

The American-Israeli Bond

It will remain strong no matter who our leaders are

By HARLEY LIPPMAN

The recent elections in Israel — another demonstration of the country's democratic resiliency in the face of ongoing conflict — have

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given rise to speculation that a different coalition government may affect the friendship between our two countries. As it is far from clear which leader or party will form the next government, one thing is certain: the ties that bind the Israel-U.S. special relationship are strong, enduring and not conditional on which coalition comprises the government in Israel.

The elections in Israel are another signal to the world that Israel upholds democracy and freedom in the face of those who espouse hatred of these values.

The longstanding close relationship between America and Israel is the result of shared values and heritage, strategic cooperation, decades of mutual admiration and affection.

Our mutual commitment to individual freedoms and democracy serves to enhance our common determination to live free from tyranny and oppression. Our cultural ties and shared values are rooted in ancient biblical texts as well as the modern ideals of democracy, human rights and justice. Israeli and American scientists and engineers collaborate to create life-saving biomedical devices, new space technology to further humanity's understanding of the cosmos and a myriad of productivity-enhancing technologies. Israeli and American academics,

grow even closer in the years ahead.

It is not always popular to be on the side of tolerance and freedom, especially when our enemies use our respect for human life and dignity against us by hiding among civilians and targeting innocents with rockets

and bombs. It is also impossible for a vibrant democracy like Israel to protect its cherished freedoms alone. Standing side by side with democracies fighting terror is essential if we wish for the principles of freedom to prevail in our common fight against extremism.

The elections in Israel, whatever the outcome, are another signal to the world that Israel reveres democracy and freedom. It maintains its standards in the face of those who espouse hatred of these same values. It is a message that Americans so well appreciate and explains

why the U.S. and Israel will continue to have a very special relationship, no matter who leads each of our respective nations.

Harley Lippman is president of the America-Israel Friendship League.