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IN POLITICS: NO FRIENDSHIPS, ONLY INTERESTS

It has often been said that while the Jewish people have gotten out of the ghetto, the ghetto has not yet gotten out of the Jewish people.

One relevant feature of this claim is an ingrained belief derived from the centuries of Diaspora: If the local squire happened to be friendly to 'his' subservient Jews, he behaved well to them and even protected them against attack from outside. Thus some of the descendants of those schutzjuden assume that a modern prime minister or foreign minister, or president, who is personally a friend or admirer of the Jewish people, must necessarily pursue a policy friendly to Jewish interests - and there is widespread surprise when this does not happen.

The history of US-Israeli relations, though based on many significant shared values and common norms of behavior, is nevertheless peppered with the ultimate truth that in politics, there are no friendships, only interests.

In 1967, during the administration of US president Lyndon Johnson, the US Chiefs of Staff committee carried out a survey of Israel's geo-strategic requirements. In its findings, complete with maps, it laid down that it was essential for Israel's security that it retain control of almost all the territory it had won in the (defensive) war of 1967.

This highly important report was not published; it was suppressed, kept secret. It was released only 11 years later. Why? Because it did not conform to the policy laid down by Johnson - evidently designed to appease America's 'steadfast ally' Saudi Arabia.

That policy, which has never been revoked, required Israel to withdraw to the 1949 Armistice Lines (with minor adjustments). Those were the lines from which it had just been attacked by Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Israel, the victim of aggression having defeated its aggressors, was now pressed by the US to restore to them the territory from which they had attacked.

What is not irrelevant is that Judea and Samaria did not belong to Jordan at all. They had been occupied by Trans-Jordan (its original name) in an act of aggressive war in 1948, was thus illegally annexed, and Jordan certainly had no rights of possession that Israel could, by any criterion, be expected to restore. Similarly the Gaza district had been annexed illegally in that war by Egypt.

But Johnson, personally, was a friend of Israel.

And President Ronald Reagan? One of the greatest battles between the Reagan administration and the US Senate in his day was over the decision to deliver to Saudi Arabia the new, miraculous AWACS aircraft, which can monitor any moving object in Israeli territory from inside Saudi Arabia. The infuriated opponents of the deal in the

Senate charged the administration with dishonoring its undertakings to Israel and endangering it.

In the end, by dint of tremendous pressure on individual senators, the sale was approved by a majority of two votes. In this case there occurred a departure from the norm of official behavior. The administration published an apology to Israel! It declared that the reason for reneging on an undertaking to Israel was 'that circumstances had changed.' What were the circumstances that were cited? War, the statement said, had broken out - in Afghanistan

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US secretary of state Henry Kissinger is an outstanding case in point. When the Yom Kippur War was launched by Egypt and Syria, he determined, as he recalls in his memoirs, on a diplomacy that would result in Egypt's moving over from the Soviet orbit to the American. The price, as became evident, was to be a sacrifice of Israel. Israel was headed for a great victory. Its army was almost at the gates of Cairo. Kissinger, collaborating with both the Soviets and the Egyptians, brought about a cease- fire.

That is why the Egyptians to this day celebrate what they claim was a military victory over Israel. That is why, in Israel, the Yom Kippur War is remembered and felt as a bitter defeat. The harm done to Israel was and remains incalculable, not least in that sense of having been defeated.

Kissinger was, obviously, surely not an anti-Semite. He believed that the establishment of close relations with Egypt was a primary American interest; and the Yom Kippur War provided him with an opportunity to bring it about. All else was irrelevant.

Now we are faced with a situation deriving from the same source: a clash of interests - or a contrived clash of interests. US President George W. Bush is building a coalition to fight against world terror, and so - again because the Saudis and other Arabs are candidates - Israel is excluded from the coalition.

The State Department however, also wishes to exclude the terror against Israel from the concept of world terror. They claim that there are two kinds of terror - one kind which kills people and another kind which kills Israelis. This other kind is 'understandable.' Israel should denounce and continue to resist this obscenity; but Bush should make it clear that he does not underwrite a policy which, in the final analysis, could be used to excuse Arab terror against Israel. His friendly feelings for Israel cannot be linked with such an encouragement to the Palestinian Arab terrorists.