



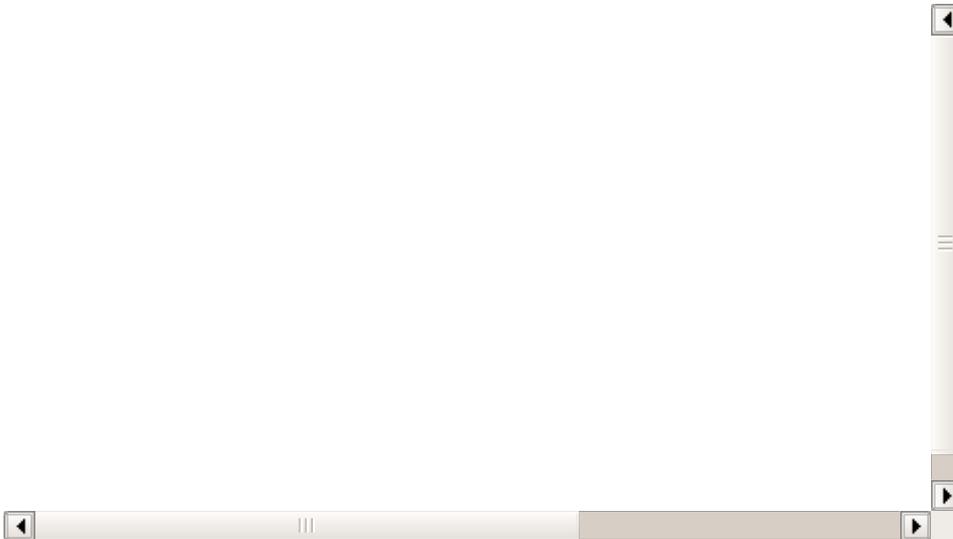
Conference Keynotes

U.S.-Israel Relations in a Changing Middle East

[*Robert D. Blackwill*](#), [*Dennis Ross*](#), and [*Amos Yadlin*](#)

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Ambassador Robert Blackwill, Ambassador Dennis Ross and Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin (IDF, ret.) said that Israel remains an important strategic asset for the United States. “The U.S. and Israel share key vital interests in a fast-changing region with multiple dangers and threats to both,” Ross said during a plenary session of The Washington Institute’s Weinberg Founders Conference.

Blackwill, a former deputy national security advisor, echoed this sentiment, saying that the rise of Islamists following the Arab Spring and the security threat of a nuclear Iran has made the relationship between the two countries as valuable as ever. He expressed concern that Israeli action against Iran could cause a significant crisis in U.S.-Israeli relations if it forced Washington to intervene and engage in a prolonged military conflict.

Ross, a former special assistant to President Obama and a key foreign policy advisor in several administrations, said that the United States and Israel must demonstrate that

every option was considered before taking military action against Iran in order to ensure that the international community will support continued sanctions after a strike. Military action alone, without continued diplomacy, Ross argued, will not be enough to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon in the long term.

While both allies share the strategic goal of preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, Yadlin said, the United States and Israel have different timelines for dealing with Tehran. He detailed further differences between the two governments regarding the Iranian regime's commitment to weaponization and acceptable parameters for a potential negotiated settlement of the nuclear dispute.

The panelists underscored the importance of dialogue between the United States and Israel to address the upheavals of the Arab Spring. According to Blackwill, since the Arab revolts began, Islamist forces have been unleashed that are antithetical to U.S. national security interests and hostile toward diplomacy. Yadlin agreed, saying the Arab Spring should be called the Arab intifada. Israeli concessions to the Palestinians or other Arab neighbors, he said, will not temper the growing Islamist factions in the region.