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Domains to Protect

The Rat in Israeli Public Life

Caroline B. Glick

Over the past several weeks, Israelis have been riveted by a new crime drama called "Meniac" or "Rat" whose central character is an investigator in Police Investigations Division of the Justice Ministry, charged with investigating crooked cops. The plot surrounds the main character's shattering discovery of deeply rooted corruption at all levels of the police and state prosecution.

If the show had aired a 15 years ago, it probably would have flopped. But over the past several years, public faith in the legal system has plummeted. Last November *Globes* newspaper published a poll showing that 72 percent of Israelis believe police and state prosecutors engage in selective law enforcement. In this climate, *Meniac's* success was all but assured.

Almost every day, events occur that reinforce the public's view that justice in Israel is not blind. Even worse, in Israel's politicized justice system justices, prosecutors and police investigators have unchecked powers the likes of which no legal system in any other democracy ever possessed.

Consider the events of the past week.

Last Thursday, the Supreme Court issued two rulings. In the first, Supreme Court President Esther Hayut and her deputy Yehuda Melzer order the destruction within three years of the community of Mitzpeh Kramim in the Benjamin District of Judea. The ruling is stunning because from the outset, Mitzpeh Kramim was established under the close supervision of the Justice Ministry. Residents did nothing without Justice Ministry approval.

All the same, Hayut and Meltzer ruled that the property rights of Mitzpeh Kramim's residents should be revoked because, they claimed, in one or two instances over the past eleven years, a government official read a map or a document in an unfair way, in Hayut and Melzer's opinion.

Two weeks before the Mitzpeh Kramim ruling, their colleagues, Justices Meni Mazuz and George Kara prohibited the IDF from carrying out a lawful military order to destroy the home of the terrorist who murdered IDF soldier Sgt. Amit Ben Yigal. Destroying the home would involve "great harm to a number

of fundamental rights including harm to property rights and to human dignity." Their main claim was that they didn't want to hurt the murderer's family, which didn't kill Ben Yigal.

In other words, the Court ruled that property rights of hundreds of Israelis who acted in good faith and broke no law are to be rejected because a clerk misread a map, and the property rights of family members of a man who murdered an IDF soldier are to be upheld and protected because they are innocent of his crime.

In its second judgment last Thursday, the Court rejected a petition from Likud asking for the publication of the Central Election Commission's protocols from the recent elections due to wide-scale allegations of vote fraud. Since the Central Elections Commission is chaired by a Supreme Court Justice, the justices might have been expected to err on the side of transparency. But then, why would they do that?

As Likud MK Shlomo Karei said to Mida website after the ruling, the Court wouldn't even order the publication of election protocols in cases where the suspicion of fraud was overwhelming. As an example, Karei cited the case of 7,000 ballots ostensibly cast by Israeli Arab students. Israel prohibits absentee voting and it turns out that the students "cast" their votes while they were in Jordan. But as far as the Supreme Court is concerned, no one is allowed to question their ballots.

Israel's unchecked state prosecutors have also been in the news – as usual. Here too, two stories were notable because both give a glimpse at the depths of state prosecutors' obsession with "getting" Netanyahu and his supporters.

One of the crimes Netanyahu is now standing trial for is bribery. Prosecutors claim that Netanyahu received positive coverage from the Walla news website from its owners Shaul and Iris Alovich and that in exchange he provided regulatory breaks to Bezeq telecommunications company which the Aloviches own.

In July, the Aloviches' attorneys claimed that the prosecutors had not provided them with accurate protocols of investigation materials. Specifically, their attorneys maintained that the prosecutors had given them a distorted protocol of a conversation between a police investigator and their son, Or

Alovich. During the conversation, the investigator had urged their son to encourage his father to fire his attorney Jacques Chen and hire a lawyer who would push him to act as a state witness against Netanyahu. If the action occurred, and it appears it did, the investigator acted illegally and tainted the investigation. The exchange was strangely absent though, from the protocol of the conversation the prosecution gave the Alovich's lawyer.

On July 24, Netanyahu's prosecutor Liat Ben Ari submitted an affidavit to the Jerusalem District Court declaring that the prosecution had provided defense attorneys will all investigative materials. The memorandum in question was immaterial, she argued because the prosecution had provided the Aloviches' attorney with the recordings of the conversation.

On Tuesday, the prosecution changed its response and acknowledged it had not provided the Aloviches with a full protocol of the conversation.

Last Wednesday, Deputy State Prosecutor Nurit Litman issued guidance regarding pursuing prosecutions against demonstrators. She told prosecutors not to indict demonstrators even if during the course of their protests they block roads and defy police orders.

Litman's guidance regarding non-prosecution of demonstrators is controversial because presently, well-organized leftist protests regularly engage in unlawful actions of the sort she ordered prosecutors not to punish in their weekly demonstrations against Netanyahu in central Jerusalem. They block traffic and ignore and attack police.

When Likud called Liman out for her obvious bias, she responded breezily that the timing of her move was totally coincidental. Nothing to do with the protests against Netanyahu.

The public isn't stupid. Israelis know state prosecutors were perfectly happy to order the arrest and prosecution of handicapped Israelis when they waged a protest campaign in 2017 and Israelis from Ethiopia who waged protests in 2019.

Israelis on the right remember well how in the lead up to the expulsion and destruction of Israeli communities in Gaza in 2005, under the leadership of then attorney general and now Justice Meni Mazuz, the prosecution

waged a campaign of political repression against opponents of the policy. Protesters including minor girls and boys as young as 13, were arrested and held without charge for months or removed from their parents' homes due to their parents' political views.

To undermine the protests, Mazuz ordered police to intercept buses travelling to lawful protests. Far from being fired for his efforts, he was appointed to the Supreme Court and his deputies moved up the ladder in the prosecution.

Mountains of articles and studies have been written over the past 25 years showing in explicit detail how the unchecked powers of the legal system have created a monster that is devouring Israeli democracy, rendering election results irrelevant and creating a two-tiered system of justice where law enforcement decision are made based on one's political views.

These articles and studies have changed nothing though. Because the only institution in Israel capable of checking the justices, the prosecutors and the police is the Knesset. And the Knesset has failed to act. Were Israel's lawmakers willing, they would curb the uncurbed justices and lawyers and restore Israeli democracy.

To check the court, the Knesset would pass a law barring the justices from overturning legally promulgated laws and another law to ban court interference in executive action, including military orders and operations. As is the case in the United States and other democracies, court decisions on the lawfulness of executive actions would be rendered after the fact. To be clear, the Court's current power to overturn laws and block government action was never granted it by law. The justices arrogated these powers to themselves and politicians have failed to call them on their action.

To check the prosecution, the Knesset needs to pass laws reordering the and limiting the powers and responsibilities of the Attorney General. Today, the Attorney General is in charge of the state prosecution and also responsible for advising the government on legal issues. Over the years, the Supreme Court has seized the power to appoint the Attorney General by forcing the government to subordinate the appointment to an appointments committee controlled by the court. The attorney general in turn has transformed his advisory opinions into binding ones, massively constraining the government's ability to advance its lawful goals. So too, the attorney general has asserted his control over his

counterparts in all government ministries and the Knesset and arrogated to all of them the power to block ministry actions and Knesset parliamentary procedures.

To end this state of affairs, the Knesset must pass a law disbanding the appointments committee and empowering the government and its ministers to appoint their own legal advisors. The position of attorney general should split into two separate positions – that of the government's legal advisor and that of the head of the prosecution. Both should be subordinate to the government.

Politicians ought to be eager to take these actions. After all, it is their powers the lawyers have seized. If they want their positions to have any significance, they need to take them back.

The reason that left wing lawmakers have refused to act is obvious. The legal fraternity shares their world view and pursues their policies for them. As for non-leftist politicians, who currently are the majority of members of Knesset, distressingly, key political leaders who fully understand the stakes are focused on their narrow, personal ambitions and nursing in at least two instances, profound loathing of Netanyahu. Politicians like Israel Beitenu leader Avigdor Liberman, and increasingly, Yemina leader Naftali Bennet are willing to sit back as the legal fraternity absconds with their power as elected officials so long as while doing so, they also rid the political world of Netanyahu.

There is no question that Netanyahu himself shares the blame for the situation. For the better part of the past generation, Netanyahu has been willing to feed the legal tiger believing that it would never come to eat him. But then again, now that his turn has arrived, Israel finally has a prime minister willing to take the necessary action to put a stop to their power grab and so defeat the gravest threat Israel faces as a Jewish and democratic state.

Meniac's producer received a contract for a second season as soon as the last episode of the first aired on Monday night, and for good reason. The show bravely deals with the biggest threat to public life in Israel today. It's about time our elected leaders do the same.

Report: Israeli Courts Secretly Asked Google to Remove Critical Articles

David Israel

The administration of Israel's courts asked Google Israel to remove from the results of its search engine articles by major media outlets that criticize

judges, according to official data that reached Haaretz and were published on Tuesday (הנהלת בתי המשפט פעלה להעלים כתבות ביקורתיות נגד שופטים).

Those requests were submitted as part of the work of a special "Team for the Prevention of Defamation of Judges Online," which routinely endeavors to remove defamatory or inciting publications against judges from the social networks.

However, according to Haaretz, this anti-defamation team also asked Google to remove newspaper and news website reports on Judges, including articles from Haaretz, The Marker, Globes and Walla, in some cases without informing those news outlets.

In addition, the courts administration did not report to the Justice Ministry that its people acted to hide the articles, and the courts' legal counsel, attorney Barak Laser, did not include these efforts in his report to the Knesset.

According to a source in the court administration, those attempts to seek the removal of Google links to the articles were made following complaints from judges, and not as a result of a systemic monitoring of the Internet in search of problematic publications.

In other words, a judge who was offended by a critical story about him or her would call Barak Laser and demand that the offending story be gone from Google.

