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# The Price of Protection: Missile Defense and the New Currency of Dependency

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**By Mark Ginsberg**

When Greece signed for a complete Israeli air-defense array at the end of August, the contract read like an arms sale and behaved like something else.



*Mark Ginsberg*

The Achilles Shield package, David's Sling interceptors, SPYDER batteries, Barak MX modules and the radars that knit them into one sky, is worth some three and a half billion dollars, and Athens is now the first European Union state to own a national missile-defense dome built entirely of Israeli systems. Arms deals used to be the receipts of alliances. This one, and the pattern forming around it, suggests the order has flipped: the hardware is now the commitment itself, signed in interceptors rather than communiques.

## The Greek Signature


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Greece did not buy a widget. It bought a relationship with the country that runs the world's only continuously tested multi-layer air-defense system, live-fired in war for two years against everything from drones to ballistic missiles. Buying Israeli means plugging into that operational legacy: the software updates written overnight during real barrages, the doctrine that only a state under fire can write. For Athens, watching Turkish drone production expand and the eastern Mediterranean thicken with threat, a communique from Brussels promises debate; a dome over the national sky promises survival. The choice tells you which currency Athens now trusts.

## A Widening Ledger

The Greek signature is the loudest entry in a ledger that has been filling for two years. Germany's Arrow 3 purchase, anchored in the same Israeli-American industrial line, gives Berlin a capability no European program offered on any timeline. Barak MX has found buyers in Cyprus, Slovakia, India and Azerbaijan, with Morocco and the Emirates appearing in foreign reports. The buyers share no single bloc, religion or constitution. What they share is the calculation that protection from the sky is now a sovereign good, that the traditional guarantors deliver it slower and less surely than the small state that has been forced to live under the problem, and that writing the check is itself the alliance.

## The Procurement Tail

Anyone who has bought a large system knows the sticker price is the beginning of the conversation, and missile defense is a textbook case. The interceptors are consumables: a single sustained barrage can burn through ammunition budgets built for peacetime assumptions, as the last two years demonstrated in public, and replenishment contracts arrive with their own diplomacy attached. The radar and battle-management software carry lifecycle costs that routinely reach multiples of the purchase price across a platform's service life: upgrades, spares, training pipelines, the certification of every firmware release. A state that adopts a foreign dome adopts its vendor's calendar, and the vendor's wars, as its own procurement rhythm. The three and a half billion euros Athens signed for is the entry fee; the subscription is the real product, renewed annually in a currency called dependence.


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That tail has a political barbed tip, and it is worth stating plainly. Major Israeli air-defense exports of American co-developed systems run through Washington's export-approval machinery, which means every dome sold abroad carries a third signature, and the alliance being purchased is triangular whether the buyer planned for it or not. It means the supplier gains standing in the buyer's national security debates that no treaty formally grants: when Berlin or Athens weighs a policy that Jerusalem or Washington dislikes, the dome is in the room, silently, the way a mortgage sits in a household's decisions. Purchases at this scale are not transactions. They are constitutions of a small commonwealth, and constitutions are hard to leave.

## The Debt Side of the Ledger

Strategic dependency compounds like financial debt, and the balance sheet has a way of arriving due at the worst moment. A client whose deterrent umbrella is maintained abroad has wagered its survival on the supplier's continuity: Israel's own war-driven production priorities this year meant customers waited on deliveries, even as the country's record exports kept climbing through the war, a small preview of what a real regional escalation would do to export commitments. One failed interception, anywhere in the chain, would devalue every contract downstream, and the supplier knows it; performance is the collateral backing this currency, and it has to be kept nightly. The buyers are, knowingly, underwriting that exchange rate.

There is a subtler cost, which the defense economics literature calls lock-in and which plainer language calls marriage. Training regimes, command software, interceptor stockpiles and doctrine all converge on one vendor's system, and switching costs rise every year after adoption. The Greek dome will make the next Greek procurement decision before any Greek minister does. Sovereignty is not lost in a signature; it is amortized across a decade of maintenance contracts, and the states now buying a piece of the Israeli sky have chosen, with open eyes, to spend it.

## What the Ledger Means

Three consequences deserve attention. First, deterrence by procurement: a state that installs Israeli layers acquires a stake in Israeli survival, and Jerusalem acquires a stake in its clients' skies, an interdependency denser than any joint declaration.


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Second, the transatlantic geometry bends. European capitals that buy Israeli systems are hedging inside NATO, not leaving it, but the hedge itself redistributes influence from Washington's monopoly on reassurance toward a new supplier of it, with Washington's own signature on each sale as the quiet guarantee. Third, the precedent is exportable beyond missiles: whoever proves he can deliver the most urgent protection, cyber, drones, rocket warning, will collect the alliances of the next decade.

The currency of protection, like all currencies, is a promise, and promises have failure modes that treaties were invented to soften. The states joining this ledger are trading the old alliance machinery, with its endless consultation and its slow, reliable patience, for a faster instrument with sharper edges. They may be right to. But the deal should be read for what it is: not an arms purchase but a refinancing, in which the mortgage on national survival is transferred from a committee of allies to a single small country that must keep intercepting, nightly, to keep the currency good.

**Author: Mark Ginsberg** – Israel-based writer and commentator on technology and artificial intelligence, with over two decades of firsthand perspective on the country's innovation economy. Originally from South Florida and now based in Efrat, he analyzes the growth of Israel's tech ecosystem and the broader implications of AI on business, policy, and society.

