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The Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry publishes commentary and analysis on Jewish identity and culture. You are welcome to share your thoughts on our Perspectives with us: cst@taux.tau.ac.il. We are glad to share with you the fiftieth issue of Perspectives.

Punching Above Her Weight

Miriam Adelson should not cross red lines

Uriya Shavit

When historians write in 100 years the story of how and why the American-Israeli alliance ended, it is likely that the following scene will open their books.

The White House, Hanukkah, 2025.

Trump celebrates with Jewish dignitaries. He talks about the magnificent ballroom he is building, a subject of great interest to Americans who cannot pay for their medications.

He gently kisses Dr. Miriam Adelson, one of his most generous donors. “Incredible woman,” he says. “With a great husband. A man that loved...Israel.”

Now it is Adelson’s turn to speak.

With a distinct Israeli-American accent, she thanks Trump smilingly and continues: “And now I met Alan Dershowitz [An American-Jewish lawyer and a passionate Zionist author], and he said the legal thing about four more years, and I said Alan, I agree with you. So [looking at Trump], we can do it! Think about it.”

Some in the audience chant: “four more years.” Adelson encourages them with a hand gesture. Trump grins.

Adelson whispers something to Trump. Trump reveals: “She said, think about it, I’ll give you another 250 million.” Adelson says: “I will give.” Trump goes on to speak about Sheldon Adelson. That there was no one more aggressive than the late billionaire in demanding his time as president, “and what he did was that he fought for Israel, that’s all he really fought for. He just wanted to take care of Israel.”

The 22nd Amendment to the Constitution bars a president from serving more than two terms. Any amendment may be re-amended, but for that to happen, a broad bipartisan agreement has to be reached, and there is a zero percent chance that would happen in the next three years.

Forcing some legal loophole through which the Constitution can be circumvented would, in all likelihood, signal the end of American democracy and the breakdown of the Union.

Even very popular presidents did not dare challenge constitutional limits. That includes Ronald Reagan, who thought the 22nd Amendment was stupid, and who would have won a third term, had he been eligible to run.

Trump, on the other hand, is an extremely unpopular president. His approval ratings recently sunk to an almost historical low of 36%.

He has not delivered on any of his campaign promises – none of those that actually matter to his voters. His Ukraine policy risks making him Chamberlain 2.0. His fantasy peace deals are collapsing. His age begins to show, his conduct humiliating a once great republic on a daily basis.

World leaders and business leaders openly discuss what empty-flattery and bribes would win his graces. His demeaning and narcissistic eulogy of Rob Reiner was one of the lowest moments in American presidential history. The Epstein files keep reminding his base that the White House had never been manned by a person more distant from the Ten Commandments.

His electoral coalition is breaking up. Alarmingly, in part because of a debate as to whether glorifying Nazism is acceptable speech, and whether or not Israel should take care of itself.

One Israeli columnist wrote that the Hanukkah scenes at the White House risk feeding antisemitism.

Understandable concern, bad phrasing. Jews should never say – or avoid saying – something because they fear antisemitism. Not in 2025.

The problem is much more brutal.

If some of the most prominent pro-Israel American advocates openly discuss how to get around the Constitution so that a pro-Israel president stays in power, then it is not antisemitism to argue that some of the most pro-Israel American advocates openly discuss how to get around the Constitution so that a pro-Israel president stays in power.

If a pro-Israel president reveals that his most generous donor only cared about Israel, then it is not antisemitism to argue that his most generous donor only cared about Israel.

Let us not be naïve here.

American politics are enslaved to big money that serves interest groups.

Heaven help us if there were no donors to counter the temptation of Arab oil money.

Yet the enslavement is becoming increasingly frustrating to a very unhappy political body. Part of Trump's appeal was the notion that he is so rich and rude that he would not be dependent on anyone. Instead, his second presidency has turned into one long march of making the super-rich richer.

The backlash from voters to this reality could be harsh and swift. It will eye big corporations, high-tech megalomaniacs, and, foremost, foreign interests, whatever they are.

Putting Israel-lobbying in the spotlight at this delicate moment is thus the definition of folly.

Adelson could have said: "America and Israel share values, biblical traditions, and security interests. I am proud to support a president who defends both countries and their alliance." And end it there.

Instead, she spoke of the constitution as if it was some toy for the rich and famous to play with over the heads of the American people.

There is no longer a Jewish American vote. Secular Jews largely vote Democrat. Religious Jews and Israeli-Americans vote Republican. Adelson represents a minority within a minority within a minority. It is her money that makes her influential. That, too, increases the risk that sooner rather than later, the anti-Israel faction within the Republican Party would wonder whom Trump's pro-Israel circles actually speak for.

If whoever saves one life saves the world entire, then Adelson has a significant stake in saving 21 worlds recently. Together with her late husband, she is responsible for one of the finest Zionist enterprises of our time, Birthright (envisioned by former MK Yossi Beilin). She is also an accomplished professional in her medical field.

Yet power and success get to people's heads, and there is often no one around to dare caution them: careful here!

There is another aspect to all of this.

In May 1976, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin described Israelis who left for the United States as “fallout of weenies.” He then said they were deserters.

These words reflected concern and frustration. With slightly more than three million Jews, a country facing Arab, Muslim, and communist enemies could not afford to lose its best and brightest. It needed them to have Israel as their primary home.

Still, Rabin’s words were also vicious, damaging, and hypocritical. Vicious, because liberal democracies accept that people have the right to decide where to live, and people leave for different reasons. Damaging and hypocritical, because Israel needed the support of its expats and was never shy to ask for it.

As is often the case in this country, the pendulum soon enough swung to the other extreme. Today, Israelis boast on the pages of *Haaretz* about the small Israeli enclaves they establish in distant lands, and so-called nationalist and liberal politicians alike are content with Israelis holding decisive sway on Israeli politics and media from afar.

Last Independence Day, I attended the reception ahead of the Israel Prize ceremony in Jerusalem due to a happy family occasion.

Enter the President. No one seemed excited. People who try to please everyone usually end up pleasing no one.

Enter Dr. Adelson, and an eager gathering of dignitaries surrounds her in a way befitting 19th-century Jews in Eastern Europe upon the arrival of the gvir.

I felt ashamed.

My grandparents did not make aliyah in the 1920s and 1930s so that their grandchildren live in a shtetl.

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