

# The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security

## A Call for Action

Assaf Orion and Shahar Eilam, Editors





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and Israel's National Security**

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# Foreword

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Jay and Shira Ruderman

The discourse about Israel's relationship with the United States and its relationship with the American Jewish community often seems to resemble train tracks: two parallel lines that connect the same places but never meet. A quick look showcases the public discourse about the relationship between the two countries, and the public conversation about the relationship between the world's two largest Jewish communities. Rarely do we hear of the connection between these relationships; it is as if they are unrelated. This artificial separation is a strategic error since it conceals, and sometimes distorts, the truth. The truth is simple: the American Jewish community plays a vital role in the relationship between the countries, and it is impossible to have an honest discussion about US-Israel bilateral relations without accounting for this community.

Israeli agents of change tend to talk about the relationship with US Jewry in the context of Jewish peoplehood and philanthropic donations to various projects – in welfare, education, and other fields. The Israeli media focuses on this relationship mainly during times of crisis, such as severe anti-Semitic incidents in the US or disputes regarding religious pluralism in Israel (i.e., the Western Wall compromise or the conversion law). At the same time, there are written publications and an ongoing discourse about the government-level cooperation between Washington and Jerusalem on issues ranging from Iran's aspirations to its nuclear program, to trade deals and visa waivers.

The research undertaken through the project with INSS demonstrates the absurd in the dichotomy between the two dialogues, as you cannot talk about Israel's relationship with the United States without talking about the American Jewish community. In 1948 it was Eddie Jacobson, President Truman's friend, who convinced him to meet Chaim Weizmann and, in doing so, contributed greatly to Truman's decision to recognize Israel – against the advice of those in the American diplomatic and defense establishment. In the years since, including today's efforts to battle the delegitimization and BDS campaigns against Israel, it is the Jewish community that has spearheaded the efforts to ensure US support for Israel. Thus, this study is an attempt to bridge these two worlds and launch a more accurate conversation.

Previous research has focused on the support of US Jews for various aspects of Israeli life: philanthropic donations to the health, welfare, and education systems; investment in the hi-tech sector; or tourist-generated income. What all these have in common is that they are relatively easy to quantify and measure. The research conducted in this study seeks to understand the contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security – not only to its social resilience and economic prosperity, but also to its ability to define its identity and defend itself from its enemies.

One part of the study is dedicated to how Israel views the Jewish contributions it has received. Do Israelis understand the transatlantic connection, which is based first and foremost on the deep sense of commitment felt by American Jews toward Israel, which they see as the homeland of the Jewish people? And at the same time, do Israeli decision makers understand that shifting the conversation requires them to change the elements they consider when steering the ship?

This professional study is the product of the hard work of many people, and we are not able to thank everyone. However, we must acknowledge those individuals who gave of their time and expertise to listen, ask, read, and comment on the various topics at hand. We also thank the INSS researchers and staff for their professionalism

and hospitality, and especially Executive Director Maj. Gen. (ret.) Amos Yadlin, along with Assaf Orion, Shahar Eilam, and Ofer Medem Friedman, who managed and oversaw the project.

We hope this research is the first page of a new Israeli discourse about the American Jewish community – a discourse based on the Israeli understanding and recognition of the commitment American Jews have to a strong Israel, and of their ongoing contribution to its national security and society. The American Jewish community is not just a distant relative; it is a strategic asset. It is time to stop the artificial separation between the Jewish conversation and the diplomatic conversation, and to understand that the two are necessarily intertwined.

This is also why an English version of this study is important: for this conversation to be truly strategic and have an impact, everyone involved needs to be engaged. The dialogue between Jerusalem and Washington is tied to the dialogue between Jews in Israel and Jews in the US. These are not two separate and parallel relationships, but a triangular relationship in which every side is linked to the other two.



# Foreword

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Daniel B. Shapiro

Since the founding of the State of Israel – and indeed, even pre-dating its establishment – the American Jewish community has played a critical role in maintaining Israel’s national security. From help to the fledgling state to acquire critical military equipment, to advocacy before the Executive Branch and Congress for foreign aid, to calls for strong American support for Israel at the United Nations, the American Jewish community has made a significant and, in many ways, outsized contribution.

Long accustomed to such support, many Israelis, both average citizens and national security decision makers, while appreciative, may underestimate the impact of this contribution, if not take it for granted. This study aims to dissect the American Jewish community’s role and make it more accessible to Israelis, both in its historical manifestations and in the form it has taken in more recent years. Publication of this work comes against the backdrop of one of the most significant periods of tension between Israel (or at least Israeli political leaders) and the American Jewish community in many years, and a number of trends that suggest the divide is poised to widen in the years ahead.

The sources of these tensions are many. There are instances in which Israel seemingly devalues the religious identity and practices of non-Orthodox diaspora Jews. In 2016, the Israeli government endorsed an agreement, the product of years of negotiations, to create an egalitarian prayer section at the Western Wall (the Kotel), only to cancel the deal in 2017. Coalition members have advanced

legislation that would grant greater control to the Chief Rabbinate over the recognition of conversions, calling into question the validity of non-Orthodox conversions performed outside of Israel.

Other sources of tension include initiatives by the Israeli government that some see as weakening the democratic foundations of the State of Israel, such as the expansion of West Bank settlements in ways that could preclude achievement of a two-state solution with the Palestinians; moves to expel African migrants without properly assessing their claims to asylum; and, more recently, the passage of a nation-state law that many interpret to place higher priority on Israel's Jewish identity over its democratic character.

Tensions arise in the other direction as well. A claim often heard in Israel is that many American Jews place a higher priority on their liberal political values than their support for Israel, citing, for example, significant support from American Jews for the Iran nuclear deal, spearheaded by President Barack Obama, even as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described it as inadequate in face of an existential threat. Some Israelis argue that Israel now counts Evangelical Christians and Orthodox Jews as its most reliable supporters in the United States. It is suggested that demographic trends of assimilation and non-affiliation among non-Orthodox Jews will make them a declining asset in the years to come, not worthy of significant investment, and therefore Israel should diversify the sources of its support in America.

All of these tensions have been exacerbated in the era of President Donald Trump, who is deeply unpopular among American Jews, yet commands significant support among Israelis. Netanyahu's decision to align himself as closely as possible with Trump, even to the extent of declining to criticize a rising wave of anti-Semitism in America, typified by the August 2017 events in Charlottesville, has further deepened the divide.

One challenge in dealing with issues that inject stress in this relationship is the absence of established relevant mechanisms.

We lack formal institutions, or even agreed rules of the road, to help determine when and how American Jews can expect to have a voice in decisions that are rightfully made by the Israeli government, in particular on policies that affect Jews outside of Israel. Similarly, there are blurred lines regarding when it is appropriate for Israel to seek and expect the support of American Jews for its positions on American policy questions, or the methods that are legitimate for it to use to exert influence.

This study cites the 1950 understandings reached between then-Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion and then-President of the American Jewish Committee Jacob Blaustein. They agreed that American Jews had only one political allegiance – to the United States; that American Jews would not seek to meddle in Israeli politics; that Israel would not disparage American Jews who choose not to live in Israel or interfere in internal diaspora affairs; and that neither American Jews nor Israelis would speak on behalf of each other.

