

uting more than ever to the geopolitical weakening of America. As the Biden administration frantically runs cover for Israeli criminal actions, the cost to the US in political, reputational, legal and other arenas increases exponentially.

Rajan Menon, City College of New York, Columbia University: Has the US-Israeli relationship changed “permanently” following the attack by Hamas last October? No. True, the Biden administration provided unalloyed support—diplomatic, economic, and military—to Israel’s massive overreaction. But it’s long been an axiom in American politics that Israel must be backed unreservedly—not only during crises and wars, but even when it continues, as it has with particular vigor during the past few years, to expand settlements in the West Bank and allow “outposts” to proliferate there, to evict Palestinians from their land and allow settlers to attack them with impunity and even steal their livestock. To all this the current administration has turned a blind eye, but so did its predecessors. Nothing has changed and nothing will, no matter who is president. Even in our currently poisonous politics, bipartisan agreement prevails in the corridors of power on one point of policy: Israel must be supported unequivocally—always.

Paul Pillar, former CIA, Georgetown University: The principal sources of the extraordinary US-Israel relationship are embedded in domestic American politics and culture, and that is where to look for any signs the relationship may be changing. The influence of those sources—including a formidable lobby—remain strong. That influence has counteracted decades of Israeli conduct that has run counter to US strategic interests, and it will counteract much of the outrage over Israeli conduct during the past year. The domestic politics of relations with Israel are evolving, however. In an increasing partisan split, automatic Republican Party support for Israel has accompanied Israel’s own lurch to the extreme right. Increasingly vocal opposition to Israel within the Democratic Party could lead a President Harris to adjust US policy once she is no longer the understudy to a self-proclaimed Zionist. A second Trump presidency would, like the first, give the Israel almost anything it wants.

Annelle Sheline, Quincy Institute: The most senior members of President Biden’s foreign policy team appear to be as tenaciously committed to maintaining full US support to the Israel as they were on October 7. This is the case, despite Israel repeatedly humiliating Biden and the US by disregarding every red line the president tried to establish. Biden’s response was to send more weapons and support. It seems that there is nothing Israel could do that would cause this administration to impose consequences or restrict the vast flow of American resources into Israel’s war machine, even as



▲ Demonstrators protest the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House during a rally, on July 25, 2024, in Washington.
● MIKE STEWART/AP

it threatens to drag the United States into war and potentially to destroy the Democrats’ chance of retaining control of the White House.

Yet the broader relationship has changed significantly. US support for Israel is no longer a bipartisan issue. The Israel lobby had to spend millions of dollars on two House primary races to defeat Black members who criticized Israel’s actions in Gaza, and were unable to primary Reps. Summer Lee (D-Pa.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich). This caused many Americans to question the role of the Israel lobby in our politics, and whether such influence is in America’s interest. The next generation of American voters has demonstrated they will not support the US sending billions of our tax dollars to Israel that murders and starves entire populations.

Steve Simon, Quincy Institute, Dartmouth College: The past year might accelerate a trend already underway, namely the narrowing of Israel’s base of support here. Israel will retain strong Republican support while support among Democrats will contract. But it will not disappear, especially when Israel is under attack. Bipartisan support for US-Israel relations has been jettisoned by the Likud and Republican parties. For Likud’s purposes, the Republican Party is the horse to ride. And Republicans can weaponize support for Israel for political gain and outbid Democrats whenever an issue arises regarding US financial and military assistance. This is risky for Israel, but the Right appears relaxed and eager to boost Trump’s prospects despite his affinity for antisemitism. Perhaps the Israeli right is

willing to trade off the security of American Jews to get its way on the West Bank. Netanyahu thinks that liberal American Jews will soon disappear so he might assess the opportunity cost as acceptable.

Barbara Slavin, Stimson Center, George Washington University: I wish I could say that the past year has altered the US-Israel relationship but I’m afraid that the US is now even more embroiled in defending Israel against its many enemies. Without US arms shipments and intelligence, Israel would not have been able to pursue its retaliatory war against Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis and Iran with such impunity, killing tens of thousands of civilians and turning Gaza into a moonscape of rubble. There have been moments when Washington was able to pause regional escalation—as after the Iran-Israel exchanges in April. But that ability appears to have waned as we sit at the brink of a wider conflagration drawing in US forces along with Israelis, Palestinians, Lebanese, Iraqis, Yemenis and Iranians, with no prospect of a ceasefire or return of Israeli captives in sight.

Hadar Suskind, Americans for Peace Now: The “special relationship” between the United States and Israel is not gone, but let’s just say, it’s not running for reelection either. The way Congress discusses and debates Israel and Palestine has changed more in the past year than in the 25 previous years. For the first time multiple members of Congress have,

for conditional cutting, or all together ending aid to Israel. When Netanyahu spoke to Congress, fully half of the Democratic caucus refused to be used as a prop in his campaign and skipped the speech. And while President Biden has largely maintained his historical views on Israel, the next generations of leaders did not, as Biden so often mentions, know Golda Meir. They do know Benjamin Netanyahu, and they don’t like him. If Israel wants to maintain a special relationship with the US, it needs to do so on the merits, and that remains to be seen.

Stephen Walt, Harvard University: At first glance, the “special relationship” between the United States and Israel seems stronger than ever. The Biden administration has given Israel a blank check, while Israel has ignored Washington’s ineffectual calls for restraint. Netanyahu got repeated ovations as he told a pack of lies to Congress, and universities have bowed to pressure from politicians and wealthy donors by cracking down on pro-Palestinian protests.

Yet October 7 and after still constitute a watershed in US-Israeli relations. Israel’s brutal attempts to destroy not just Hamas but thousands of innocent Palestinians have cost it the sympathy it received a year ago, and its violent campaigns on the West Bank, in Lebanon, and elsewhere have exposed its true character. The Israel lobby has been forced into the open, de-

fending a genocide that has done lasting damage to America’s own image and interests. It won’t end overnight, but “special relationship” will never be the same.

Sarah Leah Whitson, Democracy in the Arab World Now: Israel’s year of atrocities in Gaza has permanently transformed the American public’s perceptions, not only of Israel as an abusive, apartheid state that the International Court of Justice said could be committing genocide in Gaza, but of Palestinians as a victimized, subjugated population, such that a majority of Americans now oppose military aid to Israel. However, the US government’s own backing for the Israel remains unconditional, despite the tremendous costs to America’s global standing. Our government has provided Israel with unprecedented military and political support for the war in Gaza, which has now dangerously expanded to military support for Israel’s fighting in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. This has brought into stark relief the gross misalignment of US policies towards Israel with public sentiments, and the outsized, malign role of pro-Israel organizations, including their influence on government officials to promote dangerous policies.

James Zogby, Arab American Institute: Israel’s year-long assault on Gaza hasn’t yet “permanently” changed the US-Israel relationship.” It has, however, altered the political landscape shifting opinions, with key demographics— younger and non-white voters— moving in a pro-Palestinian direction.

As a result, pro-Israel groups and their congressional supporters have attempted to silence debate and arrest the growth of pro-Palestinian sentiment. State laws have been enacted penalizing individuals or groups that endorse sanctions on Israel and they’ve expanded the definition of antisemitism to include legitimate criticism of Israel. There’s been pressure from Republicans and donors to impose severe speech restrictions on university campuses and “dark money” groups are spending over \$100 million to target the campaigns of members of Congress sympathetic towards Palestinians.

Given the reactions to Israel’s deplorable conduct and the repressive new “McCarthyite” measures against pro-Palestinian sentiment, the already deeply polarized debate over the US-Israel relationship is likely to become more intense in the future.

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