

MIND THE GAP: KEEPING OUR TECH SUPERIORITY

By Isaac Herzog, President of Israel

In September 1943, with the world engulfed in war and new technologies threatening widespread destruction, Winston Churchill declared, “The price of greatness is responsibility.”

While he was referring to the growing influence of the United States, the same holds true today for all democracies that are on the cutting edge of technologies with unprecedented power and potential.

Our responsibility is to ensure that we remain at the forefront of technological innovation while using these new capabilities in an ethical manner and preventing rogue actors from harnessing them for malevolent ends.

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For the State of Israel, ingenuity and resourcefulness are not luxuries. They are the very cornerstones of our national existence. They are the building blocks that enabled pioneering patriots to turn a wilderness into a livable habitat 75 years ago. They are the same core foundations that years later transformed an arid land with few natural resources into a world leader in water technology, and they have converted our small, developing nation into a vibrant democracy and a world leader in start-up companies and investment per capita.

Over time, Israel has developed particular strengths in areas that stand to revolutionize varied aspects of human society, from artificial intelligence and machine learning to bioconvergence, climate tech, and cybersecurity. We have also learned the

possibilities in harnessing revolutionary technologies to create matchless prosperity, health, and wellbeing across our own Middle East. The historic Abraham Accords have demonstrated how newfound technologies are continuously facilitating new bridges of peace and friendship among neighboring countries, helping shape a regional ecosystem of sustainable peace — a Renewable Middle East.

Israel, of course, is not in this alone.

Our success is a clear result of our close cooperation with like-minded democracies, primarily in the United States, Canada, and Europe, as well as with many others that are committed to investing the resources necessary to realize the transformative potential of advances in science toward the well-being of humanity. Only through such cooperation can we meet our most urgent challenges, from pandemic resilience to climate change to homeland security, while increasing the prosperity and well-being of our citizens.

Ongoing investment of the requisite energy and resources, as well as the development of diverse human capital, is critical for enabling our democracies to maintain technological primacy.

Yet, even as paradigm-breaking technologies are pushing the boundaries of what we imagined to be possible, they are also creating new challenges and threats to our lives, our livelihoods, and our very way of life. What we view as opportunities for progress and healing, terrorist regimes and their Middle Eastern proxies see as tools of destruction and regression.

Therefore, as the democracies of the world strive for technological greatness, we must ensure ethical and

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equitable usage. We must strengthen our resolve and our close cooperation to prevent the evil use of these technologies by radical state and non-state actors, from authoritarian rulers to terrorist groups.

These aims are at the heart of the recently-launched U.S.-Israel Strategic High-level Dialogue on Technology, which is tasked with taking the U.S.-Israel partnership on critical and emerging technologies and solutions to new heights. Among the pillars of this partnership is a focus on trustworthy AI and trusted tech ecosystems, including coordination on policies related to research security, investment screening, export controls, and protection strategies for critical technologies. This partnership is further focused on green tech and climate innovation, highlighting perhaps the great challenge facing humanity today, the climate crisis.

Churchill concluded his 1943 remarks with the stirring words, “Let me say how proud we ought to be...to live in this tremendous, thrilling, formative epoch...and how fortunate it was for the world that when these great trials came upon it, there was a generation that terror could not conquer and brutal violence could not enslave.”

We are once again living in a thrilling epoch of technological possibilities, which is threatened by extremism and by undemocratic nations inflicting brutal violence on their neighbors. The democracies of the world must proudly shoulder their shared responsibility to harness the tremendous power of modern technology to counter these threats, defend our values, and shape a brighter future for our planet and all humankind.

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