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Netanyahu vs. Obama – Political Duel on Capitol Hill

Benjamin Netanyahu's trip to Washington and, in particular, his speech before the US Congress at the invitation of the Republican Speaker of the US House of Representatives, John Boehner, had been eagerly anticipated for weeks. Would he deliver a speech that gave new impetus to the peace process with the Palestinians, perhaps even lead to a breakthrough?

Prior to his departure to the US, in a speech before the Knesset on May 16th, Netanyahu had set out his positions with regard to the peace process and presented the political roadmap he would outline in Washington. The following five points summarize his basic positions: 1) The recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people; 2) A demilitarized Palestine with Israeli military presence in the Jordan River Valley; 3) No right of return to Israel for Palestinian refugees; 4) No recognition of the 1967 borders and preservation of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank; 5) No division of Jerusalem. After this speech it was plain to every observer that Netanyahu was not going to make substantial concessions in the peace process.

The day before Netanyahu's arrival in Washington, Barack Obama too delivered a foreign policy keynote speech on the "Arab Spring" and the Middle East conflict. With regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he adopted a position that sounded different from what any other American president had said before: Peace between Israel and the Palestinians should be based on the 1967 borders, in connection with mutually agreed exchanges of territory.

What followed was an exchange of blows that exercised the Israeli public intensely. Even before his departure to the US, Netanyahu had responded to Obama's speech in the strongest terms. He rejected Obama's proposal as completely unacceptable, since withdrawing to the borders of 1967 would leave Israel indefensible. The following day, having arrived in Washington, Netanyahu reiterated his criticism in a meeting with Obama at the White House. Only a few days later, Obama and Netanyahu continued their controversy, this time in front of more than 10,000 delegates of the influential American-Israeli lobby organization AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee).

This political duel culminated in Netanyahu's speech on Capitol Hill on May 24th. In this speech, he exploited his political experience and put his brilliant rhetorical skills to full use in order to appease Congress and President Obama and thank them for supporting Israel while at the same time not making a single concession to the Palestinians. His rejecting any compromise in the peace process, while at the same time strengthening Obama's status as close friend and ally of Israel, was a tactical and rhetorical master stroke.

Netanyahu returned home to mounting poll results confirming his chosen political path. He confronted Obama and was not forced to make any political concessions. He received the support of the American Congress. His government is stable. And the Israeli public, who were able to follow his appearances in the USA live on radio and television, back him politically more than ever.

For two weeks now, Netanyahu's trip to Washington and his confrontation with President Obama have been the dominant topic in the Israeli media and political discussions. In the present issue of Israel Debates two key actors present their views on this issue.

Akiva Eldar, the renowned chief political columnist for the left-liberal national daily Haaretz, investigates the inner mechanisms of the Israeli-American partnership and shows to what extent they influence both the peace process and the outcome of elections in Israel. He makes clear that this partnership is as vital to Israel as it is dangerous. Dangerous because the support the US lends Israel is based neither on common interests nor on democratic values, but on the two nations' shared assumption that they have been chosen by God and are committed to a common mission.

According to Eldar, a major cause for the current tensions between Obama and Netanyahu is the fact that unlike his Democratic predecessor, Bill Clinton, Obama has not succeeded in winning the Israelis' confidence. Netanyahu is well aware that the Israeli public supports his politics and repudiates what Obama stands for, which explains his confident appearances in the US. Akiva Eldar depicts Netanyahu as a politician who, despite different rhetoric, is not at all prepared to relinquish the Israeli claim to the West Bank – or Judea and Samaria, as his political camp likes to call that territory.

