

**The Israeli Government's Credibility Crisis**

By Shmuel Rosner

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**It can't be expected to keep everybody happy, but it could inspire the public.**

On the night of July 11 and again on July 13, after many months of a weird, melancholic quiet, central Tel Aviv was loud again. Hundreds, then thousands, made their way to Rabin Square. Most of them were wearing masks, but the rules of social distancing quickly evaporated. Young and old risked their health, possibly even their lives, as they gathered to protest against an Israeli government that — they believe, and I agree — has lost touch.

The police let them gather and protest — and let them break the rules. When a few became violent and smashed windows of banks, there were clashes and arrests. The next morning, the police moved to other places, to clash with Charedis and Arabs in Jerusalem, whose neighborhoods were placed under quarantine. Stones were thrown, tear gas deployed. On the radio, ultra-Orthodox politicians, members of the coalition, complained that the police use different gloves for different populations. Police are soft with trendy Tel Avivians and harsh with minority Jerusalemites. Members of the opposition complained the opposite is true: The police are trying to restrict moves of resistance and tame public anger. They had proof. On the morning of July 13, protesters near Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house in Jerusalem were dispersed, some by force.

The crowd at Rabin Square was angry. Arabs and Charedis were angry. Black-Shirt protesters against Netanyahu are always angry. Anger is one thing you can find in Israel in abundance these days. Anger in all groups. Anger whose main target is Israel's government.

This is a majority government that enjoys the support of more than 70 members of Knesset; a unity government born after more than a year of labor; an emergency government formed to address a crisis. It is a government that has all the means to succeed — and still is failing miserably. When it comes to controlling the virus and handling the economic crisis, it let Israel descend into something resembling chaos.

Israel started dealing with the pandemic early and well; then it became cocky because of the favorable statistics, and became frustrated because of the heavy price paid; then it irresponsibly removed the restrictions on public gatherings; it was late to respond to the first signs of a second coming of the virus; it now is trying to regain its footing amid a crisis much worse than the first.

The third week of May was probably the inception of this reversal of fortune. It was a week in which bad luck met sloppiness of mind. Bad-luck exhibit No. 1 was the

weather. Temperatures in Israel often get high in the transition period between winter and summer. This year, they were especially high. Bad-luck exhibit No. 2 was that same week, schools were slated to reopen after the long first round of virus hiatus. Students were expected to wear masks at all times but with temperatures rising above 100 degrees Fahrenheit, this was an impractical order. So the order to wear masks was canceled. Newly installed Minister of Health Yuli Edelstein decided to give students a pass for a few days. Schools immediately became a main driver of COVID-19 mass infection.

This probably is one of the worst years of Edelstein's illustrious political career. Six months ago, he was the Speaker of the Knesset, respected by friend and foe for his mild manner and moderate approach. He was considered a likely candidate to become Israel's next president, or maybe even a compromise Likud candidate for prime minister. Then he got entangled in the never-ending maneuvers to save Netanyahu's seat as the prime minister. Bullied by a court order, he quit his post as Speaker. This made him persona non grata to the leaders of Blue and White, who banned him from returning to his seat. So he was appointed health minister, a job other politicians wanted much more than he did and seemed much better suited for.

Now, he's stuck. The bearer of bad news, Edelstein must take responsibility for a crisis that got out of hand and — as a side show — explain why his wife had a birthday party for dozens of guests the same night he announced new restrictions on public gatherings. The information about the party turned into a social media circus, with memes, satire, outrage and everything in between hurled at the minister.

The story of Edelstein is the sad story of the newly formed government. Just a few months ago, a narrow, transitional government that couldn't win three rounds of elections functioned with precision under the direction of a highly engaged prime minister. Then the unity government was formed, and instead of one prime minister in charge, we have two who refuse, or are unable, to take charge. The coronavirus-era government is a slow, clumsy, inflated, ruptured government. Precious energy was wasted on creating the complex mechanism that governs its actions. Precious resources were wasted on unnecessary offices and ministries. Precious time still is wasted on turf wars and political maneuvering. The parties keep fighting over things great and small as if they all must prepare for a fourth round of elections.

Last week, they fought tooth and nail over whether to form a committee to investigate the conflict of interest of

Supreme Court justices. After seven decades in which this was a non-issue, someone decided this was an urgent mission. The decision was made to embrace Likud; sure enough, it fell into the trap.