The framework still has value, and most American Jews and Israelis likely naturally still orient toward it. But as a formal structure, it no longer retains its prior significance. Few people in either community have heard of the Ben-Gurion-Blaustein understandings or could cite them as a principle for bilateral interaction. It has been more than half a century since they were revisited in a serious way, and today the Jewish world looks dramatically different, with just two major centers, Israel and North America, each representing nearly half the Jewish world.

During the years I served as United States Ambassador, I encountered no other American community, no interest group, no segment of American society, with a greater stake, commitment, and dedication to Israel than the Jewish community. And yet, I was often struck by the profound lack of awareness and familiarity with this community in Israel, including among Israeli political, cultural, and national security elites. And when I did encounter Israelis who had major roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis American Jewry, many had developed their expertise on-the-job and without the benefit of in-depth training or

guidance. In this regard, I quickly came to appreciate the importance of the work of the Ruderman Family Foundation, which has supported a wide range of programs to promote greater awareness of American Jewry within Israeli society.

There were instances in which US policy and Jewish community priorities coincided, as with the NGO bill the Knesset debated in 2015 and 2016. I was instructed by the State Department to engage Israeli political leaders about proposed legislation Washington viewed as harmful to democratic principles, counter to shared Israeli-American values, and about which erroneous comparisons were being made to American law. Many American Jewish communal leaders, who were also deeply alarmed, took on a similarly critical posture. Our respective engagements played out in parallel, appearing to have a significant impact on the final text of the legislation.

But on other issues, I came into contact with the community's priorities without a direct means of influence. For example, during the negotiations over egalitarian prayer at the Kotel, I spoke regularly to leaders of the American Jewish organizations participating in these talks. I was personally sympathetic to their goals, but made clear that I had no instructions to articulate a US policy position in support of any particular outcome. At the same time, I offered my analysis that there was a dearth of support, or even awareness, among Israeli Jews for an issue I knew to have great resonance among American Jews, and one very vocal bloc of Israeli opposition voices, the ultra-Orthodox. I expected Israeli politicians – like politicians everywhere – to be most responsive to the voices of their voting public and those they rely on for political survival. In that sense, the deal that was ultimately reached was counter to all domestic political logic, and the renegeing on it far more in keeping with expectations of a political system like Israel's.

In tandem, I engaged in an ongoing dialogue with most of the Israeli political leaders involved in the negotiations. Again, without advocating any particular outcome, I sought to emphasize the strong feelings that the Kotel issue aroused among American Jews, and

the tenet that the community remains a critical pillar of support for the bilateral relationship. My argument to them was that Israel's interests – including its national security interests – would be served by taking a decision that would strengthen the bonds with that pillar of support and would be harmed by taking a decision that would weaken them. American Jews who feel that their values and identity are respected by Israel, even when there are policy disagreements, will naturally be more motivated to continue to play the role they have traditionally played in advocating with the US government and Congress for measures that benefit Israel. Those who feel disrespected and devalued will be less so.

The impetus for this study is underscored by that reality. In every decade of Israel's existence, American Jews have rallied to fundraise, advocate, and lobby on behalf of policies, military acquisitions, and a US-Israel security partnership that have helped strengthen Israel's national security and ensure it can defend itself against any threat. While there have been numerous other factors contributing to Israel's security, this critical element is certainly worth preserving and strengthening.

Israeli decision makers, therefore, will want to take into account the benefits of this partnership when deciding how to address issues of religious equality that hold great sensitivity with American Jews, how to interact with the American government and society, and how to maintain the broadest base of support from the American Jewish community and the American public as the political pendulum of American politics inevitably swings in both directions. This study offers them a useful reminder of the stakes. It also provides initial recommendations for how to take those stakes into account as Israeli policies are determined, expand knowledge of the American Jewish community's contributions among Israeli national security professionals, and enable dialogue that strengthens the bonds between Israel and the community and minimizes points of disagreement.

An ongoing commitment from both sides will be necessary to carry out this work successfully.



# Preface

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Amos Yadlin

At the heart of the study undertaken by INSS with the Ruderman Family Foundation is an axis that connects two formative elements for Israel and the Jewish people. The first is American Jewry, and to a great extent the United States as well, as a component of Israel's national security. The second is the overall relationship between the world's two largest Jewish communities, in Israel and the United States, as a central factor shaping Israel's security and future. The study analyzes the developments and trends that have marked these two issues, indicates the main challenges in these areas, and recommends ways to shape the future of the State of Israel and the Jewish people.

Today, more than seventy years after its establishment, the State of Israel is stronger than ever before. While it still faces significant external threats, it has economic strength, an advanced security-technology industry, and clear military superiority over its adversaries in the region. In addition, it enjoys an enhanced strategic environment based on its regional and international standing and foreign relations, first and foremost the special relationship with the United States, which the Trump administration has brought to new levels. The United States Jewish community has also attained new heights of integration and influence within American society and its various realms – politics, economics, culture, education, and more.

That said, the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel cannot rest on their laurels, as the strategic environment is dynamic and currently challenges some of the shared basic foundations. It is

precisely today, when they are so strong, that the two largest Jewish communities face significant internal trials that relate first and foremost to their identity and purpose: Israel is looking for the right balance among the different groups that comprise Israeli society, and against the backdrop of the continued conflict with the Palestinians, seeks to manage the tensions between its Jewish and democratic natures. For its part, the Jewish community in the United States faces the challenges of its continued existence, cohesion, and future during a period of intergenerational transition, while seeking to find the balance between retaining its unique Jewish characteristics and demonstrating openness and integration within American society.

The relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community has been a central anchor in the ability of both communities to develop and prosper over the past 70 years, and it is vital not only to Israel's national security, but to that of the entire Jewish people. It was the American Jewish community that helped the young State of Israel stand on its own, and convinced the American public and its elected officials to establish the special relationship with Israel, which has no match and is irreplaceable. Today, the two communities are in need of an updated joint plan based on a profound understanding of how each can help the other meet the challenges of the present and the future.

Both in Israel and within American Jewry, the current generation has witnessed increasing trends of distance and alienation, weakened connections and sense of belonging, and the decline of mutual responsibility, care, involvement, and concern for the very relationship between the two communities. These trends join the challenges facing the continuity and influence of the American Jewish community. They are rooted primarily in long term demographic and social processes on the one hand, and current political considerations in Israel, the United States, and the American Jewish community on the other hand. However, they also stem from significant lapses in the existing efforts to bridge between the communities, including mutual ignorance, gaps in knowledge and awareness, and the scarcity

and weakness of dialogue mechanisms. The trends of increasing distance between the communities bear long term consequences for Israel's national security and the security of the entire Jewish people, for Israel's purpose and identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and for the internal cohesion and resilience of the Jewish communities in the United States and Israeli society.

The Trump era highlights the dilemmas before us. On the one hand, the President has stood by Israel in a way that is unprecedented. On the other hand, the majority of American Jews oppose him, his policies, and his conduct. In this reality, Israel's short term interests are advanced at the cost of aggravated tensions with American Jewry and undermined relations with the Democratic Party and its supporters in a way that threatens long term bipartisan support for Israel – a vital asset, perhaps the most important one at the base of the special relationship between the two countries.