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*Image Source: Israel Ministry of Defense (Israel's director-general of the Israel Ministry of Defense, Maj. Gen. Amir Baram, and his Greek counterpart, Maj. Gen. Ioannis Bouras, signing an approximately $3.4 billion defense agreement, on Aug. 31, 2026.).*

Mark Ginsberg Military Strategy


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Political Polarization in Pakistan

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SAFETY FIRST

# Your rabbi's voice on the phone is not always your rabbi

By Mark Ginsberg · August 26, 2026

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The call sounds exactly right. The rabbi's voice, the cadence, the little verbal habits everyone knows from Shabbat *drashot*. There is an emergency, the voice says. A family in the congregation needs help tonight. Could you please send gift cards right away?

Congregants at synagogues in multiple states have received versions of that call over the past year. Every one of them was fake. Voice-cloning tools that once required studio equipment now need 30 seconds of audio pulled from a public sermon recording and a few dollars a month.


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*Illustrative.*

I write about AI and cybersecurity from Israel, and the gap I keep running into is this: the technology producing convincing fake voices, faces and emails went mainstream, while the security practices of most Jewish institutions did not move at all. The people running our federations, synagogues, schools and camps are facing adversaries with industrial-grade tools, and they are defending themselves with advice written for a threat that no longer exists.

The threat is not hypothetical. The Secure Community Network documented 190 cyberattacks against synagogues and Jewish organizations across 16 states between January and mid-April of this year alone, a tally cybersecurity experts laid out in these pages. Phishing, fraud, data exposure, doxxing. The criminals are not only after money. Some campaigns harvest membership lists and donor records to map who in the community can be targeted next.

The fakes are getting harder to spot. Israeli security researchers have tracked online campaigns built on fabricated outrage and invented victims for years, and the same machinery now powers scams aimed directly at Jewish donors: fake charity sites after every disaster, AI-written appeals that mirror the language of real organizations, and manipulated video. In May, Israel's National Cyber Directorate flagged deepfake videos of Chief Rabbi David Yosef apparently endorsing a


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medical product he had never seen. If the chief rabbi can be convincingly faked from a public clip, so can your executive director from last month's federation gala.

What actually works? I put that question to security practitioners in Israel, where defending civilian institutions against sophisticated adversaries is a national specialty. Their answers were strikingly unglamorous.

**Kill the assumption that voice proves identity**

First, no financial request, credential change or sensitive data transfer happens on the strength of a call or video alone, no matter who appears to be asking. Call back on a known number. This costs nothing and defeats most voice-clone scams instantly.

**Treat email as hostile until verified**

Second, AI writes flawless, personalized phishing now, free of the grammar errors people were trained to spot. An email from your board president asking for a wire transfer gets the same callback treatment as the phone call. Multi-factor authentication on every account, especially email, blocks the majority of account takeovers even when a password is stolen.

**Rehearse the human moment**

Third, the Israeli approach to institutional security runs on drills, not documents. Run one tabletop exercise: the executive director's email asks finance staff to move funds Friday afternoon before a deadline. Do staff verify? Who calls whom? A community that has practiced saying no politely is a community a scammer cannot script against.

**Small does not mean safe**

Fourth, security experts repeatedly note that attackers look for the path of least resistance, and smaller organizations with older systems and thinner training get hit precisely because they assume they are beneath notice. The hostage-taking of a small congregation's donor database is just as damaging to that congregation as a larger breach would be to a federation.

There is a positive here worth naming: The same country that built a civilian cyber defense ecosystem out of necessity, and whose technology sector now underpins security tools used far beyond its borders, has made much of this expertise publicly accessible. Israeli-developed threat intelligence, training curricula and hardened communications tools are within reach of a mid-sized federation's budget. A closer look at Israel's technology sector shows how much of the world's


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defensive capability now flows from institutions built to protect a small, persistently targeted society.

Jewish organizations have rewritten their physical security playbooks since Oct. 7, 2023. The digital playbook needs the same urgency, the same budget line and the same assumption that someone is actively planning for the next attempt. Because someone is.

*Mark Ginsberg writes about AI, cybersecurity and Israel. His work has appeared in* The Times of Israel *and* WGI World.

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**Jewish peoplehood is a two-way street**


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# WHAT DO WE TELL THE CHILDREN?

Guest September 14, 2026 Jewish Life

**By Mark Ginsberg**

Your reporting on the Boulder Valley School District settlement, concrete measures after real harm, arrives at the question every Jewish parent now meets sooner or later: what do we tell the children? I write from Efrat, where my children practice walking to the shelter alongside their math lessons, and where that question stopped being hypothetical two years ago. Israeli families have been forced to develop scripts for these conversations, and the ones that work may be worth trading across the water.

## The Lessons That Arrive Early

Israeli schools teach the siren the way American schools teach the fire drill, as routine rather than alarm, and the routine is the first lesson for parents too. Fear with a procedure attached becomes a task; fear without one becomes a mood that follows a child home. When the war began, the guidance that circulated among parents here was to answer the question asked and not the question feared. A child who asks whether the sirens will come tonight wants to know about tonight, not about the region's future. Short true answers, calibrated to the age in front of you, beat thorough ones every time.

The second lesson took longer to learn. Children absorb far more from what we do than from what we say, and a parent who checks the phone with clenched shoulders is teaching a class of one. The families I know


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who have held up best gave their children jobs: packing the shelter bag, learning the neighbor's name, being the one who reminds everyone where the flashlight lives. Psychologists who study communities under rocket fire keep finding the same pattern, that belonging and usefulness are the armor, and the pattern works in ordinary hard times as much as in wartime.

### The Dinner-Table Version

The hardest conversations are not about the sirens at all. They are about the hatred behind them, the ones a child hears about from a classmate or sees on a screen. Here the Israeli instinct is to name the thing plainly and then widen the frame: some people hate us for what we are, and what we are is a family with a table, a holiday coming, a history we love telling. The hate gets one sentence. The table gets the rest of the evening. That ratio, one part naming to five parts living, is the closest thing to a vaccine we have found.