Yoram Ettinger, Ambassador (ret.) and profound expert on the US, believes that the distinctive feature of the Israeli-American partnership is not primarily to be found on the political level, but rather in the nations' common anchorage in the Jewish-Christian traditional values. He says that this is the true strength of that bilateral relationship and that even the White House from time to time must bend to that strength. Ettinger says that to this day, Moses and Joshua have been role models for American politicians and that the 10 commandments strongly influenced the legal foundation of American society. In contrast to this close relationship, Arabs and Palestinians as well as the UN are fundamentally met with suspicion. According to Ettinger, the high level of mutual trust and confidence is best shown in the unique military and intelligence partnership. He also states that the current chaos and instability in the Arab countries clearly demonstrate that to the US, Israel is irreplaceable.

The approval rates Israel is getting from the American people as from members of Congress are constantly high and are exceeding president Obama's approval ratings. The Congress's response to Netanyahu's speech demonstrates the firm and unique ties the US is keeping with Israel as its only genuine ally in the Middle East. It also shows that Washington will not support the position of the Palestinians.

Dr. Ralf Hexel
Director, FES Office Israel
Herzliya, 2 June 2011

**United States-Israel relations:
Where are we coming from and where are
we headed to?**
by Akiva Eldar

Relationships between two nations are usually based on mutual interests. Sometimes they are based on shared values. In rare cases, they rest on two pillars: both mutual interests and shared values. Yet the "bilateral special relationship" between the United States and Israel can be attributed neither to interests nor values. The relationship between the strongest superpower in the world and the small state, throughout the last 44 years since 1967, is a unique phenomenon which has no parallel in the modern history of international relations. These relations are the lifeblood of Israel – and also the poison that endangers Israel's very existence as a Jewish and democratic state.

There is no need to wax eloquent over Israel's great concern for maintaining and preserving the special relationship with the US. The benefits include a security umbrella, political backing and economic aid. Israel's closeness with the United States served to deter the Arabs from harming Israel for many years, no less than IDF firepower and fear of

Israel's nuclear capabilities did so. The United States' patronage grants Israel generous maneuvering room for preventive strikes and reprisals against its enemies. The understanding that the US will not allow Israel's security and sovereignty to be compromised was the main inducement for Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to come to Israel in 1977 and sign the Camp David agreement. The desire to connect with the United States drove Jordanian King Hussein to American hegemony in the Middle East in 1994 with King Hussein's signing of a peace treaty with Israel; it was one of the important factors leading to the PLO decision in 1988 to forsake their ideology of violent conflict in favor of a political solution based on the 1949 Armistice Agreements.

The generous political, economic and defense aid granted to Israel over scores of years, has won the United States very limited influence over the policies of Israel's governments after the '67 war. Israeli governments, with the exception of Yitzhak Rabin's government (1992-1995), conducted their policy of occupation in total opposition to the United States' stance, and in opposition to United States interests in the region. For this, America pays a heavy strategic pri-

ce and suffers a loss of prestige. Its forgiving attitude toward the expansion of the settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem has adversely affected its credibility and "honest broker" position in the eyes of the Arab world. Israel's greatest contribution to American strategic interests was Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's consent to an appeal from President George Bush (the father), to restrain from retaliating to the Scud attacks from Iraq on Israel's population centers during the Gulf War in 1991. Thus the claim that Israel contributed actively to the pro-Western coalition in the Middle East was refuted.

In a speech delivered in Cairo in June 2009, President Obama said that the only way to fulfill the aspirations of Israel and the Palestinians would be to have two states that would live side by side in peace and security. He emphasized that the two-state solution is "in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest and the world's interest." In September 2010 Obama said that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a US security interest, as this would make it easier for the United States to cope with Iran and with terrorist organizations. Therefore, the collapse of the peace process, the declaration of the UN in the coming September of a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders, and eruption of the resultant protests in the territories that are likely to engulf the entire region – these will harm not only Israeli interests, but also American interests as well. Negating the rights of self-determination of millions of people living for 44 years under military occupation, the plunder of their lands and limiting of their movements are not compatible with basic American democratic principles. Discrimination against Arab citizens in Israel also does not sit well with

principles of equality that are embedded in the political culture and the American constitution. In addition, the lack of separation of religion and state is completely foreign to the American world-view. The occupation has severely harmed Israel's good name among the elites, of whom Jewish intellectuals are a considerable part. Recent years have seen a rise in the number of Jews in the United States who want a just peace, support the two-state solution, and do not hide their aversion towards the policies of the Netanyahu government. The opinions and statements of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman are received by the Jewish elites with reactions ranging from embarrassment to disgust. The liberal Jewish organization J Street that was established two years ago attracts many young Jews who have been distanced from any connection to Israel by right-wing governments.