Israel must help American Jews maintain and even strengthen Israel's role in their identity and their connection with Israel, and help them with the challenges of Jewish continuity and with the threats that come from the increase in anti-Semitism and delegitimization of the State of Israel. The American Jewish community for its part must strengthen its support for Israel and help it maintain its purpose and its identity within the framework of a partnership of values and joint action.

It is common to point out the troubling trends in the American Jewish connection to Israel, especially among the younger generation. However, there are two sides to this coin: even though the Israeli leadership is aware of the importance of the connection with diaspora Jewry, this is generally not reflected in its policy and actions, some of which even contribute to undermining these ties. Systematic, long term change in the State of Israel's stance toward American Jewry requires, first of all, a deep, fundamental change in the Israeli public's conceptions and attitudes, so that the political leadership encounters a public for whom this is important, and this "foreign" issue becomes an internal issue. This is an integrated challenge for

both the leadership and the public, for both Israel and American Jewry independently, and for both of the communities together.

The response to this challenge requires an ongoing, broad process of consolidating the relationship between these two communities and shaping their identity and their future, by increasing mutual awareness and familiarity, along with meaningful joint activity. Each side must see itself as responsible for the other and for how it copes with the challenges it faces. Such a process should be based on several levels: education, experiences, joint meetings, dialogue and discourse, a shared narrative, mutual involvement, and a commitment to joint action. On all of these levels considerable activity already exists today, but it is mostly diffuse, sometimes limited in scope, and insufficient.

This kind of national project requires large scale organization based on the commitment and partnership of many bodies – the State of Israel’s institutions and systems (the President, Knesset, and government); public and sectoral leadership, together with civil society organizations in Israel; Jewish national institutions (with an emphasis on the Jewish Agency); the leadership of the Jewish communities in the United States and its major organizations; and leaders and those with influence among American Jewry. This broad partnership would create an organizing platform – a “national directorate” – that would provide the rationale, direction, resources, and system-wide approach for all of the relevant programs and projects. Only such a significant and joint process by the two communities can stop the negative trends that have arisen and ensure their security and future.

I would like to thank Shira and Jay Ruderman, the heads of the Ruderman Family Foundation, who launched the research study and enabled it to come to fruition. The study, published in full in Hebrew in December 2018, aims first and foremost to serve as a knowledge base and a foundation for discussion of the relationship between Israel and American Jewry as a national security issue, for decision makers in Israel, its foreign affairs and defense establishments, and the public at large. In addition, the study offers a comprehensive

conceptual framework for what is required by the respective sectors as a response to the strategic challenges facing the State of Israel, the American Jewish community, and the entire Jewish people. I believe that the approach presented in this study can serve as a good starting point for the path forward, and especially for the process of detailed planning that will lay the foundations for implementing the recommendations and for meaningful, ongoing joint action by the two largest and most significant Jewish communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



# Introduction to the Research

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Assaf Orion and Shahar Eilam

*The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security* focuses primarily on the question: what is the level of awareness in Israel – and especially among the circle of decision makers in the fields of security and foreign affairs – of the contribution of the American Jewish community toward Israel's national security? The research question was formulated at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) together with the Ruderman Family Foundation, which initiated the study. The Ruderman Family Foundation works to strengthen the familiarity of the Israeli public in general, and Israeli decision makers in particular, with the American Jewish community.

Security issues are high on the Israeli public agenda and play a major role in decision making in Israel. Thus, the purpose of this study is to help increase public and institutional awareness in Israel regarding the importance of the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community as an element of Israel's national security. Although it is aimed first and foremost at Israeli audiences, we believe that this study also has value for leaderships and audiences within the American Jewish community.

The research project was run by a team of researchers at INSS, began its work in early 2017, and continued for the following year and a half. The concluding publication draws from many written sources that discuss various aspects of the areas of study as well as some 60 meetings and interviews conducted with experts and current and former position-holders. This is the place to thank the people who

dedicated their time and contributed from their experience and understanding to the research project.

From the very first stages of our work, we understood that the research question explores only a part of the overall relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community (and to a certain extent, between Israel and diaspora Jewry as a whole). With Israel the nation-state of the Jewish people, clearly there is a lot more to this relationship than the contribution of American Jewry to Israel's national security. Thus, we chose to expand the boundaries of the study and tackle the issue through attention to broader issues at the base of the relationship between the communities. This discussion was carried out from the perspective of Israel's national security and based on the premise that being the nation-state of the Jewish people requires Israel to relate to the security of the nation (that is, the security of the Jewish people), and involves mutual commitment of Israel toward diaspora Jewry and of the Jewish communities in the world toward Israel.

The English version of the study that follows presents the main insights of the research and our recommendations for the future. The complete version, published in Hebrew in December 2018, includes the research chapters in two sections. The first section deals with the connections and relations between Israel and American Jewry. The main characteristics of the American Jewish community are presented, followed by a historical overview of the relationship and the factors that influence it from the perspective of two different researchers, one an American Jew and the other an Israeli. Following this is a review of philanthropy in the American Jewish community – a field that reflects the changes underway in the community and its relationship with Israel.

The study's central research question, discussed in the second section, is broken down as follows: first, we define the elements of Israel's national security; second, we examine the contribution of the United States to Israel's national security; third, we analyze the contribution of the American Jewish community to the relationship

between Israel and the United States and to additional and wider contexts relating to Israel's national security; and finally, we discuss the attitudes and level of awareness of different sectors in Israel regarding the American Jewish community and its contribution to national security, and examine the correlation between the level of awareness and the actual conduct and policy of decision makers.

In our understanding, there is great importance to the integration of the two perspectives discussed in this study. First, the contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security is examined. In addition, the trends in the mutual relationship between the two communities and their long term consequences for Israel's national security and for the future of both the Jewish people and the Zionist project are examined.

The research was conducted during a period of increasing warnings of the outbreak of a crisis in relations between Israel and American Jews – especially in light of the Israeli government's decisions regarding the conversion law and the Western Wall compromise. Without diminishing the importance of these events, this is not the first crisis in the relations and will not be the last. Although there is reference to recent developments, and even though we used them to highlight the perspectives and attitudes of relevant bodies, we attempted to focus on the deeper trends and long term implications so that the study's conclusions and recommendations can assist in a profound and systematic address of these fundamental issues.

Members of the research project team included: Brig. Gen. (res.) Assaf Orion – head of the project; Lt. Col. (res.) Shahar Eilam – manager of the project; Prof. Zaki Shalom; Dr. Scott Lasensky; Dr. Michal Hatuel-Radoshitzky; and Adv. Ofer Medem-Friedman. Dr. Hanna Shaul Bar Nissim was an external contributor. Senior advisors included former US Ambassador Daniel Shapiro and Dr. Yehuda Ben Meir. Shahar Cohen, Gideon Kafri, and Mika Fuchs were interns working on the project.



