The Gaza Crisis and the Future of US-Israel Relations

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Abstract

Following the end of World War II and the onset of the Cold War between East and West in the Middle East, the United States moved toward supporting Israel as a means of realizing its vision of global hegemony, ultimately establishing Israel as a strategic ally in the region. Washington's support for Tel Aviv is rooted in shared values, beliefs, and the protection of mutual interests. This article aims to provide an insightful and accurate understanding of the United States' strategic shift in response to the Gaza crisis. Accordingly, the research seeks to address the question: What direction will U.S.-Israel relations take in light of the Gaza crisis? The study examines the hypothesis that the future of U.S.-Israel relations may evolve into a form of limited cooperation, characterized by a reduction in Israel's economic, political, and military dependency on the United States and a shift toward Tel Aviv's self-reliance.

This research is grounded in constructivist theory. Using a futures studies methodology, it explores U.S.-Israel relations in connection with developments in Gaza. The findings suggest that the Gaza crisis and the security threats faced by Israel have introduced a new phase of convergence between the two nations. However, this convergence may take the form of limited cooperation due to fundamental challenges, including the decline of the U.S.'s global position, the rise of new powers, and regional uncertainties

Introduction

The significance of U.S.-Israel relations cannot be overstated. Readers may find it surprising to learn that Washington–Tel Aviv relations were fairly limited, and even cold and tense, until the late 1960s. During the Eisenhower administration, the U.S. supported Arab positions, maintained an arms embargo on Israel, and even pressured Israel to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula after the 1956 war. The thaw in relations began under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and further expanded following the Yom Kippur War. During this period, the United States came to view Israel as a strategic partner and key asset, laying the foundation for a relationship that eventually evolved into an almost comprehensive strategic alliance.

However, in recent decades, contentious issues such as the expansion of Israeli settlements, the initiation of the Oslo Peace Process in 1991, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as human rights violations and apartheid-like policies, have damaged Israel's image among the American public, especially among American Jews. The creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 and its subsequent control over Gaza and parts of the West Bank, followed by Hamas' victory in the 2006 elections, deepened divisions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority regarding opposition strategies toward Israel. Since Hamas assumed control over Gaza, this Islamist group and Israel have failed to reach a broad ceasefire agreement, despite intermittent clashes between 2007 and 2023.

On October 7, 2023, intense clashes broke out, triggered by Hamas in response to ongoing pressures, including the blockade of Gaza, the prolonged closure of the Rafah crossing, the denial of essential supplies such as food, medicine, and fuel, systemic humiliation of Palestinians, and racial discrimination. Given Tel Aviv's increasingly discriminatory policies against the residents of Gaza and growing domestic and international public opposition to the U.S. administration's support of Israel, this study focuses on the future trajectory of U.S.-Israel relations. The main question posed by this research is: How will the Gaza crisis shape the future of U.S.-Israel relations?

This paper examines the hypothesis that the Gaza crisis could lead to limited cooperation in U.S.-Israel relations, resulting in a reduction in Israel's economic, political, and military dependency on the United States and a move toward Tel Aviv's self-sufficiency. The research adopts a futures studies approach, using an analysis of

resources, patterns, and factors of change or continuity to outline conceivable scenarios for the future of U.S.-Israel relations.

1- Theoretical Framework: Constructivism and the Formation of a Shared Identity

Alexander Wendt, in his book Social Theory of International Politics, addresses the concept of identity by stating: "Identity is what makes something what it is." Wendt views identity as a characteristic of purposeful actors who possess motivational and behavioral tendencies. This implies that identity is a subjective feature at the unit level, rooted in the actors' self-understanding (Wendt, 2005, p. 326), and it acquires meaning within a socially constructed global framework. The significance of this understanding depends on whether other actors represent the actor in the same way. In this sense, identity possesses intersubjective and system-centered characteristics, and two types of representations are involved in the identity-formation process: self-representations and other-representations. Thus, both internal and external structures contribute to the stabilization of identities (Wendt, 2005, pp. 329–330).

Wendt begins with the assumption that two actors, "self" and "other," encounter each other in a natural state during a "first encounter." Each seeks only survival and possesses a certain material capability. However, neither has an inherent motivation for power or domination over the other, and no historical security or insecurity exists between them. Therefore, neither assumes the other to be a friend or an enemy (Mercer, 1995, p. 325). In critique of neorealists, who attribute qualities to states prior to interaction, Wendt argues that in the natural state, before interaction, no self-interested identity is possible. Identity is the result of interaction, and if states find themselves in a self-help system, it is because of their practices, which have shaped this reality. Changes in these practices lead to shifts in intersubjective understanding, thus shaping whether the system is self-help or other-help (ibid., 1995, p. 324).

Wendt approaches the construction of identities from the perspective of symbolic interactionism, wherein the identities of actors are formed through processes of signaling, change, and response. From Wendt's viewpoint, the "self" assumes a specific identity based on its role, while simultaneously shaping the "other" in a corresponding role, which makes the self-identity meaningful. However, he also points to shared understandings that predefine the roles and limit this process. In this way, a social action is created that has four stages:

1- The self enters the action based on the definition it has of its situation.

