



## **Middle East Policy Position**

Supporting democracies across the world has been one of the founding principles of United States foreign policy over the past two hundred years. When it comes to the Middle East there is no country the US can count on more than Israel. The partnership between the United States and Israel has come to be the foundation of our Middle East policy. Our country's commitment is based upon our shared values and the lessons of the past. Israel is our only truly democratic partner in the Middle East. The rest of the region is filled with nation-states that are autocratic and whose regimes are extremely repressive.

If you look at the history of the region, it is all too telling that peace cannot be achieved in a short period; it will take time. Israel is surrounded by aggressors and previous invaders, which makes it difficult to create an environment for peace and compromise.

As the US has supported Israel, so too has Israel staunchly supported the US as an equal partner in the upkeep of regional and global security. But the partnership reaches beyond strictly military/security efforts as the two democracies continue to advance efforts in the arenas of Cybersecurity, Water, Energy and Agricultural technology, as well as medical research and innovations. Israel's very democracy is modeled after that of the United States and I believe that it is in our national interest to strengthen our ties with Israel because of our common values and our commitment to equality and freedom.

Recently, attacks have been made on the patriotism and power of American supporters of Israel. One example is a current Congressional candidate who promoted an article titled, "America's Jews are Driving America's war." She stated that the article was "very provocative, but thoughtful." The copy for the article asserted that Jews "owned the media," "Jews should wear labels while on national television," and "their beliefs are as dangerous as a bottle of rat poison."

It is this type of rhetoric that promotes hate crimes and antisemitism in our country, both of which have erupted at truly frightening rates throughout the United States in the last few years. This is happening in nearly every state within the Union, Europe and throughout the world. One only has to look back at the 1930s to see the similarities



between now and the creation of the Nazi movement! I look forward to working with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has been clear that “To be antisemitic is to be anti-American. It has no place in our country” I believe that it is not enough to have a superior military, we also must win the confidence and support of the people of the world. I will continue to condemn all hate crimes that occur throughout the world, and we need to expose this type of vitriolic hate speech and universally reject it!

When elected to Congress, I will be one of the strongest proponents of not only maintaining but strengthening the US-Israel relationship; specifically, I intend to support the following efforts, among others, to bolster the bilateral partnership between our two democracies:

- **FOREIGN AID** - Since 1948, Israel has received more than \$127 billion in assistance from the United States. In all, the US foreign aid is only one percent of our overall annual budget of which just six percent is allocated to Israel for security assistance. With nearly unanimous support in Congress, both Democrats and Republicans recognize that Israel’s value to US security is incalculable. While other countries have requested the assistance of American troops to defend their interests, Israel has sought to be a partner and has only ever asked for the US to invest in their ability to defend themselves. This is a noble and worthy investment of American resources that we should wholeheartedly be willing to not only continue, but increase when necessary.
- **MAINTAINING SPENDING FOR DEFENSE** - In 2016, the Obama administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding that guaranteed that the United States would increase foreign aid to Israel over the next ten years, and for the first time ever, added a specific appropriation for the incredible missile defense technology developed in Israel. It is unfortunate that Israel has had to develop such technology, but the threats posed by Iranian-backed terror groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad continue to threaten its civilian population. I fully support Israel’s right to defend themselves; this aid package remains the most significant financial promise the US has ever made to Israel, and I support its continued fulfillment as our countries work together to bring stability to a region plagued by extremism and chaos.
- **TWO STATE EXISTENCE** - All too often, we try to simplify the Peace Process into the phrase “two-state solution.” We must be willing to recognize it is not as simple as saying these words. A two-state solution is something that we can all accept as the most viable and reasonable political resolution to the most fraught diplomatic stalemate in history; I strongly support this goal to not only guarantee the safety and security of the Jewish State of Israel but to afford the Palestinian people the country that they so desperately desire themselves. To achieve it though, both sides will need to make compromises; Palestinian leaders must publicly and unequivocally renounce terrorism and all threats to civilian security and choose freedom and responsibility over martyrdom. Israeli leaders, while rightfully focused on security, will have to make painful and unpopular



decisions about controversial settlements within the West Bank that have been an ever-present source of tension. The issues are complicated and contentious; America can play a constructive role in facilitating these discussions, but the best solutions are those that will be worked out by the parties directly.

