



Jerusalem 4:59  
Toronto 5:51

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

בס"ד

### Events...

#### May 21-28

2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem and to mark this extraordinary year the BAYT Brotherhood is running a second mission – in addition to its annual mission in December – to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim. The **BAYT Yom Yerushalayim Mission to Israel** will incorporate the World Mizrahi mission, plus add additional touring and Shabbat in Jerusalem. For information email Larry Zeifman at [LWZ@Zeifmans.ca](mailto:LWZ@Zeifmans.ca)

### Commentary...

#### Trump, the Golan Heights and Regional Progress

By Matthew R.J. Brodsky

The biggest news to come out of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington is not what's grabbing most headlines. Rather, it's his decision to ask the US to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. It comes at a time when US President Donald Trump is seeking to reinvigorate US relations with its Middle East allies and entertaining new strategies to solve a myriad of challenges facing the United States. In that context, Netanyahu's idea should prompt more than a casual review from Washington.

Israel captured two-thirds of the Golan territory from Syria in the 1967 war and annexed it in 1981, to the international community's consternation. The strategic highlands represented less than one percent of Syrian land area, yet under their control it served as a forward operating position from where Syrian artillery regularly shelled northern Israel and the Palestinian Fatah organization launched regular cross-border raids.

What the Trump administration decides to do about Syria necessitates an even more important decision, about Russia. Seeing clearly where Russian President Vladimir Putin's interest intersect with or diverge from America's will serve as a keystone in crafting a coherent, wider Middle East strategy that fulfills Trump's twin objectives of destroying Islamic State (ISIS) and pushing back against Iran. At the same time, Washington's definition of Moscow's regional role will have direct implications for Israel's security posture and intelligence sharing.

There are several reasons why recognizing the annexation of the Golan Heights would benefit both the US and Israel. Whether the previous Syrian-Israeli peace attempts were conducted under Hafez Assad during the 1990s and 2000, or overseen by his son Bashar in 2008 and 2010, the results were the same: the Syrian leaders demanded more than either Egypt or Jordan received in their agreements, while offering significantly less in return. In essence, they were asking Israel to pay a premium for several additional decades of Syrian belligerence.

The initial attempts at making peace under the Obama administration shifted from the land-for-peace formula to a land-for-realignment theory where it was believed that Syria could be flipped from the Iranian orbit. The idea that Tehran and Damascus merely shared a marriage of convenience was absurd at the time. President Obama's later decision to "respect" Tehran's "equities" in Syria demonstrated his belated understanding that Assad's rule in Syria was a core Iranian interest. At this point, there is nothing Syria is able to offer Israel or the US that couldn't be secured by engaging with Russia or Iran instead.

In fact, the risk of returning the Golan Heights should be measured against the fact that Iran is actively setting up another forward command along Israel's border with Syria. It comes at a time when Israelis are acutely aware that the reward for giving up land has been the shower of rockets and mortars from Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Had Israel accepted Hafez or Bashar Assad's previous territorial demands for peace, Iran, Hezbollah or ISIS would be threatening Israel today from their perch along the Golan plateau.

Weakening Iran's hand in Syria and beyond is also beneficial for the US given President Trump's professed desire to come to an understanding

with Russia. The moment has arrived for the Trump administration to realize that Putin's interests do not align with America's. Russia's latest arms shipment to Syria – the largest to date since they sashayed into Syria unopposed by the previous US administration in 2015 – is not designed to crush ISIS. Its

purpose is to keep Assad in power, provide security for its Iranian client and increase the Russian threat to NATO's southern flank by upgrading and expanding its Mediterranean base in Tartus, making its presence a permanent feature in the Middle East.

Putin's message to the US is clear: Russia is back, prepared to defend its former Soviet client state, and all roads to solving the conflict lead to Moscow.

With that understanding should come the realization that prying Russia apart from Iran through bilateral discussions is likely as vacuous as the hope Syria could be flipped from Iran. As Hudson Institute Senior Fellow Lee Smith points out, these are strategic partnerships, not marriages of convenience. The way to change the Russian-Iranian dynamic isn't by talking to Putin, it's by devaluing Iran as a strategic asset to Moscow through sanctions, clandestine operations, cyberwar and a variety of other measures.