2- The other assesses the meaning of the self's action based on its interpretation.

3- The other acts based on its new definition of the situation.

4- The self reinterprets and responds to the other in the newly created context

Social identities convey specific self-perceptions in relation to other actors, producing particular interests and influencing policymaking decisions. Whether the "self" regards the "other" as a friend, rival, or enemy profoundly affects the interaction between them (Wendt, 2007, pp. 374–394).

According to Wendt, before interaction, actors possess abilities and are inclined to preserve their survival. However, this does not mean they seek self-help or perceive the other as an enemy. In other words, anarchic conditions do not determine the identity of actors. Rather, it is the interactions between them that define their identity, and it is through the identity of the self and the other that the meaning of anarchy is derived. In these interactions, behaviors may emerge that lead to hostility, threats, and insecurity. Alternatively, other signs, practices, and actions may foster friendship, cooperation, and mutual interests. As a result, the structure of identities and interests does not logically arise from anarchy itself.

In such conditions, the impact of power distribution on state calculations also depends on the intersubjective understanding of self and other. Any increase in power does not necessarily pose a threat if the other is not considered an enemy. Conversely, if the other is perceived as an enemy, even the smallest increase in its power will be regarded as a threat. Therefore, these collective meanings shape the organizing structures of action, and in every specific context and social setting, anarchy acquires a particular meaning (Moshirzadeh, 2013, p. 346).

Depending on the degree of unity between the self and the other, security perceptions can be based on hostility and enmity (Hobbesian model), competition (Lockean model), or friendship and cooperation (Kantian model). In the Hobbesian model, the dominant role is enmity. The goal of the "self" is to guarantee its security and existence by eliminating or dominating the "other." In the Lockean model, competition is the dominant role. Competitors, like enemies, are formed through representations of "self" and the other in relation to violence, but these representations are less threatening. Unlike enemies, rivals expect each other to act in a way that recognizes

their sovereignty. This results in states forming reliable inferences about each other's intentions (Wendt, 2005, pp. 408–411).

In the Kantian model, the dominant role is friendship, and the intentions and behaviors of the "self" toward the other are peaceful (ibid., 2005, p. 434). This view is expressed through terms like similarity, cohesion, and union, all of which refer to a shared identity.

Thus, based on the perspectives of American and Israeli policymakers, both countries claim to be strong democracies with political and legal systems rooted in liberal traditions. Their societies continue to absorb immigrants, and over the decades, Tel Aviv and Washington have understood the reality that the United States, as a global power, has its own complex international interests, while Israel, as a small country in a turbulent region, must strive to maintain national sovereignty and security. Consequently, their relationship, based on shared beliefs, values, security, and mutual interests, has evolved into a unique partnership. With the onset of the Gaza crisis, this relationship is entering a new phase of cooperation.

2. The Evolution and Outlook of U.S.-Israel Bilateral Strategic Relations

2-1. U.S.-Israel Political and Diplomatic Relations

On September 21, 1922, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution declaring its support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (Ronenberg, 1996, p. 21). In 1948, following the declaration of the establishment of Israel, the United States, under President Truman, recognized the State of Israel de facto. Throughout this period, the definition of Israel's new role in U.S. Middle East policy remained of critical importance.

During successive U.S. presidencies, Washington's stance in support of Tel Aviv remained consistent, while issues related to Palestine largely remained unresolved.

2-2. U.S.-Israel Economic Relations

Both the United States and Israel have their own economic needs, which have led to strong bilateral economic ties. Tel Aviv, in its foreign policy, has aimed to be a significant regional player, looking toward Washington for economic exchanges. Israel is currently the United States' largest trading partner in the Middle East, and the U.S. is the most important export market for Israel. The economies of both countries are based on free-market principles and adherence to international trade liberalization With the signing of the Free

Trade Agreement between the United States and Israel in 1985, trade exchanges have increased approximately sevenfold. Ongoing discussions between officials from both countries continue to focus on enhancing economic relations. In this context, a growing number of joint economic projects, initiated by American and Israeli companies and institutions, have been implemented, and several U.S. states have entered into individual agreements with Israel across various economic sectors.

2-3. U.S.-Israel Military and Strategic Relations
The United States and Israel have extensive military and strategic cooperation, including military technology development, intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and counter-terrorism efforts. Although the United States, starting in 1947, imposed an arms embargo on Palestine and its neighboring countries due to concerns over upsetting the balance of power in favor of the Arabs in the event of a war with Israel, and to avoid potential conflicts among them (Gliboa, 1987, pp. 22–24), from 1962 onwards, the United States became the largest supplier of weapons and military equipment to Israel, in response to the Soviet Union's sale of advanced weapons to Arab countries.

2-4. U.S. Special Support for Israel
The most prominent manifestation of U.S. support for Israel can be evaluated through the extent and type of aid provided to the country. Since 1948, this assistance has gradually increased, taken on new forms, and evolved into a unique situation. The United States has also granted Israel special privileges in this regard. For example, in allocating military and economic aid to other countries, Israel has always been treated as a special case (Alkhawas, 1984, p. 27).