That's some judicial power.

A senior Justice Ministry official who dealt with this issue told Haaretz that "this is so absurd, so lacking in authority, so against the freedom of the press ... it is a scandal."

But yours truly would be deeply surprised if heads would roll as a result of this damning report. Why, only a few months ago, the President of Israel's Supreme Court practically marched into the Knesset plenum and yanked the gavel out of the Speaker's hand - and when said Speaker complained, the Israeli media hounded him for hating democracy. (In fact, Edelstein did one of the few things left to him to defend democracy against the overreach of the justices. -ed)

The anti-defamation team was set up during the tenure of former Supreme Court President Asher Grunis, with a mandate to remove defaming posts against judges on social media. But as it turns out, in addition to contacting the social networks, the team also warned citizens who posted unkind posts that if those were not removed, the courts administration might take legal action against them.

That, too, is pretty amazing judicial power. I'm never walking by a court

house with my lunch money.

In 2018, the Movement for Governance and Democracy filed a complaint about the work of the team, following which Deputy Attorney General Raz Nizri temporarily froze the team and ordered the convening of a joint committee comprising the administration of the courts, the advisory and legislative department of the Justice Ministry and the cyber department of the State Attorney's Office, to examine the working procedure of the courts' administration.

Once the committee's work was completed, the Justice Ministry decided to restrict the staff's action so that, among other things, it would not be allowed to contact citizens and would not be able to maintain a database with the names of those who published abusive posts.

They really did that, Israel's democracy-loving, liberal judges.

But the court administration did not report to the joint committee that it was acting not only to remove posts from social networks but also demanded that the Google search engine remove legitimate media stories from Google's search results.

Laser, too, during a Knesset debate in 2018 in which the team was required to present its work, did not report that his staff had acted to remove legitimate media publications from Google.

"We have written an explicit work procedure whose purpose is to make sure that our activities focus only on the serious things, which constitute an incitement to violence against judges," Laser told the Knesset.

However, a review of the list of articles that the courts' management sought to remove from Google's search results reveals that these are straight journalistic reports, which do not infringe on the judges' privacy nor incite to violence against them. They merely report on unkind things the judges don't want the world to know about them.

In 2015, the courts management sought to remove a report by Hadas Magen which was published by Globes in 2005, according to which "Attorney General Menachem Mazuz decided to close the investigation against Judge Jamil Nasser, a Justice of the Peace in Acre, on suspicion of receiving a benefit fraudulently, for lack of sufficient evidence."

In 2016, the courts administration asked Google to remove from the search results a report stating that the Ombudsman for complaints against Judges, Eliezer Goldberg, had received the Ometz movement's complaint against a reprimand letter sent by

former Military Advocate General Menachem Finkelstein—currently vice president of the Central District Court—to former Defense Minister Ehud Barak, where he expressed his "puzzlement and disappointment" that Barak appointed Brigadier General Adi Efroni and not Colonel Sharon Afek as his successor in the military justice system.

In 2018, the courts administration asked Google to remove from its search results an article by Revital Hovel in Haaretz, titled "The committee headed by Ayelet Shaked led to the appointment of a defense attorney who was negligent as a judge."

Ouch, that could be incitement against negligent judges, slippery slope there...

And in 2018, the courts administration sought to remove from Google's search results an article by Ben Zion Citrin in The Marker from 2004, about the request of then chairman of the Knesset Constitution Committee, MK Michael Eitan, to suspend Judge Ido Rosin, currently Vice President of the Magistrate's Court in Be'er Sheva, pending final clarification of a complaint filed against him.

The court administration stated in response to today's report that "on December 11, 2019, an updated version of the work and control procedure of the director of the courts for handling abusive publications on the Internet came into force" and the links mentioned in the article in Haaretz "relate to old publications from before the procedure."

The Justice Department's response confirms that the courts management did not report to the joint committee regarding requests from Google to remove information from the search engine.

This is another in a long list of revelations showing clearly that the judicial system holds itself above the law and above the legislature.

Welcome to the partial Israeli democracy. Try not to insult our judges.

Justified Contempt for the ICC

Jonathan S. Tobin

It's the sort of thing that infuriates those who have been complaining for three-and-a-half years that the Trump administration has no respect for the norms and traditions of international diplomacy. By placing sanctions on two top officials at the International Criminal Court (ICC), U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo bluntly rejected the notion that multilateral institutions deserved the respect and the deference of the American government.

This contempt for the international court roughly sums up the

administration's attitude towards the United Nations and a host of other world bodies. Critics see this as the embodiment of everything they hate about President Donald Trump's "America First" foreign policy. Instead of embracing the internationalist tradition that has largely guided the American approach to world affairs since the end of the Second World War, Trump judges international institutions by whether or not they serve the interests of the United States and its allies.

But the U.S. attack on the ICC is a long overdue dose of reality. The court and the entire network of global entities that Trump scorns operate as parodies of the postwar idealism that created them. Trump's critics in the foreign-policy establishment, the media and those who are poised to reshape American foreign policy if former Vice President Joe Biden wins in November are blasting the decision. But they should realize that Trump's approach to the issue is not merely popular but far more realistic than their blind faith in multilateralism.

The particular targets of the U.S. sanctions may claim to be defenders of international law but are, in fact, exactly the kind of individuals that specialize in engendering disrespect for the concept.

Gambian attorney Fatou Bensouda is the ICC's chief prosecutor, and Phakiso Mochochoko heads the prosecutor's office in The Hague. Since assuming office in 2012, Bensouda—a former operative in her own country's tyrannical government, which is widely considered among the world's worst human-rights offenders—has presided over an organization that has mostly specialized in trying to pick fights with democratic countries and done little to advance the cause of justice in places where there is none.

In particular, Bensouda has sought to target Israel and to prosecute the Jewish state for alleged "war crimes" during the various campaigns conducted to stop Hamas terrorists from attacking Israel from their Gaza stronghold. As outrageous and false as that charge might be, it was telling that she also claimed to be investigating Israeli crimes committed in Jerusalem and the West Bank, making it clear that hers was a political agenda intended to delegitimize Israeli self-defense, rather than just the bogus claims against its military actions in the Gaza Strip. The fact that she later expressed a vague willingness to investigate Hamas war crimes, of which there were many easily documented instances, in order to maintain a pretense of objectivity

convinced no one that she was interested in justice.

But Bensouda hasn't just used her post just to snipe at Israel, and to threaten its officials and soldiers with prosecutions on false charges. She has also sought to use the considerable resources placed at her disposal to attack the United States by threatening to prosecute Americans for crimes allegedly committed in the war still being fought against Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan.

The ICC's defenders say these legal fishing expeditions are justified in the name of the post-Nuremberg consensus that declared that the international community would not tolerate crimes committed by nations that, like the German Nazis, could claim that they were merely following their own unjust laws. That principle is a sound one, but it only works when it is employed against nations that don't have independent judiciaries and accountability under the rule of law. The ICC has, at least in theory, a role to play in holding someone to task, such as tyrants that commit genocide, as was the case in the Balkans and in Central Africa in the 1990s.

But when it selectively prosecutes what it alleges are war crimes committed by democracies defending the rule of law and against terrorism, it turns the entire concept of international law into a joke.

When institutions like the ICC behave in this manner, it creates a problem for the true believers in multilateral institutions. They know that the United Nations and its many branches is a cesspool of corruption, hypocrisy and anti-Semitism. But for people like former President Barack Obama and those who served in his administration, support for these bodies is a matter of political faith in the world coming together to govern itself. What it generally does is wind up empowering bad actors and undermining the values of liberty that the post-World War II order created by the United States was intended to preserve.

When Obama and his foreign-policy advisers looked at the United Nations and the ICC, they saw an idealistic future in which international institutions could solve problems individual sovereign governments couldn't fix.

Trump and his foreign-policy team are unencumbered by that sort of gooey faith in world government that sounds better when it is mouthed by characters in sci-fi shows like "Star Trek," which are set in future centuries when humanity has supposedly fixed all of its internal problems and is ready to expand its sway to the stars. All Trump

and Pompeo see when they look at arrogant figures like Bensouda and Mochochoko are puffed up functionaries of failed states that have been empowered by global bureaucracies to attack democracies.

They're right, and it's high time that the United States acted to warn the ICC that unless it sticks to prosecuting genuine war criminals as opposed to democratic countries fighting against war criminals, they would face the wrath of the world's lone superpower. The sanctions against the two prosecutors won't stop them from carrying on with this legal charade in their Dutch enclave. It will, however, put them on notice that there will be consequences for further such travesties.

Rather than bash Trump for defending the interests of the United States, as well as of allies like Israel, establishment critics should agree that sanctions on the ICC are exactly what the American people expect of its government.

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A Political Ruse in the Guise of Security

Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen

Thousands of West Bank Palestinians, maybe even tens of thousands, recently crossed the security barrier and arrived in buses to various beaches in Israel. The barrier was mainly crossed in the area of Tulkarem-Qalqilya, where the fence has many breaches. While many were alarmed by this event, it should come as no surprise.

A barrier that is not closely monitored along its entire length, at all times, and with a broad order of battle cannot obstruct those who want to cross it. The IDF and the Israel Police never had the manpower required for this. About two years ago, I published a detailed study of the subject that maintained that the security barrier was built as a political ruse to exploit the fear of terror in order to unilaterally establish a political border.

As an obstacle, a barrier is undoubtedly beneficial to an overall effort at tactical defense. The question of its usefulness arises when this tactical tool becomes a strategic orientation. The most basic question about the barrier is how necessary it really is to prevent terrorism. The success of the IDF and the security forces in suppressing West Bank terrorism since Operation Defensive Shield (2002) indicates that terrorism has been thwarted primarily by ongoing daily efforts deep in the West Bank, not by activity along the barrier. Therein

also lies the important difference between the effectiveness of counterterrorist operations in the West Bank and the IDF's inconclusive activity along the Gaza Strip barrier.