# The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security: Main Insights and Policy Recommendations

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Assaf Orion and Shahar Eilam

Alienation between Israel and the Jewish community in the United States has long term ramifications for Israel's national security; Israel's identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people; the security of the entire Jewish people, and the internal cohesion of Jewish communities in the United States and Israel alike. The following pages present the central insights of a comprehensive research study conducted in 2017-2018 by INSS in cooperation with the Ruderman Family Foundation, and published in a 300-page book in Hebrew, on the relations between the two communities from a national security prism. We begin by analyzing the contribution of the Jewish community in the United States to Israel's national security, and in the second part, move to discuss the relationship between the two entities. In the third section, we relate to the strategic problem that surfaced from the research findings and propose an organizing concept for a broad systemic response. The research concludes with policy recommendations, including focused suggestions for the decision makers in Israel, its foreign affairs and defense systems, and the leadership of US Jewry.

We hope that the approach presented herein will serve as a starting point for the road ahead, and for a detailed planning process at the base of future action by both communities.



Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) at the AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., March 26, 2019. Photo: Andrew Harrer/Bloomberg via Getty Images

### **The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security**

Since its establishment, the State of Israel has had unique security needs stemming from its physical inferiority in the hostile Arab and Muslim area in which it exists. In order to contend with its fundamental geographic, demographic, political, and economic resources asymmetry, Israel developed a unique security concept leveraging its human and economic assets to establish a qualitative technological-security edge over its rivals and to attain regional freedom of operation, while leveraging its network of connections and relations both in the international and regional arenas.

The implementation of Israel's security concept requires an alternative strategic depth compensating for its lack of physical strategic depth, enabling it to expand the resource and support base needed to advance its standing and its goals both regionally and internationally, and to afford it breathing space in both tangible and "soft" dimensions. The United States superpower support is the main pillar in Israel's strategic depth, enabling it to safeguard its existence and security and to promote its goals. The Jewish people in the diaspora, and

particularly the Jewish community in the United States, are a critical component of Israel's strategic depth, as a human and resource reserve, as a support base for international legitimacy, and as a key player in public and political affairs.

Although there is a tendency to attribute the influential capability of the Jewish community in the United States to the power of the pro-Israeli lobby and its influence on Capitol Hill and in the White House, pro-Israel lobbying organizations are only one part of a well-established organizational and community infrastructure. In essence, people, organizations, and communities who support Israel act, separately or in concert, to support Israel in the United States and in the international system. The ability to organize in such a manner is perhaps related to the American Jewish community's contribution to the United States in the public, political, economic, and cultural spheres. Noteworthy in this respect is that Jewish representation and contribution to the United States establishment far surpasses the community's ratio within the general American population (only about 2 percent of all residents of the United States).

The American Jewish community's contribution to the fortification of the relationship between Israel and the United States should not be measured by speculations about the influence of Jews on decision making processes in the administration or in the Congress, but rather by the Jewish community's ability, in reaching out to the United States leadership and public at large, to emphasize the foundation of values and interests shared by both countries. The connection

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between Israel and the American Jewish community, and the mere perception of the American Jewish community as influential in Washington, can also be argued to contribute to Israel's security and to its international standing. This is reflected, inter alia, by the attempts of countries and international players to develop and strengthen their connections with Israel as a means to obtain a foothold and influence in the United States (i.e., the common perception that "the road to Washington passes through Jerusalem").

Beyond this, an important and tangible contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security can be found in this community's vast philanthropic undertaking. Although Jewish American philanthropy was Israel's lifeline in Israel's state-building period, nowadays contributions continue to be significant and are assessed at an annual \$2 billion. To exemplify, in recent decades, this philanthropy played a substantial part in the development of the educational and health sectors in Israel, and more recently in strengthening Israel's civil society.

As such, the American Jewish community can be said to contribute to the following components of Israel's national security:

1. **Fortifying the "special relations" and the strategic cooperation with the United States** by emphasizing the shared values and interests between the countries; working to increase the general public's knowledge and support for Israel, and lobbying for policies that will not peril Israel's national security.
2. **Highlighting the importance of US commitment to Israel's security.** This, arguably, indirectly contributes to US military assistance to Israel, including the sustaining of Israel's qualitative military edge (QME).
3. **Contributing to strengthening Israel's international and regional standing, in part by fighting against Israel's delegitimization.** This includes addressing activities geared toward deepening the rift between Israel and diaspora Jewry, and undermining the security of Jews outside of Israel.



Friends of the IDF Western Region Gala, Beverly Hills, California, November 3, 2018. Photo: Michael Kovac/WireImage

4. **Reinforcing Israel's economic, scientific, and technological power**, through investments, trade, and the promotion of economic cooperative efforts with Israel and Israeli corporations.
5. **Buttressing Israel's functional and social resilience**, through philanthropic activities and the initiation of projects in Israel.

Simultaneously, however, there has been a gradual decline in the contribution of the American Jewish community to Israel's national security. We relate this erosion to the following causes:

1. Polarization of **American society and the US political system** even on issues that are perceived to have been consensual over decades, such as support for Israel by both political parties.
2. **The slow erosion of the United States' international standing in recent years.** The rise of China, Russia's return to the global arena, and the United States policy of shifting focus to domestic issues at the expense of international issues are indicative of a trend of transition from the unipolar post-Cold War era to a multipolar world.

3. **Israel is stronger than ever and is gradually reducing its dependence** on the United States and its Jewish community, particularly with respect to direct financial support. Nevertheless, there appears to be no substitute for the United States' strategic, political, and security support of Israel, both nowadays and in the foreseeable future.
4. **In recent decades, the Jewish communities in Israel and in the United States have developed in opposite directions in terms of politics, values, and religion.** In Israel, the religious parties, particularly the Orthodox sector, and the right wing political camp are gradually strengthening, whereas in the United States the Jewish community is primarily non-Orthodox (with large Reform and Conservative denominations), has pluralist stances toward religiosity, and traditionally votes for the more liberal Democratic party. These trends, coupled with the continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the overt affinity between Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, and the broad support that President Trump's policies receive among the Israeli public have become thorny for Jewish Americans.

Although disagreements and tensions have been a regular feature of the relations between Israel and the Jewish community in the United States over the past 70 years, nowadays, these frictions have amounted to the erosion of the pro-Zionist and pro-Israeli consensus among Jewish Americans. To this must be added the fracturing of bipartisan support for the State of Israel; the gradual loss of young Americans' support for Israel, mainly among the liberal-progressives, and the fact that emerging communities, such as the Hispanics and the Afro-Americans, are either oblivious to Israel or tend not to support it. These trends are liable to lead to an erosion of the US public and political support for Israel in the medium to long term.

In recent years, there has been a growing tendency in Israel to perceive the Evangelical community in the United States (numbering about eighty million people) as a possible alternative base of support to

compensate for the rift between Israel and the American Jewish community. Evangelical Christians constitute President Trump's largest political base, and most of them are also enthusiastic supporters of the State of Israel. Perceiving the Evangelical community as a substitute to the Jewish community's support is perceived as "abandoning" the American Jewish community, with all the ramifications that such a policy entails for Israel's mission and identity as the homeland of the Jewish people (thus transforming the state to "the state of the Israeli people"). Moreover, the Evangelical alternative cannot provide a response to Israel's greatest challenge in the United States – the erosion of its base of support among liberal-progressive populations, whose numbers and power are steadily growing. In fact, it is the American Jewish community, which is largely rooted in the liberal, progressive camp that can potentially mediate and assist Israel in reaching out to these communities.