Does anyone care about the conflict of interest of Supreme Court justices? With 20% unemployment and a virus that's spreading like wildfire, the public expects the government to focus on what is important. Alas, what is important for the politicians, who live in their bubbles — a "Seinfeldian" version of a show about nothing — is hardly what's important for us.

No government can survive a crisis such as this and keep everybody happy. No government can find a quick fix to a virus without a cure, or to rising unemployment because of closures and quarantines. No government can convince the public that they must keep the rules and follow orders. So, the problem with Israel's government isn't that it failed to do any of those — or that it made many mistakes along the way. In a time of uncertainty, when decisions are made on the fly, all governments are bound to make mistakes.

The main problem with Israel's government is that it doesn't set examples. It doesn't inspire the public, gaining its trust and leading it through hardships. It has no fireside-chat ability to console and inject confidence. It has no Churchillian fighting mentality. It is a government of whiners and spoiled brats. The prime minister tells everyone to spend their Passover seder alone, then has his son as a guest at his table. The minister of health — the one preceding Edelstein — tells everyone not to join crowds, then gets sick after disobeying his own rules to attend synagogue. The result is a complete lack of trust. Everyone suspects everyone. Everyone complains about everyone else.

One day a police officer handed a ticket to a crying 13-year-old Charedi girl who dared walk around without a mask — imagine the outrage — and at week later the police let 10,000 protesters spend two hours together, no tickets. No one is ready to accept that one or the other was a mistake, or to accept there is no hidden motivation behind police decisions.

If swimming pools are closed and ritual baths are opened, the secular conclude Charedis manipulated the system. If ritual baths are closed but the Tel Aviv beach is crowded, Charedis conclude the secular get a pass they would never get. The list goes on. On July 11, a Knesset committee headed by a member of Likud defied the prime minister and allowed gyms and swimming pools to open. The head of the coalition then wanted to depose the rebellious members of Knesset. But he quickly realized that he didn't have a majority for such a move. A verse from the book of Judges comes to mind: "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did as he pleased."

Why gyms and pools? Why synagogues and not schools? Why schools and not wedding halls? Why mosques and not rock concerts? Why restaurants but not bars?

It is as if the government must keep everything closed — or keep everything open — or keep a detailed catalog of a particular and convincing reason for each and every item on its list of open or closed institutions. Of course, this is something the government cannot do, because some of the decisions are a compromise born of political or financial pressures — such as a Charedi politician blocking the closing of synagogues; such as a businessman warning that if things don't go his way, the factory will boot thousands of workers. Or a decision might seem irrational because it is, well, irrational. They are the kinds of mistakes people make when they spend nights and days making hundreds of decisions under pressure and are subjected to the outbursts of a chaotic political system.

In every crisis, heroes are born and villains identified. Think Dr. Anthony Fauci. Just a few months ago, few Americans knew who he was. Today, he is a household name. A hero to many, especially the very cautious. Think Gov. Doug Ducey of Arizona. He surely is the hero of Americans who believe in the religion of individualism. In Arizona, each person must decide for himself or herself whether to go to a church or a rodeo. This makes Ducey a villain in the eyes of those who believe in government action to safeguard the public's health.

In Israel, everybody recognizes professor Sigal Sadetsky, the head of health services at the Health Ministry. Well, the former head. Sadetsky recently resigned, dissatisfied with how the crisis was being handled. Everybody recognizes Moshe Bar Siman-Tov, nicknamed "Barsi," the first non-doctor to head the Health Ministry. Well — the former head. Barsi also resigned. These two were the heroes of Israel's first round of dealing with the coronavirus. They were dominant; they had the ear of the prime minister; they became household names. Then, suddenly, their stars dimmed. Their influence diminished. Their dire warnings seemed outdated. Israel was ready to move on and downgrade its heroes to villains. And it did.

Surely, they had their faults. Barsi was too grim, Sadetsky too controlling. Every crisis has its share of infighting between institutional warlords. In a war, it is a general vying for combat and glory. In a plague, it is doctors and economists vying to sell their view of what is more important: health or finances.

The July 11 demonstrations in Tel Aviv were about the latter. Israelis — many without work, many in debt, many seeing their small businesses drown — broke the rules that guard their health to send a message about their finances. One of them was a senior doctor who tweeted to protesters that they ought to leave their phones at home in order to dodge tracking by the government and risk quarantine. A senior health official was telling people how to get infected and infect others without getting caught. The post by this doctor prompted a harsh response from the minister of health. A proper response. But the response to the response — all over social media — was

also harsh: A minister who parties when Israelis suffer is not in a position to tell other Israelis what to do.