Capitalizing on Netanyahu's idea will help the US limit Russia's reemergence as a Middle East power broker after a 40-year absence. Rather than being encouraged by the Obama administration as a result of a self-inflicted "red line" wound, their influence will be checked against American interests. That is not to say that Washington and Moscow cannot cooperate where their interests align. Destroying ISIS should be a common goal. But the days of supporting a fundamentally flawed nuclear deal with Iran by giving in to Putin, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Bashar Assad are over.

Yet another benefit from recognizing the Golan Heights as Israeli is the manner in which it could help reset the moribund peace process with the Palestinians and provide new options for US senior presidential adviser Jared Kushner. It removes the idea that the June 4, 1967 lines are sacrosanct in peace agreements while lessening the damage caused by the recent anti-Israel UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution. That unreasonable decision not only fixes those lines as the starting point for negotiations but also entitles Palestinians to pre-1967 Israeli territory as a part of mutually agreed land swaps.

This approach mistakes the possible outcome of negotiations with the starting point of peace talks. It's no wonder, then, why the Palestinian Authority prefers to avoid direct negotiations with Israel. They pocket benefits and concessions as a reward for their avoidance and belligerence.

UNSC Resolution 242 has long served as the cornerstone of Middle East peacemaking and it called for the return of territory (not all territory) in exchange for peace. At this point, Israel has returned 80% of the land it gained in the 1967 war. Syria has missed the boat; the ship has already sailed. Regarding the Palestinians, the depth of the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank may only match the depth of peace they are offered.

Much has changed since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and convening of the Madrid Peace Conference over a quarter century ago. American policy should also adjust to reflect the lessons learned from past successes and failures. Israel is no longer perceived as enemy number one by the rulers of the Arab states. While they would no doubt oppose an American recognition of the Israeli Golan Heights, they have a better understanding of their priorities and would be more accepting if it was presented as part of a region-wide plan that works in their favor. Besides, given the choice between aligning with Russia or a reanimated America determined to reward its allies and push back against its adversaries, most Arab states will likely lean to the West.

With the changing of the guard in Washington comes the pursuit of new objectives in Syria, the region and beyond. America has pushed the land-for-peace boulder uphill for decades and reached a point of diminishing returns. There should be penalties rather than rewards for truculent defiance, whether Syrian or Palestinian. Netanyahu's request for the US to recognize Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights represents a bold move that would help accomplish several American objectives in the Middle East, while jettisoning policy prescriptions that have long lived past their expiration dates. (Jerusalem Post Feb 28)

The author is a senior Middle East analyst at Wikistrat and former director of policy at the Jewish Policy Center in Washington, DC.

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Opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the views of BAYT.

## Israel's Ally Serving in the White House By Trent Franks

Israel has done everything within its power to cooperate with its violent neighbors, defying eight years of criticism and condescension from the Obama administration and the antisemites at the United Nations. Indeed, president Obama did everything within his power to diminish the standing of Israel in the world. He repeatedly sent mixed and extremely dangerous messages about our relationship with Israel.

As president Obama's days in office were coming to an end, he and secretary of state John Kerry broke with over 20 years of bipartisan precedent by refusing to veto a resolution at the UN Security Council designed to undermine Israel's right to exist. The resolution, orchestrated by the Obama administration, went to such an outrageous extent it would categorize even places like the Western Wall as occupied territory. This overt betrayal by Obama of our closest ally reinforced the position of the ubiquitous anti-Semites at the UN.

The cowardly refusal of the Obama administration to confirm to the world who our allies are left President Donald Trump in the very uncomfortable position of having to do damage control before he was even sworn in. If anything should serve as unequivocal confirmation to the entire world of America's commitment to Israel and the Jewish people, it is the president's choice of Dr. Sebastian Gorka as White House deputy assistant.