The debate over the barrier is not just about security, especially when its route runs, for the most part, along the Green Line. This was candidly noted by US Middle East Envoy Dennis Ross back when the building of the barrier began. In a tour of the route that was under construction, Ross stopped, looked at the nascent barrier with satisfaction, and said, "It looks like a border, it smells like a border, it is a border!"

The idea of building a security barrier began to emerge in the early 1990s, when there was an outbreak of suicide bombings after the inking of the Oslo Accords, and by 1995 the Rabin government was considering the idea. However, PM Rabin's realization that the barrier's construction would have far-reaching political implications, in effect determining the route of the political border, led him to reject it.

There were others in the then-ruling Labor coalition, however, who saw the fight against terrorism as an opportunity to launch a major move: a simple, quick, and effective way to separate the Israelis and the Palestinians and cede the West Bank by setting in train a process on the ground without having to worry about an Israeli public debate, negotiations, or an agreement.

In the ongoing debate in Israel between those advocates of a withdrawal to the Green Line and proponents of extending sovereignty to part of the West Bank, the decision to build the barrier marked a highly significant shift in the direction of withdrawal. Its architects foresaw a solution in two stages: first, a barrier would be built with the IDF operating on both sides; then the IDF would be deployed only along the Israeli side of the barrier thus creating a de facto border.

The security barrier is one of the most prolonged and expensive projects that Israel has ever carried out. Its cost is thus far estimated at more than 15 billion shekels (over \$4 billion), and its adverse implications for Israel's future borders are of profound significance. Its recent massive crossing offers an opportunity to open the eyes of the public to the barrier's real function as a dangerous political ruse in the guise of security.

Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen is a senior research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies. (BESA)

Palestinian Claim of Continuity

Ambassador (ret.) Yoram Ettinger

Have Arabs been in the area west of the Jordan River from time immemorial?

In 1881, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, a leading British cartographer and Dean of Westminster Abbey, reported that "in Judea it is hardly an exaggeration to say that for miles and miles there was no appearance of life or habitation" (Sinai and Palestine in Connection with Their History, New York 1895, pp. 184-186).

The Egyptian immigration

According to Arie Avneri, a groundbreaking historian of Arab and Jewish migration to Palestine (The Claim of Dispossession, 1980), during the Egyptian conquest (1831-1840), "there was a limited influx of some thousands of [Egyptian] immigrants, whom Ibrahim Pasha [the ruler of Egypt] brought in to settle the empty stretches of the country. Before them, a goodly number of Egyptians had fled Egypt, seeking to evade the military draft.... They sought sanctuary with the governor of Acre, who granted it readily."

The French-Egyptian scholar, Muhammad Sabry [The Egyptian Empire under Mohammed Ali and the question of the Orient, 1930], confirmed that "the Governor of Acre encouraged the migration of fellaheen [peasants] from Egypt and gave them shelter.... In 1831, more than 6,000 fellaheen crossed the Egyptian border.... After he conquered Palestine, not only did Mohammed Ali [Ibrahim Pasha's father] refrain from sending back the draft evaders to Egypt, but he sent new settlers to consolidate his rule.... The Egyptian ruler also brought the Bedouin slave-tribe, Arab ed-Damair...."

Avneri highlights (ibid.) many documents published by the British Palestine Exploration Fund. For instance: "Most of Jaffa was made up of Egyptian-populated districts.... Philip Baldensperger [a renowned anthropologist] stated that in 1893, the inhabitants of many villages in the southern part of the country [between Gaza and Tulkarem] were of Egyptian origin.... The dwellers of some parts of the south were originally brought to Palestine from Libya.... Hundreds of families of Egyptian origin accompanied the conquering forces of Ibrahim Pasha.... Similarly, in the cities of Samaria and Judea there are hundreds of families which, to this day, are named Masri [the Egyptian].... Before WW1, Egyptian laborers worked on the reclamation of the swamp-lands.... Egyptians participated

in the laying of the railroad tracks from Jerusalem to Jaffa, and thereafter remained in the country....

"According to Baldensperger, the existing population in Jaffa contained at least twenty-five different nationalities [mostly Egyptians, but also Syrians, Yemenites, Persians, Afghanis, Hindus and Baluchis]....

Additional Arab/Moslem migrants

Avneri adds (ibid.) that "in 1856, the French [conquerors of Algeria] permitted Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini [the leader of the anti-French rebellion] to leave Algeria together with some followers. Some went to Syria and others to Palestine.... These immigrants were called Mughrabis [originating in the Maghreb, North Africa]. They founded four villages in the Lower Galilee.... Quite a number of Mughrabis settled in Safed, and probably in Tiberias....

"In 1914, Masterman [British Palestine Exploration Fund] described the Moslem population of Safed as being of mixed origin. One of the neighborhoods was called Hareth el-Karad, which denotes a population of Kurdish origin.... Half of the Moslem population of Safed were Mughrabis.... Other Moslem Arabs were immigrants from Damascus and Bedouins from the Jordan Valley.... In 1893, Baldensperger wrote [British Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly] about the Mughrabis of Jaffa.... The Persians, Afghans, Hindus and Baluchis were engaged in commerce....

"In 1878, the Ottoman Sultan, Abd el-Hamid took under his protection Circassian refugees who had fled the Christian-Russian rule in the Caucasus. Many settled in Jordan. Others settled west of the Jordan River in Kafer Kamma, Sarona and Reihaniya. Some Moslems from Bosnia also found refuge in Palestine and settled near Caesarea... Laurence Oliphant [a British traveler, author and diplomat] wrote about one of the Turkoman tribes that pitched their black tents near a Circassian village, arriving from the mountains of Iraq.... In 1908, a group of Arabs arrived in Jaffa from Yemen and settled there....

"In 1878, Claude Reignier Conder [British Palestine Exploration Fund] reported that the large Jezreel Valley was the refuge of the Bedouins whenever war or famine threatened their existence in Jordan.... In 1870, only a sixth of the lands were ploughed, because the valley was occupied by Bedouins.... The same phenomenon occurred in the southern part of the country [e.g., from the Hebron area and southward]....

Infrastructure projects enticed Arab

immigration

Avneri adds (ibid.): "The building of the Jerusalem-Jaffa railroad [inaugurated in 1892] employed many local and outside labor. The Belgian company that built the railroad imported Egyptian laborers, many of whom remained in the country. At the start of the 20th century, work on the railway track between Haifa and Dera'a [in southwestern Syria] began. At the outbreak of WW1, the Haifa-Nablus railroad was launched.... Many workers were imported from neighboring countries....

"In 1880, Haifa was a small town of 6,000 souls. In 1910 it tripled to 18,000 inhabitants, of whom 15,000 were Moslem and Christian Arabs. Many of the newcomers were from Lebanon and Syria.... Jaffa developed as a port city... through which passed pilgrims.... Some of them remained in Jaffa. Jaffa's population doubled during 1890-1910, numbering 43,000 of whom 30,000 were Moslem and Christian Arabs. Also, a large number of pilgrims from North Africa settled in Jerusalem amidst their countrymen, who arrived in earlier times....

"The rapid population growth in Jaffa and Haifa (following the British victory in WW1) was, in large part, due to the influx of many Egyptian laborers, policemen, contractors, foremen and businessmen, who accompanied the advance of the British Army.... The building of the railroad to Qantara on the Egyptian border employed thousands of Egyptians, many of whom preferred to settle in Haifa....

"The British authorities preferred Egyptian, Syrian or other foreign Arab laborers [e.g., Sudan] – over Jewish immigrants – when it came to erecting military bases, operating quarries, paving roads and the construction of the port of Haifa.... During 1919-1922, the Arab-Moslem population grew from 515,000 to 590,000, largely, due to Arab immigration....

"The years 1932-1936 were marked by unprecedented economic prosperity... and a considerable influx of Arab immigrants....

"The outbreak of violence that occurred from time to time [against Jews and intra-Arab], especially during 1936-1938, drew thousands of Arab mercenaries from the neighboring countries.... Many mercenaries remained in the country...."

"In 1942, during WW2, there was a severe labor shortage in Palestine.... The British Mandate issues emergency regulations permitting the British Army to bring laborers from Arab countries....

In conclusion

Prof. Efraim Karsh of the Bar Ilan University and London King's College, features a report by the British Peel Commission (Palestine Betrayed, 2010): "during 1922-1931, the increase of Arab population in Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem was 86%, 62% and 37% respectively."

As a result of the 1880-1947 waves of Arab immigration, the Arab population of Jaffa, Haifa and Ramla grew 17, 12 and 5 times respectively.

Thus, contrary to Palestinian claims, Arab residents west of the Jordan River (Judea, Samaria and pre-1967 Israel) are not descendants of the Canaanites, but of recent Arab migrants.

Moreover, in defiance of a myth advanced by the Palestinian Authority, Palestine has not been Arab/Moslem from time immemorial.

In fact, since the Greek Empire era (5th century BCE), the term Palestine (Palaistine) referred to the Land of Israel, directly linked to the People of Israel.

A Blind Eye to Palestinian Incitement

Melanie Phillips

Why do so many well-meaning people committed to ending abuses of power ignore the evidence of who is actually committing these abuses and blame their victims instead?

An official investigation funded by Britain and the European Union into textbooks used in Palestinian schools has descended into farce.

In April 2018, finally responding to concerns about anti-Israel incitement in Palestinian-Arab schools, the United Kingdom pushed the E.U. to commission a report on Palestinian textbooks from the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research in Germany.

In April last year, the Institute published as a preliminary what it called its "Inception Report." This, it said, developed a framework for "an academically rigorous review" of "how peace, tolerance and an understanding of the other are incorporated into Palestinian textbooks."