In light of the gap between the interests of the United States and those of Israel, and the erosion of joint values, what, then, are the roots of the almost symbiotic relations between the two countries? How does Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu allow himself to provoke the President of the United States? Why does the American Congress choose to invite him, a second time, to use such a respectable platform to defy the government? American-Jewish Professors Todd Gitlin and Liel Leibovitz, in their recently published book *The Chosen Peoples: America, Israel, and the Ordeals of Divine Election* (Simon and Schuster, 2010), claim that the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel is rooted neither in common interests nor in joint democratic principles. In their opinion, the connection is rooted in a covenant between two nations who have decided that God has chosen them.

Despite the fact that many Americans are agnostics or even atheists, they believe that Israel has a special position in the eyes of the Creator. They feel that Israel – like the US – is an embodiment of light, while the Arabs personify darkness. The events of September 11, 2001 and the Palestinian terrorist attacks against civilian targets in Israel, strengthened the sense of "joint destiny" with Israel. Besides American Jews, the most passionate supporters of Israel in the US – and the least critical – are fundamentalist or evangelical Christians. They identify with Jews as the nation from which Jesus emerged and as the nation of the Holy Land. The Jewish Bible – their "Old Testament"-- is, to them, the introduction to their own holy books, the New Testament.

Regarding the cultural-religious component, American-Israel relations are given to the prosaic influence of short-range political interests. The weight of this factor is greater in presidential and congressional election seasons. It grows as the gap between Democrats and Republicans narrows. The Israeli and Jewish Right did not shed tears when the Democrats (Obama's party) lost their majority in the House of Representatives. This crushing defeat forces the President to make great efforts to return millions of disappointed Democratic voters to the fold – voters who either remained at home or punished him for the economic crisis by supporting Republican candidates for Congress.

The Nobel Peace Prize bestowed on Obama, in part for his involvement in the Israeli-Arab peace process, did not comfort the millions of young American couples who lost their homes, nor the tens of thousands of unemployed university graduates. In order to win them back, Obama will have to invest

most of his political capital in domestic policy and the economy. The large, aggressive Republican majority ties Obama's hands and attempts to thwart all attempts of his administration to promote liberal reforms that would give him successes on the domestic front – successes that would, in turn, improve his chances of earning another term of office. In order to promote his agenda, the President will be forced to reach compromises with the Republicans who object to putting pressure on Israel, and to be more attentive to the strong, wealthy Jewish lobby. In any case, the chances for promoting peace in the Middle East are smaller than the chances of falling out with Netanyahu and his adherents in the conservative Jewish public. Even if there would be progress in the political process, it is doubtful whether this would be enough to have much impact on his chances for remaining four more years in the White House. A large majority of the Jews (four percent of the voters), including big donors, traditionally support Democratic candidates anyway. The positions of candidates toward Israel are not first place, or even third place, on the political priority-list of the overall Jewish electorate.

On the other hand, if Obama were to lose control of the process, his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize would be turned into raw material for political satire against the President. A third Intifada and conquest of the West Bank by the Hamas would erase any points that Obama accumulated for eliminating al-Qaeda's leader, Osama bin Laden. Riots in the territories and in Israel might overthrow the Palestinian Authority, harm United States allies in the Middle East, and promote Iranian hegemony in the area.