I am compelled to respond with disgust to recent attempts in the press and on social media to libel this American patriot. Dr. Gorka truly understands the existential threat Global Jihadism poses to both America and Israel. He has repeatedly stated that groups like al-Qaida and Islamic State (ISIS) share a totalitarian bond with the Fascists and Nazis who threatened the world in the 20th century. To associate him in any way with such ideologies is repugnant and a prime example of "fake news."

Most disturbing of all is the attempt to portray Dr. Gorka as in any way anti-Semitic. Having called upon his expertise on counterterrorism repeatedly in Congress and used his analysis to inform our work, I can attest that he is a deep and relentless friend of Israel and the Jewish people.

Sebastian Gorka's service to the nation, his reputation, and his national security credentials are all unimpeachable and I am delighted that Israel and the Jewish people have such an ally serving our president in the White House. (Jerusalem Post Feb 27)

*The writer is serving his eighth term in Congress and is the chairman of the Congressional Israel Allies Caucus.*

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## The Uphill Battle over Returning to Jerusalem By David Parsons

Everyone is waiting to see if US President Donald Trump will keep his campaign pledge to move the American embassy to Jerusalem.

Those opposed to this move warn of impending rage and upheaval in the region. Many proponents have quickly grown impatient, saying Trump should have acted on day one of his presidency.

I remain optimistic it will happen soon and firmly believe it is time for the US to finally rectify this historic injustice by leading the nations back up to Jerusalem and recognizing the city as Israel's capital. I offer this hopeful forecast as someone who has been engaged in the uphill diplomatic battle over Jerusalem for over 25 years.

In fact, I drafted the initial version of the bill which eventually became the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995. Thus, I know from the inside the long history of this debate in Washington, the arguments pro and con, and the key players involved.

It was the cerebral senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D-New York) who first started pushing for the embassy move in the early 1980s. He was considered a good friend of Israel, though some suggested he was just exploiting the embassy issue to embarrass the Reagan administration. Regardless, Moynihan deserves credit for putting the issue of Jerusalem on the map in Congress, as strong bipartisan majorities in both Houses began passing annual resolutions in support of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Still, in the decades since numerous politicians have played political football with Jerusalem.

One clear example is Bill Clinton, who promised to move the embassy in his initial run for the White House only to break his word as president. Both George W. Bush and Barack Obama impulsively followed suit, courting Jewish voters and donors with campaign vows on Jerusalem and only to renege once in office. Meanwhile, whatever party occupies the Oval Office, count on the opposing party to be making hay over Jerusalem in Congress.

Such was the case in January 1995, when both Houses of Congress came under Republican control for the first time in decades. The Gingrich revolution had just swept in many new conservative congressmen committed to his "Contract with America." At the time, I was registered with Congress as a pro-Israel lobbyist for a Christian organization called CIPAC, and we sensed a shift on Capitol Hill concerning the Jerusalem issue. There was growing interest in Congress to switch from toothless resolutions to an actual bill mandating the move of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Israel was engaged in good-faith negotiations with the Palestinians under the Oslo process, and many saw the embassy move as a reward for Israel's taking risks for peace or as an incentive to pursue Oslo further.

Even Senator Bob Dole (R-Kansas), who lacked any real pro-Israel credentials, was jousting with fellow presidential hopeful senator Phil Gramm (R-Texas) over who would move the embassy faster. I also will never forget the day when House speaker Newt Gingrich addressed Arab threats of violence over an embassy move with his famously incorrect rejoinder: "They ought to grow up."

So we decided to press the issue in Congress that year. I helped organize three sets of lobby days that winter and spring, bringing in several hundred Jewish and Christian activists each time to urge members of Congress to support a bill for moving the US embassy to Jerusalem. By May of 1995, we had blanketed all 538 offices in the House and Senate with our message.

Meantime, we identified Senator Jon Kyl (R-Arizona) as our preferred champion of this effort. He had always stood out as a truly principled supporter of Israel, including as an early advocate of funding for US-Israeli joint missile defense systems. We were convinced of Kyl's sincerity on the embassy question when we arranged a meeting for him with Kare Kristiansen, the Norwegian statesman who had just resigned from the Nobel Peace Prize Committee over its feting of Yasser Arafat. The two veteran leaders were in full accord that moving our respective embassies to Jerusalem deserved top priority. Afterwards, Kyl asked us to prepare a draft bill for his consideration.

