

A lesson in democracy

• By SHERWIN POMERANTZ

An item in this week's news that the Republican Jewish Coalition in the United States is officially challenging every speaker at the Democratic Convention in Chicago to "praise Israel" — coupled with the never-ending questions about whether or not Democrat Presidential Candidate Kamala Harris is "good for Israel" — got me thinking that we all need a lesson in US politics and the responsibilities of political leadership there.

First of all, everyone should understand that the US does not "owe" Israel anything other than what has been already covered by agreements between us. The \$38 billion 10-year military aid package for Israel, signed by the majority of the Obama administration (some of you did not like him either), and the Free Trade Agreement in place since 1984 between Israel and the US are two such formal obligations between the two countries.

The formulation of US foreign policy, similar to that of every other well-run democracy, is built on the principle of whether or not each decision is good for America. While decisions may certainly be somewhat affected by the opinion and policies of a sitting president, it is his or her overall obligation to base them on the best interests of the US, while being constrained, of course, by Congress and the will of the people.

Ever since the Six Day War in 1967, the US has understood that Israel is a crucial security ally in the Middle East as well as (sadly for us, given the realities in which we live), a great place to test out America's weaponry during our regular military skirmishes. While over these past 57 years, some US presidents have looked upon us kinder than others, their overall policy toward Israel has been one of support along with occasional, sometimes obnoxious, criticism.

These past 10 months, under the leadership of President Joe Biden (whether one likes him or not), have seen probably the most direct support for Israel since 1973, when former President Nixon overrode the objections of his Jewish secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, and sent us the ammunition and equipment to needed to stave off defeat in the Yom Kippur War.

There are other examples, of course, all falling under the umbrella of what is best for America. Nixon did not want to see Russian influence overrun the Middle East — while Biden understands that defending Israel from Iran and its proxies ties the hands of a country that ultimately wants to conquer the West.

Biden's ability to twice craft a coalition of Western and Arab nations



MATT BROOKS, CEO of the Republican Jewish Coalition, holds a kippah in support of former US president and Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, as he speaks at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, last month. (Mike Segar/Reuters)

to work together to protect Israel in the case of an Iranian attack may relate somewhat to his personal feelings about our country, but make no mistake, the core driver is and must be to send a strong message to Iran and its proxies that they don't have carte blanche to shoot up the world at will.

America's support for Israel, which simply does not exist in any other country, is due to a very successful and politically influential Jewish community; 11 million card-carrying, Christian Evangelicals who are members of Christians United for Israel (CUI); 80% of Americans who see Israel in a positive light; and bi-partisan support in Congress (which while no longer 100% is still 90% in our favor).

Although during the recently-concluded Republican National Convention (RNC) there was a fair amount of scheduled vocal support for Israel, it was not necessary there — and it is not needed at the Democratic National Convention either. What the electorate in the US should be demanding — and what we should be doing here with our government as well — is that our elected officials do what's best for the country they represent. The delegates at a convention that ratifies candidates for president and vice president should ask to hear the platforms on which the candidates will campaign and implement, rather than whether they do or do not support Israel.

The current chatter about whether Vice President Kamala Harris

will be good for Israel is a waste of time. Previously presidents who were thought of as not particularly friendly to us were supportive insofar as the US defense establishment considers Israel to be important for America's security. US support may vary in intensity but will continue as long as providing such support has value for the US. And that is how it should be. No sitting president is going to treat Israel badly if they see that doing so potentially endangers the security of America or the West.

The world's problem is Iran. The threat to world peace comes from Iran and the Shi'ite commitment to destroy the infidel — which starts with us here in the Jewish state but will not end here. What America should be asking of their current presidential candidates is "What's the plan for Iran?"

Support for Israel fits clearly into the answer.

While the US does not owe us anything, it does have an obligation to protect and defend its citizens as any government should. That is the threat to world peace comes from Iran and the Shi'ite commitment to destroy the infidel — which starts with us here in the Jewish state but will not end here. What America should be asking of their current presidential candidates is "What's the plan for Iran?"

The writer has lived in Israel for 40 years and is the founder and chair of Atid EDI Ltd., an international business development consultancy. He is also the founder and chair of the American State Offices Association, a former national president of the National Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel (AACI), and a past chairperson of the Board of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies.

