

Israel:
A Blueprint for Peace, Democracy, and Security
A Perspective from an American Ally

Conor O'Callaghan

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Policy Subject To Revisions

UPDATED MARCH 2024 AMIDST THE ONGOING ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Introduction

At the time of this writing, it is imperative to acknowledge that on October 7th, 2023, Hamas terrorists executed the deadliest attack on Jewish people since the Holocaust. Their acts were an abomination to humanity. Since this atrocity – which has been described as Israel’s 9/11 – more than 1,200 Israelis have been killed. Terrorists are still holding more than 130 men, women, and children in captivity. Some hostages have been killed. Israel has rightly responded to these acts of terror with overwhelming force in Gaza to destroy Hamas once and for all. But as I have stated since the beginning of this conflict, innocent civilians’ safety must be paramount. The death toll in Gaza is reportedly somewhere around 30,000 — a shocking number. No one can deny the humanitarian situation there is beyond dire.

I believe we can be pro-Israel, anti-Hamas, and pro-Palestinian people. I don’t believe any of these must be an all-or-nothing choice. I fully support President Biden’s efforts to airdrop aid to civilians in Gaza given the difficulties that have arisen in getting aid into the area. I fully support any good-faith ceasefire efforts that result in the return of all hostages, aid to civilians, and the surrender of Hamas. The ceasefire must be predicated on freeing those held captive.

This war will not be over anytime soon. Its impact is already being felt across the region and around the world. Iranian proxies – Houthi rebels – are attacking American cargo ships and wounding and killing our military personnel. Dozens of Arizonans in uniform were recently wounded in a Houthi drone attack for which the United States is currently retaliating. This issue is larger than Israel and Hamas; it has global ramifications and will be a defining issue in 2024 and beyond.

There is nothing simple about foreign policy. My dedication to the subject runs far deeper than a mere hobby; it’s profoundly personal. As an Irish immigrant who was able to realize the American dream, my foreign policy platform embodies a heartfelt commitment to fostering enduring stability around the world. The fact is, in the 21st century, few alliances are as vital as the United States’ partnership with Israel. As a candidate for Congress in Arizona’s 1st Congressional District, I believe that I must clearly articulate my Israel policies as a matter of principle and due to the ongoing war.

Middle East policy specifically is very important to me. The service of my grandfather, Bill “The Bull” O’Callaghan, a United Nations general who served in Jerusalem, had a profound impact on my upbringing and shaped my worldview during my early years.

The welfare of Israel and the battle against anti-Semitism carry deep personal significance for me. In my personal life, I place a strong emphasis on actively engaging with members of the Jewish community and listening to their perspectives on all matters concerning Israel and its relationship with the United States. Here, I champion a pro-Israel stance that seeks to fortify our relationship, support Israel in achieving its regional objectives, and actively pursue peace in the Middle East.

The Two-State Solution: A Path to Peace

At the heart of my foreign policy agenda lies a deep commitment to the two-state solution—a fundamental framework that I firmly believe can chart a course for Israel and Palestine to peacefully coexist as independent and sovereign states. I believe in a diplomatic process that engages both Israel and Palestine in substantive discussions at an appropriate time given the current war, ensuring that the final settlement reflects the aspirations and needs of both parties and their people.

Israel's right to defend itself against terrorist attacks can not be overstated. Security is a huge concern for any nation, and Israel's security is non-negotiable. To this end, any agreement must acknowledge and respect Israel's need to protect its citizens. In Congress, I will advocate for diplomatic initiatives prioritizing dialogue, cooperation, and trust-building between Israel and Palestine. By fostering an environment where open communication and mutual understanding are nurtured, we can begin to mend the deep-seated mistrust that has hindered progress for too long.

It is important to stress and recognize that achieving a two-state solution isn't merely about reaching an agreement, but about implementing it for the long term. These arrangements have to last beyond just a few short years, beyond a decade, more than one generation. How long have we been having these debates? The sustainability and endurance of peace in the region require ongoing efforts to ensure that the terms of the agreement are upheld and adjusted to changing circumstances. Nothing in foreign policy is stagnant.