So together with CIPAC founder Richard Hellman, I crafted a proposed law with three operative provisions: 1) Immediate US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital; 2) Immediately placing the US ambassador to Israel in the capital; and 3) Begin planning for a new embassy building to be constructed at a later date. I also authored a supporting policy memorandum as well as a constitutional law brief on the legislative branch's shared authority with the executive on this matter.

Our final set of lobby days for the proposed embassy bill took place in May 1995, just days before AIPAC's annual policy conference in Washington. That week, Kyl informed a CIPAC gathering on Capitol Hill that he would be submitting our bill in the Senate, but he first wanted the head of his party, Senator Dole, to come on as co-sponsor.

The next day, Kyl confirmed that Dole was on board and would actually introduce the bill. Then on the eve of their policy conference, AIPAC convened their 33-member executive committee and faced questions on why Dole was set to proffer a Jerusalem embassy bill they had not been lobbying for. The AIPAC staff in Washington admitted they had been "outflanked" by others and would now begin pushing for the embassy bill.

The next week, Dole duly introduced the Jerusalem Embassy Act along with the esteemed senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii). But the Dole-Inouye bill was different from our original draft.

AIPAC had evidently provided Dole with a version setting forth a timetable for building a new embassy, to be completed by May 1999. The bill did contain "teeth" in that it withheld a certain percentage of State Department funding to operate their missions overseas if the timetable was not met. But it was now tied to the Oslo peace process in that it was timed to coincide with what many hoped would be a successful conclusion of the Oslo final-status talks scheduled for 1999.

In response, the Clinton administration threatened to veto the bill. So the strategy on the Hill focused on getting at least 67 co-sponsors in the Senate to demonstrate they could override a presidential veto. Over the summer, 60 senators signed on as co-sponsors but finding those last few endorsements proved elusive. Eventually, senator Dianne Feinstein (D-California) came forward with a package deal offering to bring on 10 Democratic senators to make the bill veto-proof, but she insisted on adding a waiver authority giving the president power to suspend the bill's provisions every six months if he certified to Congress that it was in America's "national security interests."

Feinstein's legislative assistant for foreign policy issues at that time was Dan Shapiro, later the US ambassador to Israel, and our sources in Congress claimed he played a central role in arranging this package deal. As the true originator of the bill, Kyl was asked to agree to the waiver provision and he reluctantly did so to ensure passage.

Yet we instantly understood the waiver provision was intended to essentially gut the bill, since it removed any means for congressional enforcement. That has proven to be the case, as every president since has exercised the waiver authority even though they each made campaign pledges to move the embassy.

In recent years, several bills have been introduced in Congress to remove that presidential waiver authority, but none has passed yet. Upon his retirement from a distinguished career in both the House and Senate spanning over 25 years, Kyl gave an interview to The Jerusalem Post in which he admitted that his biggest regret in office was agreeing to add the waiver provision to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995.

In late 1995, I left Washington for Jerusalem on a three-month assignment with the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. I returned two years later to take up a full-time position with the Christian Embassy and have been on staff ever since. The ICEJ was launched in 1980 when the last 13 national embassies left Jerusalem for Tel Aviv under threat of an Arab oil embargo. We were founded on the principle of Christian

recognition of the ancient Jewish claim and connection to Jerusalem, the eternal capital of Israel. I continue to advocate for all nations to move their embassies to Jerusalem, and am optimistic that President Trump will be the first US president to finally keep his campaign pledge and move the American embassy here.

The case for moving the Embassy could not be clearer. In 1950, Israel declared Jerusalem to be its capital and placed its primary government institutions in the city. This despite the fact that Jewish western Jerusalem was still precariously surrounded at the time by hostile Arab forces. Yet this courageous decision reflected the deep spiritual, historic and cultural significance which the Jewish people have attached to the city for over 3,000 years now.