Exactly what we should expect

Israel's seven Olympic medals

• By BARAK SELLA

The Paris Olympic Games concluded with a record achievement for the Israeli delegation, bringing home seven medals. For several weeks, each report of another victory had filled Israelis with a sense of collective pride. Judoka Raz Hershko's impressive takedown over her Turkish opponent in just 10 seconds felt like a fitting Zionist response to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. For a moment, it felt like just another normal country uniting behind its incredible athletes.

Israel's amazing achievement was, however, not exceptional at all, even though it certainly felt that way. It was a normal achievement by all standards, and that's what's truly amazing.

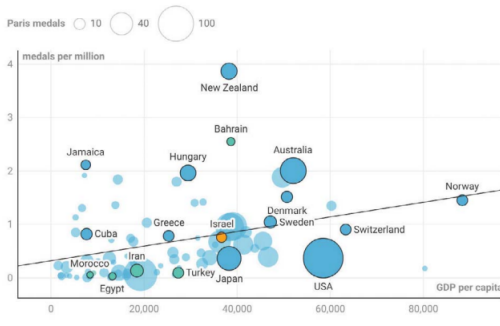
In 1992, judo champion Yael Arad brought home the first-ever medal after a 40-year wait since Israel's Olympic debut at the Helsinki Games of 1952. Twelve years ago, she joined the Olympic Committee of Israel, becoming part of the process of bringing Israel to the international level of Olympic sport. Arad brought her insights from the business world and helped implement effective metrics and financial planning. Israel understood that to improve its Olympic achievements it needed to consider its size and relative strength. To that end, five sports were chosen to receive excess funding: athletics, gymnastics, swimming, sailing, and, of course, judo.

The Olympic Committee of Israel understood that the state budget alone couldn't provide for the professional development needed to compete with leading teams, so partnerships were developed with 11 businesses, including Bank Hapoalim, Arkia, and Shufersal.

A scientific-medical support system — employing 110 people — was developed to provide athletes full support in nutrition, medicine, therapy, and data analysis. It was also decided to offer significant financial rewards to winning athletes: NIS50,000 for a bronze medal, NIS750,000 for a silver, and NIS 1 million for a gold — all tax-free. This has positioned Israel as a world leader in rewarding its athletes.

However, pouring money into the Olympic effort isn't the only solution. Singapore, for example, tops the list of rewarding countries with a grant of NIS 2.7 million for gold medalists but had to settle for a single bronze medal in Paris. The real difference lies in a combination of professional leadership, long-term planning ability, early investment in talents, significant development budgets, and a population large enough to supply the best athletes.

So, where does Israel stand relative to the rest of the world? Is our achievement truly outstanding, or is it simply normal?



A CHART compares Israel's performance at the Paris Olympics with that of other Middle Eastern countries and those with a similar population size to the Jewish state. (Chart: Barak Sella/Sources: olympics.com, ourworldindata.org/ Created with Datawrapper)

Israel's problems

In "Why Harris's golden boy should worry Israel" (August 16), Zvika Klein, editor-in-chief of *The Jerusalem Post*, criticizes Vice President Harris's choice of Ilan Goldenberg as her liaison to the Jewish community. One of his main arguments is that Goldenberg supported the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. He ignores that the deal was working well, according to nuclear experts and professional inspectors, and that former president Trump's pulling out of it in 2018 enabled Iran to get much closer to obtaining a nuclear bomb and to be in a much better bargaining position.

Mr. Klein is also critical of many of Goldenberg's positions on Israel. He ignores that these positions are generally consistent with the views of President Biden and most other world leaders, almost all congressional Democrats, and, most importantly, the Commanders for Israel's Security, a non-partisan movement of retired senior members of the IDF, Shin Bet, Mossad and Israel Police.

Israel's problems today are far less due to US appointees than to some of the extremists who Prime Minister Netanyahu has appointed.

RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ
Shoreside

Difficult questions

Kudos to *The Jerusalem Post* for having the courage to publish "Behind the veil" by Benjamin Anthony (August 15), exposing the damage to Israel caused by the anti-government protest movement and the "Bring Them Home Now" forum. Almost all of the Israeli print and broadcast media have refrained from expressing even the mildest criticism of these two groups, which are now in effect one and the same. Representatives of both are given constant exposure to the public and rarely asked any difficult questions.

One fact that the writer overlooked is that both of these movements are beneficiaries of substantial funding from abroad, which is needed to cover their huge expenditure for activities, clothing and

other paraphernalia. Shouldn't they then be considered a foreign-funded political lobby promoting an agenda which may differ greatly from the national interests of Israel?

