



Middle East Spotlight

The First 60 Years of Friendship

Recent joyous celebrations around the world have marked Israel's 60th anniversary and its astounding achievements in all spheres of life. The close U.S.-Israel ties during this period have played a key role in ensuring Israel's security. The president's Knesset speech highlighted the depth of this historic alliance. The concurrent visit to Israel by Democratic House leaders underlined the alliance's bipartisan nature.

The U.S.-Israel alliance, President Bush said, "is unbreakable, yet the source of our friendship runs deeper than any treaty. It is grounded in the shared spirit of our people, the bonds of the Book, the ties of the soul." The president expressed deep admiration for Israel's success in forging "a free and modern society based on a love of liberty, a passion for justice, a respect for human dignity."

Bush's speech could not have come at a more critical time. It constituted not only an affirmation of the two allies' common values, but also an assertion of their future application to U.S.-Israel relations as they work together to confront Islamist extremism.

The overarching threat of radical Islamism—incarnated by a belligerent Iran seeking nuclear weapons, a brutal Hamas targeting Israeli civilians and a resurgent Hizballah preparing for renewed war with Israel—promises to challenge both countries with growing intensity. Yet the president emphasized that confronting them requires promoting the very values of human dignity embodied by Israel and America, which emerged in the face of stupefying odds and defeated numerically superior foes.

"Shared convictions rooted in moral clarity"—so said the president to describe the principles underlying the U.S.-Israel alliance. His words reflected the bipartisan consensus shared by the vast majority of Americans concerning this relationship, which spans party lines and political ideologies. It is a permanent alliance, one that finds expression not in individual leaders, or in partisan tendentiousness, or in the fleeting expediencies of diplomacy.

Leading a bipartisan congressional delegation to Israel, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) expressed similar sentiments. "We are countries that were created by pioneers, grown by immigrants, and committed to democracy," she said, and called Israel "a beacon of hope to the world."

As we celebrate 60 years of the U.S.-Israel alliance, it remains incumbent upon the pro-Israel community to nurture it for another 60 years to come, and beyond.