### What Travels to Boulder

What would I offer a Boulder family reading about the settlement and wondering what to say at dinner? The same blueprint with local materials. Name what happened honestly, since children will hear it anyway and secrets teach shame. Give them a role, since a child who helps make the household ready stands a little straighter. And keep the ratio: one sentence for the harm, the rest of the evening for the joy, which is the family's own and cannot be settled away. The measures your district agreed to matter, and the belonging you build at the table matters more. Our two communities are proof of the same sentence: children do not need the danger hidden. They need the love to be visible.


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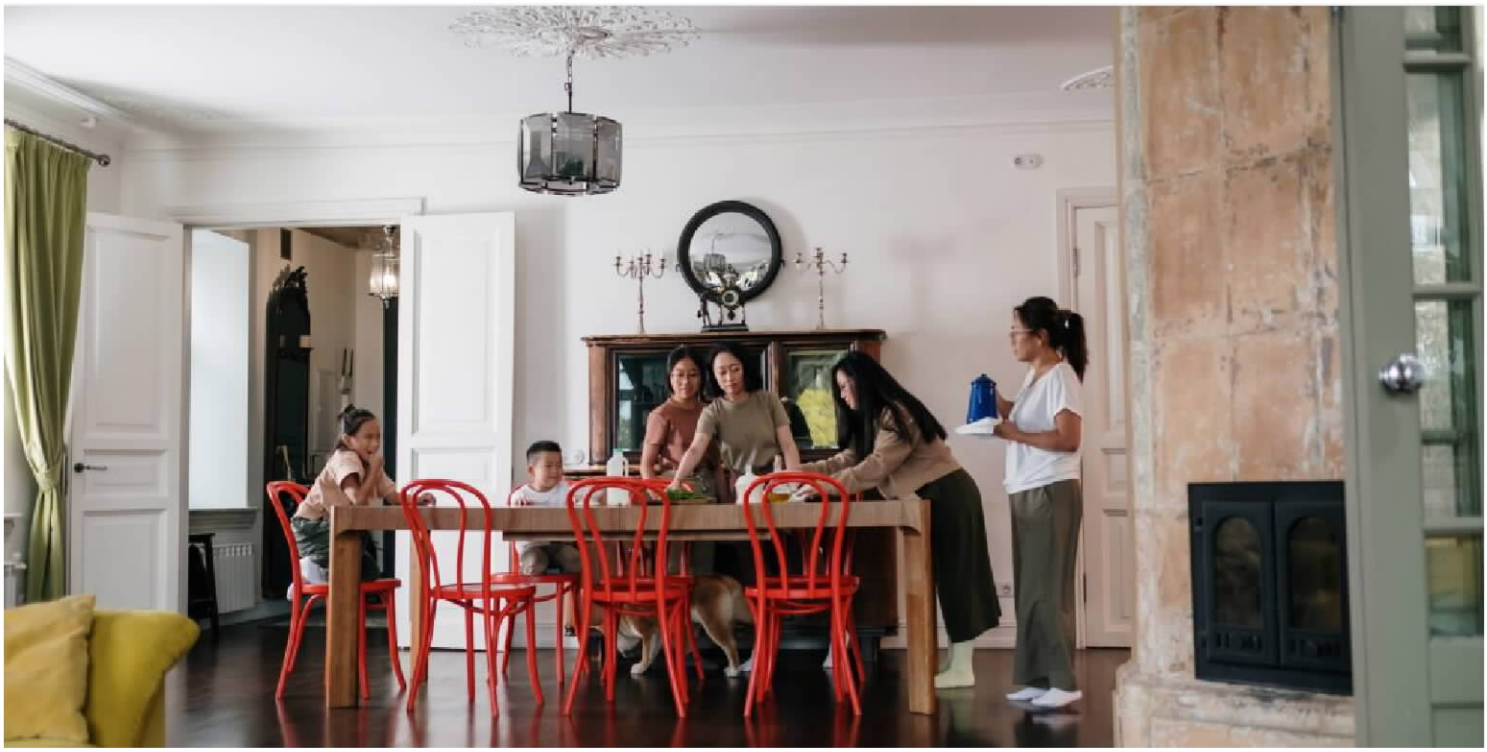


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# THE GUESTS WHO COULDN'T COME

Guest September 17, 2026 Jewish Life

By Mark Ginsberg

Every Jewish holiday table is a census, and wartime Israel has learned to read the count the way one reads an x-ray, for what is present and for what is not. This year, across the holidays just ended, households set their tables with a new arithmetic: the chair for the son on reserve duty, who may or may not make it home by candle-lighting; the chair that stays empty for the hostage, set by families who are not his; the chairs of the murdered, filled by relatives who now sit twice as close to each other. I want to describe this quietly, from my own table in Efrat, since it is the piece of the war that never makes the news and the one your readers' tables have the most in common with.

## Setting for the Missing

The customs differ by household and none of them are official. Some families pour the wine cup for the missing the way one does for Elijah, a placeholder with prophetic patience. Some leave the chair with its coat draped over the back, the coat that went to the base in October and has not come home for a holiday since. One mother I know photographs the empty place at each festival and sends the picture to her son at the front, a message that needs no caption: we kept it for you. The rabbis never had to rule on any of this.


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The practices invented themselves, the way liturgy does, from the ground up, and by the second year they had hardened into tradition, which is what grief does when it plans to stay.