Since the establishment of Israel, the United States has continued its unconditional political and diplomatic support, preventing the passage of multiple resolutions condemning Israel's aggression against Palestinians and Arab states.

From 1976 onwards, Israel has been the largest recipient of U.S. annual financial aid, and the U.S. has been the primary donor of foreign aid to Israel (Reich, 1995, pp. 99–100). Although the majority of this aid is military, some portions consist of economic assistance. A significant portion of this financial aid has been provided in the form of grants, which Israel is not required to repay. In total, from 1945 to 2024, U.S. economic and military assistance to Israel has exceeded $146.2 billion.

3. Major Influential Trends in U.S.-Israel Relation
3-1. Israel's Position in the Ideological Framework of the Christian Right

At the 2002 National Christian Coalition conference—arguably the most powerful and influential Christian organization—the focus shifted from previous conventions, where support for Israel was briefly addressed, and the main discussion revolved around domestic issues such as abortion, prayer in schools, and other social matters. For the first time, foreign policy - particularly support for the far-right positions of Israel - became the central theme of the conference. Speakers, one after another, explicitly voiced their opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian state and urged Israeli leaders to expel all Palestinians from the occupied territories. Pat Robertson, the founder of the Christian Coalition, linked his stance on the Middle East to his biblically based beliefs. Senator Lindsey Graham also warned that if the United States did not stand by Israel, God would punish America (Mayer, 2004, pp. 679–698).

The term Zionism itself refers to a political movement by Jews aiming to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine, a land from which they had been displaced for centuries. However, a Christian Zionist is someone who, rather than merely desiring God to fulfill His prophetic plan through the body of Christ, is more focused on aiding the fulfillment of God's prophesied plan through Israel - the earthly, political state of Israel (Sizer, 1998, p. 1).

In fact, Christian Zionism is a phenomenon that originated in England and has since been widely adopted and expanded to other parts of the world. The premillennial dispensationalism that underpins this ideology emerged in early 19th-century England.

Christian Zionists emphasize that ancient Palestine—including the West Bank, which was occupied by Israel in 1967—must remain under the exclusive control of Jews, as this is a necessary step in the events leading up to the return of Jesus Christ.

In general, American support for Israel can be divided into religious and non-religious motivations. Non-religious factors include social, historical, and political considerations. Some argue that the U.S. and Israel share similar economic, political, and cultural systems, while others point to the Holocaust as a source of moral responsibility to make up for past neglect and persecution of Jews. This sense of responsibility manifests in broad support for Israel as a representative of the Jewish people. This perspective is non-religious and more humanitarian in nature (Jamshidi, 2015, pp.

178–179).

However, not all Americans support Israel in the same way or to the same extent. Jewish Americans are the strongest supporters of Israel, while African Americans show the lowest levels of support. This lack of support may be linked to Israel's historically close relations with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Nonetheless, overall support for Israel is high among Christians, particularly Christian fundamentalists, who are the most prominent Christian supporters of Israel in the U.S. Their leaders are at the forefront of pro-Israel advocacy, justifying their support based on religious arguments that closely align with the positions of the Christian Right (Mayer, 2004, p. 679).

3-2. Position and Influence of Jews in American Society

Before delving into the early lobbying activities of Jews in America, it is worth noting their social and economic position in the United States. Their economic standing, ability to seize opportunities, and alignment of their interests with American values are among the key factors contributing to their elevated position in the country. The vast majority of American Jews are Ashkenazi Jews, a group known for its intellectual aptitude. The average IQ of this group is 115. Hence, it is unsurprising that Jews constitute an elite group in the U.S., influencing issues of interest—including immigration and racial politics—more than others. The per capita income of Jews in America is approximately double that of non-Jews, a stark contrast compared to the income levels of African Americans and white Americans (Thernstrom, 1997, p. 39).

Jewish acumen has played a crucial role in their access to key and influential professions and positions, ranging from academia to media, and from business to politics. As Jews gained power, influential intellectual movements associated with Jewish networks emerged to pursue Jewish-related goals and interests. Some of these movements formed the backbone of leftist thought and continue to have an impact to this day. These movements, characterized by theoretical depth and complexity, have questioned the fundamental moral, political, and economic foundations of Western societies. Notably, these movements had relatively easy access to prominent media outlets, often because media owners and program producers were Jewish. In addition, these movements were represented by notable academics in prestigious universities, and their works were published by both academic and commercial publishers (MacDonald, 2002, p. 79).

The history of Jewish activities and lobbying also reflects both the intelligence of Jewish individuals and the impact of organized efforts backed by intellectual and academic support. For instance, one notable success was the long-standing effort by Jews to change U.S. immigration policies. The American Jewish Committee - a major Jewish organization influencing immigration policy - was known for its "strong leadership, internal cohesion, well-structured plans, sophisticated lobbying techniques, strategic alliances with non-Jewish foreigners, and astute timing" (Goldstein, 1990, p. 333).

Prominent Jewish activists, such as Louis Marshall, were also regarded as skillful and intellectually robust in their efforts to fulfill Jewish aspirations. The American Jewish Committee, during public debates on immigration restrictions, presented its responses using statistical evidence and academic language, arguing from the position that Jewish perspectives were beneficial to society as a whole. Pro-immigration articles were published, and legal measures were devised to prevent the deportation of foreigners (op. cit.).