DOUG CRENER
Jerusalem

The right person

In "From golden age to hostile terrain" (August 16), Herb Keiron, a journalist of high repute, has even surpassed his superior reputation in presenting to us the next Israeli ambassador to the UN. Those of us who are well-versed in the machinations of politics in this great nation can only bow to the decision to have Danny Danon represent us once again in the arena that is rightly described as a "lion's den."

Mr. Danon is a very experienced politician but even more so a diplomat having already served a term at the UN, pleading Israel's case in a manner which has always been formidable and erudite. Again since October 7, the UN and the majority of those who represent their nations have shown a virulent bias against Israel, especially when not letting facts get in the way of their animosity.

I am sure Danny Danon is fully prepared for what awaits him in this new-era Colosseum, but he will require an extra coat of verbal armor to ward off the vitriol that will head his way. With hypocritical UN-affiliated organizations such as UNRWA and UNIFIL having been not only negligent but corrupt in their roles, he will have more than enough ammunition to argue his/our case.

Finding himself in a den where the roar will be megaphoned to heights that erroneously place all blame of blame on Israel and exhibits thinly veiled antisemitism from some, he will require all his attributes at a heightened level to state and present Israel's case.

I am more than confident that we have, in Danny Danon, the right person representing us, and wish him great strength and fortitude in his task in being able, with assistance from valued allies to plead our position, and to fend off all the inaccuracies and

untruths that will be coming his way.

STEPHEN VISHNICK
Tel Aviv

Not important

In "Donald Trump is not a friend of the Jews" (August 13), Amy Neustein establishes her case primarily on the basis that Trump was against the Jewish governor of Pennsylvania, Josh Shapiro, becoming the vice presidential candidate on the Democrat 2024 ticket.

Contrary to what Neustein might believe, it is not important to have a Jew on the ticket. However, it is important for a candidate — Jew or non-Jew — to be strongly opposed to antisemitism, and strongly in favor of the Jewish state.

Donald Trump, when he was president, recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the US Embassy there. He also recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights. In addition, he was against the deal with Iran, which endangered American and Israeli security. Also, he supported the Abraham Accords, for which he should have been given the Nobel Peace Prize. He also withheld money to Israel's genocidal enemies.

For all of this and more, including his support of Jewish students at the antisemitic universities, he deserves Jewish gratitude and support. Who needs Jewish senators, such as Chuck Schumer and Bernie Sanders to represent us? I would much prefer Senators Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and Tom Cotton.

IRA NOSENCHUK
Jerusalem

Insulted by vegans

Regarding "I am not a vegan" by Alan Freishtat (August 15), I have been a lover of chicken meat since I was a toddler and stole the chicken from my aunts' and uncles' plates. I still love chicken dishes, which I've learned to cook myself. I have in the past, eaten beef, but never took to it.

Today I continue cooking and eating chicken and fish dishes, and here I am in my 89th year still looking forward to hitting 120. Incidentally, I eat a lot, and I mean

a lot, of vegetables and fruit. Even though I was diagnosed with late-onset diabetes, I find it impossible to give up fruit.

Still, I feel insulted by all you vegans and whatever else you call yourselves for telling the world to give up eating meat and fish. Lots of people who eat meat live long healthy lives. Lots of people who don't eat meat die early.

EDMUND JONAH
Rishon LeZion

Proud, independent nation

Regarding "Defying Netanyahu, Ben-Gvir announces change in status quo of Temple Mount" (August 14): I cannot imagine the circumstance that would have me vote for Itamar Ben-Gvir. I cannot think of a single position he holds that I support. However, when it comes to the Temple Mount, I am with him 100%. Our government is still fearful after 57 years of exercising our sovereignty there.

We have allowed unauthorized, unsupervised construction and have folded over and over again when it comes to maintaining security for all those visiting there. Our courts have ruled that we have a right to pray there, but our governments have feared making our sworn enemies even more violent. How much more violent can they get?

By not allowing freedom of worship for Jews at our holiest site, our governments have consistently undermined our right to be there at all, giving credence to the widespread belief among Arabs that there never was a Temple there at all.

As for the Negev, when we will act as if we are sovereign in our country? You can take the Jew out of the Diaspora, but taking the Diaspora out of the Jew seems to be nigh impossible.

So much for a proud, independent nation in its own land; this is just another variation of the belief gripping too many of our so-called leaders that victory is impossible, and submission to our sworn enemies is the only path to peace. It's pathetic.

YISRAEL CUTTMAN
Jerusalem