### The Table as Census

There is a harder kind of counting, and honesty requires it. The war added names to the community's permanent list, and the holidays are when the loss recalculates itself. The friend who used to carve is carved out of the evening now; his joke survives at the table, told in his cadence by someone else, and the first time each joke lands, the room holds still for half a second, a moment of silence nobody announces. New faces appear too: the lone soldier whose family is abroad, the widow brought in by the neighborhood, the friend of the fallen who has become a seventh child to a family of six. When a community absorbs a blow, it reconfigures its tables rather than merely mourning at them, and the holiday version of that reconfiguration is the most visible inventory the country takes.

### What the Empty Chairs Teach

What the table teaches, two years in, is a theology of the placeholder. The empty chair is not denial; nobody at these tables believes the missing are merely late. It is a statement of account: this person belongs here, the seat is held, and the holding itself is the family's answer to everything the war tried to take. The world kept coming to celebrate in Jerusalem through every season of alarm, and the tables did the same in miniature, refusing to subtract the missing from the guest list even when subtraction was the honest arithmetic.

For readers who set their own tables with absences, medical wings, distant cities, chairs that will not be filled again, the Israeli version is not exotic. It is the same tradition arriving at the same answer under harder pressure: the table is a promise, and a promise does not depend on everyone being present to keep it. We lit the candles, sang the songs that go too high for us, and passed the food toward the empty places, which is how a family says, out loud, in the only liturgy it has: next year, complete.


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*Mark Ginsberg*

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The Greek signature is the loudest entry in a ledger that has been filling for two years. Germany's Arrow 3 purchase, anchored in the same Israeli-American industrial line, gives Berlin a capability no European program offered on any timeline. Barak MX has found buyers in Cyprus, Slovakia, India and Azerbaijan, with Morocco and the Emirates appearing in foreign reports. The buyers share no single bloc, religion or constitution. What they share is the calculation that protection from the sky is now a sovereign good, that the traditional guarantors deliver it slower and less surely than the small state that has been forced to live under the problem, and that writing the check is itself the alliance.

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Anyone who has bought a large system knows the sticker price is the beginning of the conversation, and missile defense is a textbook case. The interceptors are consumables: a single sustained barrage can burn through ammunition budgets built for peacetime assumptions, as the last two years demonstrated in public, and replenishment contracts arrive with their own diplomacy attached. The radar and battle-management software carry lifecycle costs that routinely reach multiples of the purchase price across a platform's service life: upgrades, spares, training pipelines, the certification of every firmware release. A state that adopts a foreign dome adopts its vendor's calendar, and the vendor's wars, as its own procurement rhythm. The three and a half billion euros Athens signed for is the entry fee; the subscription is the real product, renewed annually in a currency called dependence.


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Strategic dependency compounds like financial debt, and the balance sheet has a way of arriving due at the worst moment. A client whose deterrent umbrella is maintained abroad has wagered its survival on the supplier's continuity: Israel's own war-driven production priorities this year meant customers waited on deliveries, even as the country's record exports kept climbing through the war, a small preview of what a real regional escalation would do to export commitments. One failed interception, anywhere in the chain, would devalue every contract downstream, and the supplier knows it; performance is the collateral backing this currency, and it has to be kept nightly. The buyers are, knowingly, underwriting that exchange rate.

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Second, the transatlantic geometry bends. European capitals that buy Israeli systems are hedging inside NATO, not leaving it, but the hedge itself redistributes influence from Washington's monopoly on reassurance toward a new supplier of it, with Washington's own signature on each sale as the quiet guarantee. Third, the precedent is exportable beyond missiles: whoever proves he can deliver the most urgent protection, cyber, drones, rocket warning, will collect the alliances of the next decade.

The currency of protection, like all currencies, is a promise, and promises have failure modes that treaties were invented to soften. The states joining this ledger are trading the old alliance machinery, with its endless consultation and its slow, reliable patience, for a faster instrument with sharper edges. They may be right to. But the deal should be read for what it is: not an arms purchase but a refinancing, in which the mortgage on national survival is transferred from a committee of allies to a single small country that must keep intercepting, nightly, to keep the currency good.

**Author: Mark Ginsberg** – Israel-based writer and commentator on technology and artificial intelligence, with over two decades of firsthand perspective on the country's innovation economy. Originally from South Florida and now based in Efrat, he analyzes the growth of Israel's tech ecosystem and the broader implications of AI on business, policy, and society.

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*Image Source: Israel Ministry of Defense (Israel's director-general of the Israel Ministry of Defense, Maj. Gen. Amir Baram, and his Greek counterpart, Maj. Gen. Ioannis Bouras, signing an approximately $3.4 billion defense agreement, on Aug. 31, 2026.).*

Mark Ginsberg Military Strategy


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Political Polarization in Pakistan

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THE BLOGS

# Mark Ginsberg

## The Myth of Israel's Isolation: The World's Moving Closer, Not Further Away




Israel Day parade - courtesy of Shutterstock

One of the most frequently repeated claims since October 7 has been that Israel is becoming increasingly isolated on the international stage. Headlines often focus on diplomatic disputes, hostile demonstrations, critical UN resolutions, and disagreements with some Western governments, creating the impression that Israel is steadily losing friends around the world.


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The reality, however, is considerably more complex.

While criticism of Israeli policies has undoubtedly intensified in some international forums, many governments have simultaneously chosen to deepen their practical relationships with Israel. Defence cooperation has expanded, trade agreements have grown, diplomatic ties have strengthened, and new strategic partnerships have emerged across Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. Far from being abandoned, Israel is increasingly viewed by many countries as an indispensable partner in areas ranging from defence and cybersecurity to agriculture, artificial intelligence, water technology and energy security.