Two earlier Presidents, one Republican and one Democrat, faced similar dilemmas during

election season. Both preferred to jeopardize their political futures than to imperil the future of the peace process in the Middle East. In 1992, President Bush (the father) forced Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to choose between expanding settlements and receiving loan guarantees for absorbing new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Shamir refused to freeze construction in the settlements and tried to mobilize the Democratic majority in Congress against the President. This unsuccessful maneuver resulted in loss of economic aid and termination of the Likud government. The subsequent election of Yitzhak Rabin to Prime Minister, led to the Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Three years later, in the fall of 1995 (only a few weeks before the beginning of the presidential and congressional election year), the Democratic President Bill Clinton invoked a waiver that froze the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995. This law had been passed by Senator Bob Dole (the Republican contestant for the presidency) and Newt Gingrich (Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives), for moving the American Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. After a year, literally on the eve of elections and following the riots in the territories in response to the opening of the Hasmonean Tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City, Clinton forced Prime Minister Netanyahu to do the following: to shake Yasser Arafat's hand, agree to a cease-fire with the Palestinians, and increase security cooperation with them. The pressure placed by the government on Netanyahu led to the Hebron Agreement, which forced Netanyahu to give up control over part of Hebron's Old City.

Clinton's pressure on Netanyahu was received by the mainstream Israeli public

with much greater understanding and even favor than Obama's pressure. The credibility crisis between Clinton and Netanyahu largely contributed to Ehud Barak's victory and the return of the Labor Party to the government in the elections of 1999. Netanyahu learned his lesson. The Bar Ilan speech of 2009, in which Netanyahu spoke about the two-state solution and the refusal of Mahmoud Abbas to meet him, transformed him into a more moderate figure in the eyes of Israelis as well as non-Israelis. Netanyahu's partnership with Ehud Barak (which did not exist in his earlier term of office) also adds a measure of pragmatism to Netanyahu's stature.

Despite the fact that the guidelines Clinton placed on the negotiating table ("Clinton's Outline") contained concessions that were much more far-reaching than the ones suggested by Obama, Clinton was and remains better liked by the Israeli public. While Obama proposed a general formula for negotiations based on the borders of '67 with agreed-upon border adjustments and postponement of the discussion of the fate of Jerusalem and the refugees to a later stage, the plan offered by Clinton's proposal was the establishment of the Palestinian state on 94%-96% of the West Bank, with the addition of exchange of territories of 1%-3% on the Green Line, a multinational force along the Jordanian border and transferring Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount to Palestinian sovereignty.

Clinton knew how to develop trust with the average Israeli and to radiate a message of friendship. Obama, on the other hand, transmits a frosty message that does not penetrate the Israeli heart. The cold shoulder he exhibits to Netanyahu more adversely affects Obama's popularity in Israel, than Netanyahu's popularity. If Obama intends to

follow the footsteps of Bush (the father) and Clinton—and force Israel to choose between settlements and a crisis in relations with the United States, or conceding most of the territories and retaining a close relationship with the United States—then the President will have to correct his relations with the Israelis. He will have to convince them that if they will return to the joint values that Israel has in common with the great American democracy, Israel's security and welfare will be a high-level American interest.

Netanyahu delivered a speech before a joint meeting of the two houses of Congress, at the invitation of the leaders of the Republican majority who are Obama's confirmed rivals. The Prime Minister's very appearance in such a forum, and the content of his words, demonstrate that he was more concerned by an internal political crisis in Israel than a crisis in relations with the United States. We might also learn from this event that Netanyahu has remained loyal to the Revisionist worldview of his parent's home, and that his support of the two-state solution is only a thin veneer of public relations spin which hides a hard ideological core and a conservative political-legal approach regarding the West Bank, or Judea and Samaria as this region is called by the right-wing camp. Support for this hypothesis may be found in Netanyahu's declaration before Congress that Israel is not an occupying regime in Judea and Samaria; according to his approach, these are 'disputed territories' and not 'occupied territories.' Thus, according to this worldview, Israel's claim to retain these territories—most or a small part of them—is no less legitimate than the Palestinian claim.

