

Trump Leaves Israel in the Lurch

The president's precipitous decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria provided many Israelis with a rude awakening.

Daniel Shapiro / Dec. 28, 2018

Ask Israelis what they appreciate about President Donald Trump, and they can tick off a substantial list: the long-sought move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem; the abandonment of the much-maligned Iran nuclear deal; the lack of pressure (so far) on Israel to curtail settlement expansion or make concessions to the Palestinians; and the absence of tensions with Israel's leaders, which plagued the relationship between former President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

But dig a bit deeper, and you hear something else, best captured in a phrase used frequently by young Israelis I meet who consider themselves Trump fans: *gever-gever*, a real man. Something about the Trump style appeals to an Israeli sense of machismo, an appreciation for direct, gut-level expressions of toughness, such a contrast from the more analytical Obama.

Trump's sudden decision this month to reverse course and announce the withdrawal of the 2,000 U.S. troops in Syria, though, forced Israelis to recognize, in many cases for the first time, both their policy differences with Trump and the downsides of his stylistic idiosyncrasies. The implications, for Israel's strategic interests in the region and for its management of its relationship with the United States, are broad.

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Daniel B. Shapiro is a distinguished visiting fellow at the **Institute for National Security Studies** in Tel Aviv. He served as U.S. ambassador to Israel and senior director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Security Council during the Obama Administration.

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