3-3. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC)

Following the 1956 war between Israel and the Arab states and President Eisenhower's order for Israeli forces to withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula, Jews realized that relying solely on existing Jewish lobbying efforts was insufficient. They concluded that connections with the White House, Department of State, Congress, and American officials would not guarantee sustained U.S. support for Israel in the future. Instead, they needed to cultivate influential figures who could occupy sensitive and key positions in the U.S. government and Congress to advance Jewish objectives effectively (Karimian, 2007, p. 676).

AIPAC is managed by a highly powerful executive director who is responsible for implementing the organization's programs. This executive oversees all daily operations and staff activities. As a policymaking institution that requires quick responses to developments, AIPAC employs professional personnel with strong decision-making capabilities. The executive director handles daily management and crisis situations while operating under the oversight of AIPAC's executive committee and the broader American Jewish community.

Since its establishment, Israel's primary focus has been security, and AIPAC has consistently sought to influence U.S. policies within this framework. AIPAC has successfully managed to create the perception that opposing its positions is equivalent to opposing the

Israeli government. This perception has instilled fear among Jews, discouraging criticism of AIPAC and fostering unity within its ranks (Izadi, 2003, pp. 181–200).

3-4. The U.S. and Middle East Policy

President Truman's speech in Congress served as the foundation for the Truman Doctrine. The primary objective of this doctrine was to contain Soviet expansionism worldwide, including in the Middle East, by providing economic and political support to democracies facing crises.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the shift in the international system from bipolarity to unipolarity, the United States emerged as the sole "unchallenged superpower." The strategy of combating terrorism replaced the anti-communist agenda. For the first time, the U.S. confronted ideological adversaries who perceived America's presence in the Middle East as fundamentally opposed to their values. Following the events of September 11, U.S. Middle East policy evolved to prioritize maintaining American dominance in the region. This was accomplished through preventive measures, the formation of strategic coalitions, and emphasis on multilateralism to combat terrorism. Since 2009, the U.S. has largely adopted a policy of non-intervention, offshore balancing, alliances, and regional coalitions led by America, delegating responsibilities to its allies to confront emerging security and geopolitical challenges while preserving its position in the Middle East.

The idea of a joint Arab army, referred to as the "Arab NATO," was initially proposed by the U.S. during President Donald Trump's 2017 visit to Saudi Arabia. Its primary goal was to create harmony among Arab states to counter regional rivals and threats to U.S. allies. However, the plan faced significant challenges, including Egypt's withdrawal and divisions among Arab states, which ultimately rendered the initiative unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the Abraham Accords were proposed during Trump's presidency following the failure of earlier Middle East initiatives, such as the Greater Middle East Plan (2002), the New Middle East Plan (2006), and the Deal of the Century (2018), all aimed at reshaping the region's power dynamics.

The Abraham Accords marked a new chapter in the Middle East and reflected profound changes in the region over the past decade. The normalization of diplomatic relations between the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Israel in 2020 continued a gradual regional trend. The first recognition of Israel's legitimacy came from Egypt

in 1979, followed by Jordan in 1994. This normalization of relations is part of a broader regional process. The Abraham Accords, purposefully named, symbolize the shared recognition of Abraham as the patriarch of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The architects of the accords sought to use a name that resonated with Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

3-5. The Palestinian Crisis

The war and hostility between Arab states and Israel in general, and specifically between Palestine and Israel, have demonstrated remarkable durability and persistence, distinguishing them from other conflicts. Following Egypt's peace agreement with Israel and the end of the bipolar world order - which led to the collapse of Soviet Union support for Arab states - most Arab nations, influenced by the new international system, sought peace with Israel. While Israel was initially reluctant to make peace with Arab states, it was compelled to adjust its stance due to transformations in the international system. After the Cold War, the United States, in its pursuit of stability in the Middle East, began advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process. As a result, multiple peace negotiations between the parties took place during the 1990s.

Within the Palestinian groups, however, there were serious divisions regarding peace with Israel. Some Palestinian factions, primarily Fatah, moved toward peace with Israel, recognizing it and, in return, gaining semi-autonomous governance through the Palestinian Authority (PA). On the other hand, other groups, notably Hamas, refused to recognize Israel and opposed peace with it, advocating instead for resistance against Israel. Regionally, Iran and Syria supported Hamas, while Egypt and a majority of Arab states backed the Palestinian Authority under Yasser Arafat, and later Mahmoud Abbas.

In the 2006 elections in the Gaza Strip, Hamas won the vote and succeeded in forming a government in the region. However, this Hamas government was not recognized by Israel, Egypt, or other Western countries. Since then, Gaza has been under siege by Israel, with support from Egypt. On October 7, 2023, on the anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, Hamas launched a surprise and large-scale attack on Israel, known as the "Al-Aqsa Storm." Thousands of rockets were launched at Jewish settlements and various regions in central Israel. Simultaneously, Hamas forces infiltrated areas under Israeli control.