Israel's relationship with America's Jewish community is, therefore, crucial not only by virtue of Israel's historic moral commitment to the Jewish people but also due to the substantial ramifications that it has on Israel's identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people, on Israel's national security, and on the future and the existence of the Jewish people as a whole. Moreover, the power and standing of the Jewish community in the United States and its relationship with Israel are a necessary condition for preserving the "special relations" between Israel and the United States.

Nowadays, external threats can be perceived as converging toward three focal points with relevance to the Jewish people: the security of Jews in the diaspora; the cohesion between Israel and diaspora Jewry; and Israel's legitimacy as the state of the Jewish people. The connection between rising anti-

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**The power and standing of the Jewish community in the United States and its relationship with Israel are a necessary condition for preserving the "special relations" between Israel and the United States.**

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Semitism, felt mainly by diaspora Jews, and the phenomenon of the delegitimization of Israel are two challenges that encompass opportunities to revive cooperative efforts between Israel and the American Jewish community toward a joint cause.

### **The Relations between the Communities**

The relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community is tied to deep trends and changes in the international system, Israel, and the United States, and in each of the two communities.

Our working assumption is that we live in a dynamic world, with tensions between trends, where events, actions, and policies in the short and medium term affect deep-rooted trends in the long term, and we perceive current trends as malleable and non-deterministic.

#### *The Global and Regional Environment*

Nowadays, humankind is caught between a universalist approach and values, such as liberalism and globalization, and a particularistic approach and values, such as nationalism. This tension creates conflicting trends of seclusion and the building of walls on the one hand and of openness and the building of bridges on the other hand, with many societies vacillating between the two polar opposites.

The State of Israel was established on the basis of a delicate balance between its being a particularistic nation-state of the Jewish people and its being a democracy based on universal values of liberty, justice, and equality. Similarly to other minority groups, the Jewish community in the United States constantly needs to balance between preserving the uniqueness of the community and its particularistic identity, and its integration and adoption of universal values characteristic of American society at large.

This internal challenge takes place in a larger ecosystem typified by global trends of radicalization; the penetration of ideological fringe groups into mainstream discourse, and social, ideological, and political polarization. The strengthening of the radicals challenges

the steadfastness of democracy and its institutions in Israel, the United States, and many other countries around the world.

One of the byproducts of the general polarization of the American public and political system is the breaking of the historic consensus and bipartisan support on Israel-related issues. While support for Israel among the conservative-Republican population in the United States appears to strengthen, it appears to be dropping among liberal-Democratic groups.

The incumbencies of President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu have brought the relationship between the United States and Israel to new heights. Nevertheless, the deep-seated and troubling trends in American society may challenge the nature of the relations between the two countries and traditional American support of Israel. It is precisely this reality that emphasizes the importance of the Jewish community in the United States, as a community that strives to sustain broad support for Israel even in polarizing times.

### *The Internal Environment*

While the Jewish community in the United States is a small minority, it is well-established and has successfully integrated into American society where equal opportunities and individual liberties are at the state's core. The secret to the Jewish community's success is its ability to integrate into the highest echelons of American society through education, excellence, and hard work – all the while preserving (to differing extents) its unique communal characteristics. A central challenge associated with Jewish integration is the erosion of Jewish identity and the significant rise in assimilation of American Jews

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(the rate of intermarriage is almost 60 percent since the turn of the century), posing a threat to the community's sustainment and cohesion. Addressing this challenge requires a perpetual balancing act between preserving the community's Jewish characteristics on the one hand and safeguarding its openness and integration into American society at-large on the other.

A prominent feature of America's Jewish community is its diverse and pluralistic (although sometimes divisive) nature, encompassing multiple religious and ideological movements, and independent and differentiated local communities. In general, Jewish Americans are mostly non-Orthodox (about 90 percent of the entire community), and tend to hold liberal or moderate viewpoints and political positions that are typical of the political center-left (about 70 percent traditionally support the Democratic party). Polls also show that most Jewish Americans have an emotional connection to Israel (about 70 percent) and perceive this connection to be a component of their Jewish identity (about 85 percent).<sup>1</sup>

Another demographic trend is the gradual shrinking of the Jewish Conservative and Reform movements in the United States, alongside a rise in the number of Orthodox Jews on the one end, and Jews who do not identify with any religious denomination on the other end. Alienation from Jewish life, characterizing mainly millennials, is accompanied by waning community involvement and a minimal sense of connection to Israel. Simultaneously, in other cases where the connection to Israel is cultivated and preserved, the result is growing criticism, or estrangement and hostility toward Israel. The weakening of the community's established infrastructure and a generational shift add to the complex challenges it is facing.

As opposed to the Jewish community in the United States, Jewish Israelis have an absolute majority in their country. Israel's location in a hostile region coupled with the longstanding Jewish psyche of

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1 The data is based on Pew Research (2013): A Portrait of Jewish Americans, Pew Research Center, October 2013, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey>.

a persecuted people has resulted in heightened importance related to security and defense. Notwithstanding this ethos, Israel's economic prosperity and military superiority have enabled the public discourse to open up to deliberating challenges in the domestic arena, including social disparities and polarization among Israelis – positioning these as challenges relating to national security. Central challenges to the State of Israel nowadays, beyond external security threats, are associated with the tension between its being a Jewish state and a democracy; the repercussions of the continuing conflict with the Palestinians, and finding the balance between different sectors of Israeli society (i.e., the “four tribes” model described by Israel's President Reuven Rivlin: the ultra-Orthodox sector, the national-Zionist religious sector, the secular sector, and the Arab sector).

Israeli society, similar to American society, is heterogeneous and diverse, but unlike the American Jewish community, there is little representation of non-Orthodox denominations, and a large group of Jews in Israel is secular (about 45 percent). On the political axis, Jewish Israelis are more conservative than Jewish Americans and mostly support center-right political stances. The two communities also differ in terms of demographics, with the Jewish population in Israel significantly growing.

Notwithstanding these contrasting trends, the two communities have much in common: both are prosperous and successful, and both are encountering internal predicaments concerning their identity and purpose: for Jews in Israel – preserving and updating the Zionist vision as a foundation

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**Both the American Jewish community and Israeli society are encountering internal predicaments concerning their identity and purpose: for Jews in Israel – preserving and updating the Zionist vision as a foundation for the future of the Jewish and democratic state; for Jews in the United States – preserving and updating their Jewish identity as a foundation for the continuity of the community.**

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pluralism; the issue of **shared values**, at the center of which are the values of liberal democracy, and primarily, the rights of minorities and individual liberties; and the issue of **Israel's character as a state striving for peace**, at the crux of which is the deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Israel's policies vis-à-vis the territories.

In addition, Israelis to a large extent perceive Israel as the center of the Jewish people and the Jewish world, with the diaspora perceived as Israel's periphery. In contrast, the American Jewish community is more inclined to perceive the relations between the two Jewish centers (in Israel and in the United States) as reciprocal and symmetrical. There are historic tensions and grudges on both sides, with feelings of mutual patronage and underlying tensions between the short term instrumental approach according to which the relations provide Israel with immediate advantages in capital, support, and influence; and the long term value-based approach that scrutinizes these relations through introspection on the future of the Jewish people.