This is a blame game with no end in sight. The public is right: The government must set an example. The government is right: A public that doesn't follow the rules will make it more difficult to overcome the crisis.

But it is not the public that prevents a unity government of 70-something members from passing a new budget; it is the politicians. And budgets are important because what Israelis seem to worry about more than anything else is their financial situation. Those most worried are the owners of small businesses. One has a falafel booth, another an independent bookstore or a club. Even more troubled are those who work as freelancers in industries that came to a halt, such as the guitar player who has no shows to play at; the waiter, whose restaurant is closed; the dressmaker for a theater that no longer puts on plays. Many of these people have little to depend on. Their stories are told by the media. Their grim faces touch the heart. No, they are not yet hungry or homeless — but they can feel the earth moving beneath them. They see how short the journey from middle class to poverty and despair can be.

There is no doubt they need help. But how much and for how long? The government started by giving them small change for a few months. It recently realized more money and more time is needed. So now, it is ready to give assistance for at least a year, until next summer. Finance Ministry officials worry that too much help will serve as incentive for people not to go back to work. Social activists argue these officials were never unemployed, and their stinginess adds injury to the insult of being unemployed.

Of course, what the government wants to give could never meet the expectations of these Israelis. Currently, Israel's social workers are on strike. Their salaries are low and the workload overwhelming, and getting heavier with every passing month of plague and financial struggle. Can they get raises? What the government intends to do in the coming weeks is cut the salaries of all state workers. When the private sector is hurting, state workers must shoulder some of the burden of necessary cuts to subsidize the assistance to unemployed Israelis and falling businesses. Thus, the prospect of a social worker's salary raise seems impractical, and the strike continues with no end in sight.

With this strike — as with all other aspects of financial fixes — the issue of trust resurfaces. When the government says, "This is what we can afford," the needy citizens respond with, "Close some unnecessary ministries, stop wasting money on political pet projects, and then, we might believe that this is really the best you can do for us." This is where the limit to what a country can do to mitigate a crisis meets the limit of the patience of citizens who think their government is engaged in corruption while they hurt.

To formulate a methodological, orderly response to the financial crisis, a country must have a budget. Israel did

not pass a budget for the past two years because of constant electioneering. And now, Netanyahu and Finance Minister Israel Katz insist the best economic course forward is to pass a short-term budget for the rest of 2020, then prepare another one for 2021. The coalition agreement determines that the government will pass a two-year budget at once, and the leader of Blue and White, Benny Gantz, insists on it. Netanyahu says Gantz is playing politics. It makes no economic sense to pass a budget for a year and a half under such uncertain circumstances. Gantz says Netanyahu is playing politics. He wants to prepare a way out for himself from the unity deal by initiating a crisis over next year's budget.

The probable assumption should be that both of them are right. Netanyahu has the better economic argument; Gantz has the better political argument. In the first half of this week, both seemed insistent and warned that it's their way or the highway to a fourth election. Imagine that. One in five Israelis are out of work and our leaders toy with the option of another election. On July 12, the Charedi parties joined Gantz and demanded a two-year budget. But it was not at all clear if this is because they want to prevent another election; because they think a two-year budget is the right move; or because this is their way of putting pressure on the prime minister to ease some of the restrictions that target Charedi communities, in which the rate of infections is particularly high.

Yes, Charedi politicians also are back to their habit of politicizing every crisis to their benefit. They began the first round of the pandemic as out-of-touch leaders. They thought the warnings were exaggerated, disrespected government orders, and dragged their community down the path of mass infection. At some point, they realized they were wrong, and the Charedi community became the most obedient community in the country. But then, the country was reopening, and Charedi speakers reignited their automatic complaining about discriminating decisions. You're familiar with the concept: Why concerts and not synagogues? Why restaurants and not yeshivas? Why Tel Aviv and not Bnei Brak?

Do they have a point? They do. The same point other Israelis have when schools were closed down and Charedi yeshivas kept spreading the virus. When everybody is suspicious; when no one is willing to accept error; when everything is politicized as a tool for or against the government; when the leaders have no shame, the result is disobedience, disbelief, disrespect and disharmony.

Most of all, set an example, suspend trickery, instill confidence. Make us believe, make us follow the rules, make us as poised and resilient as we can all be.

The result, on top of COVID-19, is an autoimmune disease. Autoimmune-2020. For that disease as well, a vaccine has yet to be found.

