

**American Officials on Zionism, Israel, and the US-Israeli Relationship,  
Selected Remarks, 1947- 2016**

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**1947 Loy Henderson, September 1947 anti-Jewish sentiment—**

“The UNSCOP Majority Plan [1947] is not only unworkable; if adopted, it would guarantee that the Palestine problem would be permanent and still more complicated in the future...The proposals contained in the UNSCOP plan are not only not based on any principles of an international character, the maintenance of which would be in the interests of the United States, but they are in definite contravention to various principles laid down in the Charter as well as to principle on which American concepts of Government are based...These proposals, for instance, ignore such principles as self-determination and majority rule. They recognize the principle of a theocratic racial state and even go so far in several instance as to discriminate on the grounds of religion and race against persons outside of Palestine...We are under no obligations to the Jews to set up a Jewish state. The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate provided not for a Jewish state, but for a Jewish national home. Neither the United States nor the British Government has ever interpreted the term ‘Jewish national home’ to be a Jewish national state.” *Foreign Relations of the United States*, “The Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs. Loy Henderson to the Secretary of State George C. Marshall,” Sept. 22, 1947.

**1948 Clark Clifford, President Truman’s Special Counsel doubting impact of Arab oil if US supports a Jewish state**

“It is argued that our Arabian oil supplies will be imperiled if we support the [UN] Assembly’s resolution for partition of Palestine. There are those who say that such a course of action will not get us oil, that the Arabs will not sell us oil if we back up the United Nations partition plan. The fact of the matter is that the Arab states must have oil royalties or go broke. For example, 90% of Saudi Arabia’s revenues come from American oil royalties. Their need of the United States is greater than our need for them. ...the United States appears in the ridiculous role of trembling before threats of a few nomadic desert tribes. This has done us irreparable damage. Why should Russia or Yugoslavia, or any other nation treats us with anything but contempt in light of our shilly-shallying appeasement of the Arabs. After all, the only successful opposition to the Russian advance has been in Greece and Turkey. You proclaimed a bold policy and stood your ground. The Truman Doctrine, so far, has been the one outstanding success in a

disintegrating situation.” Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, Memorandum to President Truman, March 15, 1948, Vol. V, 1948, pp. 694-95.

### **January 1957 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles**

“If the United States does not make itself felt strongly in the [Middle East] area, I think it is ‘curtains’ for Israel.” John Foster Dulles, Testimony Executive Session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 2, 1957. *Foreign Relations of the United States-Near East*, Vol. 9, p.29

### **December 29, 1967 Harold Saunders, Middle East Advisor, National Security Council**

“We’ll make sure Israel has our political support and equipment it needs to defend itself. But we can’t tie ourselves to ‘fortress’ Israel, especially if Israel gets SSMS or decides to build nuclear weapons.” Remarks by Harold Saunders, National Security Advisor, Middle East, “Rough Sketch of Package for Eshkol,” December 29, 1967, Countries: Israel, Box 144, National Security Files, LBJ Library.

### **1968 Lyndon Johnson and Israel**

“We can’t support an Israel that sits tight [vis a vis] the territories. The Israelis should be avoiding permanent moves in [the] occupied lands [and by] foreswearing “nuclear weapons and missiles.” Eshkol could have the Skyhawks, but unless Israel endorsed UN Resolution 242 and renewed its pledge not to go nuclear, there would be no Phantoms.” Quoted in Douglas Little, “The United States and Israel, 1957-1968,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 25, No. 4 (Nov 1993), pp. 579.

### **1969 Joseph Sisco, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs- On evenhandedness**

“Our interests in the Middle East do not center on Israel alone. Our moral and practical commitment to Israel is by no means toward everything Israel wants or does. Let me tell you frankly: If our friendship with Israel is the only thing the United States is left with in the Middle East, that will be a catastrophic setback for American policy. We must work for a political solution because it is the only thing that will safeguard our own array of [national] interests in the region.” Remarks by Joseph Sisco, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, US Department of State to Israel Ambassador to the US. Yitzhak Rabin, circa June 1969, as quoted in Yitzhak Rabin, *The Rabin Memoirs*, Boston: Little Brown and Co, 1979, p.149.

