

Israel's stance on Donald Trump's second term

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The change in the White House and the policies of the US administration have been met with considerable satisfaction in Israel – among the government, the broader political class, and society as a whole. This is influenced by the memory of Trump's actions during his first term (including the legitimisation of Israeli territorial annexations and the withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran), but, above all, by the fact that since returning to power, he has thus far provided stronger support for Israel than any of his predecessors.

The scale of US aid, particularly its seemingly unconditional nature, along with the strong alignment between Washington's policies and those of the government in Jerusalem, makes US-Israel relations an exception against the backdrop of the United States' otherwise chaotic relationships with its other allies. This creates unprecedented opportunities for Israel and is seen by its leadership as a chance to consolidate the Jewish state's position as a regional hegemon – effectively without rivals – freely shaping the political and security landscape in its surroundings. The drive to seize this 'window of opportunity' has been evident in Israel's actions since Trump's re-election, including in its approach to Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.

US decisions regarding Israel

Since taking office, the new US president has undertaken a series of actions favourable to Israel. He has resumed deliveries of heavy bombs (MK-84), which were halted by the previous administration in May 2024 due to developments in Israel's military operation in Gaza. He has lifted sanctions imposed by his predecessor on certain groups of Israeli settlers in the West Bank and has introduced restrictions on the International Criminal Court in retaliation for issuing international arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant; he has hosted the Israeli prime minister as the first official guest at the White House and unveiled his plan for Gaza, which envisions the displacement of the Palestinian population and the transformation of the Gaza Strip into a resort under US control. He has also rejected an alternative plan proposed in early March by Arab states, led by Egypt; he has approved arms exports to Israel worth a total of \$12 billion, including bombs, missiles, precision-guided munitions, and armoured bulldozers. His administration has intensified sanctions on Iran (as part of a 'maximum pressure' policy towards the country) and has incorporated the Iranian nuclear programme into negotiations with Russia over Ukraine. He has also threatened to withhold federal funding from schools and universities that allow "illegal protests", effectively targeting pro-Palestinian demonstrations, and has announced the deportation of foreign students who participate in them. Finally, he has effectively given the green light for Israeli operations in Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank,

and Gaza (see below).

Sources of Trump's policy towards Israel

Regardless of political shifts in Washington, a pro-Israel stance remains a permanent feature of US policy, and every successive occupant of the White House must be regarded as distinctly pro-Israel, regardless of how they may be perceived within Israel itself. Even during the presidency of Barack Obama – who was criticised in Israel, particularly for his approval of the nuclear deal with Iran in 2015 – the United States approved the largest military aid package for Israel in history, amounting to \$38 billion. However, the degree of 'pro-Israel' sentiment within US administrations can vary, and in the case of the current administration, it appears – at least for now – even more pronounced than in previous ones. Among the numerous factors contributing to this, several are particularly noteworthy.

Firstly, evangelical Protestants, for whom unconditional support for Israel is rooted in religious beliefs, represent one of Trump's most important voter bases (in the 2016, 2020, and 2024 elections alike).

Secondly, among the top donors to the new president – and to the Republican Party in general – is Miriam Adelson, a businesswoman and widow of multibillionaire Sheldon Adelson, who contributed over \$100 million to the campaign, making it the third-largest donation. She is known not only for her unwavering support for Israel, where she was born, but also for her close ties to the Israeli right. Among her other assets, Adelson owns *Israel Hayom*, the country's largest newspaper, which is aligned with the right-wing political camp.

Thirdly, strong and often unconditional support for Israel's most expansionist policies, alongside anti-Iranian views, are widespread attitudes within the MAGA movement.

Fourthly, although the majority of American Jews vote for the Democratic Party, a fact that has been a source of open frustration for Trump, and tend to hold a more nuanced view of Israel, the new president's inner circle includes prominent figures of Jewish origin whose views align closely with the Israeli far right. During his previous term, such figures included David M. Friedman, the US ambassador to Israel, and Jason Greenblatt, the US President's Special Envoy for the Middle East.