This report, however, was itself riddled with so many mistakes that the European Union ditched it. Bafflingly, however, the E.U. has continued to use the Georg Eckert Institute to finish the project.

Its final report is due out next month. But it has now produced an interim report, which the E.U. is choosing to keep secret.

Marcus Sheff, chief executive of the Jerusalem-based Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education,

managed to obtain a presentation of this interim report. This has shown the project lurching from bad to worse.

Calling the review "a comedy of errors from start to finish," Sheff says the researchers have looked at the wrong textbooks. They have actually used as examples textbooks that are used in Israel's Arab schools in Jerusalem, praising them and presenting them falsely as part of the Palestinian Authority's curriculum.

On the basis of this egregious mistake, the researchers have claimed that the Palestinians' educational materials have been "transformed" for the better.

They make no mention of the vile language and images used in many of the Palestinian textbooks, such as describing the burning of Jewish bus passengers with Molotov cocktails as a "barbecue party," or teaching Arabic through a story promoting suicide bombings and illustrated by a Palestinian gunman shooting Israeli soldiers in a tank.

The incompetence seems hard to credit. Why do people in the West appear to find it so difficult to acknowledge Palestinian hatred and incitement against Israel and the Jews?

Clearly, they resist acknowledging anything that will undermine the narrative on which E.U. and U.K. foreign policy has been based for decades—that giving the Palestinian Arabs a state would end the "Middle East conflict."

But this gives rise to deeper questions. Why do they believe that the Palestinians are entitled to a state of their own? Why do they claim that, aside from the extremists of Hamas, the Palestinian Authority's leaders are legitimate statesmen-in-waiting?

Because these Western supporters refuse to acknowledge the murderous incitement against both Israel and the Jewish people that routinely emanates from the supposedly moderate P.A.

They don't just ignore its repeated calls for Israel's destruction and support for the murder of Israelis. They also ignore the grotesque anti-Semitism that pours out of P.A.-backed preachers, publications and TV.

As painstakingly documented by Palestinian Media Watch and the Middle East Media Research Institute, the P.A. presents the Jews as possessing inherently evil traits. It regularly describes them as treacherous, corrupt, allied with the devil and the descendants of apes and pigs.

It has claimed Jews are "thirsty for blood to please their god (against the gentiles), and crave pockets full of money," that the Jews were forced out of Europe in the past because of the

threat that their "evil nature" posed to Europeans; that these Jewish "traits" and "ways of behavior" constitute a danger to all humanity. And so on, and so on.

The Palestinians' supporters, who are so quick to damn any Western figure suspected of the slightest historic connection with far-right movements, also totally ignore the history of Palestinian Nazism.

In the 1930s, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj-Amin al-Husseini, made a pact with the Nazis and turned the Palestinian Arabs into Hitler's army in the Middle East.

More than that, as detailed by Barry Rubin and Wolfgang Schwanitz in their book *Nazis, Islamists and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, al-Husseini was no less committed than Hitler to the extermination of the Jews. He pledged to achieve that infernal aim throughout the Middle East and was highly influential in encouraging Hitler to adopt the specific extermination strategy of the Final Solution.

This still matters today. While the Palestinians in general shouldn't be tarred with the Nazi brush, al-Husseini is revered and extolled by the P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas, a Holocaust denier who openly draws on the former Grand Mufti for inspiration.

So why are Western progressives so attached to the Palestinian cause that they ignore such evidence of its noxious characteristics?

One answer is the anti-Semitism that courses through the West itself. Another is the realpolitik that has caused Western leaders to cozy up to the Arab world.

There's a deeper reason. Acknowledging the toxic reality of Palestinian Jew-hatred would up-end the entire moral and political universe that the left have constructed around the narrative of the "oppressive" West and those it has "oppressed."

Left-wing idealists need to reflect this dogma in a cause with which they can identify. All of their previous causes have either ended or gone belly-up: Soviet communism, South African apartheid, Irish republicanism.

The Palestinians have been portrayed as oppressed victims by fiendishly effective propaganda that has rewritten a history of which the left remain almost wholly ignorant. So they've made the Palestinians into their poster cause of conscience.

Moreover, the overriding preoccupation of progressives is never the actual condition of the oppressed for whom their hearts bleed. It is instead how noble and virtuous such support makes them appear, both to themselves

and to others.

If they had to acknowledge that the Palestinian cause is inextricably intertwined with murderous anti-Semitism—and that its current leader hero-worships a man who had sought to achieve victory for fascism and the extermination of the Jews—then their entire moral and political universe would implode.

This is also why the same kind of people refuse to acknowledge the anti-white, anti-Jew, revolutionary agenda of Black Lives Matter, telling themselves instead that it's a noble campaign against racism.

When incontrovertible facts about Palestinian anti-Semitism or BLM are pointed out, not only do progressives deny this noxious agenda, but they smear as racist anyone who dares point out these inconvenient truths.

That's because progressives believe they stand for everything that's good in the world. So anyone challenging their position is assumed to be bad, anything they say is automatically dismissed as a lie, and they are assumed to have the worst possible motives.

This is why support for the Palestinians is both symptom and cause of the West's moral collapse; and both Jew and non-Jew are involved in its disintegration.

Melanie Phillips, a British journalist, broadcaster and author, writes a weekly column for JNS.

Fighting Armed Struggle

Nave Dromi

Perhaps it is because they feel more out in the cold than ever, or because they see the success Hamas is having in gaining Israel's attention with regular rocket and arson attacks, but whatever the reason, it seems that the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah are readying for an escalation in the violence emanating from the territories they control.

In recent weeks, top Palestinian officials have spoken more and more openly about what they call "a return to armed struggle" and using "resistance in all of its forms," which we know from past bloody experience means active terrorism.

The question that Israeli policy makers have to ask themselves is whether they are finally ready to fight fire with fire.

The Palestinian officials, including Fatah Central Committee Secretary Jibril Rajoub, Fatah Revolutionary Council member Muhammad al-Laham and the head of the Committee to Resist Settlements and the Wall, Walid Assaf—a personal appointee of Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas—are readying their people for

battle with their calls to arms.

Israel has not seen wide-scale violence emanating from Judea and Samaria for some time, especially coordinated and orchestrated violence, and has become lax in its thinking towards the PA because it believes it to be contained and largely disinterested in organized terrorism.

This appears to be changing. PA rhetoric is being ramped up to levels not seen in years. It is preparing the ground for outright conflict.

In a rapidly changing region, now might be exactly the time for Israel to also return to "armed struggle."

Not since "Operation Defensive Shield" in 2002 has Israel launched a large-scale offensive against Palestinian terror groups in Judea and Samaria, including those associated with Fatah.

In the years since, the Palestinian armed groups have not remained static, they have trained and prepared. For them it has never been a question of if they will return to the "armed struggle," but when.

It is clear that pressure from the United States, a reduction of aid, a focus on the infrastructure of terror payments and incitement, and now Israel normalizing relations with the United Arab Emirate, have caused the Palestinian leadership to feel more isolated and cornered than ever.

They might feel like now is the time for an attack, because they have little to lose and much to gain.

Israel, on the other hand, has much to lose.

It can ill afford another semi-permanent front in addition to the constantly smoldering borders it has in the south with Hamas and Islamic Jihad and in the north with Hezbollah.

To prevent this, Israel must defeat the Palestinians with our own "armed struggle." It should use its overwhelming force to finally emerge as victorious over the Palestinians and their violent rejectionism and terror.

The Israeli political and security establishment should make a decision now that any future conflagration will be the last. It is time for the over 100-year conflict to end, finally.

Enacting a policy towards Judea and Samaria's terror groups similar to that employed against Hamas in Gaza could be devastating and overwhelming. Israel can ill afford to react to violence with compromises. Providing the Palestinian Authority with suitcases full of millions of dollars and desperately suing for peace by making harmful concessions will bring terrorism to the doorstep of the coastal plain, where 80 percent of Israel's population resides.

We cannot afford to incentivize belligerent behavior.

On the other hand, if Israel is able to convince the Palestinian leadership that it has lost, that it does not pay to continue fighting, that Israel as the national and indigenous homeland of the Jewish people is permanent and cannot be defeated or destroyed, then the conflict will end, for the good of all.

If it is able to do so then relations with the Palestinians can be normalized, a Palestinian polity can be established and built up that serves the interests of its people, not appropriated for the machinery of terror and violence, but for the welfare of the Palestinian people.

While people talk about the "domino effect" of the agreement with the UAE, victory over the Palestinians will be the most significant domino in the region.

If this conflict ends, ensuring peace, security and prosperity for both peoples, then pragmatic Arab states in the region will flock to Jerusalem to sign normalization of relations agreements.

This would be the "New Middle East" others have spoken about. While the path of negotiations and concessions never achieved it, Israeli victory can.

This vision will be realized if Israel returns to a policy of overwhelming deterrence and reverts to the "armed struggle" to match that which the Palestinian Authority is readying for.

Israeli victory is the only way to finally end the conflict, because it seems like the conflict is returning on our eastern front.

Our armed struggle must defeat theirs. Nave Dromi is director of the Middle East Forum's office in Israel and head of the Israel Victory Project.

Woke Religion - Israel Was Ground Zero

Matti Friedman

This year many people have discovered that liberal life and institutions in the West are in the grip of something resembling a new religion. Anyone following the doings of the past few months won't need a recap of the attempted "cancellations" of scholars and scientists for heresies, the purge of editors for running the wrong op-ed, or the excommunication of J.K. Rowling. Adherents of the thought system vaguely described as "woke" believe themselves to be fighting evil in the name of justice. They share a hierarchy of good, a lingo, purity tests, and a stark division of the world into friend and foe, all of which borrow heavily from religious modes of thought. But one of the most obvious signs that religion is in play, and not merely empirical

observation or political criticism, is the way this ideology has focused and amplified the condemnation of Jews.