3-6. The Israel-Palestine Crisis

The Palestinian crisis has been fraught with doubts regarding the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, thereby complicating the pursuit of Palestinian rights and international support. The creation or recognition of a sovereign Palestinian state, or its stabilization if such a state exists, is a critical step toward reinforcing and supporting the rights of the Palestinian people. However, this process faces numerous obstacles. The right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state have been repeatedly emphasized through United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Despite more than six decades passing since the UN partition plan, and despite international recognition of this right, no significant practical steps have been taken.

Presently, despite over 130 countries recognizing Palestine, consensus on the existence of an independent Palestinian state remains elusive. Several factors contribute to this uncertainty, including:

- Non-recognition by influential and powerful countries: Major global powers, particularly those in the West, have yet to recognize Palestine as a sovereign state, preventing full international recognition.
- Challenges regarding the elements essential for statehood: Key components for statehood, such as defined territory, population, sovereignty, and the ability to enter treaties, present significant challenges for Palestine.
- Geopolitical and international relations concerns: Even if the establishment of Palestine is assumed, the political and geographical conditions currently prevent the Palestinian people from fully benefiting from the rights of statehood.

There are multiple political challenges on the path toward Palestinian independence. Some challenges concern the declaration of an independent Palestinian state, while others focus on ensuring that the Palestinian state would be able to exercise its full rights as a state. The primary barrier remains Israel's unwillingness to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state and its failure to adhere to the necessary requirements for such an establishment (Tabatabai & Mohhebi, 2013, pp. 131–132)..

3-7. Public Opinion Regarding the Palestinian Crisis

With the continued hostile policies of Israel, particularly in committing civilian massacres in the Gaza Strip, public opinion in countries around the world, especially in the West, has become increasingly sensitive to this issue. Widespread protests have

erupted across various parts of the world, especially in Western countries, in opposition to Western policies, particularly the United States' unconditional support for Israel. These protests are ongoing, occurring in parallel with the continuation of the war in Gaza. However, these protests have not only failed to stop the massacres perpetrated by Tel Aviv in Gaza, but they have also not resulted in a reduction of military support or overall backing provided by governments such as the United States to Israel.

Despite the results of public opinion polls and widespread protests from American citizens calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and an end to Israeli military operations, American officials continue to emphasize that a ceasefire would benefit Hamas and that Israel has the right to defend itself. In practice, however, this right has been exercised at the cost of over 20,000 civilian deaths and more than 30,000 injuries, particularly among women and children.

The United States and other European countries have not stopped there, imposing harsh penalties on those protesting Israel's inhumane policies. Even the act of carrying Palestinian symbols and flags has been criminalized, leading to many students, journalists, and civil activists being dismissed or threatened with dismissal under this pretext.

4. Significant Events in U.S.-Israel Bilateral Relations
4-1. China and Israel Relations

The year 2012 can be seen as a pivotal point in China-Israel relations. In 2012, the Chinese navy made a friendly visit to the port of Haifa, and Israeli officials initiated efforts to resolve sensitive issues related to foreign investments in China, facilitating Israeli companies' entry into the Chinese market. By 2013, both sides decided to form a special working group to study bilateral economic and social cooperation. During their meetings, they emphasized the need to create favorable conditions for restarting negotiations aimed at advancing peace in the entire region. Israel regarded China as a key driver of its economic growth (Shay, 2014, p. 80). China, on the other hand, was keen on gaining continuous access to Israel's advanced technologies, particularly in agriculture, telecommunications, and defense. Israel's largest exports to China are also in these fields. China's interests in Israel stem from a variety of resources, including innovations in weapon systems, agriculture, and food production—issues that hold significant importance in a centrally planned country like China.

Israel, like other countries, recognized the immense economic

potential of China and focused its efforts on developing strong bilateral economic relations (Orion, 2019, p. 104). China views Israel as a global technology hub and acknowledges it as a valuable economic partner. As President Xi Jinping remarked during his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2017, Israel is considered an innovative and renowned country, with innovation and technology being key areas of focus for both nations (ibid, 2019, p. 14).

China intends to transform its economic model from one based on production to one centered around innovation and an enhanced value chain. Furthermore, both Israel and China are ancient civilizations and modern countries with much in common, including respect for tradition and family, as well as a strong emphasis on education. Israel has become an attractive destination for China's rapidly growing middle class, with the number of Chinese tourists to Israel tripling in 2017 compared to 2015 (Ku, 2018, p. 40). These factors have significantly influenced the expansion of interactions between the two countries.

Israel is unlikely to benefit from Chinese investments without sacrificing a significant portion of its support from the United States. In January 2020, the United States warned Israel to distance itself from China (Novak, 2019, p. 150). Washington is an irreplaceable ally for Tel Aviv, while China has become an economic partner that has bolstered Israel's economy. This situation could be advantageous for China, as it is not only interested in gaining access to new military technologies but also in acquiring broader knowledge, such as expertise in conducting regional anti-terrorism operations - a field in which Israel has considerable operational experience. Israel must be cautious about the unintended consequences of developing these relations. Alongside strategic benefits, it is essential to consider how these relations might affect Israel's broader ties with other countries, particularly the United States.