I feel Israel does not require other nations to lecture its leaders on how to negotiate or implement peace, but I think it is important to note that in the wake of 9/11 America went on the offensive in Afghanistan – justifiably – but then overextended. Our anger led us into Iraq and other protracted engagements. More than 20 years on, if we are objective, I think we can say we let our thirst for revenge dictate much of our strategy. Israel should be mindful of this lesson now as they carry out campaigns in Gaza. We must protect the innocent. There must be an exit strategy and a vision for a future free of conflict. Nevertheless, any efforts involving other nations should be cognizant of Israel's sovereignty.

What this all comes down to for me is a future where Israel and Palestine can coexist as sovereign states, living in peace and security. A two-state solution represents the most promising path toward a peaceful Middle East and by extension a more peaceful world.

Security Cooperation: A Cornerstone for Regional Stability and Peace

As we have seen since the onset of the Israel-Hamas war, security cooperation needs to be a pillar of any strategy that pursues a safe and secure Middle East. Currently, the United States is combating Houthi rebels (who have wounded several Arizona soldiers), the crisis in Gaza is ongoing, and Israeli security remains at risk. We must further develop strong security partnerships between Israel, its neighbors, and international allies. My goal is to prevent terrorism and promote stability, while protecting the interests of nations and their citizens.

The main objective of this security cooperation is to reduce the threat posed by bad actors such as Iran, which continues to pose significant challenges to regional stability. However, it is important to emphasize that our focus needs to extend beyond the immediate threats of today. We need to anticipate the threats of tomorrow. That doesn't mean going out in search of monsters to destroy. Our strategy has to be about sustainable relationships where countries can engage in productive negotiations that deter future confrontations.

Israel is a beacon of democracy in the Middle East and is a natural ally of the United States. The partnership includes intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and advanced defense technologies. Together, we leverage our collective strengths to effectively address shared security concerns.

I support the recent terms of the 10-year Memorandum of Understanding which stipulates that the United States pledged to provide \$38 billion in military aid (\$33 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants plus \$5 billion in missile defense appropriations) to Israel. In Congress, I would support this appropriation. As appropriations are handled yearly, I support appropriating \$3.3B for security assistance and \$500M for missile defense each year through the end of the MOU.

I strongly support the historic normalization agreement of the Abraham Accords signed between the UAE and Israel in September 2020. With strong bipartisan backing in the United States and accolades from nations around the world, the Accords have ushered in the potential for a transformative era for the Middle East. Three years on, they are delivering on their promise of expanding trade and commerce, fostering deeper people-to-people connections, and promoting a more integrated region. This conflict stands to threaten that, so we must not lose sight of the potential of these Accords.

It is essential to underscore that while peace is the ultimate goal, deterrence must not be undermined. The reality of the region dictates that we remain vigilant and well-prepared to counter any threats that may arise. Thus, our security cooperation is characterized by a delicate balance between seeking diplomatic resolutions and maintaining a robust security posture.

Economic Prosperity: Fostering Growth and Cooperation

When this war comes to an end, we need to have serious conversations about economic prosperity and the opportunities that are available if we dare to reach for them. Let's face it, economic prosperity promotes peace. When economies are strong and when people have livelihoods, animosity has a weaker breeding ground. Much of the conflict we have today that erupts out of the Middle East can be directly tied to poor economic conditions. This is going to get worse as climate change worsens. This is why international aid and cooperation are essential. But I want us to be braver and bolder.

Taking this a step further – we need to embrace sharing ideas and collaborating on economic issues, especially those that pertain to the environment. If we do that, we can increase the quality of life, strengthen economies, and by extension ensure a more peaceful future, all through collaboration with our allies. The United States has growing opportunities to have strategic economic partnerships with Israel that benefit both nations. I'm continuously inspired by the innovative solutions that nations like Israel have pioneered. Specifically, Israel's remarkable achievements in the field of desalination have not only improved their economic landscape, but also served as inspiration for arid regions worldwide. Why can't we help spread that technology to other regions across the Middle East and help with quality of life? Why can't we use some of that innovation right here in Arizona? Let's think bigger.

