

Biden Will Inevitably Reassess the US-Israel Relationship, Says NYT Columnist Thomas Friedman

New York Times foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman wrote on Wednesday that a reassessment of the relationship is “inevitable.” Friedman believes that next week, U.S. President Joe Biden will deliver a message of “tough love” to Israeli President Isaac Herzog during their upcoming meeting at the White House.

“I have no doubt that the U.S. president will arm the Israeli president with the message—out of sorrow, not anger—that when the interests and values of a U.S. government and an Israeli government diverge this much, a reassessment of the relationship is inevitable,” Friedman wrote in an Op-Ed.

Friedman stated that the Biden administration “sees the far-right Israeli government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, engaged in unprecedented radical behavior—under the cloak of judicial ‘reform’—that is undermining our shared interests with Israel, our shared values and the vitally important shared fiction about the status of the West Bank that has kept peace hopes there just barely alive.”

“Why should the U.S. continue to defend the idea in the U.N. and the International Court that Israel is just temporarily occupying the West Bank—and therefore is not practicing some form of apartheid there—when this Israeli government appears to be openly hellbent on annexing the West Bank and has given two of the most active annexationists, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, extensive security and financial powers over settlements in that region?” Friedman wondered.

In light of Jerusalem's policies, Friedman predicted that Washington would reevaluate its "basic diplomatic approach to an Israel that is unabashedly locking in a one-state solution: a Jewish state only, with the fate and rights of the Palestinians ."

Nevertheless, he noted that intelligence and military cooperation between the U.S. and Israel will remain strong.

In his column, Friedman repeatedly blamed the Israeli prime minister for the ongoing tension in relations. He stressed that Netanyahu "would be ready to risk a civil war in Israel just to stay in power with a group of ciphers and ultranationalists."

The Times columnist further stressed that Israeli lawmakers are not in a place to criticize Washington for its intervention in internal affairs, as long as U.S. taxpayer money keeps proving for the Jewish State. He elaborated that Israel has received the most U.S. foreign assistance of any country in the world since World War II (\$146 billion, not adjusted for inflation).

According to Friedman, "That's quite an allowance and one that might have merited a little more respect for the US president from Ben-Gvir, who in his youth was convicted of inciting racism against Arabs."

Ben Gvir hit back at Biden following his CNN interview earlier this week, saying: "President Biden needs to comprehend that we are not another star on the American flag."

Israeli reaction

In response to Friedman's claims, Israeli media outlets quoted an unnamed government official who denied having any knowledge of U.S. reassessment of ties underway. Even if that was true, the official claimed it would not have been without precedent.

"The Ford administration announced a reassessment with the Rabin government, the Reagan administration did so with the Begin government, Bush Sr.'s administration did so with the Shamir government and Bush Jr. did so with the Barak and Sharon governments," noted the source.

The official added: "It's no secret we have disagreements with the Biden administration about the establishment of a Palestinian state, the return to the dangerous nuclear deal with Iran and Netanyahu's refusal for zero surprises regarding Israeli operations against Iran."

Israeli media outlet YNET introduced Friedman to their Hebrew readers as "one of the world's most prominent publicists, by part, thanks to his access to the most important person in the world, U.S. President Joe Biden."

Opposition lawmakers capitalized on the anti-government momentum generated by the Times Op-Ed and Biden's CNN interview to lash out at Netanyahu. National Unity Party leader Benny Gantz accused the premier on Wednesday of inflicting "strategic damage" on relations with the United States. He said Netanyahu was "playing with fire at the expense of Israelis."

Israeli President Isaac Herzog addressed a gathering of the IDF 7th Armored Brigade on Wednesday night.

In his remarks, he said:

"In just a few days, I will pay an important visit to the United States, to mark 75 years of Israeli independence, and 75 years of our solid alliance, which lies above and beyond any and all disagreements.

"Here, on the battlefields, at a time when our enemies over the border in Syria and Lebanon, led by Iran, are trying to test us. I say what I will also say in Washington: Israel and the United States are strong and strategic, democratic allies

of the highest level. Our enemies should not underestimate us.

“Our enemies should be in no doubt, we are perfectly entitled to our internal, even difficult, debates. It is an essential part of vibrant and healthy democracies. But we are stronger than ever. Those who try us will find us determined, united and strong. The alliance between Israel and the United States is unbreakable and irreplaceable. Just like Israeli democracy – which is also unbreakable and irreplaceable. It has always been and will always be.”

Republican reaction

Former U.S. President Donald Trump told a group of Jewish Orthodox pro-Israel supporters “Biden doesn’t like you. You can see that.”

In a speech at an Israel Heritage Foundation fundraiser, Trump taunted Netanyahu for not being invited to the White House.

“He won’t even see Netanyahu,” Trump said on Biden. “Netanyahu was the first person to call him. That made me feel great... He was the first person to call and they won’t even see Netanyahu.”

Meanwhile, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis slammed the outgoing U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides for his remarks in a Wall Street Journal interview.

“How disrespectful for the U.S. Ambassador to Israel to falsely claim ‘most Israelis want the United States to be in their business.’ Biden meets with dictators of countries such as Venezuela but snubs the democratically elected Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This is not how you should treat an ally,” DeSantis wrote on Twitter.

Fox News commentator and anchor Mark Levin blasted both the Biden administration and NYT columnist Thomas Friedman in a series of tweets.

"Friedman is a contemptible phony celebrated by the self-anointed elitists and ruling class establishment in Washington. AND, of course, if you're an Israel and Netanyahu-hating buffoon at the White House or State Department, Friedman is your go-to, secularist, self-hating weasel who will excitedly write your back-stabbing hitjobs in the pages of the vilest media corporation in the free world, the New York Times," Levin wrote.

He added: "Joe Biden is such a wretched imbecile that while he has spent years lambasting the integrity and independence of our Supreme Court, undermining the majority at every turn and encouraging violence with his vile propaganda, he condemns Israeli conservatives, led by PM Netanyahu and his Likud Party, for trying to reign in that country's actual judicial oligarchy and re-establishing democracy." {eo}

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Tal Heinrich is a senior correspondent for both ALL ISRAEL NEWS and ALL ARAB NEWS. She is currently based in New York City. Tal also provides reports and analysis for Israeli Hebrew media Channel 14 News.