The contrast between the political narrative and the diplomatic reality has rarely been more striking.

## Key Takeaways

- Claims that Israel is becoming internationally isolated overlook significant diplomatic developments occurring around the world.
- Several governments that adopted strongly anti-Israel positions have recently lost elections while others are falling behind in opinion polls.
- European countries continue expanding defense cooperation with Israel.
- The Abraham Accords countries continue strengthening relations despite the Gaza war.
- India, Nigeria and several African nations are deepening strategic cooperation with Israel.
- Latin America has witnessed important political shifts favourable to stronger ties with Israel.
- Increasingly, governments are separating disagreements over the Gaza conflict from long-term national interests.

## Politics Changes—National Interests Endure


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One of the biggest mistakes in analyzing international relations is assuming that today's political headlines represent permanent diplomatic realities.

Governments change. Elections alter foreign policy. Public opinion evolves.

In recent months, several governments that adopted some of the world's strongest anti-Israel positions have either lost power or suffered significant political setbacks. Slovenia, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador have all experienced electoral changes that weaken governments whose foreign policies were among the most hostile towards Israel.

Meanwhile, governments in Spain and Norway—two of Israel's sharpest European critics—are currently trailing in opinion polls.

These developments do not guarantee dramatic policy reversals.

They do illustrate that diplomatic trends are rarely static.

## Europe Is Buying Israeli Security

Perhaps the clearest evidence against the narrative of isolation lies in defense cooperation.

Countries do not entrust their national security to partners they consider internationally isolated.

Germany, Slovakia and Romania have all signed major defense agreements with Israel, reflecting growing confidence in Israeli military technology and operational expertise. Greece and Cyprus have continued strengthening their strategic defense partnership with Jerusalem, recognizing Israel as an increasingly important pillar of Eastern Mediterranean security.

These agreements involve more than commercial transactions.

They represent long-term strategic partnerships that often extend over decades and require extraordinary levels of political trust.


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Governments purchasing advanced defense systems are making decisions based upon national security rather than temporary political debates.

## The Abraham Accords Continue to Grow

One prediction made repeatedly after October 7 was that the Abraham Accords would collapse

The opposite has largely occurred.

The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco have continued expanding economic, technological and security cooperation with Israel despite enormous regional pressure. Investment, tourism, business partnerships and strategic dialogue have continued because all parties recognize that the long-term benefits of cooperation outweigh short-term political tensions.

This represents an important transformation in Middle Eastern politics.

For decades, the Palestinian issue effectively determined Arab-Israeli relations.

Today, many regional governments increasingly pursue foreign policies based upon their own national interests rather than ideological expectations.

That shift appears increasingly durable.

## New Partnerships Across the Global South

Israel's expanding diplomatic footprint is not limited to Europe or the Middle East.

Across Africa and the developing world, numerous countries continue strengthening bilateral relations. Estonia, Fiji, Guatemala, Uganda and El Salvador have all upgraded various aspects of their relationships with Israel, recognizing the country's expertise in agriculture, healthcare cybersecurity, water management and technological innovation.

At the same time, India and Nigeria have implemented highly significant new cooperation agreements covering strategic sectors important to both countries' long-term development.


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These partnerships reflect a broader trend.

Many governments increasingly evaluate Israel through the practical lens of technology, innovation and economic cooperation rather than exclusively through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## Latin America Is Changing

Political developments across Latin America also challenge the narrative of growing isolation.

Argentina has emerged as one of Israel's closest partners in the region, with President Javier Milei continuing to deepen bilateral relations and promoting what has become known as the "Isaac Accords" as a framework for expanded cooperation.

At the same time, electoral changes elsewhere in the region have weakened several governments that previously positioned themselves among Israel's harshest critics.

Foreign policy throughout Latin America remains dynamic.

What appears today as diplomatic confrontation can rapidly evolve following democratic elections.

## Recognition Through Partnership

Perhaps the most important development is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Countries are increasingly choosing to deepen relationships with Israel not despite its challenges but because of its capabilities.

Whether the issue is missile defense, cyber resilience, artificial intelligence, water scarcity, precision agriculture, emergency medicine or intelligence cooperation, Israel has become an increasingly valuable strategic partner for governments confronting complex twenty-first century security challenges.


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Even Somaliland's celebration of closer ties and recognition by Israel illustrates a broader point.

Many emerging governments increasingly view relations with Israel as an asset rather than a liability.

## The Difference Between Headlines and Reality

None of this means Israel faces no diplomatic challenges.

It plainly does.

International criticism remains intense. Several governments continue adopting highly critica positions. United Nations forums remain deeply contentious, and public opinion in parts of Europe and North America has shifted significantly.

These realities should not be ignored.

Neither should the equally important reality that beneath the headlines, governments continue signing defense agreements, expanding trade, investing in technology partnerships and strengthening diplomatic ties with Israel.

International relations are ultimately driven less by slogans than by national interests.

On that measure, Israel's position remains remarkably strong.

## Conclusion

Predictions of Israel's growing international isolation have become a recurring feature of commentary throughout the Gaza war.

The evidence suggests a far more nuanced picture.

While political criticism has undoubtedly intensified in some quarters, many governments have simultaneously chosen to strengthen practical cooperation with Israel across defense,


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technology, intelligence, trade, agriculture and regional security. Electoral changes in several countries, expanding strategic partnerships in Europe and the Middle East, deepening ties across Africa and Asia, and the continued growth of the Abraham Accords all point toward a more complicated diplomatic reality than the narrative of isolation suggests.

Israel is not universally embraced. No country is. But neither is it isolated.