In the ensuing seven decades, the international community has generally extended de facto recognition to Jerusalem as Israel's capital, in that nearly all visiting heads of state and other foreign officials come to Jerusalem to conduct business with their Israeli counterparts. This includes even Arab leaders, such as Anwar Sadat, who made his historic peace mission to Jerusalem, not Tel Aviv. Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas also have held numerous meetings with Israeli leaders in Jerusalem, and even attended the state funerals of Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres on Mount Herzl.

However, the US and other nations have refused to extend de jure recognition to Jerusalem. This is a gross anomaly in that Israel is the only country where the US embassy is not located in the capital city chosen by the host country. This diplomatic slight goes even deeper, as the US has never even recognized any part of west Jerusalem as belonging to Israel.

The origins of this unjust policy can be found in the United Nations Partition Plan of 1947, which called for dividing Mandatory Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state, but with Jerusalem set aside as a corpus separatum under international supervision. This UN decision to "internationalize" the city reflected a certain colonialist attitude toward the new Jewish state, as well as the religious bias of many Christian and Muslim leaders who were reluctant to see the holy sites of Jerusalem placed under Jewish control. Even so, it is often overlooked that the UN Partition Plan specifically provided for a city-wide referendum within 10 years allowing local residents to decide the fate of the city. So the internationalization of Jerusalem was never intended as a permanent measure. Nonetheless, president Harry Truman embraced the concept, setting a course for US policy on the city which has since drifted into folly.

After the city was reunited in June 1967, there has been a continuing effort to deny Israel and the Jewish people their rightful place in Jerusalem under other pretexts. In recent decades, the US has joined the international community in stressing the need to be neutral when it comes to Jerusalem, so as not to prejudice the outcome of negotiations over the city between Israel and the Palestinians.

But this is a disingenuous argument as many nations – including the US – have located their senior envoys to the Palestinians, some at the ambassadorial level, in Jerusalem, while their Israeli equivalents sit in Tel Aviv.

Further, the UN Security Council's recent Resolution 2334 thoroughly contradicts this even-handed approach by declaring east Jerusalem to be "occupied Palestinian territory."

Thus, the UN itself has deliberately prejudged the outcome of talks over the future status of Jerusalem, and there is an urgent need for the US and other nations to rectify this major diplomatic blunder.

This leaves only one remaining excuse for the nations to still refuse to move their embassies to Jerusalem, and that is fear of the potentially violent Arab and Islamic response. This attitude of weakness is reflected in the way every US president so far has exercised the waiver authority added at the last minute to the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, delaying the embassy move every six months on the grounds that it is in US "national security interests."

This is not a policy based on principle, fairness or historical right, but solely on timidity over the possible Arab/ Islamic reaction, and it has effectively granted the Palestinians a veto over US decision-making.

The time has come to finally right this wrong by the US recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving its embassy here. This show of resolve by the Trump administration would not only remove a regrettable diplomatic stain, but also signal the Palestinians that the time for compromise has come. It also would send a message to the entire world that America stands by its allies and that peace and progress for the region will no longer be a hostage of fear and intimidation.

Surely, there will be no harm to the outcome of peace talks if the US embassy is relocated to west Jerusalem. All parties know this sector of the city will remain part of Israel in any final-status agreement. Nor is anyone seriously looking for a return to that dismal era from 1948 to 1967 when the city was forcibly divided. And Israel can still work out a way to share an open and united Jerusalem with the Palestinians.

Certainly, Jerusalem must be kept open for all those with faith in God.

But the Jewish people are the proper custodians of the city. Christians and Muslims can trust the Jewish people in this regard, because their own Hebrew scriptures demand that they maintain the city as a "house of prayer for all peoples" (Isaiah 56:7). Israel has guaranteed religious freedom in its

Declaration of Independence, and is committed to maintaining the status quo with regards to the city's holy sites. In fact, of all the sovereign rulers over Jerusalem down through the centuries, Israel has compiled the best track record in ensuring religious access and freedom of worship in the city.

So while some Muslim extremists might vent their rage and threaten violence, we should not take all the recent warnings of chaos and destruction as a given. Jerusalem remains a sensitive issue, but the Trump administration has a unique opportunity this year to lead a group of freedom-loving, democratic nations back up to Jerusalem.