Hence, among the conceptual challenges that require attention, discourse, and ultimately a response are the following issues:

1. **The perception among some constituencies of Jews in Israel (primarily the religious-Zionists)** that the American Jewish community is of lessening importance and relevance to Israel. This is because of the alienation that Reform and Conservative Jews feel toward Israel; this constituency's declining size (owing to assimilation); and the paradigm that Israel's natural partner in the United States is the Evangelical Christian community.
2. **The perception among the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish community in Israel** that negates the "Jewishness" of non-Orthodox Jewish movements in the United States and considers them the greatest threat to the survival of the Jewish people.
3. **The perception among some American Jewish groups** whereby Israel is distancing itself from their values and worldviews and thus no longer has a place as a component in their identity. This implies, at a minimum, a disregard for Israel and, at most,

alienation from it to the point of objecting to Israel's existence in its current format as the homeland of the Jewish people.

The changes in attitudes are extremely disturbing. It appears that American Jews are finding it increasingly difficult to separate their emotional connection to the State of Israel from their political positions regarding the Israeli government's policies. Some Jews in the United States have developed harsh feelings toward Israel, to the point that Israel has become a divisive factor and a source of major controversy within the American Jewish community. As we close the second decade of the twenty-first century, it appears that Jewish Americans and Israelis have reached a seminal moment in the relationship, reflective of the future of their communities. While each community is an unprecedented success story, both are experiencing wide disparities in their paths and identities; are preoccupied with internal issues; and are moving in different directions.

### **From a Lack of Familiarity to Policy-Shaping**

Evident in both Jewish communities – mainly in Israel, but also in the United States – is the lack of familiarity and considerable ignorance regarding one another. Approximately half of American

**Approximately half of American Jews have never visited Israel, and the community's knowledge of Israel is generally poor. In Israel, most Jews feel a sense of shared fate and fundamental responsibility for diaspora Jewry, and yet, the average Israeli does not learn about American Jewry and is unfamiliar with its characteristics or heritage.**

Jews have never visited Israel, and the community's knowledge of Israel is generally poor. In Israel, most Jews feel a sense of shared fate and fundamental responsibility for diaspora Jewry, and yet, the average Israeli does not learn about American Jewry and is unfamiliar with its characteristics or heritage. Most of the Israeli public respects and appreciates the relations with the United States and its contribution to Israel's national security but does not attribute any significant role to the

American Jewish community in strengthening these relations or in contributing to Israel's security. Israeli media coverage and public discourse about diaspora Jewry in general, and American Jewry in particular, are relatively sparse – generally triggered by tensions and crises, and completely disconnected from discourse regarding national security. This is despite the fact that certain professional circles, including individuals in the decision making echelon in Israel, are well aware of the importance that America's Jewish community has for Israel; and despite the reasonable expectation that the Israeli security establishment would have included American Jewry as a consideration in the state's national security paradigm. These trends can perhaps be explained by the fact that Israel's policy agenda is mostly dominated by domestic issues, and the many challenges that pose more immediate and tangible threats. Importantly, there is no official, semi-official, or non-government entity in Israel that represents the interests of the American Jewish community or of diaspora Jewry in general in state decision making processes, particularly on issues without direct connection to the relations between the two communities.

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### **The Strategic Problem**

Our research illustrates that the Jewish community in the United States has made instrumental contributions to the establishment of the State of Israel, its formation, development, and national security. We perceive the future of this community and its connection to Israel to be crucial components of Israel's mission as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and to the national security of the Jewish people as a whole.

**We are witnessing growing alienation and estrangement between the two communities, and an unraveling of the mutual responsibility, concern, and engagement. This is in addition to the challenge of the continuing existence of a strong, influential and cohesive Jewish community in the United States in the future.**

We are witnessing growing alienation and estrangement between the two communities, and an unraveling of the mutual responsibility, concern, and engagement. This is in addition to the challenge of the continuing existence of a strong, influential and cohesive Jewish community in the United States in the future.

If these trends continue, they are likely to generate a series of medium and long term risks to the State of Israel and to the Jewish people:

1. **Damage to Israel's special relationship with the United States.**
2. **Jeopardizing of the purpose, character, and identity of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.** To a great extent, these elements depend upon the intensity of Israel's connection with the Jewish communities in the diaspora, particularly in the United States, and upon the extent of these communities' support of Israel.
3. **Negative impact on American Jewry's contribution to Israel's national security,** and more specifically to Israel's strategic depth, which compensates for its size constraints and expands its security margins and defensive freedom of action. American Jewry constitutes a large human reserve and a foundation of value-based, public, economic, and political support for the State of Israel, both within the United States and in the international arena.
4. **A threat to the cohesiveness of the global Jewish community to the point of a break in the relations between its two major centers** in Israel and in the United States, along with major challenges facing each community separately.

Because the leadership echelon in Israel is cognizant of the importance of the connection with diaspora Jewry but prioritizes what is happening in Israel itself, a systemic and long term change in the attitude toward United States Jewry necessitates a profound change in the mindsets of the Israeli public. This is based on the assumption that should the political leadership grasp this issue as important to its electorate, its weight in national decision making processes will increase.

Nowadays, various approaches, actions, and methods are either discussed or implemented in order to mitigate the gaps and provide a response to the problems specified above. An effective response will require strategic, systemic, and long term efforts. To this end, we present a comprehensive ideological framework based on a **strategic goal**

that defines the desired future, followed by an **organizing concept** that oversees the course of action in service of the strategic goal.

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### **The Strategic Goal and the Organizing Concept**

The strategic goal: **preserving, strengthening, and fortifying the relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community, as a crucial component of Israel's national security, the future and security of the Jewish people, and the cohesiveness of Jewish communities in the United States and Israel.**

The organizing concept: **systemic, ongoing, coordinated, and joint action by the State of Israel, Israeli civil society, and the Jewish community in the United States, to rehabilitate the strong relations between the two communities and mutually help one another contend with internal challenges.**

This systemic course of action should include the following layers, which will be adjusted to the characteristics of the communities and the various groups comprising them:

1. Promoting education to reinforce mutual awareness, familiarity, and knowledge.
2. Organizing personal and group experiences (particularly visits and delegations) to gain familiarity, develop awareness, and shape identity.
3. Increasing the number of joint encounters as a means to forge contacts, shape identity, and acquire shared experiences.
4. Institutionalizing and expanding channels of official and informal dialogue and consultations.
5. Designing common goals and identity components, and cultivating joint narratives.
6. Harnessing people for joint action on the local, sectoral, and national levels.

These measures should particularly target millennials of both communities, by integrating the following components:

1. Inter-generational discourse and inter-community discourse.
2. The establishment of institutionalized frameworks for the leaderships of both sides, to direct efforts, channel resources, and build suitable communication platforms to facilitate ongoing communication between and within the two communities.
3. Activities at the national, sectoral, local, and inter-personal levels.
4. Tangible dimensions combined with online activities.

A broad and systemic course of action of this type should be a guiding, synchronizing, connecting, and enabling entity in terms of resources and infrastructure. It requires leadership by persons (officials and civil society) with wide-scale public and political recognition on both

sides of the ocean and with the capability of serving as a source of inspiration for scattered efforts in this field.