The differences between Netanyahu's recent speech before the two houses of Congress and the speech he delivered before this

respectable forum during his first term of office (in 1996) are evident in the 'music' or tone, rather than the actual text, of the orations. Netanyahu has learned that a message of "Yes, but" is received by far more cheering and applause than "No way." Unfortunately, the "but" empties the "yes" of its content and exacerbates the paralytic disease that has attacked the political process. The positions presented by Netanyahu to Congress, as well as those he espoused before the speech and also after, left no choice to the Palestinian leadership than to request political assistance from the international community and the UN.

The interesting question now is whether the echoes of the applause that accompanied Netanyahu in Congress will also sweep through the British Parliament in London and the German Bundestag in Berlin, or whether Europe will force Washington to start an effective process that will force the Israeli public to choose: either territories, or peace with the entire world, first and foremost—with its American patron.

Akiva Eldar is currently a chief political columnist and editorial writer for the Israeli national daily Ha'aretz. He was previously (1993-1996) the Ha'aretz US Bureau Chief and Washington correspondent.

The Mutually-Beneficial Bottoms-Up US-Israel Relations

by Yoram Ettinger

The bottom-up US-Israel relations

The enthusiastic reception – by Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, doves and hawks - to Prime Minister Netanyahu's May 24, 2011 speech before a joint session of the US Congress reflected the unique relationship between the United States and Israel. The ties between the US and Israel resemble a triple-braided cord, which is not easily broken, consisting of shared values and mutually-beneficial economic and security interests.

The US affinity towards the Jewish State is exceptional in the international relations arena. It is based upon a bottoms-up structure, deriving its potency from the American people more than from American politicians.

Most Americans identify the Jewish State with cardinal US domestic values – not just with foreign policy – that reflect the Judeo-Christian roots of American democracy, liberty, morality, justice and the federalist system. Such sentiments have produced systemic and solid support for Jewish sovereignty in Zion, dating back to the 17th century Pilgrims and the 18th century American Founding Fathers. These sentiments are currently echoed by the representatives of the American people in the legislatures of the 50 states and in the US House of Representatives and Senate in Washington, DC. While American presidents play a critical role in shaping US-Israel relations, the American people and their representatives set the foundations, direction and tone, as well as the content of the bilateral relations, sometimes overruling or redirecting White House policies.

The 390 year old infrastructure of shared values between the US and the vision of a Jewish State – since the sermons of William Bradford on the "Mayflower" in 1620AD - has been buttressed in recent years by Israel's significant contribution to US national security in the face of mutual threats and in the

pursuit of joint interests. In addition, Israeli cutting-edge technologies have stimulated the US economy. Moreover, Israel's role as the only reliable and capable Middle Eastern ally of the US is highlighted by the recent seismic developments destabilizing every Arab country.

Thus, the unique popular affinity towards Israel has produced a robust relationship, benefiting both countries, while facilitating quick healing of occasional tensions and crises between American and Israeli leaders.

The foundations of shared values

Prime Minister Netanyahu received the longest standing ovations, from House Representatives and Senators, when he referred to the return of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, to the Jewish deed over Judea and Samaria and to the indivisibility of Jerusalem. The enthusiastic legislators of 2011 adhere to the legacy of the authors of the 1787 US Constitution. The latter were inspired by the Jewish Bible, by the Exodus from Egypt and by the political structure of the 12 Jewish tribes, which were governed by Moses the Executive, Aaron, the tribal governors and the legislature of 70 elders. The US Founding Fathers regarded themselves as "the modern-day People of the Covenant." Hence, the term "Federalism," a derivative of the Latin word for "Covenant" – Foedus.