- **BOYCOTT, DIVESTMENT AND SANCTIONS MOVEMENT** – I applaud the House for passing a bipartisan resolution condemning the boycott-Israel movement in July 2019. The 398 – 17 vote was a clear indication of our support for Israel. While promoted in this country as a means to achieve a two-state solution, the boycott campaign was actually designed to isolate Israel, erode Israel's support in the world, destabilize its economic security, and undermine its character as a Jewish State. While I believe that a spirited debate of Middle East policy is beneficial, this movement is counter-productive, anti-American, and anti-Peace.

- **BIPARTISANSHIP** – Since the inception of Israel as a nation-state, American support for Israel and her people has been unwavering. It didn't matter who was in the White House or which party controlled Congress. Support for Israel is unique because it never turned into a liberal or conservative issue. Unfortunately, President Trump's statement that Jewish voters should be loyal and not vote for Democrats is a serious threat to the bipartisan support Israel has enjoyed over the years. Israel must be a partner in this effort as well, helping to protect the important bipartisanship that has been achieved by not preventing American leaders from entering its country. As Florida Congressman Ted Deutch, a staunch supporter of Israel noted, "If Members of Congress visit Israel and shut out the voices of those they disagree with, they are making a mistake. And when Israel shuts out Members of Congress, they too, are making a mistake." It is imperative that Israel maintains its bipartisan support in the US Congress. I hope to be a leader in bringing back a civil discourse to Middle East policy while serving in Congress.

As with most regions, I believe our foreign policy centers around our partners and allies but most assuredly must address those places where our interests are threatened. When elected to Congress, I would apply a thoughtful approach to America's foreign policy throughout the Middle East:

- **IRAN & PROXY WARS:** In Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Gaza, the repressive Iranian regime is working to increase their influence by filling power vacuums created by civil war in Syria and through their support of terrorist organizations, such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran has threatened to block the international waters in the Straits of Hormuz and are building a land bridge linking Iran—through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon—to Israel's borders and the Mediterranean. Iran has been working on this project throughout the Syrian civil war and is currently using it to transport military equipment to terrorists in Lebanon. It should go without saying that Iran cannot be allowed to acquire or develop a nuclear weapon, but I believe the U.S. must stand with Israel and



continue to push back against Iran's efforts to destabilize the region by increasing diplomatic and economic pressure through sanctions, which inhibit Iran's ability to fund or carry out terrorist activities.

- **REGIONAL CONFLICTS:** American military intervention is a tool that should be used smartly, soundly, but sparingly. With an eye towards withdrawing our forces or support from campaigns in both Afghanistan and Yemen, we must honestly evaluate our goals in these places, consider the need to combat corruption and incompetence [in Afghanistan], increase humanitarian aid [in Yemen] and seek a quick resolution to these conflicts that both protects American national security interests and prevents further casualties amongst our servicemen and women.

- **SAUDI ARABIA:** Saudi Arabia is what I would describe as an *ally* of the United States, but not necessarily a *partner*. It is an understatement to say that America's relationship with the Kingdom is one that has been at best of times complex. While our diplomatic, economic and security interests may align, our value systems have not and do not run parallel when you consider the lack of progress in its societal makeup and most certainly not when you factor in the unfathomable killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018. I believe we can continue to work together to advance both countries' *shared* interests, including but not limited to exposing and respond to those that attacked Saudi oilfields to disrupt the global energy market, but we must also stand firm in our condemnation of human rights abuses. To that end, until a full and comprehensive investigation is completed regarding Jamal Khashoggi, I join with my fellow Democrats in the House who voted to suspend military arms deals with Saudi Arabia.

Winston Churchill once stated about Russia, "It is a riddle wrapped inside a mystery inside an enigma." The same can be said of the Middle East. It is one of the most complicated and long-standing policy questions that the world has faced in the last 70 years. Many have suggested it is time for the United States to disengage from the region, but responsible actors recognize that the Middle East will never disengage from the United States, and therefore we should not shrink from our responsibilities as a leader on the world stage. We must carefully continue to adapt to the complexities of the region while maintaining a resolute commitment to the security of our friends in Israel. This is an American principle that not only makes us stronger and safer but is simply the right thing to do as an American value.

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