

Why the US-Israel relationship is unique and critical

By ALLEN B. WEST 02/02/2012 23:38

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The history of the Jewish people in the land of Israel stems back more than 3,000 years, unbowed by the sequential rise and fall of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Maccabeans, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Egyptians, Crusaders, Mamelukes and Turks.

In comparison, the history of our own United States dates back 236 years. Although America is a young society, we have shared fundamental principles with the Jewish heritage from the time of our founding.

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When our founding fathers crafted the Constitution, they looked to the ancient Israelites for guidance in defining our "certain inalienable rights."

The words inscribed on the Liberty Bell: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof," are taken from Old Testament scripture, Leviticus 25:10.

The modern State of Israel and the United States share deeply-held precepts of self-reliance, individual responsibility and religious freedom – as well as a passion and acuity for entrepreneurship and innovation. With more than 3,000 hitech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of hi-tech companies in the world, apart from Silicon Valley. The

technology for AOL Instant Messenger was developed in 1996 by four young Israelis.

Israel and the United States also unfortunately share a common enemy in radical Islam, an ideology whose stated purpose is the destruction of Israel, and the subjugation of the United States and America's way of life. Our common enemy knows no national borders. It fights without uniforms, and readily targets our civilian populations.

Israel is the 100th smallest country, with less than 1/1,000th of the world's population. This tiny, bright beacon of freedom, liberty and economic success in the Middle East is a target for destruction by radical Islamists for these very reasons.

Israel has endured continuous attacks since its founding in 1948, and peace agreements offered to the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon have met only rejection and rocket fire. It is truly a miracle that the modern State of Israel still exists.

Israel's position in the region is more tenuous than ever. With its current borders, Israel as a nation is virtually indefensible. At its narrowest point, Israel is only nine-miles wide. The West Bank borders the West; the Mediterranean Sea borders the East.

Israel continues to push for negotiations with the Palestinians, but success has been virtually impossible when there is no unity between the Palestinians themselves.

PA President Mahmoud Abbas has not had control of Gaza since June 2007, when the terrorist group Hamas staged a violent coup against the Fatah party. As long as Fatah and Hamas continue fighting over the legitimate Palestinian governing authority, credible negotiations seem impossible.

Israel continues to be threatened by the onslaught of secular Muslim leaders appearing in volatile, unstable nearby nations. The "Arab Spring" has resulted in Islamists led by the Muslim Brotherhood obtaining a 75 percent majority control in Egypt, with a stated goal of overturning the 1979 Camp David Accords.

To make matters even more complicated and dangerous in the Middle East, the US withdrawal from Iraq leaves a Shiafriendly path through which Iran can extend its destructive tentacles.

Iran has already shown a steady march to nuclear armament, while threatening to close the Straits of Hormuz if a planned European Union oil embargo disrupts its export.

Now, more than ever, America must demonstrate unwavering support of Israel. Instead, though, this administration shows a weakening commitment to our staunchest ally in the Middle East. Recently, the US cancelled the largest-ever joint military exercise with Israel.

This decision made just two days before we learned US President Barack Obama sent a secret communiqué to Iran's supreme leader requesting talks. Apparently, the president did not wish to "offend" Iran.

The president should instead be offended when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad asserts that "Anybody who recognizes Israel will burn in the fire of the Islamic nation's fury."

As a 22-year US Army veteran who commanded troops in the Middle East, I can tell you from experience, this enemy of radical Islam understands and respects only one thing: strength.

It is absolutely essential to the future of both Israel and the US that America supports Israel by providing a credible projection of power and a resolute willingness to accept military options if necessary.

While we can, and should, assist with negotiations, we must not adopt a posture of "even-handedness" between our ally and other parties.

The US must support Israel's need for secure, recognized and defensible borders, as well as

Israel's right to determine its own security requirements.

In the Middle East, the sands of power are shifting under a harsh wind of change, with dangerous and frightening possibilities. In this landscape, the existence of a sincere, brave and unwavering ally is critical.

The US depends on the single constant of a democratic, free ally in Israel. We must ensure Israel can always depend on us.

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