All of this has made me think differently about my experience as a reporter in Israel a decade ago, and particularly about an essay I wrote in 2014 for Tablet, which was one of the first publications to pick up on these trends. That essay, “An Insider’s Guide to the Most Important Story on Earth,” and a second one that appeared in The Atlantic, described the replacement of journalism here by activism, the subjugation of objective description to higher ideological truth, and the manufacture of politically driven morality plays in the guise of news. I took this to be a problem related to, and perhaps limited to, perceptions of Jewish people and of Israel.

From the vantage point of 2020, that understanding was far too narrow. To pull a metaphor from this strange moment: I thought I’d seen the outbreak, when I was really just hanging out in the wet market. The Israel story was just a formative stage in the evolution of a more ambitious set of ideas. Israel was an early target for adherents of the movement for social justice, but it wasn’t just that. It was a place to manufacture a mobilizing mythology.

Upon gaining admission to the tribe of Western journalists in Jerusalem in 2006, I found that it wasn’t enough—or necessary, or sometimes even desirable—to be knowledgeable about the region or to speak its languages. The important thing was adopting a creed, one which seemed strange to me then but is widely familiar now. This outlook included a dim view of America; sympathy for all international organizations; an aversion to fervent Christianity and a healthy respect for fervent Islam; a considerate attitude toward despotic regimes from China to Iran, which are not “the problem”; the idea that the moral high ground has something to do with skin color; the belief that while groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood might sometimes go too far, they do have a point; and the idea that the world would probably be improved if Jewish sovereignty could somehow be reduced to zero percent from the current high of 0.01 percent.

The key credo, however, was that recognizing complexity was desirable only within the tenets of the belief system. Outside of those tenets, complexity was not just unwelcome but wrong. That is, you could discuss how evil the Israelis are, or Republicans, or “nationalists” from India or France, or oil companies, or anyone on the

approved list of wrongdoers—but not suggest they might be right, or their opponents mistaken. The rigors of reporting, in other words, were abandoned for the simple pleasures of the sermon.

I’m lucky enough to have grown up with traditional religion, and I’ve experienced religious behavior from moderate to extreme. What I was seeing in the mainstream press was a move from rational observation into a kind of moral judgment that I knew from other parts of my life. The guiding idea was no longer to understand what was going on; there was nothing to understand. We knew who was right and who was wrong, and it remained only to anathematize the bad guys so far into disrepute that even the act of trying to understand them would be a kind of sin.

To achieve this effect, the news narrative in Israel was constructed, without undue difficulty, with tricks of storytelling and framing: pretending the conflict is one between Israelis and Palestinians and not a much broader Middle Eastern war; pretending the Palestinian national movement merely wants a state beside Israel; dismissing Israeli attempts to solve the conflict on reasonable terms; erasing the actions of Israel’s opponents so Israel’s own actions and fears seem irrational or duplicitous; and suggesting the Jewish instinct for self-preservation in the Middle East is “right wing” while the Islamist war against Jews or the Iranian drive for regional hegemony are somehow about “human rights.” The ideology not only puts forward its own explanation for things but rules out any other explanation. If you point out that none of this is true, you’re whitewashing oppression and will be tarred as a racist, as I eventually was, joining a list that was less illustrious at the time than it is now.

Today all of this seems almost wearily familiar from “cancel culture.” But it wasn’t widely familiar a decade ago, because in many ways Israel was patient zero. The successful creation and promotion of the Israel story transformed a real country into something so dangerous and disruptive to the desired order that it had to be canceled—an aspiration that has actually become a staple of politics on the left, and is now aired in the press as if it were completely rational. It’s the same thinking behind the idea that an op-ed by a right-wing senator is too dangerous to be published in a newspaper of record, or that it’s necessary to pulp books in which a human being of one ethnic background imagines how the world might appear to a human being from another. The

creation of the malevolent “Israel” of the news, and the subsequent push to render an entire country beyond the pale, created a pattern that has been replicated against targets ranging from nonconforming biologists to the author of books about teenage wizards. Of course the list of heretics is growing, as such lists always do.

Western ideologies generally include a parable about villainous Jews. Because this is a set of ideas that sees itself as a political critique, the parable doesn’t come, as past versions have, from Scripture (in the case of Christianity), or from economic theory (as it did in Marxism), or pseudo-scientific racial doctrines (National Socialism). It comes from the news—specifically, from the mythology that I saw being constructed as a reporter a decade ago. A strange antagonism to something called “Israel” came up if you went to a Women’s March against Donald Trump in New York, or protested violence against African Americans in Ferguson, Missouri, or joined the Dyke March in Chicago, or presented an academic paper at the American Studies Association. It appears in the platform of Black Lives Matter from 2016, in left-wing politics in Britain and France, and in gender studies courses at California colleges.

These diverse applications are unique, if not entirely unprecedented, for a news story. But they make sense if we understand the Israel story as a kind of sacred template that can be used to explain many different situations. A good example became visible this spring in the wake of the protests that followed the killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis: the myth that Israel trains American police officers in the same methods of brutality that killed Floyd, and which are deployed more generally against people of color. This conspiracy theory has been promoted as factual by (among many others) senior journalists, members of the British Labour Party, and, in early July, by the biggest Lutheran denomination in America.

That last detail supports the idea that new religions are never completely removed from the old ones. Indeed, the unique power of the Israel story is the way it takes the central preoccupation of the new thought system—the inequality of white Western power versus nonwhite Third World innocence—and projects it onto a setting already loaded with religious resonance. If you’re looking for a parable about human inequality, places called Jerusalem or Bethlehem are potent in ways that can’t be rivaled by Xinjiang or Laayoune, or Minneapolis.

A good illustration of this merger came in the form of a speech given to a convention of the Episcopal church in 2018 by a Massachusetts bishop who described atrocities she claimed to have personally witnessed in Israel. She described the murder of an innocent 15-year-old Palestinian by Jewish soldiers—"they shot him in the back four times, he fell on the ground and they shot him another six"—and the aggressive handcuffing by soldiers of a 3-year-old Palestinian boy whose ball rolled off the Temple Mount.

It later turned out that the bishop hadn't seen any such thing, and she apologized profusely. But in a religious mindset, the question isn't whether a story happened. The question is whether a story can mobilize believers to achieve good. If the answer is yes, the story is "true."

This kind of thinking has now bled into newsrooms and university departments, precisely the bodies that are supposed to be engaged in observation and reasoned debate. If important parts of the press and the academy are beginning to sound like ministries, it's happening at a time when religion and quasi-religion are on the rise everywhere—not just on the progressive left but also on the right, and not only in the West. Some of these trends are evident in Israel, too. As we speak, as if to symbolize the moment, the Hagia Sophia is being changed from a public museum back into a mosque—though in Istanbul, at least, the conversion is being done in the open.

A Biden Administration

Barry Shaw

Presidential candidate, Joe Biden, appealed to American Jewish voters with a promise not to condition US aid to Israel, but his word, based on past history, is disingenuous.

Biden, a Catholic, promising Catholic voters that he would represent their ethics and values even as he endorses pro-abortion rights and selected a Vice President who has built a political career funded by the pro-abortion lobby represented by Planned Parenthood.

Biden says one thing but does the opposite. Senator Biden in 1982 threatened to cut off US aid to Israel. In a heated exchange with Israeli Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, Biden banged on the table and delivered his threat to which Begin undiplomatically replied,

"Don't threaten us with cutting off your aid. I am not a Jew with trembling knees. I am a proud Jew with 3,700 years of civilized history. Nobody came to our aid when we were dying in the gas chambers and ovens. Nobody came

to our aid when we were striving to create our country. We paid for it. We fought for it. We died for it. We will stand by our principles. We will defend them. And, when necessary, we will die for them again, with or without your aid."

In an administration that promised "no daylight" between the United States, Obama, Biden, John Kerry and Hillary Clinton did precisely the opposite.

A December 29, 2015 Wall Street Journal article detailed how the Obama administration conducted surveillance on Israeli officials to discover how the Israeli government would react to their bad Iran nuclear deal. This broke the decades-old bipartisan US policy toward Israel.

Biden has pledged to revive Obama's Middle East policies, particularly his highly criticized Iran nuclear deal which allowed Iran to develop not only its advanced missile program but also more sophisticated centrifuges buried in Iran's underground facility at Natanz, scene of a mysterious explosion in August. These centrifuges will speed up the enrichment of uranium needed to produce a nuclear warhead at a time of Iran's choosing.

The disastrous fallout of this awful deal was a failure in not understanding that the Iranian regime would not use the money on its people but on broadening its malevolent regional intentions. The Obama-Biden generous gift of potentially \$150 billion plus an additional \$1.5 billion cash payment enabled the Islamic regime in Tehran to extend their violent hegemony, directly and via their proxies, through Iraq, into Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and further south in Yemen.

This has left the Sunni Arab world with a dire sense of vulnerability. Inadvertently, it has driven moderate Arab states to first develop covert contacts with Israel and now, with the advent of the Israel-UAE peace deal, with open relationships and partnership.

One of the unsung benefits of UAE's decision to normalize their relationship with Israel was their official renunciation of a 47-year boycott policy against Israel.

In effect, this act killed the infamous boycott, divestment and sanctions movement at a stroke of the UAE pen. How is it possible for radical Left activists, as well as certain members of Congress, to promote boycott campaigns against Israel when Arab states are not only dropping their boycotts but actively signing trade deals with Israel?

It is worth noting that although an attempt to oppose an anti-boycott bill in

Congress was defeated, seventeen Democrats continued to support such measures and a further ten abstained from the vote. Two Democrat presidential hopefuls absented themselves from the vote, as did House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Although Democrat representatives do attend the annual AIPAC Conference to show their support of Israel, the jury is out as to whether they do so to appeal to their Jewish and Christian constituents, rather than an affirmative love of Israel. The doubt stems from the failure of any Democrat Congress member to attend the opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem. They also swerved the Israel Embassy celebration party in Washington DC.