One possible format is a steering committee that will lead the joint action, representing broad population segments with assistance from a designated headquarters or “national administration.” Given such a structure, efforts must continue to be carried out in a dispersed manner through existing organizations, alongside new ones.

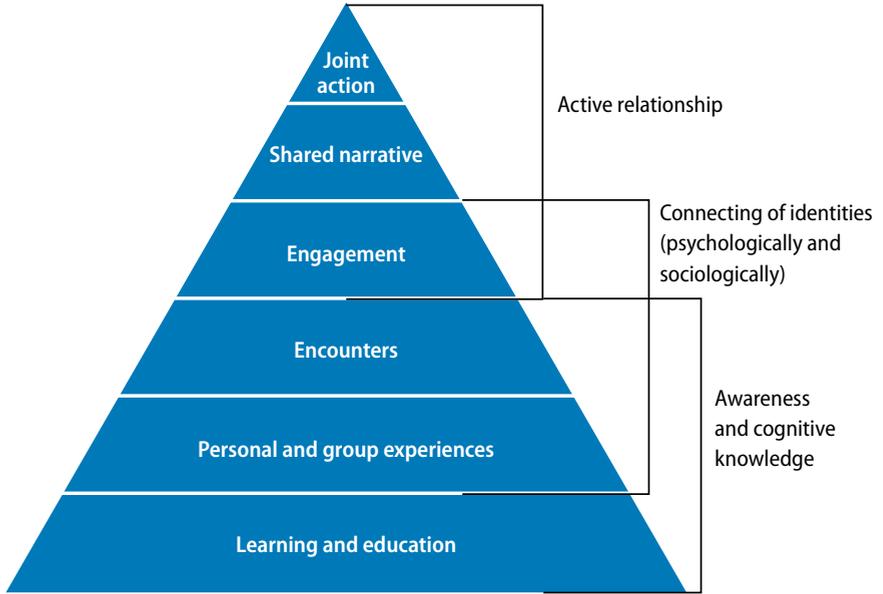
We propose the following basic principles as a compass for moving forward:

1. Jewish and democratic Israel is the national homeland of the entire Jewish people.
2. The Jewish people will continue living in independent Jewish communities in the diaspora.
3. Israel’s connection to Jewish communities in the diaspora is essential to the existence and future of the Jewish people.
4. Jewish peoplehood (the spectrum of collective identities that reflects a belonging to the Jewish people) is a wide and open tent with room for a variety of voices with a shared foundation.
5. All of the above requires mutual acquaintance, concern, responsibility and engagement.

**A broad and systemic course of action should be a guiding, synchronizing, connecting, and enabling entity in terms of resources and infrastructure. It requires leadership with wide-scale public and political recognition on both sides of the ocean and with the capability of serving as a source of inspiration for scattered efforts in this field.**

### **Recommendations for Action**

Transforming the strategic goal and the organizing concept into a comprehensive, detailed action plan requires additional planning



**Figure 1:** Layers required to build a strong relationship between the Jewish communities

work that exceeds the scope of the undertaken study. Nevertheless, in this section we propose action according to the abovementioned layers – education, encounters, dialogue, and joint activities – for decision makers in both Israel and the leadership of the Jewish community in the United States.

### *Education*

At issue is the promotion of curricula, training, ongoing educational courses, and research projects in Israel and the United States, within and outside of the formal education system. Target constituents for educational activities are millennials and decision makers:

1. **In Israel** – the state’s formal education, for all ages, should include a component about Jewish peoplehood; thriving Jewish communities; similarities and differences within them and between them and Israeli society; and the importance of the relations with

them for the continuing existence of the Jewish people. Beyond the formal education system, this should be incorporated into youth movements and programs for professionals in the public sector (the National Security Council, the foreign affairs and security establishment, and more). In implementing these educational units, partnering with educators and experts from the United States and from additional Jewish communities in the diaspora will have added value.

2. **In the United States** – educational programs should be part of the Jewish education system (mainly Jewish day schools), in cooperation with professionals from Israel. Programs should focus on Israeli history, society and culture, and Hebrew language classes. The challenge here is to develop and preserve the Zionist narrative and the connection of American Jews to Israel through inculcating the importance of Israel to their Jewish identity and through education about Israel’s challenges (inter alia, as preparation for coping with anti-Israeli activities on college campuses in the United States).
3. **Together** – expanding joint study programs, reciprocal visits, and shared projects, such as twinning of schools, joint online classes, joint educational activities in youth movements, student exchange programs, and US-Israel teacher exchange programs.

### *Encounters*

At issue is an expansion of channels for meeting and of frameworks for dialogue between Israelis and American Jews. Inter-personal communication as part of a meaningful personal experience is extremely important for strengthening relations and mitigating indifference and alienation.

Although successful encounters and delegations promoting Israel among young American Jews are well underway (e.g., the Taglit and Masa programs), we propose the following improvements and additions:

1. "Taglit America" for Israeli adolescents to visit Jewish communities in the United States, perhaps based on the infrastructure of Jewish summer camps in the United States.
2. Expanding academic programs and increasing scholarships that fund Israelis' academic education in the United States; student exchange programs for annual/semester studies.
3. Cultivating and strengthening alumni networks of existing programs (namely Taglit and Masa), for example, through reciprocal meetings of Taglit alumni in the United States; online, and personalized activities.
4. Enhancing the delegation projects (in both directions) according to targeted and strategic population segments.
5. Expanding meetings within the frameworks of twinned communities and twinned schools.
6. Use of technological links and global networks to innovate mutual dialogue through utilizing the fact that the young generations in both communities conduct their lives and shape their identities, connections, and experiences through these means.

### *Dialogue*

At issue are the formulation of joint mechanisms and the building of organizational, resource, and methodological infrastructure that will enable dialogue and consultations, alongside the design, planning, decision making, and performance processes for dealing with shared issues and projects, both at the leadership and grassroots levels.

Fruitful dialogue, based on open discussions regarding each side's sensitivities, requires mechanisms for conveying and receiving criticism; designated boundaries of legitimate conversation, and the identification of both common ground and issues in dispute.



Celebrate Israel Parade in New York City, June 5, 2011. Photo: Michael Stewart/WireImage

Our impression is that official frameworks of dialogue suffer from multiple shortcomings. To this end, we propose a variety of possible formats:

1. A forum under the auspices of the President of Israel and the head of the Jewish Agency.
2. An institutionalized channel between Israel's Prime Minister and the Jewish leadership in the United States.
3. A defined role for the Israeli Minister for Diaspora Affairs and for additional relevant ministers in processes of periodic, institutionalized dialogue with the Jewish communities.
4. A joint forum comprised of Knesset members and representatives of the Jewish community in the United States.
5. A joint entity (forum/committee/headquarters) that will engage in providing advice, planning, and performance-checking.

### *Narratives*

It is nearly impossible to maintain a close relationship when each party is preoccupied with its internal affairs, and therefore important that the sides develop a sense of shared fate. While a shared historic heritage is important, what is needed is the co-authoring of current shared stories as a basis for a shared vision and mission. As such, a joint pact may be valuable, both as an educational foundation and as a compass for concrete activities.