Therefore, a marble replica of Moses – who is perceived by Americans as the chief law giver - is featured, prominently, at the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill, facing the seat of the Speaker of the House, the chief legislator. Two sculptures of Moses welcome visitors at the entrance to the Supreme Court and above the bench of the US Supreme Court Justices. Another sculpture of Moses is displayed in the rotunda of the Library of Congress. The inscription on the Liberty Bell, a corner stone of the American ethos is from the book of Leviticus 25:10: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." It inspired the anti-slavery movement, in general, and Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, in particular.

The Ten Commandments proliferate in US government buildings, under the assumption that they have deeply impacted American civil laws. A granite rock, shaped like the Two Tablets, welcomes visitors to the Texas State Capitol in Austin, and the official seal of Yale University features the Hebrew words, "Urim and Thummim," which were the power of the High Priest during the Exodus. Furthermore, the map of the US features thousands of sites bearing biblical names, such as Salem (JeruSalem), Zion, Beth El, Bethlehem, Dothan, Ephrata, Hebron, Jericho, Canaan, Pisgah, Carmel, Gilboa, Rehoboth, etc.

American leaders often quote from the Bible, since the US is the most religious Western society, believing in God and in Judeo-Christian values (90% and 80% respectively), with 42% of Christians frequenting Sunday church services. For example, at the conclusion of the 2009 Senate debate on President Obama's health reform, the very liberal Democratic Senator, Tom Harkin, congratulated the Majority Leader for "displaying the patience of Job, the endurance of Samson and the wisdom of Solomon." In January 2001, Republican Senator Mitch McConnell introduced President Bush at a nation-wide televised Senate luncheon: "We trust that you shall lead us in the best tradition of Joshua and Caleb." David's lamentation featured prominently during the eulogies for Presidents Washington and Lincoln, and President Bush was compared to King David during the 2001 inaugural prayer services at the Washington National Cathedral.

Mutual threats and joined interests

Unlike European Parliamentarians, US legislators did not hold their breath, expecting Netanyahu to announce further concessions to the Palestinians. In fact, the vast majority of US legislators – just like their constituents – do not trust the Palestinians. Netanyahu should not have focused on the Palestinian issue, and certainly should not have offered further concessions. He should have focused on the larger context of US-Israel relations, which benefits America on the federal, state

and district levels. He should have proposed specific job-creating, export-increasing and security-enhancing bilateral programs, similar to the mutually-beneficial existing programs. He should have offered the US expanded access to the the ports of Haifa and Ashdod, and to dramatically enlarge and diversify the prepositioning of American military systems in Israel, for use by the US upon regional emergencies.

The larger context of the US-Israel relationship extends beyond the foundations of shared-values and transcends the Arab-Israeli conflict. It leverages Israel's unique capabilities in order to advance both regional and global American interests. It is not a one-way-street relationship - with the US giving and Israel receiving; it is a mutually-beneficial two-way-street.

For example, Senator Daniel Inouye, Chairman of the Appropriations Committee and its Subcommittee on Defense, and former Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, contends that "Israel's contribution to US military intelligence is greater than all NATO countries combined." General Keegan, former chief of US Air Force Intelligence, asserted that "the scope of intelligence gained by the US from Israel is equal to five CIAs."

Currently, US special operations forces are trained in Israel, on their way to Iraq and Afghanistan, leveraging Israeli battle tactics and counter-terrorism experience in the face of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), car bombs, booby-traps, suicide bombers and anti-tank missiles. According to Brig. General Michael Vane, Deputy Chief of Staff at the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, the Israeli experience played a role in defeating terrorists in Iraq's "Sunni Triangle." In September 2007, Israel demolished a nuclear plant in Syria, dealing a blow to the anti-Western Syria-Iran-North Korea axis, while upgrading the posture of deterrence and the joint interests of the US and Israel.

In 1982, Israel devastated 23 most advanced Soviet surface-to-air missile batteries, employed by Syria and considered impregnable. Israel's battle tactics and electronic warfare

were shared with the US, thus tilting the global balance of power in favor of the US and delivering to the US defense industries sensitive and rare knowhow.