Increasingly, governments around the world appear to be distinguishing between political disagreements over specific policies and their long-term national interests. In doing so, many have concluded that Israel remains one of the world's most valuable strategic, technological and security partners.

Diplomatic headlines may suggest isolation.

Diplomatic actions increasingly tell a different story.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Mark Ginsberg is an Israel-based digital marketer and commentator on technology and artificial intelligence, with over two decades of firsthand perspective on the country's innovation economy. Originally from South Florida and now based in Efrat, he analyzes the growth of Israel's tech ecosystem and the broader implications of AI on business, policy, and society.

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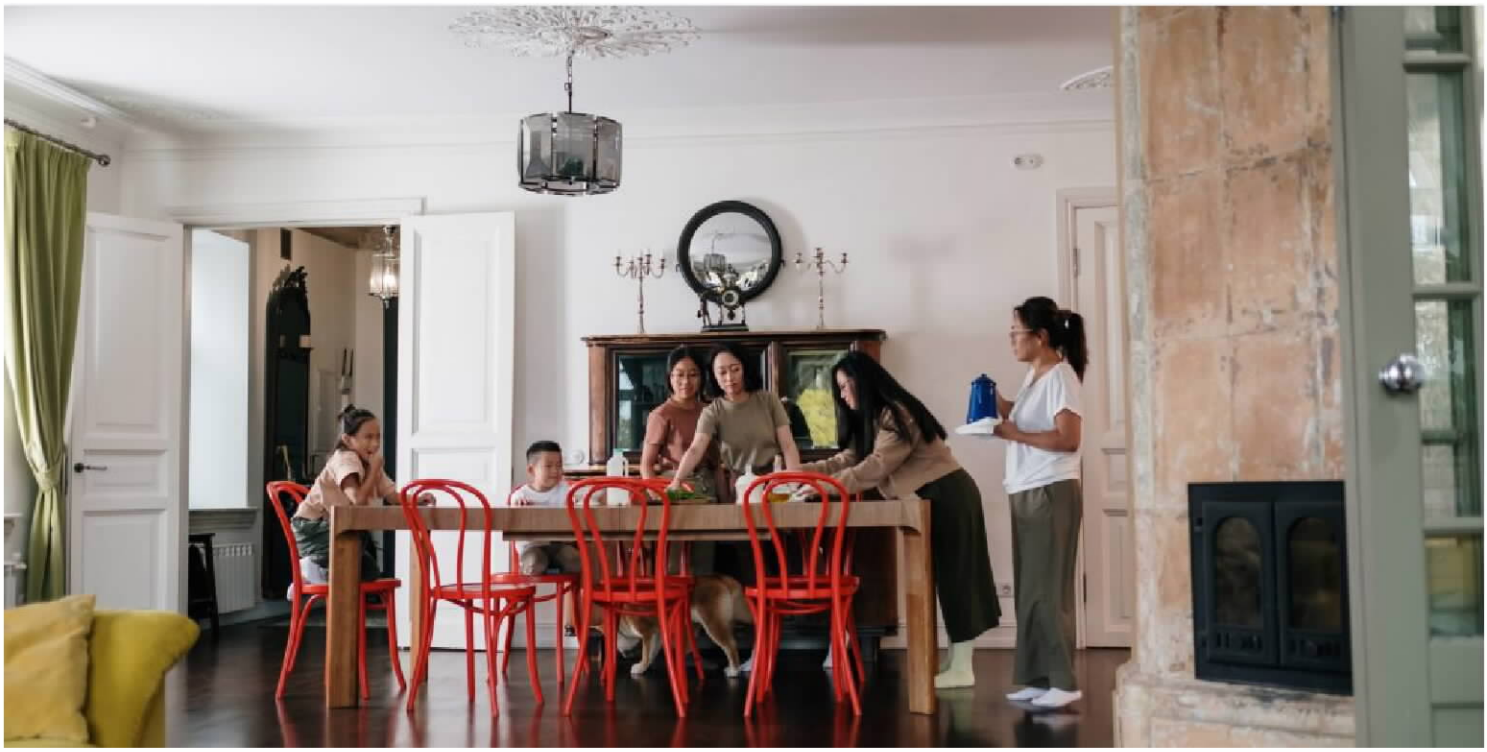


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# THE GUESTS WHO COULDN'T COME

Guest September 17, 2026 Jewish Life

By Mark Ginsberg

Every Jewish holiday table is a census, and wartime Israel has learned to read the count the way one reads an x-ray, for what is present and for what is not. This year, across the holidays just ended, households set their tables with a new arithmetic: the chair for the son on reserve duty, who may or may not make it home by candle-lighting; the chair that stays empty for the hostage, set by families who are not his; the chairs of the murdered, filled by relatives who now sit twice as close to each other. I want to describe this quietly, from my own table in Efrat, since it is the piece of the war that never makes the news and the one your readers' tables have the most in common with.

## Setting for the Missing

The customs differ by household and none of them are official. Some families pour the wine cup for the missing the way one does for Elijah, a placeholder with prophetic patience. Some leave the chair with its coat draped over the back, the coat that went to the base in October and has not come home for a holiday since. One mother I know photographs the empty place at each festival and sends the picture to her son at the front, a message that needs no caption: we kept it for you. The rabbis never had to rule on any of this.


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The practices invented themselves, the way liturgy does, from the ground up, and by the second year they had hardened into tradition, which is what grief does when it plans to stay.

