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Facts & Logic About the Middle East

October 15, 2019



Trump's Withdrawal from Syria Validates Israel's Self-Sufficiency Strategy—and Its Value to the U.S.

Dear Friend of FLAME:

There's been much criticism of President Trump for his precipitous drawdown of troops from Syria and granting of "permission" to Turkish President Recep Tayip Erdogan for Turkey's troops to cross the border in order to subdue Syrian Kurds.

Mr. Trump's decision is certainly questionable on many fronts, but it also reinforces the supreme wisdom of <u>Israel's strategy of military self-sufficiency</u>—which also makes the Jewish state an even more valuable ally of the U.S. and a more attractive *potential* ally of its Arab neighbors.

While Trump's foreign policy often seems uneven and uncoordinated, this recent move nonetheless seems to have a bedrock logic. Above all, as the President says, he wants to disentangle the U.S. from the <u>"endless wars" among Middle East "tribes."</u>

While this logic sounds reasonable on its surface, it also creates major problems for our allies.

For one, U.S. withdrawal supports muscle-flexing by Erdogan, one of the most entrenched dictators in the Middle East, who is often hostile to U.S. and Israeli interests. Trump's move also comes at the expense of the Syrian Kurds, who assisted the U.S. in routing ISIS from Syria (and whose national aspirations Israel supports).

In self-defense, the Kurds may be forced to seek alliance with Syrian dictator Bashar Assad and with Iran, which is working tirelessly to make Syria its latest proxy puppet.

The U.S. action also reverberates for the Gulf States, <u>especially Saudi Arabia</u>, for whom any reduction of pressure on Iran increases its own vulnerability to the Islamic Republic, which just weeks ago mounted devastating missile and drone attacks on Saudi oil refineries.

Finally, Israel surely cannot cheer any diminution of American influence in

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Syria, especially in favor of <u>cold-enemy Turkey</u>, especially in territory on its border where <u>arch-enemy Iran</u> continues an ominous build-up of military might.

Yet, Israel's military is ranked 17th strongest in the world, and Israel is ranked the 8th most powerful nation globally based on economic influence, political influence, international alliances and military strength.

Those rankings are obviously helpful in and of themselves, but they are important because they support President Trump's desire to have other countries contribute to fighting the "bad guys"—which both European and Arab nations have been reluctant to do, especially against Iran.

Indeed, Israel has attacked Iranian assets in Syria some 200 times, while even the U.S. has never done so. Mr. Trump should particularly be <u>held to account for his lack of response</u> to Iran's attack on U.S. ally Saudi Arabia and on oil tankers in the Gulf of Hormuz—both of which certainly rise far above "tribal disputes."

In any case, Israel's military power and prowess position it well to <u>handle its own</u> <u>conflicts</u> without direct U.S. intervention—which cannot be said for most states in the Middle East.

It also seems clear that Mr. Trump, as past U.S. presidents, would <u>rather have the Israeli Defense Forces</u> on the front lines of Middle East conflagrations than American servicemembers.

Israel's military strength likewise makes the Jewish state an ideal potential ally to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Arab Gulf states—since they are demonstrably unable or unwilling to risk armed response to Iran's aggression.

But let's not discount the \$3+ billion Israel receives annually in U.S. military aid —a critical factor in providing Israel such world-class power and influence.

This expense is clearly a bargain compared with the cost of activating U.S. troops and armaments in the region in case of conflict. That's especially true considering all such U.S. aid is spent in the U.S.—and that the U.S. regularly benefits from acquiring advanced Israel military technology and Middle East intelligence.

Nonetheless, Trump's seeming <u>impulsiveness and unpredictability</u> should make Israelis and supporters of Israel nervous. Relying on this President being a constant, as opposed to a fair-weather, friend could be risky.

While preserving an optimally warm friendship with the U.S. at all levels, Israel's best general strategy would seem to require maintenance of its ability to manage international relations—diplomatic, commercial and military—as independently as possible <u>from this and future White Houses</u>.

I hope you'll emphasize to friends, family and colleagues that while Israel highly values and cultivates relationships with the U.S. government (and both political parties), it is best served by continuing to develop its independence. We never know how these winds of favor may blow—in this administration and Congress . . . or the next.

In addition, I hope you'll also take a minute, while you have this material front and center, to visit FLAME's lively new Facebook page and review the P.S.

editorial hasbarah messages placed in media nationwide every month: The dire threats from Iran, Hamas and Hizbollah, the injustice of BDS, Palestinian anti-Semitism and more. If you support a bold voice that tells the truth about Israel in American media, please donate now.

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immediately below. It describes FLAME's new hasbarah campaign—outspokenly questioning the validity and wisdom of the so-called two-state solution.

Best regards,

Jim Sinkinson
President, Facts and Logic About the Middle East (FLAME)

P.S. Many politicians in the U.S., as well as in Western Europe, hold steadfastly to the notion of a two-state solution for resolving the Palestinians' conflict with Israel. However, it's become clear as stability in the Middle East deteriorates, power balances shift and the Palestinians themselves continue to reject peace initiatives, that a twostate solution may be no solution at all. That's why FLAME has created a new hasbarah message called "Is a Two-State Solution Still Possible?" I hope you'll review this hard-hitting paid editorial, which will run in coming months in the New York Times and Washington Post. It lays out seven tough questions that must be answered before two states can seriously be considered. This piece will also be sent to all members of Congress, Vice President Pence and President Trump. If you agree that this kind of public relations effort on Israel's behalf is critical, I urge you to support us. Remember: FLAME's powerful ability to influence public opinion-and U.S. support of Israel—comes from individuals like you, one by one. I hope you'll consider giving a donation now, as you're able—with \$500, \$250, \$100, or even \$18. (Remember, your donation to FLAME is tax deductible.) To donate online, just go to donate now. Now, more than ever, we need your support to ensure that the American people, the U.S. Congress and President Trump stay focused on realistic policies in relation to Israel, the Palestinians and the entire Middle East.

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