Such a collective return to the city would demonstrate the rightness of this move and thereby serve to defuse tensions in the region.

*The writer is the senior spokesman for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. (Jerusalem Post Feb 25)*

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## **Wars are Won on the Battlefield** By Zvika Fogel

A victory in war or a defeat of the enemy that will lead to peace or at least a few decades of routine normalcy -- this may be what we are missing more than anything else. We have not savored the sweet taste of success, we have not seen an enemy defeated since the Six-Day War. Since this product, victory, is unavailable, we are consumed by madness; we invest energy and resources toward the establishment of investigative committees and aggrandize the abilities of the state comptroller, so that they can serve our self-flagellation and our need to see heads roll. Only that, it seems, will allow us to overcome our frustration and disappointment.

We are so good at appointing investigative committees and relying on the state comptroller that barely any leaders remain who are willing to accept responsibility and realize our fantasies of victory. And pretty soon, there will be no new successful leaders willing to storm the battlefield for us. The battle cries heard in the city streets and penetrating from the television screens and the airwaves and the gloating that abounds just before the release of the investigators' conclusions deceive us. Unfortunately for us, we have yet to notice that never in Israel's history has a state comptroller or committee won the war or defeated the enemy. Together, all they did was breathe bad wind into the sails of those who built themselves on the failures of others, or worse, added fuel to the fire of our enemies, who so enjoy watching us as we strike one another.

Let there be no doubt, despite the difficult blow dealt to the Gaza Strip, Operation Protective Edge is not the only operation that should be taught in military schools around the world. Fifty-one days of fighting are nothing like the success of the operation to free the hostages at Entebbe or Operation Babylon that took out the nuclear plant somewhere in Iraq. That operation had nothing in the way of military principles that lead to the enemy's defeat, or at the very least, the understanding that we won. The subterfuge, surprise, simplicity and flexibility that defined us not so long ago were not part of the senior commanders' lexicon of war. It seems only the combat divisions and brigades have heard of initiative and offensive attacks; they are the ones who were active out in the field and displayed courage and fighting spirit in battle. The senior commanders may have updated the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet, but they did not prepare the Israel Defense Forces for the right operation.

In order to correct this, one doesn't need to use the stick of an investigative committee or the state comptroller's report. What this requires is a new General Staff that understands we will not get a second chance, because next time we must win. We need a General Staff that does not conduct itself according to protocols set by investigative committees and does not look for ways to simply get through their shift. We should have a General Staff that commands a military willing to storm an open area and chase through the tunnels and that does not make do with technological advantages and the abilities of the air force and the Iron Dome defense system. The authority and the responsibility will not change. The investigative committee and the state comptroller will not write the operational commands for the next war. Those will be written and adapted to the relevant enemy by a General Staff that knows how to accept responsibility, how to console and how to lead and command.

In order to make sure it is our enemies that fear the release of the state comptroller's report, our elected officials, and especially those involved in security matters, must put their knives back in the drawer and instead pull out more effective procedures and battle plans that will lead to better results for us, the citizens of Israel, the kind that will allow us not just to defend ourselves and react, but to initiate and defeat. We are tired of the military embarking on new operations every two to three years. We elected you to make difficult decisions, to go to war and to sign peace deals from a position of victory, on the condition that you would know how to lead us toward a better future.

Do what is necessary to defeat Hamas and Hezbollah, spend some time thinking about how to prepare for the threat from the Islamic State and Iran. Don't busy yourselves with tomorrow's elections and your internal ego wars, because that no longer fools us. (Israel Hayom Feb 28)  
*The writer, a brigadier general in the reserves, is a former chief of staff of the IDF Southern Command.*

## **Toward a True US-Israel Partnership** By Caroline B. Glick

In his speech before the members of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American Organizations in Jerusalem this week, President Reuven Rivlin said that Israel has three overriding foreign policy concerns: "Number 1: Relations with America. Number 2: Relations with America. Number 3: Relations with America."

There is a lot of truth in Rivlin's hyperbolic statement.

Israel's security depends on its relationship with the US. After all, the Russians and the Chinese won't sell Israel fighter planes. Russia couldn't develop strategic ties with Israel even if it wanted to. Its Iranian ally wouldn't let it.

