

It was a stirring moment – and a rare one. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in his capital city of Kyiv, spoke movingly about the threats he and his citizens face. A half-world away, gathered in an auditorium in Washington, Democrats and Republicans, progressives and conservatives, for a brief moment set aside their differences and applauded this leader.

We must not forget how rare such moments are. People in Washington thrive on conflict and division, drawing lines and building walls. And yet, for decades, we have built the pro-Israel movement and our political organizing arm in Washington on the premise that everyone can and should be a friend of Israel, because a strong U.S.-Israel relationship benefits both countries. We make no apologies for this position. There are many important issues on which Americans disagree – but Israel should not be one of them.

And so, our coalition has been a remarkably diverse one. We have friends from every state and every region. We have friends in Congress who have few, if any, Jewish constituents in their districts. We have friends in Congress who are skeptical of foreign aid for any nation – except for Israel. We have friends who are pro-choice and pro-life, those who are liberal on immigration and those who want



to tighten our borders, and yes, those who disagree strongly on issues surrounding the 2020 presidential election.

These disagreements are not minor. They are, in many respects, critical to the future of America. But they do not determine the fate of America's enduring commitment to the State of Israel.

We know this because in every Congress, under every administration – regardless of who controls the White House and who chairs key committees – the U.S.-Israel relationship has staunch defenders on both sides of the political aisle. Just last week, the Senate, which is divided 50-50 by party and on virtually every major issue, approved a \$4.8 billion security package for Israel – the largest funding package in Israel's history.

This is no moment for the pro-Israel movement to become selective about its friends. Israel faces nuclear threats from Iran's rulers and terror tunnels built by Hezbollah and Hamas. An international movement seeking to isolate and demonize the Jewish state continues to make inroads, especially here in the United States.



The one thing that guarantees Israel’s ability to defend itself is the enduring support of the United States. When we launched our political action committee last year, we decided that we would base decisions about political contributions on only one thing: whether a political candidate supports the U.S.-Israel relationship. Not on any other issue – just this one.

Why are we so single-minded? Because no one else is. There will always be major issues that divide Americans. Israel’s enemies don’t wait for America to sort out our politics. They didn’t wait in 1948, nor in 1973, nor to this day. Israel needs America in its corner, always.

Our job today, as it has always been, is to bring more people to Israel’s side and focus only on Israel’s strength and ability to defend itself, in times of war as well as in times of peace. We can never let the things that divide Americans politically determine whether the United States will support Israel. We must be willing to stand with those who stand with Israel.

Of course, all members of the pro-Israel community are free to set their own individual political priorities, and support candidates who meet their other political tests. That’s not only acceptable, it’s the nature of a healthy democracy.



But our organization and our PAC will not make those judgments or do that work. We will pool our energy, resources and support behind candidates on one single issue, regardless of any other priority. That's why we exist, and that's why we are successful.

What are the stakes? Ask President Zelenskyy. His nation faces a war of extinction – a war which will determine whether his nation exists in the coming months. And here he is, pleading to the United States for bipartisan support to deliver him and his people. We can only pray help will arrive in time.

Israel can't afford to wait for such a moment of peril. Our job is to make America's friendship with Israel so robust, so certain, so broadly based, and so dependable that even the deep divisions of American politics never imperil that relationship and the ability of the Jewish state to defend itself.

Betsy Berns Korn

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