Israel's relationship with the new US administration is further facilitated by personal connections, as the officials responsible for managing ties with Washington were not only born and/or raised in the United States but are also ideologically aligned with the American right. This applies primarily to Netanyahu himself, but also to his close aide, Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer - whose father and later elder brother served as mayors of Miami Beach, Florida - as well as the current ambassador, Yechiel Leiter.

Israel's course since Trump's re-election

In the four months since Trump's victory, Israel has launched an armed incursion into Syria, declared the permanent occupation of additional territory beyond the Golan Heights (which have been under Israeli control since 1967), and conducted airstrikes on Syrian military infrastructure. Additionally, it has declared a quasi-protectorate over the Druze population and threatened military intervention if the alleged persecution of this group continues. Furthermore, Israel has demanded the removal of all Syrian armed groups from areas south of Damascus. At the same time, it has been lobbying Washington for approval to allow

Russian military bases to remain on Syrian territory, ostensibly to counterbalance Turkey's influence. Israel has retained some of its troops in Lebanon despite the ceasefire agreement reached with Hezbollah in November 2024, and its air force conducted a demonstrative flyover of Beirut. Meanwhile, in the West Bank, Israeli armed forces launched a large-scale operation employing heavy military equipment and airpower the day after Trump's inauguration. The offensive has so far displaced over 40,000 people internally.

Regarding Gaza, Israel initially agreed – most likely under pressure from the new US president – to a ceasefire on the eve of the transition of power in Washington. However, the structure of the agreement, particularly its division into multiple phases requiring a gradual withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, carried a significant risk from the outset that it would not be fully implemented. Now, following the completion of the first phase, which involved the exchange of some Israeli hostages for Palestinian prisoners, Israel is refusing to proceed to the second phase, which would necessitate a full military withdrawal. Instead, it is demanding an extension of the first phase, allowing it to secure the release of additional hostages at minimal political cost while retaining the option to resume military operations at an opportune moment. In response to Hamas's refusal, Israel has again halted all aid deliveries to Gaza, including food and medicine, and has threatened to reignite the conflict.

Considering the statements made by Israeli authorities regarding Gaza, the large-scale arms shipments from the United States, and Israel's continued refusal to engage in talks on any resolution outside the framework of the 'Trump Plan' (as evidenced by its immediate rejection of the alternative proposal for Gaza adopted at the Arab League summit in Cairo on 4 March), a renewed large-scale war appears increasingly likely. This could include attempts to force at least a partial displacement of the Palestinian population.

In response to Egypt's firm resistance, Israel has begun, through its official representatives (including the outgoing Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi), to advance a narrative of an alleged military threat from Cairo. This may be interpreted as an attempt to discredit Egypt in the eyes of US leadership and pressure it into making concessions regarding Gaza.

All the actions outlined above have been met with either public endorsement or tacit approval from the new US administration.

Regarding Iran, Israel does not dispute Trump's position when he declares that he is willing to attempt diplomacy before resorting to other means to thwart Tehran's nuclear ambitions. However, lobbying organisations in the United States which support the Israeli government are urging the new administration to endorse potentially 'any Israeli action' against Iran's nuclear programme. Such initiatives include a [letter from 77 retired US generals](#), initiated by one of these groups

Beyond regional policy, Israel has also aligned itself with the US administration's stance on the war in Ukraine. In a vote at the UN General Assembly, it was one of just 18 countries – alongside Russia and the United States – that opposed a resolution condemning Russian aggression.

In summary, compared with the United States' relations with other partners and allies, the privileged nature of US-Israel ties is undeniable. At the same time, the unpredictability of US policy under its new leadership remains a concern, and Israel is not immune to potential shifts. This explains the intensified lobbying efforts and the urgency to take advantage of the current 'window of opportunity'. With Washington's support and approval, Netanyahu

sees an opportunity to move closer to achieving the status of 'the strongest power between Bangladesh and Marrakesh', as former Prime Minister Ehud Barak once described it.