Israel's commitment to developing desalination plants has been transformative. These facilities have not only addressed Israel's chronic water scarcity issues, but have also set a global standard for sustainable water resource management. Ireland is looking into this for its water shortage issues, as are dozens of other nations. The ability to turn seawater into a reliable source of fresh water is a remarkable feat that has the potential to revolutionize regions facing similar challenges and Arizona is no exception. We should be leaning into that. Israel has also made tremendous progress in high-efficiency watering systems for agricultural use, such as N-Drip. Only about 10% of Arizona farms use high-efficiency watering systems and agriculture accounts for more than 80% of the water usage in the state; estimates show that universal use of systems like N-Drip in Arizona could conserve 25-40% of the water being used for agriculture, which could cut aggregate water usage in the state by as much as a third.

Given Israel's success in this arena, I'll advocate in Congress that we explore similar water solutions right here in Arizona. Our state shares many commonalities with Israel given our arid climate and our water scarcity. I have long said the solutions for our water issues are right in front of us. We need will and leadership. We can look to Israel's innovation as an example of what can be achieved. We can initiate projects that address water scarcity issues within our communities and regions. Now go a step further. What if we helped other countries in the Middle East with this issue? Instead of exporting our water to Saudi Arabia or shrugging off the notion that the longer countries like Yemen stay impoverished the more likely they are to breed terrorists, let's expand the innovation and build a better world. The United States and Israel can lead on this. We can help Palestine and other countries with this issue. And yes – we can make life better here in Arizona in the process.

This will secure a more sustainable future for Arizona and will contribute to the broader goal of fostering economic prosperity and improving the quality of life for our citizens. My vision for economic prosperity goes beyond aspiration. It is a tangible goal that we can achieve through innovative solutions and

collaborative efforts, drawing inspiration and help from Israel's successes in desalination. By pursuing similar drinkable water solutions here in Arizona and fostering economic growth through entrepreneurship and cooperation, we can build a more sustainable, prosperous, and harmonious future for our state and the broader global community.

A Democratic Society: Acknowledging and Strengthening Democratic Values

When I initially crafted this policy, there were growing concerns about democratic issues within Israel. Legislation impacting the independence of the Israeli judiciary was at the forefront of people's minds. That effort has since been weakened significantly and I am pleased by that. It is essential to acknowledge and address the democratic challenges that Israel faces. Similar to the challenges encountered by the United States and other democracies, we're still living in the Trump era and a post-January 6th fever dream.

Israel must grapple with issues related to the global protection and strengthening of democratic institutions. This includes concerns about judicial oversight and the need to promote transparency, accountability, and the rule of law. I firmly stand behind these principles and support the democratic values that are the bedrock of any just society. I am staunchly anti-authoritarianism. I will never be silent about authoritarian practices. While I support diplomatic efforts and cooperation with international partners to promote and expand the franchise of democracy, I also emphasize the importance of respecting the sovereignty of the Israeli people in determining the path of their democratic institutions in this current environment.

If anything can be gleaned from this tragic war, it is that fostering dialogues and exchanges on democratic values must be a key pillar of our collective strategy for peace going forward. It is beyond clear to me that by facilitating constructive discussions between Israel and its international partners, we can share experiences, knowledge, and best practices in democratic governance. This not only strengthens Israel's democratic institutions but also helps create a platform for the exchange of ideas and the promotion of democratic values on a global scale.

Opposition to Boycott Measures, Ramifications, and Aid Restrictions: Commonsense and Cooperation

In crafting my original foreign policy approach months ago, I felt it was essential to emphasize my stance against boycott measures. Since the explosion of conflict post-October 7th, I feel this needs to be further emphasized and clarified. Look, I believe that building enduring relationships with our international allies is paramount for global stability and peace. I understand a desire to push our will on others through pressure – we have done it with success in other nations in the past. But it's not how we should behave with an ally.

