



Israel and the United States

My Personal Background

My support of the State of Israel has been a cornerstone of my political beliefs well before I ever considered running for office. I grew up in New City, New York and was raised by two loving parents. My mother is Jewish, but I was raised Catholic throughout my childhood. While attending college at Cornell University, I made the decision to go on birthright where I would be bar mitzvahed.

Thanks to my mother's guidance and wisdom, I would always be connected and identify with my Jewish heritage. However, without the State of Israel, and its close relationship with my country of birth, my path to Judaism would have been fundamentally altered or prolonged. The person I am and the life I cherish today is, in large part, a product of the special relationship between the United States and Israel. Not only has it informed my personal and political support of a strong and secure Jewish state, but it led me to my wife, who is also Jewish, and our two beautiful children. Our family attends Temple Beth Shalom in the town I grew up in and my eldest son is currently attending Hebrew school.

I wholeheartedly support Israel and stronger relations with the United States as an ethical and moral imperative. However, these convictions are fortified by the important role Israel played in my path toward my proudest achievement, my family.

U.S.-Israel Relations and Aid

The United States has a responsibility to honor our commitments and stand by our allies across the world stage. But in the case of Israel, we have a moral

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J obligation to support the only democracy in a region entangled with actors who seek destruction over peace.

Israel and the United States have been engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship for the better part of a century—economically, militarily, and diplomatically. Our economies have, in the past, and will continue to grow stronger as we expand commerce and boost collaboration among our private and public sectors.

Providing Foreign Military Financing to Israel is the single most effective mechanism to stop nuclear proliferation, combat terrorism, and secure the safety of our citizens at home and abroad.

When elected to Congress, I will fight to make sure the U.S. continues to fully fund our Memorandum of Understanding with Israel. Each year, as our enemies adapt and find new ways to attack our country and its allies, it becomes increasingly more important to build upon our current aid package to further develop missile defense and anti-drone technologies as well anti-tunnelling programs and the Iron Dome.

To pass such a bill, it takes true legislative experience to create bipartisan support—as seen in the legislation passed in December 2019. As the most productive lawmaker in Albany last year, I passed 42 bills, more than any lawmaker in the State of New York. My record shows that I possess the skills necessary to build successful bipartisan legislation and ensure Congress continues to fully fund its annual pledge to aid Israel.

We must also push back against the notion in which some suggest the U.S. should consider conditioning its aid to Israel. It is my belief that the Israeli government knows best how to protect its people and I strongly oppose attaching strings to this crucial, mutually beneficial aid.

The Israel-U.S. relationship is more than a mere strategic partnership. At its core, our bond is the steadfast commitment to the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Iran and the Spread of Terrorism

Iran is the greatest existential threat to human rights, non-proliferation, the war on terror, and overall stability in the Middle East.

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JIt is a theocratic regime that forces its people to live under abject tyranny by persecuting non-Shia Muslims (as well as other minority religions) on a daily basis; putting homosexuals, free thinkers, journalists, and any perceived critics of the regime to death, and maintain government control through blatant, state sanctioned election fraud.

A nuclear Iran would pose the greatest, most immediate national security threat the world has ever seen. The JCPOA, also known as the “Iran Deal”, did not go far enough to ensure the total prevention of Iranian development of nuclear weapons. The United States and its allies must do better than a postponement of Iran’s nuclear program. It is imperative that the United States use its influence in the global community to intensify sanctions on the Iranian economy until they have no choice but to allow the IAEA unrestricted access to perform thorough and proper inspections and ultimately force Iran to comply with the NNPT.

Unfortunately, the threat of Iran does not stop at its borders. Iran remains the top state sponsor of terrorist organizations— Hamas and Hezbollah among them. Iran arms, funds, and trains these violent organizations that share the fundamental goal of removing “infidels” (Israel in particular) from the Middle East and from existence as we know it.

In no uncertain terms, Iran and the terrorist groups they champion are as committed to the destruction of the Jewish state as any other cause they claim to hold true. Therefore, the United States must constantly reinforce its unwavering support of Israel to ensure the safety of its people and the stability in the region at large.

U.S. Role in Negotiating a Peace Agreement

The United States must remain committed to seeking a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. However, it is imperative that any peace deal start and end with negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians with limited interference from other actors, the United States included. This is not to say that the United States and other stakeholders should not play a critical role in the peace process.

While Israel and the Palestinians pursue these delicate negotiations, the United States must use its influence on key IGOs such as the United Nations,

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J the Arab League, or the International Criminal Court to support bilateral negotiations and commit to not interfere on behalf of either Israel or the Palestinians.

Important concessions must be made by both sides in order to form a true and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians. Regardless of the United States officially recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (and moving our embassy there from Tel Aviv), it is crucial to recognize that no peace agreement could ever be reached without this important step.

Standing Against Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)

In 2018, I voted for an anti-BDS Senate bill to prevent New York State from supporting boycotts used to harm Israel and other U.S. allies. The bill expands on the existing state law in place that prevents New York from entering into a state contract or investment with individuals or organizations who seek to economically harm American allies.

The United States government should follow suit and make clear to the people in this country that there will be real consequences to subverting the national security interests of our country and its allies. Those who receive funding or have business in front of the federal government must be precluded from directly or indirectly undermining the safety and stability of Israel and the Middle East as a whole. As a member of Congress, I will continue to be vocal in my opposition to any efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel and will encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Conclusion

As the next member of Congress to represent New York's 17th Congressional District, I will dedicate my public service to be the example of how the United States ought to behave domestically and internationally—whether that be through delivering for the people in my district or ensuring our government honors and routinely strengthens its commitments to Israel and other allies.