But the unkindest cut of all was when Obama-Biden stabbed Israel in the back as they were leaving the White House. A vindictive out-going president, backed by his vice president, failed to impose the United States veto in UN Security Council Resolution 2334 that decreed, wrongly, that Israeli communities beyond the Green Line were an illegal occupation.

More recently, Biden has said he does not support the extension of sovereignty to Jewish settlements that are the homes, universities and workplaces of 600,000 Jews.

He went further by saying he would renew US funding to the Palestinian Authority ignoring their "Pay to Slay" reward payments to Palestinian terrorists and killers of Israelis.

Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, privy to important policy issues emanating from the Oval Office, famously said that Joe Biden has been wrong on nearly every major foreign policy and national security issue over the past four decades.

On the campaign trail, Biden has become an embarrassment. His faux pas and mumbling thoughts are a matter of concern for the Democrat faithful. Even the Chicago Sun Times, a paper that has endorsed the Democratic Party, fears that Biden's diminished faculties will handicap their election chances. But Biden was never elected to affirmatively lead the country but to be the front man for the growing radical wing of the party. In an act of national deception, the Democrats try to project themselves as moderates in an effort to keep their traditional voters on board. In truth, the party has changed beyond recognition. It belongs to the Red-Green alliance, the Marxists and Islamists that control the party Establishment to the point that their elderly leaders take the knee to their demands and, should they take power, their policies.

One example of this change is personified in Rep. Ilhan Omar. Omar projected herself as the shining face of a culture sensitive public when she won her Minneapolis seat. She was supported by the Jews of her district as representing their progressive values. That was before the mask came off and she revealed her real self as an anti-Semitic Israel hater.

More recently, Omar has called for the dismantling of the police. She also called to "tear down the system." This radicalism shows where the heart of the Democrat Party lies.

Omar is portrayed as the future of the party. As a member of The Squad alongside Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, and Alexandria-Ocasio Cortez, they drive its agenda. It was not by accident that Joe Biden went public asking for a Million Muslim Vote. He spoke the words, but the campaign strategy was decided elsewhere. Biden has yet to go public and ask for a Million Jewish Votes. He won't. That is not where the party is today.

But the Democrat radicals in Congress are far more numerous than this quartet. As mentioned earlier, thirty of them followed their anti-Israel lead when it came to a vote. And their numbers will grow in the next Congress. Elliot Engel, one of the dwindling pro-Israel Democrats was easily defeated by a new radical in a recent primary.

This is the force what will set policy, not Biden. He will be a figurehead president, rolled out to sign policies, read speeches off teleprompters, and be seen shaking hands with visiting dignitaries. The business of government will be executed elsewhere.

Where the party will be, policy-wise, should they win the 2020 election, is reflected in Ilhan Omar. They elected her to sit on the US Foreign Affairs Committee failing to demote her following her numerous anti-Jewish and anti-Israel remarks.

They failed because this is where the power of the party is today.

Imagine a Democratic administration with Ilhan Omar promoted to chair the US Foreign Affairs Committee.

What do you think will be the United States position on Israel?

Barry Shaw, Senior Associate for International Public Diplomacy at the Israel Institute for Strategic Studies.

Making History

Israel's National Imperative:

"Keep Your Powder Dry."
Martin Sherman

Put your trust in God, my boys, but mind to keep your powder dry – attributed to Oliver Cromwell, prior to the opening engagement of the English civil war at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642.

...The purpose of keeping powder dry is to be able to blaze away at the proper time. Thus, the phrase "keep your powder dry"... carries an implicit, most ominous threat: "...be prepared to blow the enemy's head off at the propitious moment"—William Safire, "Keeping Your Powder Dry", The New York Times, Feb. 23, 1997.

...it's impossible to understand the reality we face today, without knowing the history of Hebron-- Tzipi Schissel, curator of the Hebron History museum, on the brutal 1929 Hebron Massacre of Jews by their long time Arab neighbors.

The emerging normalization agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has ignited hopes among many that it will be a harbinger of further amiable relationships between Israel and additional "moderate" Sunni states across the region.

A challenge to past perceptions?

While the normalization initiative certainly could entail significant benefits for the Jewish state, including a "knock-on" effect, inducing other Mid-East countries to follow suit, I recently cautioned that it is still somewhat premature to celebrate the onset of lasting amity—rather than enmity—in the region.

Numerous pundits (or is that "pundits"?) have set out their preferred preconditions for a lasting peace, only to have their prescriptions upended by recalcitrant realities.

In some ways, the Israel-UAE initiative has indeed challenged widely accepted "wisdom" regarding peace, and the absence thereof, in the Middle East. Thus, a little over three years ago, on the website of Commanders for Israel's Security, former Head of the Mossad, Tamir Pardo, declared: *"Popular hostility in Moslem countries resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has made normalization with Jordan and Egypt impossible, and has rendered anything other than secret agreements with other Arab countries impossible. The Palestinian issue serves as a categorical limitation on the establishment of formal relations between Arab states and Israel."*

Clearly, the move toward normalization between Abu Dhabi and Jerusalem severely undercuts the rationale underlying Pardo's diagnosis. Indeed, although Emirati leaders have paid ostensible lip service to the "Palestinian cause", the apoplectic

rejection and incandescent rage with which the initiative was greeted by the Palestinians clearly indicates that their "cause" has been relegated in Arab priorities and is no longer a focal rallying point for the Arab world.

The "people-to-people" peace paradigm

In the ongoing discourse on peace and its determinants, it has become common—and fashionable—to claim that to create a sustainable peace, it is not sufficient to conclude a "political peace"—i.e. a compact between governments/regimes.

Peace, according to this school of thought, must be between the peoples of erstwhile adversarial collectives.

This is a perspective that is not confined to the Israel-Arab conflict and is propounded for the resolution of hostilities in other parts of the globe—such as Central and East Asia.

Thus, in a piece entitled *People-to-people contacts seen central to peace*, Pakistani journalist S. Mudassir Ali Shah reported on discussions in a 2018 conference in Islamabad, under the banner of "Festival for Peace and Regional Convergence", where participants concluded: *"Increased people-to-people contacts among Central Asian states are necessary to achieve lasting peace and prosperity in the region."*

This was a view echoed by a senior Pakistani delegate, who stated: *"People-to-people contacts are essential to bring the regional states closer."*

Testifying to the wide-spread prevalence of the idea is the fact that a quick Google search for "Peace" + "people-to-people-contacts" will yield over 50 million hits, referring to cases of unrest across the globe and how they may be mitigated by inter-personal contacts.

"People to people" peace: The deceptive allure

Of course, the allure of the "people-to-people" peace paradigm is understandable for peace-seeking publics. Indeed, beyond its obvious emotional appeal, it has a certain internal logic to it. After all, if members of rivalrous collectives—such Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs—get to know each other, form amicable interpersonal ties, even bonds of friendship, this should work to break down barriers of animosity, undermine mutual suspicion and dispel negative stereotypes.

This all sounds very reasonable—and indeed, Mossad Head Pardo embraced it in his previously cited address, asserting: *"At the end of the day, a peace agreement derives its strength*

from an understanding between peoples, not an accord between governments.”

This parallels the sentiments expressed in a 2019 Hoover Institute paper, *Israel-Palestine Peace Is Possible*, by Dan Kurtzer, former US ambassador to Israel (2001-2005): “*One important, but undervalued element in all past peace efforts has been people-to-people engagement, that is, activities that bring ordinary people together to overcome mutual distrust and to build understanding at the grassroots level.*”

Indeed, the friendly attitude shown towards Israel and Israelis, together with the well-disposed manner in which the 3000 strong resident Jewish community is treated in the UAE has been cited as the basis for the belief that, for the first time, Israel and an Arab country are on the cusp of a warm peace—significantly different from the grudgingly cold peace that prevails with Jordan and Egypt, which resemble non-belligerency accords rather than a harmonious peace.

However, as sensible and sober as these views appear, experience has shown that the credence placed in the durability of amiable people-to-people ties, is at times, decidedly at odds with reality.

Iran becomes inimical

In recent decades, there have been at least two major instances, in which changes in governments have totally washed away any congenial impact of previously multi-faceted people-to-people contacts with Israelis. These are the cases of Iran and Turkey, each central to the current discussion.

From the early 1950s to the late 1970s, until the fall of the Shah (1979), Israel and Iran conducted very close relations. Following the 1967 Six-Day War, a major portion of Israeli oil requirements were provided for by Iran. Moreover, Iranian oil was shipped to European destinations via the joint Israeli-Iranian Eilat-Ashkelon pipeline. There was brisk trade between the countries. Israeli construction firms and engineers worked extensively throughout the country. Israel's national air carrier, El Al, operated frequent direct flights between Tel Aviv and Tehran. Iranian-Israeli military links and projects were largely classified but were reportedly extensive—possibly including missile development.

The scale and scope of the Israeli-Iranian collaboration are dramatically illustrated by the

words of Yaakov Shapiro, the Defense Ministry official in charge of coordinating the negotiations with Iran from 1975 to 1978: “*In Iran they*

treated us like kings. We did business with them on a stunning scale. Without the ties with Iran, we would not have had the money to develop weaponry that is today in the front line of the defense of the State of Israel.”

Turkey turns truculent

Turco-Israeli relations followed a somewhat similar pattern to those of Iranian-Israeli ones. Up until just over a decade-and-a-half ago, and the ascendancy of Recep Erdogan's Islamist Justice and Development Party (AKP), Israel and Turkey saw each other as having much in common—two non-Arab countries in an otherwise almost exclusively Arab region, sharing a western looking perspective with regard to the future development of both countries—with Ankara a far less problematic member of NATO than it is today, and with a then-firm ambition to accede to the EU.