In 1981, Israel decimated Iraq's nuclear reactor, in defiance of US and international pressure. This provided the US with the conventional option during the 1991 war against Iraq, sparing the US a traumatic nuclear confrontation.

In 1970, Syria, invaded Jordan, aiming to topple the Hashemite regime and activate a pro-Soviet domino scenario into the Gulf States. US forces were over-stretched in Vietnam, but Israel mobilized its military, forcing Syria into a swift evacuation of Jordan, thus avoiding a dramatic setback to US national security and economy. Israel's capability of snatching roasting chestnuts out of the fire – without US involvement – vindicated enhanced US-Israel strategic cooperation, irrespective of severe US-Israel disagreements over the Arab-Israeli conflict. The US is determined to avoid cutting off its nose to spite its face.

Israel's unique contribution to US national security was summed up by the late General Alexander Haig, who was the Supreme Commander of NATO and US Secretary of State: "Israel is the largest, most battle-tested and cost-effective US aircraft carrier, which does not require even one American soldier, cannot be sunk and is located in a critical region for American national security and economic interests. If Israel did not exist - the US would have to deploy a few additional aircraft carriers to the Mediterranean, along with tens of thousands of military personnel, costing the US taxpayers \$20BN annually and dragging the US into additional regional and international confrontations."

Israel constitutes a bonanza for the US defense industries, advancing US national security, employment, research & development and exports. In addition, Israel is a battle-proven laboratory, which has upgraded and refurbished hundreds of US military systems and technologies. It shares with the US most of these improvements, enhancing the com-

petitive edge of the US defense industries, thus saving many US lives and mega billions of dollars in terms of new jobs, research and development. For instance, the current generation of the F-16 includes over 600 modifications introduced by Israel. Also, during the Cold War, Israel transferred to the US captured Soviet combat aircraft, radar and other military systems, which afforded the US a crucial advantage over the USSR, operationally and industrially.

If there had been an Israel-like nation in the Persian Gulf, there would not be a need to dispatch hundreds of thousands of US military personnel to the region!

The impact of the Middle East upheaval

The upheaval in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Syria and other Arab countries highlight Israel's unique qualities as an ally of the US. The 2011 turmoil has removed "the Middle East screensaver," exposing the real Arab Street: No "Arab Spring," but the exacerbation of tribal-ethnic-religious-geographic-ideological rivalries, animosities, splits and power struggles; the intensification of domestic and intra-Arab fragmentation; the escalation of intolerance, violence and hate-culture; the absence of stability and the deepening of uncertainty, which exposes the tenuous nature of Arab regimes and their agreements and alliances; the ruthless submission of democracy-seeking elements and the perpetuation of atrocious tyrannies.

Egypt - a beneficiary of billions of dollars and state of the art US military systems – maintains close ties with North Korea, Russia and China, agitates the Horn of Africa and Sudan, consistently votes against the US in the UN, collaborates with Hamas' smuggling of missiles and explosives into Gaza and institutionalizes hate-education.

Iran had access to the most advanced US military systems when the Shah was at the helm. However, the Shah was toppled, and Iran was transformed from a staunch US ally into the most anti-US regime in the world.

Libya granted the US, in 1954, the use of Wheelus Air Base, which became the largest US Air Force base outside the USA. In 1969, Colonel Qaddafi overthrew King Idris and Wheelus serviced the Soviet Air Force. Libya became a terrorist state, responsible for the murder of 270 people during the 1988 PanAm-103 bombing, as well as for the 1986 LaBelle Discotheque bombing.

Iraq was pro-Western until the 1958 anti-Western coup. Saddam Hussein – who ruled Iraq since 1979 - gained the confidence of the US and benefitted from a shared-intelligence agreement, the transfer of sensitive dual-use American technologies and \$5BN loan guarantees until his 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The US evacuation of Iraq could trigger a volcanic-like eruption, which could consume Iraq itself, as well as neighboring countries.