### The Table as Census

There is a harder kind of counting, and honesty requires it. The war added names to the community's permanent list, and the holidays are when the loss recalculates itself. The friend who used to carve is carved out of the evening now; his joke survives at the table, told in his cadence by someone else, and the first time each joke lands, the room holds still for half a second, a moment of silence nobody announces. New faces appear too: the lone soldier whose family is abroad, the widow brought in by the neighborhood, the friend of the fallen who has become a seventh child to a family of six. When a community absorbs a blow, it reconfigures its tables rather than merely mourning at them, and the holiday version of that reconfiguration is the most visible inventory the country takes.

### What the Empty Chairs Teach

What the table teaches, two years in, is a theology of the placeholder. The empty chair is not denial; nobody at these tables believes the missing are merely late. It is a statement of account: this person belongs here, the seat is held, and the holding itself is the family's answer to everything the war tried to take. The world kept coming to celebrate in Jerusalem through every season of alarm, and the tables did the same in miniature, refusing to subtract the missing from the guest list even when subtraction was the honest arithmetic.

For readers who set their own tables with absences, medical wings, distant cities, chairs that will not be filled again, the Israeli version is not exotic. It is the same tradition arriving at the same answer under harder pressure: the table is a promise, and a promise does not depend on everyone being present to keep it. We lit the candles, sang the songs that go too high for us, and passed the food toward the empty places, which is how a family says, out loud, in the only liturgy it has: next year, complete.


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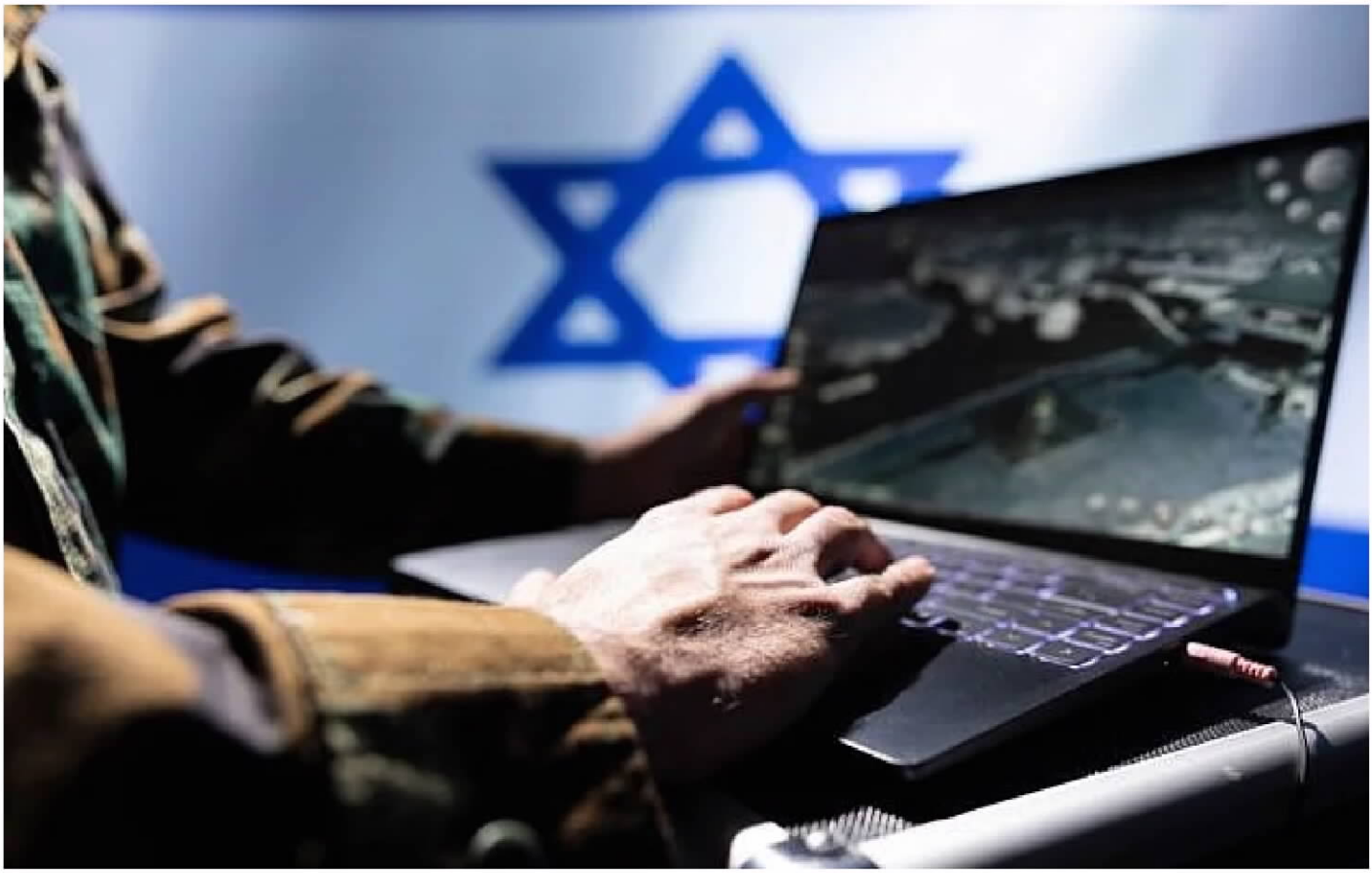
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THE BLOGS

Mark Ginsberg

# The Myth of Israel's Isolation is a Great Strategic Liability



Israeli military technology (courtesy of Shutterstock)

Ever since October 7, one narrative has become almost conventional wisdom: Israel is increasingly isolated from the rest of the world. It is repeated by international commentators, amplified on social media, cited by critics of Israel and, perhaps most surprisingly, echoed by many of Israel's own supporters.


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It was made most recently by potential US presidential candidate Rahm Emanuel.