### **1971 President Nixon to H.R. Haldeman, White House Chief of Staff**

“Convinced by Rogers that Sadat was mellowing in his attitude towards Israel and that the expulsion of Soviet military advisers from Egypt could be had in exchange for Israeli carrots, he authorized the secretary to press the Israelis into an interim agreement on the Suez Canal, providing this explanation: ‘[I]t is essential that no more aid programs for Israel be approved until they agree to some kind of interim action on the Suez or some other issue...the interests of the United States will be served [...] by tilting the policy [...] on the side of 100 million Arabs rather than on the side of two million Israelis.’ In June, Nixon coupled word with deed and suspended the delivery of Phantoms, telling his chief of staff and confidante H.R. Haldeman that he would not ‘play the Jewish game’ of ‘strin[ging] us along until the elections [...] when they hope to replace us. Noam Kochavi, “Joining the Conservative Brotherhood: Israel, President Nixon, and the political consolidation of the ‘special relationship’, 1969-73. Cold War History. Vol 8, No. , November 2008, pp. 460.

### **Early 1970s –David Korn, US State Department official**

“Things were still under the shadow of the 1967 war. The feeling was that we had some moral commitment to the Israelis. We left them to go alone. We didn’t fulfill on this commitment. We arranged their withdrawal from Sinai in 1957 and the UN forces and all that and gave some commitments there, but they were not hard and fast. When Nasser sent his forces into the Sinai in 1967 and closed the Straits of Tiran, the Johnson Administration flailed around. It was too heavily committed in Vietnam to be able to mount a real effort in the Middle East. Then finally the Israelis took things into their own hands. This really meant that the United States was not pushing the Israelis very hard on anything. (Korn started his Foreign Service career in 1956 and left the department in the late 1970s. Korn served in various positions working primarily on Arab-Israeli and Arab affairs. He was a desk officer during the 1967 war, was the State Department official who handled Henry Kissinger’s visit to Damascus in December 1973, and among other assignments, he staffed several negotiating missions in the aftermath of Sadat’s 1977 visit to Jerusalem. Interview with David A. Korn, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project; Charles Stuart Kennedy December 11, 1990.

### **December 17, 1975 Henry Kissinger on Israel to size—**

“We don’t need Israel for influence in the Arab world. On the contrary, Israel does us more harm than good in the Arab world. You yourself said your objection to us is Israel. Except maybe that we are capitalists. We can’t negotiate about the existence of Israel, but we can reduce its size to historical proportions. I don’t agree that Israel is a permanent

threat. How can a nation of three million be a permanent threat? They have a technical advantage now. But it is inconceivable that peoples with wealth and skill and the tradition of the Arabs won't develop the capacity that is needed. So I think in ten to fifteen years, Israel will be like Lebanon—struggling for existence, with no influence in the Arab world. If the issue is the existence of Israel, we can't cooperate. But if the issue is more normal borders, we can cooperate.” Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Saddun Hammadi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Iraq, December 17, 1975.

### **1978 Zbigniew Brzezinski, US National Security Advisor**

According to Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s National Security Adviser, Carter, “increasingly frustrated by Begin’s provocations on the settlements decided to increase the number of planes to Egypt...” Carter remarked to Brzezinski how irritated he was that some Senators like Frank Church had promised to support the arms package deal and then backed away. Brzezinski acknowledged that he developed the package deal as a “strategy to paralyze the powerful Israeli lobby on the Hill.” Said Carter, “it was striking the degree to which some senators are afraid to stand up for the American national interest and will simply do the bidding of a powerful lobby.” Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p 247-249.

### **1978 Mark Siegel, Deputy to the White House Chief of Staff, Hamilton Jordan**

Siegel’s recollection of Brzezinski’s anti-Israeli and anti-AIPAC sentiment, “there was an incident after the joint Soviet-American communiqué and all of the uproar about that. I scheduled a series of monthly meetings where I would bring in Jewish leadership into the White House in to the state dining room for luncheons. The President spoke once. The Vice President spoke once, whatever. There was one occasion where Brzezinski spoke, I don’t know if it was a solo speak or after, but no one else in the administration on a high level was there, but we had the cream of the crop, the President’s conference, I think. Someone was complaining about the . . . this was actually later on, now I remember it, but someone was complaining about the arms F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia, which ultimately led me to leave. So this had to be in February of 1978 and Brzezinski, remember the whole point of these meetings was to reassure the community.

