

Are America and Israel Drifting Apart?

by [David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Articles & Testimony

For Sunday's "Topic A" feature, the Washington Post asked six policy experts whether they perceive a divide between the Obama administration and the Jewish state. The following is a contribution by Washington Institute Ziegler distinguished fellow [David Makovsky \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=6\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC10.php?CID=6), director of the Institute's [Project on the Middle East Peace Process \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateI02.php?SID=16&newActiveSubNav=Project%20on%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process&activeSubNavLink=templateI02.php%3FSID%3D16&newActiveNav=researchPrograms\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateI02.php?SID=16&newActiveSubNav=Project%20on%20the%20Middle%20East%20Peace%20Process&activeSubNavLink=templateI02.php%3FSID%3D16&newActiveNav=researchPrograms). Read the entire discussion on the [Post \(http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/12/AR2010031203570.html?sub=AR\)](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/12/AR2010031203570.html?sub=AR) website.

Widespread editorial comment in Israel has unequivocally blasted the Israeli government for embarrassing Vice President Biden during his pitch-perfect fence-mending visit, using language far sharper than U.S. condemnation. Coupled with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's apology to Biden for the moves made by lower-ranking officials, this does not suggest a nadir of ties in which the two sides are being deliberately confrontational.

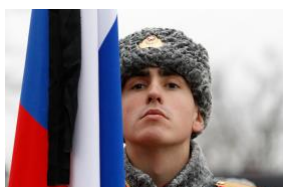
While unintended and too soon to know for sure, the episode may have sparked a fresh public debate in Israel about the need to develop a more calibrated approach regarding new housing in East Jerusalem.

The incident may require more fence-mending of a different sort, but it does not mark a historic low in ties. Take the critical area of Iran. One needs a scorecard to tally the number of distinct visits back and forth at the top of the national security and foreign-policy apparatus of both countries -- just in the past two months. Among those going to Israel -- apart from Biden -- were national security adviser Jim Jones; the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Mike Mullen; CIA Director Leon Panetta; and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, John Kerry. Among the Israelis coming to the United States were Defense Minister Ehud Barak, Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi and national security adviser Uzi Arad. This does not even count lower-level working visits on this issue.

Historic perspective is required. In 1956-57 and in 1975, the relationship was in deep crisis. We are not there today. ❖

Washington Post

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