It is vital to recognize that my perspective on these issues is firmly rooted in a broader strategic context. I believe that boycotting actions against Israel would ultimately undermine the potential for productive dialogue, cooperation, and the pursuit of shared global objectives. I believed that before October 7th, and I believe that now. Among these shared goals are critical initiatives aimed at countering Iran's influence in the region and addressing the pervasive threat of terrorism. As I have mentioned, my wife's family escaped Iran at the onset of that country's revolution. As I acknowledged months ago, Iran is a consistently bad actor in the region. As feared, their proxies are wreaking havoc across the region and killing American soldiers in the process. All the more reason for us not to shun our allies by strong-arming. We need support on these strategic initiatives.

As a candidate now and when I become a Congressman, I'll advocate for the maintenance of existing Foreign Aid provisions to Israel without advocating for the imposition of additional conditions on aid packages. My rationale behind this approach is rooted in the belief that consistent and dependable support fosters strong diplomatic ties and allows our allies to focus on their development and security.

When it comes to financial aid to Palestine, my position is guided by the Taylor Force Act and a deep concern about the potential diversion of funds into the hands of terrorist organizations. I am resolutely committed to ensuring that the assistance provided serves its intended humanitarian purpose. Therefore, I am more inclined to support various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that directly channel aid to those in need in Palestine until Palestine implements the necessary reforms. This approach ensures that our contributions are directed toward alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and promoting stability in the region, rather than inadvertently aiding groups that advocate violence and carry out attacks.

My stance on a ceasefire is that any permanent ceasefire must be conditioned on the immediate release of all hostages. This is non-negotiable. And there must also be a roadmap for the dismantling or surrender of Hamas. I do strongly endorse the idea of intermittent ceasefires to safeguard innocent civilians and secure the freedom of hostages. When it comes to current negotiations in Congress for aid and the \$14.3 billion emergency resupply package in the Senate, I am against any consideration of new restrictions. I believe that the package should maintain its existing restrictions without any additions.

Countering Iran: Diplomacy and Deterrence

Since initially revealing this policy in October, the stakes with Iran have escalated. Iran is backing the Houthis, a Zaydi Shiite force that has been fighting Yemen's Sunni-led government since the early 2000s. The Houthis took over the Yemeni capital in 2014 and seized control over much of the northern part of the country two years later. Iran and its proxy Hezbollah have provided arms, training, and monetary support to the Houthis. I have been full-throated in my support of President Biden's counter-strikes on these terrorists. Yet despite weeks of U.S.-led airstrikes, Houthi rebels remain capable of launching significant attacks against American cargo ships and military personnel. The Houthis are attacking as a direct result of the Israel-Hamas war.

Let's look back to the events of 1979 in Iran when extremists took control, toppling a pro-Western government. My wife's family experienced the upheaval firsthand and had no choice but to flee Iran to escape the grip of the emerging extremist regime. Hearing Persians' stories of escape, the loss of their homeland, and their often perilous journeys to safety remain vivid in my mind as I consider our foreign policy options today.

This personal connection has shaped my perspective on the challenges posed by Iran and underscores the urgency and importance of our response to this nation. Iran has shown a willingness to destabilize its region and export extremist ideology. Yes, diplomacy should always be our guiding light and our first tool. But we have to be prepared to use all available options to keep Iran in check. The pursuit of nuclear weapons by Iran is a red line we cannot allow them to cross. It would have catastrophic consequences for the world. We must make it clear that we are willing to take decisive measures to ensure non-proliferation.

We cannot ignore Iran's active sponsorship of terrorist activities and its support for proxy groups worldwide, including Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas could not have carried out the October 7th attacks without Iran's help. Hezbollah would not exist without Iran. The Houthis would not be the force they are today without Iran. This reality illustrates the direct threat to global stability and security that Iran poses and just emphasizes why they must never have a nuclear weapon. To address this issue, we must implement sanctions and apply international pressure on Iran which hinders their nuclear program and the funding of their terrorist proxies. While diplomacy and dialogue are important, they must be reinforced with concrete actions to ensure that Iran discontinues its support for terrorism and proxy warfare.