As for China, its mercantilist view of the Middle East makes it indifferent to the power balances in the region. Beijing may not harbor hostile intentions toward Israel, but it will act in a hostile fashion if it views China's interests as advanced by such hostility.

While Israel rightly is working to diversify its foreign ties to move beyond the narrow scope of its alliance with the US, the fact is that with or without Australia and sub-Saharan Africa, the US remains Israel's irreplaceable ally. Unfortunately, today even the friendliest US administration cannot be relied on to secure Israel's long-term capacity to defend itself. Israel faces enemy forces equipped with Russian and Chinese technologies – including Russian forces in Syria – that are rapidly challenging American systems in key areas. So long as the US remains behind the technological eight ball, Israel's long-term reliance on its military ties to the US is a dangerous proposition.

Things didn't use to be this way. At the start of the 21st century, America's military power was unrivaled. From the end of the Cold War until the turn of the century, neither Russia nor China could challenge the US and its status as the sole global superpower. That is no longer the case.

In a distressing article published this week in the *American Affairs Journal*, David Goldman details the technological crisis the US is steeped in today. Goldman notes that the US is lagging behind the Russians and the Chinese in air defense systems and technologies, missile technology, particularly hypersonic missile technologies, submarine warfare, cyber warfare technologies and satellite interdiction capabilities.

To bridge the gap and outpace the Chinese and the Russians, Goldman argues that the US needs to initiate massive government-funded research and development programs. In the post-Cold War era, Goldman notes ruefully, Americans have forgotten that they were ever vulnerable, that their victory against the USSR was anything but preordained.

The actual history, Goldman reminds us, was quite different. The US victory in the Cold War was the result of conscious decisions by US leaders to outstrip Soviet technology after American technology was shown to be lagging behind. In 1957, the Americans reacted to the Soviet Union's launch of Sputnik with a crash program in space exploration. That program, which benefited from lavish federal funding, ended the Soviets' advantage in aerospace technology inside of a decade.

During the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Americans realized that the Egyptian success in downing Israeli jets over Sinai in the early days of the war meant that the Soviet surface-to-air missiles Egypt fielded had neutralized US air superiority. The Americans realized that the Soviets' technological advantage meant that they would win a land war in Europe.

Consequently, Goldman explains, the US initiated détente to avert a war in Europe. At the same time, the Americans began to develop the technologies to defeat the Soviets. Massive public investments in defense R&D followed. A decade later, Ronald Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative; the Soviets realized they couldn't compete, and eight years later, the USSR collapsed.

The Americans weren't the only ones to respond to Israel's air losses in 1973 with a massive investment in defense R&D aimed at destroying Russia's technological advantage with its surface-to-air missiles.

Israel responded to its exposed vulnerabilities by developing the electronic warfare capabilities to neutralize Soviet SAM batteries. As Goldman recalls, in 1982, Israel matched US air platforms – the F-16 and F-15 – used in combat for the first time in the Lebanon War – with its own homegrown computer-based electronic warfare systems. So equipped, Israel eliminated Syria's Soviet-built surface-to-air batteries and its Soviet-supplied air force, in a stunning air victory. Whereas in the 1950s and the 1970s, the US had the domestic scientific capacity to quickly regroup in the face of Soviet technological advances, today the US's path to rebuilding its technological advantage is less clear. Since the Cold War, the US government slashed its investment in military R&D.

According to Goldman, as a percentage of GDP, today US government investment in R&D is barely half of what it was in 1978.

Goldman bemoans the self-imposed evisceration of America's capacity to develop the knowledge it requires to regain the technological advantage over the Chinese and the Russians. In his words, "The national laboratories are hollowed out, and the major corporate laboratories (at IBM, the Bell System, General Electric, and RCA among others) that contributed significantly to defense R&D during the Cold War no longer exist. Within the shrinking defense R&D budget, a disproportionate share has been squandered on the F-35, a poorly conceived and executed weapons system with the highest price tag in defense history."