Saudi Arabia depends on the US for its survival in the face of lethal regional threats. The 1991 and 2003 US Gulf Wars were largely induced by the concern for a Saddam takeover of Saudi Arabia. However, Riyadh bankrolls the operations of anti-US Islamic organizations in the US and anti-US Islamic terrorists worldwide.

Israel's strategic added-value is underlined by the gathering conventional and non-conventional Arab storms, by the increasing vulnerability of pro-US Arab regimes, by the intensified threats of Islamic terrorism and Iran's nuclearization, by the deepening penetration of the Arab Middle East by Russia and China, by the recent erosion of the US posture of deterrence and by the expected US evacuation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Israel's reliability, capability, credibility, stability, democracy and unconditional alliance with the USA are anomalous in the Middle East.

US-Israel cooperation, in defiance of mutual threats, should not be undermined by US-Israel disagreements over the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian issue. Recent Arab havoc has reaffirmed that the Palestinian issue has never been the root cause of Middle East turbulence or the crown jewel of Arab policy-making. In fact, regional turbu-

lence is unrelated to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian issue, Israel's policies or Israel's existence.

The US public supports Israel

In February, 2011, Gallup poll ranked Israel (68%) among the seven most popular countries in the USA, which include Canada, Britain, Germany, Japan, India and France, dramatically ahead of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt (37%, 50% and 40% respectively). The Palestinian Authority (19%) was at the bottom of the list, along with Iran and North Korea.

On February 25, 2011, the Rasmussen Report determined that most Americans would stop foreign aid to Arab countries, but support foreign aid to Israel. 61% do not expect the current Middle East upheaval to advance democracy or peace in Arab countries.

In April 2010, "The Quinnipiac Institute" – often quoted by The New York Time, The Washington Post and CNN – documented a 66%:19% majority, expecting President Obama to upgrade his support of Israel.

In fact, while support for Israel is consistently in the high 60%, President Obama has already lost his "Bin Laden bump," falling back to 45%-50% approval rating.

However, the "Super Poll" is conducted daily on Capitol Hill, where support of Israel constitutes a rare bi-partisan common denominator. House Members (about 75%) and Senators (about 80%) – who are extremely sensitive to the worldview of constituents - overwhelmingly support pro-Israel legislation and resolutions, even in opposition to the President. Most legislators and constituents identify the Jewish State with their own values: faith, religion, tradition, patriotism, democracy-liberty, military and counter-terrorism, while suspecting Arabs and opposing the UN. Under the American political system, Congress is equal in power to the President, and the constituent holds a big stick over the head of legislators and presidents, who fear

the bi-annual battle cry: "We shall remember in November."

The solid foundation of shared US-Israel values, the recent volcanic eruptions in the Middle East and Israel's proven-capabilities and reliability, have transformed the US into a sustained bastion of support for the Jewish State, notwithstanding periodic tensions between the leaders of both countries.

Epilogue

The congressional response to the May 24, 2011 Netanyahu speech reaffirmed the unique ties between the leader of the Free World and its sole soul ally in the Middle East. It underlined the limit to the White House pressure on Israel and clarified that Washington was not going to embrace the Palestinian position. In fact, the Netanyahu speech, and the exhilarated reaction by Congress test Palestinian intentions: Will they repeat past mistakes by intensifying terrorism? Or, will they reduce expectations, moderate radicalism, abandon terrorism and uproot hate education, thus advancing the cause of peace?

Ambassador (ret.) **Yoram Ettinger**, CEO of "Second Thought: A US-Israel Initiative", served as Minister for Congressional Affairs at Israel's Embassy in Washington, DC and as Israel's Consul General in Houston, Texas.

Responsible:

*Dr. Ralf Hexel,
Head of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel*

Authors:

*Akiva Eldar
Yoram Ettinger*

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il