[This was] February 1978 and the whole point of me bringing these people from all over the country every month was to reassure them that we, the White House, had the best interest of Israel. We were a friend, we were not an enemy, we were not hostile. Someone, one of the Presidents, complained about the F-15 sale. Brzezinski got up and

he pointed his finger away like this and he said “You people have to decide whether you are Americans or whether your Jews”. There was an audible gasp. I was the classic dual loyalty, but for him “you people” from a pole, you could just . . .” Ken Stein interview with Mark Siegel, July 21, 2010. Washington DC, recollections of the meeting in the White House with Jewish leaders, February 1978.

**1970s Hal Saunders -- On the Israeli lobby—causes dislike among state department policy makers – (about the late 1970s-interview in 1993)**

“Frankly speaking, the Israeli lobby in the United States has created a number of American anti-Semites. The people you mentioned were on the Israeli "character assassination" list. If you look in the editions of the "Near East Report" over the years, you can see how certain people who were significantly involved in Middle East policy development were treated. Many of them were subjected to character assassination. It is to these officials' credit that they made pro-US policy and did not succumb to lobbying pressures. In the days when the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee was run by a humane person like Isaiah (Sy) Kenan, the Department's NEA assistant secretaries and their deputies had very good relationships with the Israeli lobby. Then the dialogue was civil and serious. I don't think that Isaiah (Sy) Kenan would ever have maligned the State officials as some of the other Israeli publicists did later.” Remarks by Harold Saunders, Undersecretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Oral History Interview, US, Department of State, November 24, 1993.

**Carter on Rabin March 1977**

“In *Keeping Faith*, you say your meeting with Yitzhak Rabin was an "unpleasant surprise"--those were your terms there, "unpleasant surprise.” You went on to speak about his strange reticence to speak about the negotiating progress. Was it the substance or was it the format that surprised you about Rabin?

Carter: The fact that he had **no** interest in it at all.

Stein: Why?

JC: It was just like talking to a dead fish. I was so committed at that time to move forward with Rabin, with Hussein, with Sadat, and with Assad. And when Rabin came, whom I had known before--he had just been in Atlanta in 1972--and when I went and visited (it may have been 1971), when I visited Israel, Rabin flew back from (as Governor), he flew back from South Africa just to be with me, he was down on a diamond-buying mission. And so he was kind of my host in Israel and had arranged for Golda Meir to furnish us a driver in Israel, so I was looking forward to meeting with Rabin, you know, as kind of a peg on which I could hang my whole Mideast peace

ambitions. And he was absolutely and totally uninterested.” Jimmy Carter, Interview with Ken Stein, Atlanta, Georgia, February 19, 1991.

### **1978 Roy Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs**

1978 “Israelis were worried about being stampeded about starting down the slippery slope [withdrawal to the 1967 lines]. There was inadequate understanding of the sort of political psychology of Israel, and how you deal with the Israelis, and what their own complexes and hang-ups were. And Carter and Brzezinski and company talked to them without really understanding how difficult some of these issues were in terms of their domestic political [world].” Ken Stein interview with Roy Atherton, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC. October 30, 1992.

### **November 11, 1978 President Jimmy Carter on Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin**

Carter told Anwar Sadat, “I will represent your interests as if they were my own. You are my brother. I hope I will never let you down. You are probably the most admired statesman in the US. On the other hand said ZB, “In contrast, exchanges between Carter and Begin were icy, and even mutual praise was formalistic and devoid of any personal feeling.” Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, p. 284.

### **1991 Morris Draper, Former US Ambassador to Lebanon, Career US Diplomat**

“I met with such organizations like AIPAC (American Israel Political Action Committee) every once in a while. I met with Tom Dyne, the Executive Director. I met with him every January as what was called the "Javits report" was sent to Congress. That was the annual forecast of our security assistance sales for the coming year would be. I would brief them about what sales were anticipated in the Middle East. Occasionally, they would object to a specific anticipated sale--although since this was a briefing, we would not change our position--, but because of that annual briefing AIPAC was never surprised by our sale announcements. These meetings enabled me to defend our sales policies; then I would occasionally meet with AIPAC in other venues. I did not deal with them on a weekly basis, which did not enhance my standing with them; all of my predecessors had told me that relationships with AIPAC were difficult and tortured.