4-2. Russia and Israel Relations

The presidency of Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin is often regarded as the "golden age" of Russia-Israel relations. This may seem surprising, given Russia's relationships with Hamas, Syria, and especially Iran. However, this illustrates Vladimir Putin's skill in applying pragmatism in pursuit of Russia's national interests. These achievements have led to Putin being recognized by Forbes magazine as the most powerful man in the world. Since taking

office, Putin has shown that, contrary to some Russian leaders, he does not hold anti-Zionist views. He was the first Russian president to visit Israel and expressed his admiration for Israeli culture. During this new period, the Kremlin has sought to view Russian-Jewish Israelis as an opportunity to strengthen bilateral relations. However, the relationship between the two countries entered a new phase in 2008, coinciding with Russia's more assertive foreign policy, especially in the context of the war in South Ossetia. The use of advanced Israeli drones, such as the Hermes-450, by the Georgian government posed a problem for Russia. The sale of these drones irritated Moscow, but Russia later sought to purchase this type of modern equipment from Israel. This marked the first time Russia, one of the largest arms exporters in the world, requested military equipment from a foreign state (Mousavi & Naeini, 2019, pp. 504-505).

The new relationship between the Kremlin and the White House, under Barack Obama's leadership, began with a policy of "resetting" relations. Obama gave the green light for improving relations with Moscow, bringing the two countries closer together on various issues. The most significant development in this context was Russia's alignment with the United States against Iran (Koulai, 2011, p. 83). Once again, Russia's national interests resulted in a breach of trust regarding Iran. Furthermore, according to documents released by WikiLeaks, Russia and Israel exchanged intelligence: Russia received information and codes of the Israeli drones used by Georgia, and in return, Israel received confidential details on Iran's air defense systems and the Tor-M1 missiles (Lapin, 2012, p. 2). Putin also referred to Israeli attacks on Palestinians as acts of defense for the Israeli people. Indeed, one reason for the deepening of Russia-Israel relations over the past two decades is Moscow's repeated acknowledgment of the security concerns of the Israeli government and its citizens. This is evident in Russia's lack of opposition to Israel's bombing of Hezbollah targets in Syria (Rodinman, 2015, p. 167).

The depth of Russia-Israel relations can perhaps be most clearly seen after Russia's annexation of Crimea. While the United States and Europe strongly condemned this action and subsequently issued a statement against Russia at the United Nations, Israel refrained from condemning Russia's actions. Their refusal to join the consensus against Moscow surprised and bewildered American officials (Jerusalem Post, 2014, para. 3). As a result, Moscow and Tel Aviv established a secure, encrypted communication line to prevent Washington from accessing details of their bilateral relations.

4-3. European Union and Israel Relations

The European Union, in response to Israel's request to enhance relations with the Union, responded positively at the eighth Israel-EU Cooperation Council meeting in June 2008. Later that year, in December, the EU proposed a series of plans to achieve this goal at the Council of Ministers' meeting in Brussels. In the weeks following this Brussels meeting, Israel launched Operation "Cast Lead" against Gaza in response to violations of the ceasefire by Hamas and the firing of rockets from Gaza into southern Israel. European leaders criticized the 22-day war, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,400 Palestinians. Israel also imposed an economic blockade on the Gaza Strip. Tensions between the EU and Israel escalated when the new Israeli government, led by the Likud Party, opposed the creation of a Palestinian state. By the time of the ninth Israel-EU Cooperation Council meeting in June 2009, all discussions about enhancing relations between the two had dissipated.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has generated significant tension between Israel and the European Union over the past three decades. European governments have grown frustrated with their perceived marginalization in efforts to resolve the conflict, believing that Europe should play a more substantial role in the process. Israel's policies toward this conflict and Europe's reactions to them have had a significant impact on the development of bilateral relations (Samouri & Khaleeli, 2019, p. 27). Consequently, the European Union seeks a closer partnership with Israel. Efforts to strengthen the EU-Tel Aviv partnership should be grounded in shared goals and interests, with the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a two-state solution serving as a central component of this framework.

4-4. Israel's Defense and Military Industry Trade

According to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Israel's arms exports have reached their highest level in the past four years. The report states that between 2015 and 2019, Israel's arms exports constituted 3% of the global arms trade, ranking the country eighth globally in arms production and export (Samir, 2020, p. 46). Israel operates one of the largest drone fleets in the Middle East and is also a major exporter of this technology. However, the vast majority of the Israeli Defense Forces' (IDF) drone fleet remains unarmed, as their primary role in Israel's military doctrine is to provide real-time situational awareness for

ground operations. The exact number of Israeli drones is difficult to ascertain, as leading databases and reference publications - such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the International Institute for Strategic Studies' The Military Balance - do not provide reliable figures.

In addition to drones, Israel is a significant innovator in anti-drone systems. For instance, its radar-based system, known as the "Drone Dome," can identify targets and use lasers to neutralize them from several kilometers away. More than 50 countries use Israeli-made reconnaissance drones, although all of them - with the exception of Turkey - are unarmed (Tarekh, 2020, para. 1).