And it won't be easy to rebuild them. For 25 years, the US has not only shut down its own laboratories, it has done little to encourage its citizens to acquire the knowledge they need to rebuild that capacity.

Goldman notes for instance that currently, China graduates twice the number of STEM PhDs from its universities as the US.

This brings us back to Israel. In the 1980s, the US regarded the stunning technological advances Israel had made with suspicion. America feared that Israel's growing technological capabilities would diminish its dependence on the US, at a time when the US was most concerned with keeping the Arab states inside the anti-Soviet bloc and keeping the Soviets out of the Middle East. Last year, then-president Barack Obama forced Israel to agree to a multi-year military assistance package that if implemented will diminish Israel's independent technological capabilities while expanding Israel's technological dependence on the US.

While the aid package increases the amount of US funds Israel is permitted to spend on US systems from \$3.1 billion to \$3.3b. per year, the deal phases out Israel's right to use a quarter of the funds on its domestically built systems.

Obama's aid package also denies Israel and Congress the ability to initiate joint projects to meet new challenges as they arise.

In short, Obama's deal ensures Israel will be incapable of acting on its own and will remain dependent on US goodwill and technologies for the foreseeable future.

This then brings us back to the US's swiftly vanishing technology advantage. Unlike the US, Israel has used the past generation to develop cutting edge technological capabilities in almost all of the areas where the Americans are lagging behind their competitors. Under these circumstances, Obama's military assistance is exposed not merely as bad for Israel. It is bad for the US as well.

Israel can help the US compensate for its current scientific disadvantages. Israeli technological innovations can help the US to rebuild its independent capabilities and leapfrog its competitors far more rapidly than it can do on its own today.

An R&D partnership with Israel is also aligned with Trump's vision for a renewed role for the US in global affairs. As Defense Secretary James Mattis told the US's NATO allies this week, the US will not continue carrying the load of protecting the West on its own. It wants its allies to be its partners, not its dependents. In Mattis's words, "America will meet its responsibilities, but if your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to the alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defense."

Earlier this month, Prof. Hillel Frisch published a short paper for Bar-Ilan University's BESA Center showing the utter dishonesty of the claim that Israel is the largest recipient of US military aid. Frisch noted that US military assistance to Japan, Germany, Italy and South Korea far outstrips its assistance to Israel. All of those states receive US military assistance in the form of US forces permanently deployed to their territory to protect them. Israel, on the other hand, receives aid in military equipment only. No US assets are endangered, no US forces are required to defend Israel. And the financial burden of the former is far greater than that of the latter.

Trump is interested in states like Japan and Germany transforming their strategic relations with the US from relationships based on dependency to partnerships by increasing their military spending.

What Israel's technological and innovation prowess shows is that as far as Israeli defense assistance is concerned, the US should base its relations with Jerusalem on each sides' complementary capabilities.

America and Israel should abrogate Obama's military assistance package and replace it with a partnership based on US finance of Israeli R&D projects geared toward developing weapons systems and technologies that both the US and Israel require.

The deal should stipulate the modalities for both sides sharing the technologies with third parties, and their rights to use the technologies developed by Israel with US capital for civilian commercial purposes. Israel should be permitted to purchase US platforms based on Israeli-developed technologies. Such a partnership would enable Israel to ensure that its continued dependence on the US won't place it at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its enemies such as Iran, which are able to purchase advanced weapons systems from Russia and China. Such a partnership would ensure that both the US and Israel have the systems they need to outpace Chinese and Russian technological advances and develop the weapons systems they need to win tomorrow's wars.

In his remarks before the Conference of Presidents, Rivlin voiced concern at the fact that Israel has become a partisan football in US politics. His concern is well placed. Assuming that Israel's dependence on the US will be a fixed variable for the foreseeable future, Israel needs to consider the best way of ensuring that the alliance will persevere regardless of the partisan attachments of future presidents.

The best way to ensure the resilience of the US-Israel alliance over time is for Israel to transform its military dependence into a mutually beneficial alliance with the US. A new military relationship based on joint technology development rather than Israeli purchase of US platforms is the best way to accomplish that goal, for the benefit of both countries. (Jerusalem Post Feb 23)