I met regularly with the Conference of Presidents of major Jewish Organizations, which represented all of the large Jewish groups in the US. Those sessions were separate and apart from my meetings with AIPAC. I felt that it was a disservice to American Jewish

community for me to communicate with it only through AIPAC. The Conference of Presidents is a much broader organization than AIPAC. I also met regularly with the Presidents of major American-Arab organizations. I tried to cover as many of these constituent groups as I could--not only those interested in the Middle East, but also those representing former South Asian people.

AIPAC, and other constituent groups, have their own agendas and I doubt that any meeting that I might have with them would have changed their views. They had their views and our differing perceptions, freely expressed, is the core strength of a democracy.” Remarks by Morris Draper, Oral History Interview, US Ambassador to Lebanon, US Department of State, February 27, 1991, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mfdip:@field\(DOCID+mfdip2004dra01\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mfdip:@field(DOCID+mfdip2004dra01))

### **July 9, 1996, Netanyahu and Clinton**

Dennis Ross described Bibi Netanyahu’s first meeting with President Clinton in 1996. Noted Ross, after his election, “Bibi was overcome by hubris. He had surprised us all by winning: the Americans, the Israeli media, and even his own party leaders. Now he would prove to the world that he knew best how to deal with the Arabs and the Palestinians...he was coming to Washington not as leader of the [Israeli] opposition but as the Prime Minister of Israel—and he would teach us the realities of the Middle East, or at least that is what he thought. In the meeting with President Clinton, Netanyahu was nearly insufferable, lecturing and telling us how to deal with the Arabs. He would respect the Oslo agreement because a democratically elected government in Israel had adopted it, but there would have to be adjustments and new negotiations over part of it...After Netanyahu was gone, President Clinton observed: “He thinks he is the superpower and we are here to do whatever he requires.” No one on our side disagreed with that assessment.” Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace*, Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 2004, pp. 261-262

### **June 4, 2009, President Barack Obama,**

“America’s strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history than cannot be denied. Threatening Israel with destruction—or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews---is deeply wrong...Let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. And America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspirations for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own. ...The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met **through two states**, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.” “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction [of settlements] violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.” President Barack Obama, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009.

### **January 17, 2011, Ambassador Samuel Lewis**

“The relationship [with Israel] is deeper and wider than government to government, it is unique among all our relationships in the world. [The Strategic relationship]—did not grow without rough spots along the way in the relationship. What did it take to build that relationship? US-Israel has an unwritten alliance, no treaty... Agreements exist in many understandings, congressional acts, letters of assurance, promises to supply weapons, but there is no formal treaty. There is formal access and so many channels... A spider web of support exists from the history, values, strategic issues, as good a relationship as if there were a treaty...The relationship is deeper and wider than government to government, it is so unique among all our relationships in the world.”

The US-Israeli relationship exists like a Catholic marriage of old: you can love each other, yell at each other, disagree with each other, even leave each other for a period of time, but you do not get a divorce.” Remarks by Samuel W. Lewis, Conference on the US-Israeli relationship, Scholars for Peace in the Middle East, Miami, Florida, January 17, 2011. Samuel Lewis was US ambassador to Israel from 1977-1986.

### **March 3, 2012, President Barak Obama**

“No Israeli government can tolerate a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that denies the Holocaust, threatens to wipe Israel off the map, and sponsors terrorist groups committed to Israel’s destruction. (Applause.) And so I understand the profound historical obligation that weighs on the shoulders of Bibi Netanyahu and Ehud Barak, and all of Israel’s leaders.” “A nuclear-armed Iran is completely counter to Israel’s security interests. But it is also counter to the national security interests of the United States. (Applause.) Indeed, the entire world has an interest in preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.” “Iran’s leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment; I have a policy to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. (Applause.) And as I have made clear time and again during the course of my presidency, I will not hesitate to use force when it is necessary to defend the United States and its interests. (Applause.)” President Barak Obama, AIPAC Conference, Washington, DC, March 3, 2012.