The products of Israel's aerospace industries span a wide range of domains, including land, air, space, sea, and cyberspace. The most notable products include unmanned aerial systems, precision-guided and loitering munitions, multi-layer missile defense systems, upgrades for military aircraft and helicopters, navigation systems, satellite surveillance and communication systems, ground-based satellite control stations, mission centers and launchers, autonomous robotic platforms for ground combat, manned and unmanned patrol ships, high-speed strike vessels, cybersecurity tools for cellular networks, and commercial jets (Israel Aerospace Industries, 2020, p. 4).

As such, the production and trade of military and security equipment constitute one of Israel's most lucrative economic resources today. This sector is so critical that it can be argued that the military industry is among the main pillars of Israel's economy. Israel is making swift progress in securing its status as one of the leading arms exporters globally.

4-5. Israel's Aspiration to Become an Energy Hub

Connecting the Mediterranean gas fields to the Arab Gas Pipeline is, in theory, the most efficient option for exporting gas within the region and beyond, including to Turkey. This pipeline could potentially accommodate gas from Lebanon and Syria if these countries were to discover significant reserves. However, ongoing conflicts in Syria and political disputes across the region have made this export route currently unfeasible.

In the field of energy, Israel is the first country in the Mediterranean region to achieve substantial progress in hydrocarbon development, particularly in natural gas. Access to these resources enables Israel to meet domestic energy needs across both industrial and non-industrial sectors. Nevertheless, Israel's ambitions extend beyond domestic consumption; it seeks to position

itself as a regional energy transit hub, a goal that has become a strategic priority for Tel Aviv.

The discovery and exploitation of Mediterranean gas reserves could elevate Israel to a central role in supplying energy to Europe, thereby enabling the European Union to diversify its energy sources and enhance energy security. While the size of these reserves does not rival those of major energy producers such as Russia, Iran, or Qatar, the combination of the reserves' potential, prospects for further discoveries, and Israel's strategic geopolitical location could exert a substantial influence on global energy markets. This, in turn, carries significant political and economic implications for the broader region. Tel Aviv aspires to become a "gas empire," leveraging its energy resources to strengthen economic ties with regional partners and Europe. Israeli policymakers are optimistic that this development will further their broader objectives, particularly in advancing political ambitions related to their expansionist policies toward the Palestinians.

4-6. Security Arrangements

The Middle East has experienced continuous transformation and upheaval over the past decades. Following the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia in 2011 and the subsequent fall of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, a series of interconnected events spread across the Middle East and North Africa, reshaping the region's political landscape. These uprisings profoundly influenced regional ideology, sectarian dynamics, and the balance of power. In the wake of these changes, radical Islamist groups emerged, while both Sunni Islamist factions and Shia movements gained access to corridors of power. Amid this evolving environment, Israel has sought to address its security concerns and position itself as an active and influential actor in the region.

5. Key Drivers in U.S.-Israel Relations

Among the twelve events and trends examined, eight key drivers emerge as central factors shaping present and future U.S.-Israel relations. These drivers have the potential to trigger a chain of strategic, political, and economic developments:

- Commitment to Israel: Support for Israel is widely regarded by both Jewish and non-Jewish Americans as a moral obligation, rooted in the perception that Israel, as a democracy, is engaged in a struggle for survival. Continuous U.S. support and sensitivity to Israel's security concerns remain defining features of Washington's

Middle East policy. The United States consistently positions itself as a cornerstone of Tel Aviv's security.

- Palestine's Status: Palestine is not yet a full member of the United Nations. Full UN membership requires approval by the Security Council, and currently, Palestine holds only observer status, lacking voting rights. Resolving the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is unlikely without a fundamental shift in U.S. policy toward Palestine.

- Gaza Crisis: The ongoing crisis in Gaza, compounded by the continuation of Israeli occupation, illegal settlement expansion, severe socio-economic deprivation, and the policies of Netanyahu's right-wing government, has significantly strained Gaza's population. U.S. policy has consistently sought to manage the crisis in ways that legitimize Israel's actions, including facilitating the normalization of relations between Israel and regional actors such as Saudi Arabia.

- Public Opinion vs. National Interests: While public opinion exerts influence, governments prioritize national interests and security. In the case of Gaza, despite civilian casualties, U.S. decision-makers maintain support for Israel to prevent a shift in the Middle Eastern and global geopolitical balance in favor of rival powers.

- Influence of China, Russia, and the European Union: China, Russia, and the European Union have become key players in regional and global affairs. Their growing involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict constrains U.S. policy options and underscores the necessity for Washington to account for their influence in Middle Eastern diplomacy.

- Regional Threats and Resistance Movements: Israel faces persistent regional threats, including the Resistance Axis and Sunni Islamist movements. These groups have been steadily increasing their economic, military, and technological capabilities, seeking to establish a regional anti-Western order. Their growing influence poses a potential threat to both U.S. and Israeli strategic interests.

- Security Concerns and Energy Independence: Israel's security priorities include enhancing energy security. The discovery and exploitation of Mediterranean hydrocarbon resources have the potential to reduce Israel's dependence on U.S. financial aid. Revenues from gas exports could partially offset the approximately $3 billion in annual U.S. assistance, while also strengthening Israel's strategic autonomy.

