

Trump's Astonishing Betrayal of Israel's Security Imperatives

By Fern Sidman

For decades, one of the foundational principles underpinning the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel has been a simple understanding: Israel, and Israel alone, bears ultimate responsibility for the defense of its citizens against those who seek its destruction. American presidents have occasionally disagreed with Israeli governments over tactics, diplomacy, settlements, borders, and military operations. Yet across Republican and Democratic administrations alike, there has generally been recognition that when rockets rain down on Israeli communities and terrorist organizations openly pledge genocide against the Jewish state, Israel retains the sovereign right—and indeed the obligation—to protect itself.

That principle now appears to be under unprecedented strain.



President Donald Trump has advanced an extraordinary proposition: that Syria should effectively replace Israel in confronting Hezbollah, the

Iranian-backed terrorist organization that has spent decades building an arsenal aimed directly at Israeli civilians. Simultaneously, Trump has publicly castigated Israel's military campaign in Lebanon, criticized Israeli strikes

against Hezbollah targets, expressed irritation at Jerusalem's efforts to defend itself during a period of diplomatic negotiations with Iran, and declared that Israel owes its continued existence to him and the United States.

These statements are not merely controversial. They are profoundly misguided.

More troubling still, they reveal an alarming willingness to subordinate Israel's security concerns to a diplomatic process whose ultimate outcomes remain uncertain and whose principal beneficiary appears increasingly to be the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The most astonishing aspect of Trump's remarks is his suggestion that Syria should take over responsibility for confronting Hezbollah.

Trump praised Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and declared that Syria could do a better job than Israel in dealing with Hezbollah. He suggested that if Israel could not defeat Hezbollah quickly enough or without extensive military operations, Damascus should be entrusted with the task.

This proposal is breathtaking in its detachment from regional realities.

One does not need a doctorate in Middle Eastern history to recognize the absurdity of entrusting the dismantlement of Hezbollah to actors who have long coexisted with, accommodated, benefited from, or indirectly facilitated Hezbollah's regional operations.

For years, Hezbollah utilized Syrian territory as a logistical artery connecting Tehran to Beirut. Weapons, fighters, funding, intelligence assets, and military supplies flowed through Syrian corridors. During the Syrian civil war, Hezbollah became one of the principal military instruments sustaining Bashar al-Assad's regime. Thousands of Hezbollah

fighters crossed into Syria to help preserve a dictatorship that was collapsing under internal rebellion.

Even if Syria's current leadership differs dramatically from Assad's regime, the notion that Damascus can suddenly become the guarantor of Israel's northern security border is an extraordinary leap of faith.

Faith, however, is not a national security strategy. Israel cannot entrust its survival to hopeful assumptions about the future behavior of governments whose long-term intentions remain uncertain. Nor should it.

The reality is that Hezbollah represents one of the most heavily armed non-state military organizations in the world. It possesses sophisticated missile capabilities, extensive tunnel networks, command infrastructure, intelligence assets, and decades of operational experience. It is not a neighborhood gang. It is not a localized insurgency. It is a strategic extension of Iranian power.

The idea that Israel should simply stand aside and trust Syria to neutralize such a threat is not serious policy analysis. It is geopolitical wishful thinking.

Equally disturbing is Trump's criticism of Israel's military campaign itself.

Trump argued that Israel has fought Hezbollah for too long and suggested that excessive force has been used against terrorist targets embedded in Lebanese territory. Such criticism ignores a fundamental reality that military professionals understand all too well. Hezbollah deliberately embeds military assets within civilian environments. Missile launchers are hidden near homes. Command centers operate beneath residential neighborhoods. Weapons depots are concealed inside urban areas. Fighters move through civilian infrastructure precisely because doing so complicates military responses and increases international pressure on Israel whenever combat operations

occur.

This strategy is not accidental. It is deliberate. It is central to Hezbollah's doctrine.

When critics demand that Israel eliminate Hezbollah without striking areas where Hezbollah operates, they are often demanding the impossible. Every sovereign nation confronted by a heavily armed terrorist organization positioned along its border would respond.

The United States would respond. Britain would respond. France would respond. India would respond. Any serious government would respond.

Yet Israel is repeatedly expected to satisfy standards that no other democracy is required to meet. Trump's criticism becomes particularly difficult to comprehend when viewed in light of the events he himself referenced. Israel's strike in Beirut followed Hezbollah attacks against Israeli territory.

It was not an unprovoked act. It was a response.

Nevertheless, Trump expressed anger that the operation occurred shortly before the announcement of his diplomatic framework with Iran.

That criticism exposes the underlying problem. The administration increasingly appears to view Israeli military actions not through the lens of Israeli security needs but through the lens of how those actions affect negotiations with Tehran. That is a dangerous inversion of priorities.

A democracy confronting an Iranian proxy should not be expected to calibrate its self-defense according to the scheduling preferences of negotiators meeting in Switzerland. Israel's responsibility is to protect Israeli lives. That responsibility does not disappear because diplomats happen to be signing documents.