### **May 8, 2012, Vice President Joe Biden**

“That’s why our policy is not one of containment. Let me say it again, the U.S. policy under President Obama is not one of containment. ... Barack Obama, ...reemphasized that Iran posed an existential threat to Israel. And I made it clear to [Bibi], that were I an Israeli, were I a Jew, I would not contract out my security to anybody – even a loyal,



loyal, loyal friend like the United States. As the President made clear, we take no option off the table as part of our determination to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.” Vice-President Joe Biden, Rabbinic Assembly, Atlanta, Ga, May 8, 2012.

### **March 21, 2013, President Barak Obama**

“When I consider Israel’s security, I also think about a people who have a living memory of the Holocaust, faced with the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iranian government that has called for Israel’s destruction. It’s no wonder Israelis view this as an existential threat. But this is not simply a challenge for Israel – it is a danger for the entire world, including the United States. Strong and principled diplomacy is the best way to ensure that the Iranian government forsakes nuclear weapons. This is not a danger that can be contained.” President Barak Obama, Jerusalem, Israel, March 21, 2013.

### **May 12, 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry**

“So I understand the challenge of security that Israel faces. I understand it very well. And I join with President Obama in expressing to the people of Israel our deep, deep commitment to the security of Israel and to the need to find a peace that recognizes Israel as a Jewish state, recognizes Israel as a country that can defend itself, by itself, and that is an important principle with which the Prime Minister and the President and I are in agreement.” Statement by Secretary of State John Kerry after a meeting with the Israeli Prime Minister in Jerusalem, May 12, 2013. <http://www.pmo.gov.il/English/MediaCenter/Events/Pages/eventkerry051213.aspx>

### **December 19, 2014, President Barak Obama**

“Today I have signed into law S. 2673, the ‘United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014,’ an Act that underscores the United States unshakeable commitment to Israel’s security and its future. This bipartisan piece of legislation reflects the importance placed by my administration on strengthening and deepening U.S.-Israel bilateral cooperation and ties. It reinforces critical defense and security programs, which have reached an unprecedented level under my administration.” President Barak Obama, Washington, DC, December 18, 2014.

### **June 6, 2016, Susan Rice, US National Security Advisor**

“President Obama is fiercely devoted to Israel and to the well-being of the Jewish people. I know because I see it every day. I watched him as he slipped a folded prayer into the cracks of the Western Wall. I stood with him as we ran our hands over the charred remnants of rockets in Sderot. President Obama has met with Prime Minister Netanyahu 16 times—more than almost any other leader. Our commitment to Israel, has always, transcends partisanship. America’s commitment to Israel’s security is “unshakeable,”

that's not just talk. It's the nearly \$24 billion the United States has provided since President Obama took office to help maintain Israel's qualitative military edge. . . . . President Obama is committed to ensuring Israel's security not just for the remainder of his time in office, but for years to come. Israel currently receives more than half of the United States' entire foreign military assistance budget. And, we're discussing a new agreement with Israel that would guide our military assistance until 2029. . . . Our commitment to Israel's security is also why we continue to urge Israelis and Palestinians to resolve what President Rivlin calls "the tragedy that envelops us all." . That is why, as we mark the 49th anniversary this week of the Six-Day War, we continue to strongly oppose Israeli settlement activity. Just like every administration since 1967, Republican and Democratic. Just as we oppose counterproductive Palestinian actions and strongly condemn incitement and violence. Settlement activity corrodes the prospects for two states. It moves us toward a one-state reality. Israel's future as a Jewish, democratic state is at stake.

We vigorously opposed the Human Rights Council's unbalanced and counter-productive focus on Israel. . . .when Israel's adversaries seek to isolate and boycott Israel economically, we forcefully combat these efforts. We strengthen our economic ties even more. The United States stands firmly against these attempts to delegitimize Israel. ”  
Remarks by US National Security Advisor Susan Rice, the American Jewish Committee Global Forum, Washington, DC, June 6. 2016.