

Tragedy, hope & Israel's true friends

By Timothy D. Naegele

[Timothy D. Naegele was counsel to the United States Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, and chief of staff to a U.S. Senator. His law firm, Timothy D. Naegele & Associates, is based in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles.

[\[More from Timothy D. Naegele](#)

Israel needs to do some soul searching]

September 14, 2003

Bombings, death and destruction continue; Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) has resigned and Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala) is poised to take his place; and there is hope...

Daniel Pipes wrote a terrific article recently ([Who supports Israel?](#)), explaining that Jews worldwide often fail to "heed the party line" - or always vote (or act) as they are "expected" to - and instead openly question or oppose the wisdom of Israel's policies and leadership. Similarly, there are no monolithic feelings among non-Jewish Americans about Israel these days.

Conservatives are often Israel's greatest champions, while traditional liberals are often its detractors. Republicans such as Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush have rebuilt America's military might, which has allowed the U.S. to win the "Cold War" and prevail in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Conservative politicians such as the Bushes have been Israel's strongest supporters, yet American and Israeli Jews often malign both of them. Why?

Perhaps the root explanation rests in the fact that many American Jews (or their forebears) were supporters of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his "New Deal" politics, and

supported leftist causes or certainly were perceived as doing so. When John F. Kennedy assumed the presidency, American Jews flocked to the young president after having spent years in the political "wilderness" supporting Adlai Stevenson's ill-fated election bids; and they have remained ardent Democrats ever since, notwithstanding Lyndon Johnson's Vietnam War.

Old habits die hard; and to say that many American Jews have never seen a Republican whom they liked is not to miss the point. The mere idea that Republican presidents such as the Bushes might be greater friends of Israel than their Democrat counterparts is an anathema to many Jews. It could never be true - or so they believe - which is a knee-jerk reaction that warrants reconsideration.

Had Yitzhak Rabin lived and George H.W. Bush been reelected, there might have been a decent chance for lasting peace in the Middle East. Rabin was courageous, and Bush was determined and possessed enormous power and goodwill in the region after the Gulf War; and together they might have fashioned lasting economic and political cooperation instead of the years of bloodshed that followed.

George W. Bush seems to have learned those lessons well. By first disposing of the Taliban in Afghanistan and then of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq, he has moved a long way toward establishing a Middle East that is as safe as it can be for Israel. Obviously there is much more work to do in Afghanistan and Iraq, to bring about a lasting peace for all, but great progress has been made - despite 24-hour news reporting in the U.S. and the posturing of Democrat candidates for the presidency to the contrary.

Also, Bush has forged a strong personal relationship with Ariel Sharon, which began in earnest when both were somewhat removed from the pinnacles of their nations' political power, and which has lasted through turbulent

times. The "Roadmap" is a vision for peace, a chance to end years of bloodshed and bring hope to long-suffering Israelis and Palestinians alike - the "innocents," who have been the biggest losers - and it must be given a chance by both sides even in the midst of bombings, more deaths and destruction.

George W. Bush and his administration's efforts represent enormous promise for the region, despite the political snipping at his heels from detractors of many different stripes. He has an opportunity to pick up where his father and Rabin left off, albeit after many years in which fear and hatred have held sway in the region, only exacerbating existing problems and challenges. Whether it is Abu Ala or some other seeming Palestinian "pragmatist," both sides must move toward peace. Give both Bush and peace a chance; there are no other viable options in the region.

Views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of israelinsider.

© 2001-2003 Koret Communications Ltd. All rights reserved.