Indeed, Hezbollah itself seems to understand the implications of the emerging diplomatic environment. Hezbollah has indicated that Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon has become a central issue in discussions linked to the broader U.S.-Iran diplomatic process. Iranian officials have likewise warned that continued Israeli operations could constitute violations of the developing agreement.

This should concern anyone interested in genuine regional stability. The purpose of diplomacy should be to constrain aggressors, not to constrain the victims of aggression.

Yet increasingly, Israel appears to be treated as the party expected to make concessions while Hezbollah and Iran position themselves as stakeholders whose demands must be accommodated. Nothing illustrates this troubling dynamic more clearly than Trump's astonishing declaration that Israel owes its continued existence to him and the United States.

Trump stated that without America—and specifically without him—Israel would have been “blown off the face of the earth.” Such rhetoric is not merely inaccurate. It is profoundly arrogant.

The U.S.-Israel alliance is one of the most successful strategic partnerships in modern history. American support has undoubtedly strengthened Israel's security. Military cooperation, intelligence sharing, diplomatic backing, and technological collaboration have saved lives and enhanced deterrence. These contributions deserve recognition.

But recognizing American assistance is entirely different from suggesting that Israel exists only through American grace. Israel exists because of Hashem's promise to the Jewish people and for the generations of Israelis fought for it. Israel exists because young men and women defended it in 1948, 1967, 1973, and every conflict since.

Israel exists because scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs,

soldiers, intelligence officers, doctors, teachers, and ordinary citizens built one of the most dynamic societies in the world under conditions that would have broken many nations. Israel exists because Jewish history is defined by resilience. To suggest otherwise diminishes the sacrifices of countless individuals who paid for Israel's survival with their labor, their courage, and often their lives.

Moreover, Trump's remarks fundamentally misunderstand the nature of alliances. Allies are not vassals. Partnership is not ownership. Support does not confer sovereignty over another nation's decisions. The relationship between Washington and Jerusalem has endured because it has generally rested upon mutual interests and mutual respect.

When an American president begins speaking as though another sovereign nation owes its very existence to his personal benevolence, that respect is eroded. Even more troubling is the contradiction embedded within Trump's broader argument. On one hand, he insists that Iran must never obtain nuclear weapons. On the other hand, he increasingly appears willing to accept Iranian assurances regarding intentions that successive American administrations have regarded with skepticism.

Iran has repeatedly enriched uranium far beyond civilian requirements. Iran has obstructed international inspections. Iran's leadership has repeatedly issued threats against Israel. Iran finances Hezbollah, Hamas, and other terrorist proxy organizations throughout the region.

These are not hypothetical concerns. They are documented realities.

Yet Trump now speaks optimistically about rapid negotiations and normalized relations while simultaneously criticizing the one regional actor that has consistently demonstrated both the willingness and capability to confront Iranian expansionism directly.

That contradiction is difficult to ignore.

The administration's confidence in achieving a comprehensive agreement within 60 days appears particularly ambitious given the historical record. As many analysts have observed, negotiations surrounding Iran's nuclear program have often required years of painstaking diplomacy. Iranian negotiators are experienced, disciplined, and adept at extracting concessions while preserving strategic flexibility.

The belief that decades of hostility can be resolved quickly through broad memoranda and optimistic declarations may prove overly optimistic.

History counsels caution.

Another troubling aspect of Trump's recent comments concerns regime change. Trump now insists that he never cared about regime change in Iran and does not view it as a policy objective. Yet earlier statements suggested precisely the opposite. Such inconsistency creates uncertainty regarding American strategic goals. Allies require clarity. Adversaries exploit ambiguity.

The absence of a coherent long-term vision risks undermining both deterrence and diplomatic credibility. Ultimately, the most consequential issue raised by Trump's remarks is not whether one agrees with every Israeli military decision.

Reasonable people can debate tactics. Reasonable people can debate diplomatic sequencing.

Reasonable people can debate operational priorities.

The deeper issue is whether Israel retains the sovereign right to determine how it confronts existential threats. That right should not be negotiable. It should not depend upon the preferences of foreign mediators. It should not be contingent upon the convenience of diplomatic timetables.

And it certainly should not be transferred to Syria. The proposition that Syria should assume responsibility for defeating Hezbollah is not a serious strategic alternative. It is a fantasy detached from decades of regional experience. The proposition that Israel should suspend legitimate self-defense operations because they complicate negotiations with Iran is equally misguided.

And the proposition that Israel owes its existence primarily to the personal intervention of one American president reflects a level of self-congratulation that borders on historical revisionism.

The United States and Israel remain indispensable allies. That alliance deserves preservation and strengthening. But strong alliances require honesty. They require respect. They require recognition that friends can disagree without diminishing one another's sovereignty. Most importantly, they require an understanding that no nation has a greater stake in Israel's survival than Israel itself.

That truth was valid before Donald Trump entered politics. It will remain valid long after he leaves the political stage. And it remains the central reality that should guide policy toward Hezbollah, Iran, Lebanon, and the broader Middle East today.

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