

When did the US Israel Alliance Develop?

The U.S.–Israel alliance developed over several decades. The major turning point was 1967–**1973**, when Israel became a much more important strategic partner for the United States during the Cold War.

It was not always the close military and diplomatic relationship we see today. The United States recognized Israel when it was established in **1948**, but early American policy was more cautious than the later alliance.

To understand how the relationship evolved, it helps to separate diplomatic recognition, military cooperation, financial assistance, domestic politics, and religious or ideological support. These factors developed at different times.

The key turning points

1948

Diplomatic recognition

President Harry Truman recognized Israel on May 14, 1948, shortly after its declaration of independence. However, the United States initially maintained an arms embargo in the region.



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1967

The Six-Day War

The war shifted American strategic thinking. U.S. officials were concerned about Soviet weapons supplied to Arab states and the regional balance of power. In 1968, President Lyndon Johnson's administration approved the sale of advanced F-4 Phantom aircraft to Israel.



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1973–74

The Yom Kippur War

The United States airlifted military supplies to Israel during the war. Following it, large-scale U.S. military grant assistance began, and aid increased substantially. This was a decisive step toward the modern strategic alliance.



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1979–85

A regional strategic partnership

The Egypt–Israel peace treaty in 1979 strengthened the U.S. role as a regional diplomatic and security partner. The United States and Israel signed a free-trade agreement in 1985, expanding economic ties as well.



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1990s–today

Institutionalized cooperation

Defense agreements, intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, missile-defense cooperation, and sustained congressional support made the relationship a long-term institutional commitment rather than simply a relationship between two presidents.



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Why did the relationship become so close?

Four major factors help explain the shift.

- Cold War strategy: Israel became an important regional partner as the United States competed with Soviet influence in the Middle East.
- Military and intelligence cooperation: Both countries developed shared security programs and exchanged intelligence and technology.
- American domestic politics: ***Congressional support, pro-Israel advocacy organizations, public opinion, and evangelical Christian support helped sustain the relationship across administrations. Organized advocacy became especially important after 1973.***



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- Historical and religious connections: Shared democratic ideals, the history of Jewish persecution and the Holocaust, and religious affinities among some Americans have also influenced public and political support. These factors do not mean all Americans or all Jewish Americans share the same political views.



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Why do some Americans now question the alliance?

The scale of military assistance, U.S. diplomatic protection of Israel, civilian casualties in Gaza, Israeli settlement policy, and concerns about whether **U.S. aid is used consistently with American law** have all become subjects of political dispute. The Congressional Research Service documents both the strategic rationale for the relationship and congressional concerns about oversight and Israel's treatment of Palestinians.



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For context, a Congressional Research Service report published in 2025 estimated total U.S. aid obligated to Israel from 1946 through 2024 at approximately **\$298 billion in inflation-adjusted 2024 dollars**. That figure includes economic, military, and missile-defense assistance, with accounting distinctions depending on the dataset used.



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The central historical answer: U.S. recognition of Israel began in 1948, the strategic relationship strengthened after 1967, and the modern large-scale military alliance took shape after the 1973 war. Domestic political coalitions and institutional defense cooperation subsequently helped preserve it.

The more difficult question is whether the current degree of support serves U.S. interests, complies with U.S. law, and is subject to adequate oversight. Those are questions that can be evaluated through public records, aid agreements, voting records, and documented policy outcomes. <https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-meets-freed-russian-gaza-hostages-says-ties-with-palestinians-helped-2025-04-16>

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