The daily news cycle, dominated by hostile demonstrations, condemnatory UN resolutions and public disagreements with some Western governments, reinforces the impression that Israel is rapidly becoming a diplomatic pariah.

It is an understandable conclusion; it is also an incomplete one.

The danger is not merely that this narrative is inaccurate. It is that it has become so widely accepted that it is beginning to shape perceptions of reality. Those perceptions matter. They affect deterrence, embolden Israel's enemies, influence investors, discourage potential partners and undermine the confidence of Israelis themselves. When even well-meaning friends repeat that Israel stands alone, they unintentionally strengthen one of the central messages promoted by Hamas, Iran and their allies.

The reality is considerably more nuanced.

Behind the headlines, governments across the world are quietly moving closer to Israel, not further away. While criticism over the war in Gaza has undoubtedly intensified in many diplomatic forums, an entirely different story is unfolding in cabinet rooms, defense ministries and boardrooms.

Countries continue to buy Israeli defense systems. Intelligence cooperation is expanding. Trade is growing. New technological partnerships are being signed. Governments are increasingly separating disagreements over the Gaza conflict from their own long-term national interests.

International politics has always been driven less by rhetoric than by interests.

One of the greatest mistakes in analysing foreign policy is assuming that today's headlines represent permanent diplomatic realities. Governments change. Elections alter priorities. Public opinion shifts. Strategic interests endure.


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Recent political developments illustrate precisely this point. Several governments that adopte some of the world's strongest anti-Israel positions have either lost power or suffered significant electoral setbacks. Slovenia, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador have all experienced political changes that weakened governments whose foreign policies had become among the most hostile towards Israel. Meanwhile, governments in Spain and Norway, two of Israel's sharpest European critics, now trail in opinion polls.

Perhaps the clearest contradiction to the narrative of isolation can be found in defense cooperation.

Countries do not entrust their national security to partners they believe are isolated or strategically irrelevant. Across Europe, governments continue investing heavily in Israeli defense technology because they view it as among the most advanced in the world.

Germany, Romania and Slovakia have all expanded major defense cooperation with Israel. Greece and Cyprus continue strengthening strategic partnerships that have become central pillars of Eastern Mediterranean security. These are not symbolic gestures designed for favourable headlines. They are long-term commitments involving billions of dollars, decades of cooperation and extraordinary levels of political trust.

Governments may criticise Israeli policies while simultaneously deciding that Israel is indispensable to their own national security. Those positions are not contradictory. They reflect how states actually make decisions.

The same distinction has become increasingly evident in the Middle East.

Following October 7, many predicted the Abraham Accords would collapse under the pressure of public opinion. Instead, the opposite has largely occurred. The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco have continued expanding economic, technological and security cooperation with Israel despite enormous regional pressure.

Business delegations continue travelling. Investment continues flowing. Security dialogue continues expanding. Tourism has resumed. While official rhetoric has sometimes become


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more cautious, the underlying strategic logic has remained intact.

This represents one of the most significant transformations in modern Middle Eastern politics For decades, Arab-Israeli relations were largely held hostage to the Palestinian issue. Increasingly, regional governments are pursuing foreign policies based upon their own national interests, economic development and security concerns. That shift appears far more durable than many observers appreciate.

The story extends well beyond Europe and the Middle East.

India continues deepening strategic cooperation with Israel across defense, technology and innovation. Nigeria has expanded important areas of collaboration. Across Africa, countries increasingly view Israeli expertise in agriculture, water management, healthcare and cybersecurity as essential tools for their own development. Meanwhile, Latin America is experiencing its own political evolution. Argentina has become one of Israel's closest international partners, while electoral changes elsewhere have weakened several governments that built much of their foreign policy around hostility towards Israel.

Increasingly, governments are evaluating Israel not solely through the prism of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but through the practical lens of what Israel contributes to solving 21st-century challenges.

Artificial intelligence. Cybersecurity. Missile defense. Emergency medicine. Precision agriculture. Water scarcity. Intelligence cooperation. Energy resilience.

These are areas where Israel is not simply competitive. In many cases, it is a global leader.

None of this should minimise Israel's genuine diplomatic challenges. International criticism remains intense. Public opinion has shifted in parts of Europe and North America. Israel continues to face hostile majorities in many United Nations bodies, and some bilateral relationships have become more strained.

Ignoring those realities would be just as misleading as ignoring Israel's growing partnerships.


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But neither should we ignore what governments are actually doing. The distinction between public rhetoric and private policy has rarely been greater.

Diplomatic actions often reveal priorities far more accurately than diplomatic statements.

This is why the myth of Israel's isolation deserves to be challenged. Not because everything is going well, but because a distorted picture carries real strategic consequences.

Israel's enemies seek to portray it as abandoned because isolation weakens deterrence and encourages further aggression. If they can convince Israelis that they are alone, and persuade the wider world that partnership with Israel carries unacceptable costs, they achieve an important psychological victory regardless of events on the battlefield.

Israel's friends should be careful not to reinforce that narrative unintentionally.

The truth is more encouraging, and more useful. Israel is neither universally embraced nor universally condemned. Like every country confronting a major conflict, it faces criticism alongside cooperation. Yet beneath the daily headlines, governments across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America continue making decisions based on enduring national interests rather than passing political controversies.

Those decisions increasingly point in one direction.

Despite the noise, Israel remains one of the world's most valuable strategic, technological and security partners. The headlines often suggest isolation. The diplomacy tells a very different story.


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**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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**williamkeenan**
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Opposition to Israel is largely opposition to Netanyahu and his Smotrich and Ben Gvir controlled coalition. The US has a similar reputational problem with Trump. Both carry enormous strategic risk as evidenced by the debacle with Iran.

*(Edited)*

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