

# MEMMO

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## Close U.S.-Israel Ties Key to Forging Middle East Peace

**The United States and Israel have built a deep, sturdy alliance based on common values and shared interests. American leaders have long recognized that deterring war, promoting stability and achieving peace can best be realized when the United States stands strongly with Israel. As Vice President Joseph Biden said during his recent visit to Israel, “Progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there is simply no space between the United States and Israel.” Leaders of both countries must do their utmost to strengthen the special U.S.-Israel relationship despite the frequent ups and downs of peace negotiations.**

The United States and Israel need to work closely together to achieve peace in the Middle East.

- The government of Israel shares the U.S. goal of achieving Middle East peace and has taken significant steps during the past year toward this end.
- While U.S. leaders have used various approaches during the past six decades to achieve this shared goal, experience has shown that successful peacemaking requires close U.S.-Israel coordination, direct Arab-Israeli negotiations and the avoidance of efforts by outside parties to impose solutions.
- Since the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, American leaders have understood that negotiations can only be successful when Israel feels secure that it has strong backing from America if it takes risks for peace.
- American support also paved the way for Israel’s peace treaty with Jordan and enabled Israel to make far-reaching offers to the Palestinians and Syria.
- U.S. support for Israel tells the Palestinians and Arab states that they cannot reach their objectives through war or terror. The only way to achieve Arab-Israeli peace and a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is by negotiating directly with Israel and making the necessary compromises.



**Prime Minister Netanyahu has taken concrete steps demonstrating Israel’s commitment to peace.**

The United States and Israel should work out any differences privately.

- As in any relationship, there will be times of tension and disagreements. The best way for the United States and Israel to work through their differences is to communicate directly, privately and with an eye to the overall value of the relationship that they share.

- As three-quarters of the members of the House recently wrote to President Obama, “Our view is that such differences are best resolved quietly, in trust and confidence, as befits longstanding strategic allies.”
- While the announcement regarding housing construction in Jerusalem made during Biden’s recent trip to Israel was a deeply regrettable incident for which Israel quickly apologized, the public nature and harsh wording of the criticism and demands placed on Israel by the administration are unlikely to serve to advance the peace process or efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- In fact, such public pressure could have the opposite effect. It further solidifies the Palestinian and Arab refusal to enter into direct talks with Israel, while they wait instead for the United States to press Israel to make concessions.

The U.S.-Israel relationship transcends the daily ups and downs of the peace negotiations.

- Beyond the peace process, the United States and Israel have a deep alliance based on common values and mutually reinforcing cooperation. It is critical that vital strategic cooperation is maintained regardless of the daily ups and downs of the peace process negotiations.
- The U.S. and Israel face many of the same threats, including unconventional weapons proliferation and state-sponsored terrorism. The two allies have set up a complex and effective network of strategic cooperation programs, including intelligence sharing, joint-military exercises and cutting-edge technology research.
- Israel has served as an anchor of stability in the region, helping thwart aggressors and preserve moderate regimes without the type of deployment of U.S. forces required in Europe, East Asia, Iraq or Afghanistan.

While Israel is committed to serious peace talks and has taken bold steps to demonstrate that commitment, the Arabs have yet to act.

- During the past year, Israel continued to demonstrate its commitment to peace by taking tough decisions aimed at paving the way for negotiations with the Palestinians.
- For the first time in his career, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he endorses, and is prepared to negotiate, a two-state solution to the conflict.
- Netanyahu also implemented an unprecedented 10-month moratorium on the construction of new homes in the West Bank, a step Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described as “unprecedented.”
- Israel has removed more than 350 West Bank checkpoints and roadblocks since April 2008, improving freedom of movement for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Israel has dismantled 210 of those barriers in the past several months alone.
- These measures, along with improved security cooperation, have significantly boosted the West Bank economy, contributing to a double-digit growth rate in the West Bank in 2009.
- The failure to restart direct peace talks during the past year is due to the unwillingness of Palestinian leaders to meet their Israeli counterparts and the lack of support of moderate Arab states, which have refused to take even the most basic steps towards acceptance of Israel.
- In addition to refusing to meet with Netanyahu, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has insisted on a series of unrealistic preconditions, including a total settlement freeze, a construction ban in East Jerusalem and an explicit Israeli commitment to withdraw to the pre-June 1967 lines before talks begin.