We have to acknowledge Iran's warming relationship with Russia and China. An isolationist strategy is not going to mitigate this problem. The evolving alliance threatens to further destabilize the global balance of power. We must be vigilant and work diligently against an emerging axis that could have dire consequences for international peace. Diplomacy is a critical tool in addressing Iran's multifaceted challenges, but it cannot be our sole approach.

Combating Anti-Semitism And Xenophobia: A Moral Imperative

Anti-Semitism is an affront to the principles of tolerance, respect, and human dignity that we hold dear. I have been horrified by the places it rears its head – in places I would not have expected. I have seen it on the far right, the far left, and shockingly at universities that have prided themselves on inclusivity and empathy. Especially amidst this war, xenophobia is being justified because of people's passions about the conflict. That cannot stand and we cannot become numb to it. It was prejudice that drove the October 7th attacks. Since the war began, there has been a rise in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hate crimes. None of this is okay.

Education is the greatest tool in the fight against anti-Semitism and xenophobia. I support educational programs that promote awareness about the history and consequences of anti-Semitism. We need to teach about the Holocaust, we need to teach about the Munich attacks, we need to teach about Charlottesville, and we need to explain where these attacks and incidents stem from.

Arizona is home to the remnants of the internment camps of World War II. As we liberated Jews from the horrors of the concentration camps in Europe, we were still imprisoning Japanese American citizens in our own country based on fear and racism. While we obviously did not carry out the atrocities of Germany, we have to acknowledge that we're not immune to hatred and bigotry in the United States. We have made great strides as a nation, but as the Trump years have shown us, regression is possible and it can happen quickly.

By educating individuals about the devastating impact of prejudice and discrimination, we can foster empathy, compassion, and a commitment to tolerance. Schools, universities, and community organizations should play a pivotal role in imparting these essential lessons to future generations. By fostering constructive discussions, we can break down barriers and dispel the misconceptions that fuel hatred. Building relationships and understanding among communities of different faiths and backgrounds not only promotes tolerance, but also strengthens the social fabric of our societies.

Legal measures also play a critical role in addressing anti-Semitism. I have long admired the German penal code that prohibits publicly denying the Holocaust and disseminating Nazi propaganda, both off-and online. This includes sharing images such as swastikas, wearing an SS uniform, and making statements in support of Hitler. I'd like to see something similar in America – without encroaching on the First Amendment. It would touch on anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and racism. We've seen that there are consequences and limitations to speech (just look at all the election denialists and their legal losses) . We can find a path here in America that protects people's freedoms, but also protects people from harm.

This is a collective responsibility. Our efforts, or lack thereof, send a powerful message. We must be clear that prejudice and discrimination have no place in our societies, fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of their background or beliefs, can live free from fear and discrimination. This is not just a commitment; it is our moral duty, and it reflects the values that define us as a global community.

Conclusion: Pursuing A Just and Lasting Peace

I don't want to see civilians killed in Gaza. We must prioritize humanitarian aid in tandem with getting the hostages back. This conflict is laced with false choices. We can want more than one thing. We can want peace and we can want to dismantle Hamas. We can love Palestinians and Israelis. We can feed and protect the innocent and bring terrorists to justice. We can pursue global stability without being anti-Semitic or xenophobic. We can move past these dark days, but we have to do it together. My pro-Israel policy seeks to fortify America's relationship with Israel. It supports Israel in achieving its regional objectives, while actively pursuing peace in the Middle East.

The pillars of my policy include: achieving a Two-State Solution, cooperating with Israel on security, fostering economic prosperity with our ally, strengthening democratic values, opposing boycott measures and aid restrictions, countering Iran and hostile actors through diplomacy and careful application of force, and combating Anti-Semitism everywhere. At its core, my platform is anchored in a resolute dedication to realizing a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By diligently pursuing the principles I have discussed here, we can make significant strides toward a more stable, secure, and prosperous future for Israel, Palestine, and the Middle East.