

JANUARY 20, 2025 11:48 AM 0

How Trump Used Israel in the Game of Geopolitics — and How Israel Should Respond

 by Amy Neustein



Thousands of supporters of hostage families gather in Hostages Square in Tel Aviv as three hostages are returned to Israel. Photo: Paulina Patimer / Hostages Families Forum

The US-brokered hostage-ceasefire deal — secured by fiat, not consensus — struck a harsh blow at the Jewish community this week. Notwithstanding the joy of finally seeing the hostages returned to their families and communities, many are questioning how President Donald Trump, who always claims to be a diehard supporter of Israel, could send an envoy to pressure Netanyahu into agreeing to suspend the campaign to extinguish Hamas and release convicted terrorists who pose an imminent danger to Israel's security.

The simple explanation — Trump's need to show off his masterful negotiation skills in achieving a ceasefire and the return of the Israeli hostages even before he had taken office — is not sufficient. It conveniently overlooks the game-changing geopolitical forces hidden beneath the glossy wrapper of "peace talks." To begin with, it is no secret that Trump's main objective is to have the US achieve economic superiority over China. He promised to set up the "External Revenue Service" on his first day in office to collect tariffs from Chinese imports that flood the US consumer markets. Because China represents to Trump the greatest existential threat to America, his policies, politics, and passions are principally geared toward facilitating America's dominance in trade relations and in closing the US border.

It would be hard to ignore how Trump, in his mission to defeat his Chinese rivals, has tried to leverage the support of Russia, by displaying unusual comity and collegiality toward Putin. In essence, by showing fealty to Russia, Trump plausibly weakens the dyad between China and Russia. It is no secret that Russia wanted Israel to cease their combat operations in Gaza because continued fighting in the Middle East could endanger the survival of the Iranian regime. Not surprisingly, less than 48 hours after Israel announced its agreement to the hostage-ceasefire deal, Putin put on an amazing spectacle. Holding a joint press conference with his Iranian counterpart, President Masoud Pezeshkian, Putin applauded the deal and urged its immediate implementation.

Since it is no secret that Russia has vociferously supported Palestinian statehood (in fact, Putin reiterated those wishes at the press conference with Pezeshkian), it is concerning how easily Putin may try to exact compromises and concessions from Trump, who needs Russia to leverage America's rival, China. Trump's strong-arming of Israel into a terrible ceasefire-hostage deal, immediately followed by his stern warnings to the Jewish State regarding any possible violation of the 60-day Lebanon-Hezbollah ceasefire, has placed Israel on the altar of a dangerous geopolitical chess game. The Jewish State has been slid across the chessboard as a pawn of politics, while superpowers naturally take credit for their mastery of this game.

Similar to geopolitical jockeying, market dynamics likewise factor into the chess game of peace negotiations. Fitch — the first major credit rating agency to take a sledgehammer to Israel's creditworthiness when it began its justified counteroffensive in Gaza against Hamas in 2023 — let out speculation shortly before Netanyahu accepted the hostage-ceasefire deal that Israel would enjoy a boost to its credit rating, thereby making the Jewish State more appealing to foreign investors. For a country already stressed by a 15-month multi-front war, dangling these promises of a much-needed credit upgrade is very tempting. All in all, the Latin Proverb *Praemonitus Praemunitus* (forewarned is forearmed) cannot be understated.

The geopolitics of peace negotiations, and the concomitant market undercurrents that resulted in the 11th-hour arm-twisting diplomacy in Israel, is a reminder that the Jewish State is a cog in a much larger system. To deny this reality leads to false hope, miscalculation, and much agony. All in all, the Ferris wheel of fate has played out, and arguably not to Israel's benefit. The landslide victory of Trump had emboldened the Jewish State and Jews throughout the world. Those feelings were justified, considering the staunch support Trump had given Israel in his prior term, as well as his present appointment of former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, an undeniably strong ally of Israel, to serve as the US ambassador to the Jewish State.

However, it's time to get off the Ferris wheel and stand firmly on the ground. A steady mooring will make Israel less likely to be moved around as a pawn on a chessboard. And this augurs well for Israel's long-term survival.

Amy Neustein, Ph.D., is a sociologist and author/editor of 16 academic books on socio-political institutions, a speaker on counter-terrorism, and the recipient of the Pro-Humanitate Literary Award.

The opinions presented by Algemeiner bloggers are solely theirs and do not represent those of The Algemeiner, its publishers or editors. If you would like to share your views with a blog post on The Algemeiner, please be in touch through our [Contact](#) page.