Indeed, so close and robust were the bilateral contacts between Ankara and Jerusalem, that the New York Times wrote in an August 1999 piece: “*Over the last few years, Israel and Turkey have built a strategic partnership that has altered the face of Middle East politics. Trade and tourism are booming in both directions. Israeli pilots practice maneuvers in Turkish airspace, and Israeli technicians are modernizing Turkish combat jets. There are plans for Israel to share its high-tech skills with Turkey, and for Turkey to send some of its plentiful fresh water to [pre-desalination era] Israel.*”

Relations began to deteriorate with the rise of the AKP and its increasingly firm grip on power in Turkey, but particularly following the 2008-9 IDF's Operation Cast Lead in Gaza—and were further exacerbated by the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident.

Although Turkey's relations with Israel have not reached the same level of enmity as those of Iran, they are a far cry from those that prevailed in the 1990s—with Erdogan even comparing Israel to Nazi Germany and the events in Gaza to the Holocaust, in an address to the UN General Assembly.

Israel's preoccupation with peace & the Middle-East's “special lunacy”

In many ways, Israel is obsessed with the idea of peace. This preoccupation is not difficult to understand. After all, the Jewish state has been under constant threat ever since its inception just over seven decades ago—and the Jewish collective in the Holy Land, for considerably longer.

However, as understandable as this desire is, it cannot blind the country to the real mechanism of international relations and the potentially fickle—or at least, ephemeral—nature of the

relationships between nations.

This was aptly expressed by Henry Kissinger in his well known book *White House Years*. In it he wrote: “*Israel insisted on a ‘binding peace’. Only a country that had never known peace could have attached so much importance to that phrase. For what is a binding peace among sovereign nations when one of the attributes of sovereignty is the right to change one's mind?*”

He went on to elaborate: “*For three centuries France and Germany had fought wars in almost every generation; each one was ended by a formal “binding” peace treaty that did nothing to prevent the next war. Nor did “open frontiers” in 1914 prevent the outbreak of a world war that shook Europe to its foundations.*”

Referring to the special lunacy that pervades the Middle East, he noted: “*Most wars in history have been fought between countries that started out at peace; it was the special lunacy of the Middle East that its wars broke out between countries that were technically already at war.*”

The imperative of interest

The impermanence of international alliances were succinctly articulated by Lord Palmerston, then British Foreign Secretary, in a March 1848 address to The House of Commons “*...it is a narrow policy to suppose that this country or that is to be marked out as the eternal ally or perpetual enemy of England. We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are perpetual and eternal and those interests it is our duty to follow.*”

This notion of interest as the dominant determinant of nations' behavior was, arguably, first articulated by Athenian historian and general, Thucydides' (460 BCE – 400 BCE), in his treatise *The History Of The Peloponnesian War* (Ch V) in which he stipulated that, “*identity of interests is the surest of bonds whether between states or individuals*”.

Centuries later, essentially the same idea was articulated by British statesman, Lord Salisbury (1830-1903), who stated that, “*“the only bond of union that endures’ among nations ‘is the absence of all clashing interests.’*”

It was the renowned scholar Hans Morgenthau, who in his *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, set out a modern formulation of the notion of interest as the defining determinant of nations' behavior.

Novelty no virtue

In it, he pointed out that basic patterns of international behavior have remained immutable over time—and the passage of time will not change

them: *“Human nature, in which the laws of politics have their roots, has not changed since the classical philosophies of China, India, and Greece endeavored to discover these laws. Hence, novelty is not necessarily a virtue in political theory, nor is old age a defect.”*

He added *“...[T]he fact that a theory of politics was developed hundreds or even thousands of years ago...does not create a presumption that it must be outmoded and obsolete...To dismiss such a theory because it had its flowering in centuries past is to present not a rational argument but a modernistic prejudice...”*

Warning of the consequences of allowing wishful thinking to cloud judgement, he cautions: “In order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives. The operation of these laws being impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure.”

Sobering precedent

For those who subscribe to the “People-to-people” doctrine, perhaps a sobering example is the chilling case of the 1929 Hebron massacre, in which the Jewish residents of the town were viciously attacked and brutally murdered by Arabs, who had long been their friendly neighbors but at the call of their leaders, mercilessly turned on them.

Accordingly, Israeli policy-makers would do well to heed the dour words of Tzipi Schissel, curator of the Hebron History museum: *“...it’s impossible to understand the reality we face today, without knowing the history of Hebron.”*

Which is precisely why—despite positive developments—Israel needs to “keep its powder dry.”

Martin Sherman is the founder and executive director of the Israel Institute for Strategic Studies.

Defying Geography:

The Israel-Azerbaijan Partnership

Emil Avdaliani

Fighting in July between Armenia and Azerbaijan caused many casualties along the border, and the governments of the region fear an escalation to the scale of the four-day war between the two states in 2016. I will not delve into the details of the recent flare-up as that has been done elsewhere (and much remains in dispute in any case), but will focus instead on one interesting aspect of the tension in the South Caucasus: the role of Israel.

Jerusalem is confronted with a dilemma in the Armenia-Azerbaijan

conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh (which is officially within Azerbaijan’s borders). Israel is not a direct participant, but it enjoys close relations with both combatants (for instance, Armenia recently sent its first ambassador to Israel). Jerusalem has stayed completely out of the evolving conflict so far, which is the logical approach. One of the latest statements from Israel’s foreign ministry about the recent violence is an anodyne expression of concern and a hope for a swift ceasefire.

Though small and far from the conflict area, Israel nevertheless has vital strategic interests in the South Caucasus. Azerbaijan stands out, as its relations with Israel dwarf the latter’s relations with Armenia.

Israel and Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations in April 1992, and in 1993, Israel opened an embassy in Baku. Ever since then, relations have broadened and deepened. The relationship is predicated on a number of geo-strategic factors. The first is Azerbaijan’s loss of political control over Nagorno-Karabakh and growing need to correct that situation via an expansive military program, which has caused it to become a major importer of Israeli defense technologies. Israeli defense companies have trained Azerbaijani special forces and bodyguards, built security systems for the Baku airport, and upgraded Soviet-era military equipment (tanks).

The scale of the transactions between the two is immense. In 2012, reports emerged about a \$1.6 billion purchase by Azerbaijan of weapons manufactured by Israel Aerospace Industries. In 2016, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu said Azerbaijan had bought \$5 billion worth of weapons from Israel (unmanned aerial vehicles and satellite systems). In 2017, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that Baku had purchased \$127 million worth of military technology from Jerusalem.

This does not mean that all has gone smoothly so far. Halts in cooperation between the two have occurred. In 2017, claims emerged that an Israeli drone manufacturer had attempted to bomb the Armenian military on the Azeris’ behalf during a demonstration of one of its “suicide” unmanned aerial vehicles. In a rare move, the Israeli Defense Ministry suspended the export license.

Thus it comes as no surprise that on July 21, after the recent border flare-up with Azerbaijan, Armenia showcased alleged Israeli-made drones that it presumably shot down during the fighting. No specifics were given, but

the Israeli firm Aeronautics Defense Systems does indeed manufacture several types of Orbiter UAVs, including lightweight systems for reconnaissance and others for aerial attack.

Overall, however, the bilateral military cooperation has been burgeoning ever since Azerbaijan’s independence in 1991. Israel has been willing to provide Baku with high tech at a level that Yerevan and even Moscow do not possess.

But business alone is insufficient grounds for a long-term geopolitical relationship. Azerbaijan and Israel share other fundamental interests, of which the Iran issue is arguably the most crucial.

Iran, located to Azerbaijan’s south, is Israel’s arch nemesis, while Baku and Tehran have mixed relations. Diplomatic relations exist and bilateral economic contacts are extensive (primarily via the newly introduced North-South economic corridor through Azerbaijan, though much more can yet be achieved there). Baku is nevertheless apprehensive about Iranian moves that could complicate its position in the South Caucasus and Caspian Sea.

All of this is heightened by Tehran’s concerns about the allegedly political aspirations of the Azeris in Iran. Tehran thinks that at an opportune moment, secession talks could occur, at which a “Greater Azerbaijan” idea might emerge. This is all hypothetical, but there is a high level of distrust between the two states. Consider, for example, Azerbaijan’s recent claim that Iran was sending trucks to Nagorno-Karabakh. Baku summoned Iranian diplomats and accused Tehran of stoking the conflict over the land.

This state of affairs naturally makes Israel a comfortable partner for Azerbaijan. Moreover, from Jerusalem’s perspective, Azerbaijan’s geographic position on Iran’s border makes it an ideal site for the gathering of strategic intelligence. Media sources claim that Israel helped Baku build electronic intelligence-gathering stations along the Azerbaijani border with Iran in the 1990s.

Claims are occasionally made that the two countries are engaged in tactical cooperation against Iran. For instance, in 2012, Foreign Policy reported that Israel had an arrangement with Azerbaijan allowing it to potentially fly sorties out of the country. Cooperation regarding the war on terror also exists.

The close relations between Israel and Azerbaijan also fit into the larger perspective the US has for the region. In the early 1990s, Washington

encouraged a triangular relationship between Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Israel. Georgia was added later, though the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 shattered Tbilisi's prospects as did the crisis in Israeli-Turkish relations. Despite that setback, the geopolitical model has worked. Azerbaijan and Israel continue to regard their geopolitical interests as vital for regional security, and Georgia plays a transit role. Baku supplies up to 40% of Israel's oil needs, which is imported through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline.

There are also weaknesses to their bilateral relations. Azerbaijan experiences geopolitical pressure from Russia and Iran, and the cold-to-hot war with Armenia is a persistent problem. In these difficult geopolitical circumstances, Baku has to balance its relations with Israel carefully to avoid drawing heavy pressure from Tehran, Moscow, and even Ankara.