Beyond these proposed activities, we recommend initiating joint projects as a response to broad national issues and to the shared sectoral and local needs. The venture “Tikva Israelit – Israeli Hope” initiated by the President of Israel, which serves as an umbrella organization for activities and the creation of a “new Israeli order” by establishing a partnership between the various segments of Israeli society, can serve as a model (and perhaps even as a host) for such activities.

Other options for creating channels and joint spheres of action within the framework of national, sectoral, and local agendas are:

1. Young Israeli and American Jews joining forces in the battle against anti-Semitism and against efforts to delegitimize Israel in the United States and in other countries around the world.
2. Joint efforts to address the challenges of the continuity of the Jewish communities in the United States.
3. Joint *tikkun olam* projects in Israel, in the United States, and throughout the world.
4. Promotion of religious pluralism in Israel.
5. Promotion of minority rights in Israel and in the United States.
6. Sectoral and local projects, such as joint theme-related communities (art, academia, media, and the like) and twinned local communities.

### *Israeli Policy-Shapers*

The directions for action that our study recommends require an extensive national plan. A precondition to formulating and implementing such a plan is broad support from the Israeli government, national institutions, and civil society organizations. The expansion of the activities of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs in recent years and the addition of budgets for the purpose of assisting Jewish communities in the diaspora are welcome measures. However, the challenges we face require far more extensive actions, both in Israel and across the ocean.

Israeli policies and public discourse have a tremendous impact on the lives of American Jewry and on their perceptions and positions vis-à-vis Israel. These are not only issues that directly concern them but also affect their Jewish identity and their moral and emotional identification with Israel. As such, national decision making processes in Israel, not only on issues that directly address diaspora Jewry, require awareness and sensitivity as well as a built-in mechanism which considers policies' ramifications on diaspora Jewry and on Israel's relations with them. The situation today is far from satisfactory and contributes to exacerbating the strategic problem.

Consequently, we recommend the establishment of an advisory and coordinating body that will engage in the subject of the relations with diaspora Jewry, for example, in the National Security Council, with the assistance of the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs, and a senior ministerial echelon to take permanent responsibility over the matter.

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### *Foreign Affairs and Security Establishments*

Our study proposes that the State of Israel's relationship with the Jewish community in the United States be treated as a major asset to Israel's national security. Recommended directions for action in this field are as follows:

1. Introducing the subject of American Jewry and its connection to Israel's national security into training courses for senior personnel in the National Security Council, the IDF, other organizations in the security establishment, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
2. Building a relevant knowledge base and installing mechanisms for ongoing engagement with this issue within the relevant staff units of the IDF and the security establishment, beyond the current engagement of the National Security Council and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
3. Expanding and institutionalizing briefings from executives in the foreign affairs and security establishments to relevant people and groups from the United States, including civil society groups organized by pro-Israel organizations. Greater utilization can be made of retired executives from these systems in order to accommodate the volume of such briefings and their expansion.
4. The IDF, as part of its educational and social role in Israeli society, serves as a key partner in the Taglit program. About 100,000 officers and soldiers have already escorted Taglit delegations in Israel. This engagement should be broadened to additional endeavors. One possible direction is by sending delegations of Israeli officers and soldiers to visit Jewish communities in the United States.

### *Leaderships of Jewish Communities in the United States*

To the best of our understanding, the leadership of United States Jewry is well aware of the major challenges ahead but often disagrees on the appropriate modes of response, and encounters difficulties in joining forces on a nationwide scale. Institutionalized cooperation

with parties in Israel could potentially alleviate the task of organizing within the United States in order to tackle challenges.

One such challenge is how to divide investments (philanthropic and others) between non-Jewish American causes (currently, the vast majority of the philanthropic contributions), the Jewish communities themselves, and the State of Israel. Another issue is the indifference (and indeed alienation) on the part of Israelis toward diaspora Jews, as exemplified by the lack of success, to date, to raise the issue of Israeli religious pluralism (or lack thereof) into a more prominent issue in Israeli discourse. More involvement on the part of American Jewry is warranted in this regard.

These and other issues necessitate channels of influence of the American Jewish community in Israel, through advocacy, recruiting agents of change in the relevant sectors, and creating partnerships and coalitions with relevant groups in Israeli society.

## Presentation of the Research Study

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On December 6, 2018, INSS researchers and a representative of the Ruderman Family Foundation presented the study to Israeli President Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin on the relationship between Israel and American Jewry and its impact on the national security of the State of Israel. The study, *The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security*, was conducted in cooperation with the Ruderman Family Foundation.

Upon receiving the book, President Rivlin said: "I am pleased to receive this important study, particularly in the current crucial period for relations between Israel and world Jewry. I regard world Jewry



Israeli President Reuven Rivlin receives *The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security*, prepared by INSS, in cooperation with the Ruderman Family Foundation. Photo: Mark Neyman / GPO

as the fifth tribe of Israel, and I believe that its importance and its role are determined not by its location but rather by its immense importance to building the society, the state, and the people in Israel. This study proves, without a doubt, American Jewry's importance to the national security of the State of Israel and to the national strength of the Jewish people, and I thank you for this. I am aware of the widening gaps between Israel and American Jewry. Many Israelis have no family connections to diaspora Jewry, and for them this Jewish community is remote and unfamiliar. It is important that we do not wait in passive anticipation for the arrival of the inevitable. Now is the time to build bridges of understanding and appreciation between us. We are brothers, and brothers we shall remain."



A panel at the INSS 12<sup>th</sup> annual international conference (January 28, 2019), titled: "The Rift between Israel and American Jewry: Why Should We Worry?" l-r: Ambassador Daniel Shapiro (moderator), Mr. Jonathan Greenblatt, Ms. Shira Ruderman, Ms. Jane Eisner. Photo: Chen Galili

*The American Jewish Community and Israel's National Security* was presented during the INSS 12<sup>th</sup> annual conference, in Tel Aviv, on January 28, 2019. The main insights and recommendations were discussed in both a conversation with Mr. Isaac Herzog, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and a panel discussion, led by Ambassador Daniel Shapiro.

The relationship between Israel and the American Jewish community has been central to the ability of both communities to develop and flourish over the past 70 years; it is likewise vital to the national security of Israel and the entire Jewish people. The current generation has witnessed increasing trends of distance and alienation between Israel and American Jewry, a weakened connection and sense of mutual belonging, and the decline of responsibility and involvement between the two communities. These join the challenges concerning the continuity of the American Jewish community and its political and social influence within the United States. All these developments carry long term consequences for Israel's national security and the Jewish people, for Israel's purpose and identity as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and for the internal cohesion of the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel.

At this time, the two communities need a new plan that will enable them to navigate the challenges of the present and the future, based on familiarity with one another and mutual understanding.

Included here are the main conclusions of a study carried out by a team of INSS researchers, in partnership with the Ruderman Family Foundation. The study follows two interfacing currents critical to the State of Israel and the Jewish people: American Jewry as an element of Israel's national security, and the relationship between the two largest Jewish communities in the world. It analyzes the developments and trends concerning these two issues, identifies the main challenges that they pose, and offers a comprehensive outline for properly addressing the related strategic challenges facing the State of Israel, the American Jewish community, and the Jewish people.

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