- Arms Exports and Defense Industry: Israel's arms exports serve not only economic purposes but also strategic objectives. The defense and arms industry enables Israel to enhance its security, assert regional and global political influence, reduce dependency on U.S. military aid, and progress toward self-sufficiency in defense capabilities.

6. Scenario Analysis
6-1. Scenario One (Possible)
Over recent years, subtle tensions have emerged between the United States and Israel due to issues such as Gaza, the West Bank, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, human rights concerns, and approaches toward regional and transregional rivals. These tensions have manifested in diplomatic disputes and reductions in certain economic aid packages. With the escalation of the Gaza crisis, Israel's continued hostile policies and refusal to recognize an independent Palestinian state have challenged the legitimacy of the United States in the international arena. In response, to mitigate domestic and global opposition while preserving its strategic interests amid competing global powers, the U.S. is likely to adopt de-escalation strategies aimed at reducing conflicts and easing tensions with Israel.

6-2. Scenario Two (Desirable)
Israel has pursued expansionist policies toward the Palestinians, driven by internal, regional, and international dynamics. The United States, in order to maintain military and economic superiority against global competitors and deflect international criticism of Israel's policies, has included placing pressure on Tel Aviv in its strategic agenda. Israel, as a regional and global actor, seeks to engage diplomatically with major powers such as Russia, China, and the European Union to reduce its dependence on the United States. Following Hamas's surprise attack on October 7, 2023, Israel has prioritized military superiority and deterrence to safeguard its security and global standing. However, if repressive policies against Gaza persist, growing domestic and international opposition to U.S. support for Israel may compel Washington to reassess its strategic relationship with Tel Aviv, potentially resulting in tangible tensions in the bilateral relationship over time.

6-3. Scenario Three (Probable)
In pursuit of shared strategic interests, the United States and Israel

may collaborate to preserve their hegemonic influence in the Middle East and maintain global political and economic dominance, including arms sales. This cooperation could involve supporting a form of Palestinian statehood to reduce international criticism while creating a relatively secure environment for advancing their objectives. In their shared ideological framework, peace is not the mere resolution of conflict but the creation of a regional order centered on Israel. Within this vision, peace and economic cooperation serve as foundations for integrating Arab states into a shared regional economic market. Consequently, the U.S. and Israel are likely to work jointly to manage the Gaza crisis and construct a structured Israeli-Arab regional order to secure their hegemonic position, reduce regional and global rival influence, and expand their strategic partnership.

6-4. Scenario Four (Possible)
Following the Gaza crisis, the United States has adopted a dual-track strategy to achieve its economic, political, and military objectives. Israel's hostile policies have generated both opportunities and challenges for Washington. Crucially, U.S. post-crisis strategies will differ significantly from its pre-crisis approach. While conflicting interests and divergences exist between the two nations regarding the Gaza crisis, these points of tension are secondary to their shared strategic objectives. Therefore, although competition may arise, it is unlikely to escalate into open confrontation between the United States and Israel.

Conclusion
The special relationship between Washington and Tel Aviv remains one of the most complex and enduring partnerships in international relations. Since 1967, the United States has provided Israel with more assistance and security guarantees than any other country, reflecting deep political, historical, and cultural foundations. Public support for Israel among Americans has remained exceptionally high, and the bilateral relationship—rooted in shared values, beliefs, security concerns, and mutual interests—has evolved into a distinct strategic partnership. However, the ongoing Gaza crisis has introduced a new phase of convergence in U.S.-Israel relations, while simultaneously highlighting potential future divergences. Key factors that could shape the trajectory of this relationship include:
- **Public Opposition and Erosion of Legitimacy:** The U.S. support policies for Israel amid the Gaza crisis will lead to

increased public opposition and harm the country's image both in the region and globally. Consequently, the United States is likely to reduce its supportive stance toward Israel, considering its national interests, security concerns, and geopolitical realities.

- **Opportunities for Competing Powers:** The Gaza crisis provides opportunities for powers like China, Russia, and the European Union to step in, which will create new challenges for the United States in the future.
- **Shift in Regional Dynamics:** The Gaza crisis has reversed Washington's strategy for regional stability, which had been focused on containing the Resistance Bloc and Sunni Islamist groups. This shift introduces the risk of escalating regional tensions, further complicating the Middle East situation.
- **Challenges Facing Arab States and Regional Order:** The challenges posed by the Gaza crisis to traditional Arab governments could, in the future, threaten both the U.S. and Israel. The regional Israeli-Arab order could face instability or even collapse, undermining the current geopolitical framework.
- **Strategic Competition in the International Arena:** The rise of new global powers such as China, Russia, and the European Union has intensified strategic competition, driving Israel to develop a new strategy to navigate the evolving international environment.
- **Israel's Pursuit of Independent Policies:** Israel is increasingly seeking to showcase independent policies from the United States by strengthening its economic, political, and military power within the global system.

Considering these dynamics, the future of U.S.-Israel relations is likely to shift toward a more limited form of cooperation. This trajectory would involve a reduction in Israel's reliance on U.S. defense, military, and economic support, while promoting greater self-sufficiency and independent strategic maneuvering for Tel Aviv.

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