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In Other News

Waqf Fills Ancient Pit Discovered on Temple Mount

Aryeh Savir

The Islamic Waqf filled an ancient pit recently discovered on the Temple Mount with cement, possibly in an attempt to cover up the important findings found in it.

Initial estimates show that it may have served as an entry point into an underground cavern dating to the Second Temple era, some 2,000 years ago.

The new pit was uncovered Sunday on the Temple Mount under a large tile that fell into it, sparking excitement over the prospects of its historic significance. The large hole was located on the southern side of the Temple Mount.

The Temple Mount Heritage Foundation stated Tuesday that "once again we are witnessing the abandonment on the Temple Mount."

"It is no longer a religious matter, it is a historical matter, and thus antiquities on the Temple Mount are being destroyed in 2020 and the State of Israel is doing nothing to stop it," the organization charged.

The Foundation further noted that in every other antiquity site in the country, anyone who would have filled an ancient pit with concrete would "have been thrown into prison. Israel has a severe set of laws against the

destruction of historical sites.

The Jordanian-run Waqf has been conducting extensive renovations at the Temple Mount, possibly causing the exposure of the hole. For years, it has been involved in the destruction of artifacts found at the site, the vast majority of which attest to the deep and long-running Jewish ties to the holy site.

The Waqf excavations significantly compromised the archaeological integrity of the Temple Mount, leading many to suggest that the Waqf was intentionally attempting to eradicate evidence of two Jewish Temples that stood on the Mount.

The Sifting Project, which has operated since 2004 in the Emek Tzurim National Park, aims to salvage religious and historical artifacts from the rubble taken from the Temple Mount and dumped by the Waqf, as well as to educate the public about the authenticity of Jewish history on the Mount. Salvation work at the site by Israeli archeologists and volunteers had led to the exposure of half a million artifacts from periods ranging over thousands of years of Jewish history.

Tazpit Press Service

Excavators Find 'Magnificent' Palace in Capital

Yori Yalon

In what has been described as an "exciting discovery," the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed on Thursday remains from a palace overlooking Jerusalem's Old City dating back to the First Temple Period.

"A rare, impressive, and very special collection of several dozen adorned architectural stone artifacts, which together were part of a magnificent structure, was discovered," the agency said in a statement. "These stone artifacts are made of soft limestone, with decorative carvings, and among them are capitals of various sizes in the architectural style known as 'Proto-Aeolian' – one of the most significant royal building features of the First Temple period."

According to the IAAA, the findings carry significant meaning due to the state they were found in and due to their prominent location within the palace. *"This is a very exciting discovery. This is a first-time discovery of scaled-down models of the giant Proto-Aeolian capitals, of the kind found thus far in the Kingdoms of Judah and Israel, where they were incorporated above the royal palace gates. The level of workmanship on these capitals is the best seen to date, and the degree of preservation of the items is rare,"* the director of the

excavation Yaakov Billig said.

"This discovery, along with the palace previously uncovered in Ramat Rachel and the administrative center recently uncovered by the Israel Antiquities Authority on the slopes of Arnona [another neighborhood of Jerusalem], attests to a new revival in the city and a somewhat 'exit from the walls' of the First Temple period, after the Assyrian siege. We reveal villas, mansions and government buildings in the area outside the walls of the city. This testifies to the relief felt by the city's residents and the recovery of Jerusalem's developments after the Assyrian threat was over," Billig continued.

It is unclear who lived in the palace, according to the IAA, but there is speculation that it could have served royalty or prominent families.

"Who was privileged to live in the monumental structure possessing a breathtaking view of the City of David and the temple, which was uncovered in an archeological excavation? Was it one of the kings of Judah, or was it perhaps a Jerusalemite family of nobility and wealth during the First Temple period?" the agency said in a statement

In Memoriam

A Tribute to Dr. Michael Levenstein z"l

David M. Weinberg

Last Shabbat, my best friend passed away at 60 after fighting cancer for three years. Dr. Michael Levenstein was an esteemed family medicine doctor, a respected community activist, a wonderful family man, an enormous talmid chacham (Torah scholar) and a passionate Zionist. I owe him many debts of gratitude.

So do readers of The Jerusalem Post, because over the past 25 years Michael was the best source of ideas for this column.

Michael's keen insight into politics and society, his cynical wit, and his ideological zealotry for the State of Israel underlie many of my more than 750 columns in this newspaper. The writing always has been mine, but the germ of the argument often began with him.

Even when we did not agree on an issue about which I was writing, Michael read almost every draft column, and he usually had an argument, contention or counterpoint to improve the text. He served both as the wisest sounding board and the best filter (alongside my wife, who has been my ultimate censor and finest

proofreader).

Michael collaborated with me on many of my “annual” columns, such as the annual “crystal ball” look ahead into expected developments of the coming year, annual list of best Jewish books, annual list of most interesting Jews and annual Independence Day review of Israel’s spiritual condition.

Michael had a steady series of pet peeves to which I gave vent over the years, including distortions in IDF reserve duty (which Dr. Levenstein did in spades, long beyond the necessary term), and inequalities in the health system (especially in relation to east Jerusalem). Of even greater concern to him was the scourge of *sinat chinam* (baseless and unbridled political hatred), and the evils of hypocrisy in the way world leaders treat Israel.

Michael pressed me to write many times about the *chutzpa* and double standards of European leaders who knew only how to “Goldstone” Israel when defending itself against Hamas terrorists, or to how condemn Israel for adding a few balconies in “settlements” in east Jerusalem or biblical Shiloh.

Rebuffing the continuous threats from unfriendly foreign leaders was one of Michael’s core principles. After suffering 2,000 years of Diaspora, dispersion, and persecution at the hands of European and other nations, Michael was insistent that the Jewish people in the reborn State of Israel need not apologize to the world for anything.

In fact, he felt that anger was a useful and necessary tool of diplomacy, especially versus the Palestinians and their apologists; that Israel should harness the vitality of anger instead of wallowing in woe in the face of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and other attacks.

Michael also had little patience for high-minded Western moralizing about the supposed “brutalization” (not) of Israeli society and the “cycle of violence” in Palestinian-Israeli conflict. There is no moral symmetry whatsoever between Israeli and Palestinian societies, he would proclaim. Comparisons that place the two societies on the same moral plane are evil and untrue.

It endlessly bugged Michael that Israel gets almost no international credit for its manifold humanitarian medical activities, everywhere from Armenia to Uzbekistan, activities that stem from Jewish tradition’s abiding concern for

healing, and from the State of Israel’s commitment to being a force for good in the world. But of course, you would not know this from the international press or from UN reports.

Michael and I shared a distaste for the choke-hold of narrow-minded *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) politicians and rabbis on Israeli politics, so I wrote often about the rabbinical racket related to *kashrut*, conversion and educational policies. The one development of recent years that gave us both more hope was the surge of young *haredi* men and women studying at college. Let us hope that the High Court of (In)Justice does not put an end to this blessed trend by mistakenly ruling against gender-separate class arrangements.

Dr. Levenstein was innately suspicious of “big talkers,” politicians who promised the sky and delivered little, from Shimon Peres to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Perhaps the most biting example of Michael’s wit was a column I wrote with his input in 1999 called “The Peres Pill.” It described a powerful drug invented by Israel’s elder statesman that induces hallucination and wishful thinking. It magically allowed one to imagine a “New Middle East,” and assert that peace with Yasser Arafat and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was possible.

The column was a riff on the medical paper insert that comes with most psychotropic drugs, describing therapeutic activity (in the case of the Peres Pill it was most effective on a fatigued populace, or a public that had become affluent and comfortable), side effects (causes withdrawal tendencies, plus deafness to Palestinian antisemitism and threats of violence) and recommended dosage (do not swallow whole, and keep out of the hands of prime ministers and foreign ministers who need to secure the country).

In case of an overdose, the column recommended proceeding immediately “to a hospital emergency room or an emergency bomb shelter” and taking a Netanyahu pill for four years or more.

Michael was similarly skeptical of Netanyahu’s soaring promises to apply Israeli sovereignty to significant parts of Judea and Samaria. He correctly predicted that Netanyahu would not go through with the move. Michael had me urge Netanyahu to “build now, talk later.”

The unity government of Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz should be building like crazy in all the critical and consensus settlement zones, I subsequently wrote, whether sovereignty over some or all the settlements is declared or not.

“Netanyahu should call his good friend [US President] Donald Trump and inform him that a building campaign is what Israel needs now, especially in E-1. After all, there already are clear understandings with the US to buttress Israel’s hold on the Jerusalem envelope through significant renewal of home construction. So why isn’t this happening?”

The last column I wrote reflecting Michael’s feelings and fears – as a doctor and a patriot – was published on August 21, a week before he died. Michael saw that all types of Israelis – from *hassidic* rabbis to left-wing politicians – were flouting sensible health restrictions, and he feared disaster. The spiraling rate of current COVID infection seems to affirm Michael’s premonitions.

My article pressed for fastidious enforcement of social distancing rules and rigorous punishment by the government of coronavirus lawbreakers. “We need enforcement, enforcement, and again more enforcement.”

I added a classic Michael Levenstein witticism: “Somebody in Israel should get a prank Nobel Prize for inventing the fake concept of ‘capsules’ in schools and workplaces, in the army and at weddings. It is just not workable.” “Numskulls don’t spread the plague!” was his/my *cri de coeur*.

Which brings this week’s column to a close. Normally, I would have emailed this text to Mike Levenstein for his pre-publication comment. Alas, I can no longer do so, because he has been precipitately summoned to the next world. But I hope that he nevertheless enjoys reading this column on his heavenly smartphone, and that he accepts my love and appreciation.

The writer is vice president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security