To me, this looks like a simple, straightforward mission for a government, for a country as spirited as Israel.

Contain the plague by limiting the exposure of Israelis to the virus.

Assist those in need to the extent a country can do such a thing without risking its economic future.

Do not waste energy on things other than the crisis, and if you do (because of the belief that a crisis creates

opportunities for necessary changes), make sure these are truly essential diversions.

But most of all, set an example, suspend trickery, instill confidence. Make us believe, make us follow the rules, make us as poised and resilient as we can all be.

If not now, when?

*Mr. Rosner is senior political editor.*

## How China Bought Muslim Rulers' Acquiescence to Its Persecution of the Uyghurs

By Ilan Berman

thediplomat.com

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**Over a dozen Muslim-majority countries have publicly defended Beijing to the UN.**

Why have Muslim nations stayed silent about Chinese conduct in Xinjiang? Ever since China launched a broad campaign of repression against its Uyghur Muslim minority in the country's western region of Xinjiang some four years ago, that question has been on the minds of policymakers and analysts alike.

To the extent that it has been possible to find one, the answer seems to have a great deal to do with money. Over the past several years, as part of the signature foreign policy initiative known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Beijing has made massive investments throughout the Middle East, Africa, and Asia in everything from infrastructure to telecommunications. In the process, it has succeeded in buying the silence of Muslim states regarding how it treats their co-religionists.

Examples of this passivity abound. Take Turkey, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's prior condemnation of China's domestic conduct petered out after China's Central Bank offered a \$1 billion bailout to stabilize the country's ailing economy last summer. Or Saudi Arabia, where a slew of recent deals made China a key partner in the country's "Vision 2030" development plan, turning the House of Saud into an apologist for Beijing in the process. And in Pakistan, the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan has repeatedly refused to officially criticize China's treatment of the Uyghurs because of past assistance from Beijing. All this compliance was showcased in a July 2019 letter to the United Nations in which no fewer than 37 nations (more than a third of them majority Muslim) officially threw their support behind China's Xinjiang policy.

Even so, fresh revelations regarding the scope of China's repression in recent weeks have put renewed pressure on Beijing, and challenged the current status quo. In response, Chinese officials have deftly moved to co-opt the Muslim political narrative surrounding their government's domestic atrocities.

On July 6, at the latest ministerial of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum, China made a major effort to ingratiate itself with the major players of the Muslim world. As part of the summit, carried out this year via teleconference, it officially pledged to adopt the Amman Declaration, the 2006 statement (also known as the

"Amman Message") that serves as one of the earliest multilateral efforts to build an intellectual response to Islamic extremism. As part of the virtual summit, China's official Xinhua news agency reports, the two sides agreed to "denounce terrorist activities in all forms, actively combat extremist ideology, acts of terrorism and incitement to terrorism, eradicate the root causes of terrorism, and cut off its sources of funding."

That wording is significant, because it frames China's domestic campaign of repression against the Uyghurs as strictly a counterterrorism issue, and presents Beijing as an ally of moderate Muslims against a mutual foe.

That, of course, is precisely the consensus that China has been cultivating, and for good reason. The success of the BRI depends heavily on Beijing bringing Xinjiang fully under its control, because the region's strategic location makes it a crucial connector with Eurasian, European, and Middle Eastern markets. But China's government views organized religion with deep suspicion, and sees Xinjiang's Uyghurs as particularly prone to radicalization and extremism – and thus a threat to their geopolitical ambitions.

As a result, China's Muslim minority has been subjected to a widening campaign of repression of truly terrifying proportions. Since its launch in 2016, that effort has imposed sweeping curbs on everything from Muslim attire to diet, and interned more than a million souls in "reeducation" camps designed to remove religious identity and instill proper communist thought. With revelations about forcible sterilization policies and an official intent to break up Uyghur families now garnering serious attention, more than a few observers have begun to equate what Chinese authorities are doing in Xinjiang to the universally prohibited crime of genocide.

But Muslim states likely won't be among those speaking out. With its embrace of the Amman Message, Beijing has succeeded in finishing what its economic investments began: co-opting the hearts and minds of Muslim governments, both in the Middle East and beyond. Quite simply, China has managed to outmaneuver the Muslim world, and hijacked the narrative of the fight against Islamic extremism to whitewash its own horrendous practices at home.

*Mr. Berman is Senior Vice President of the American Foreign Policy Council in Washington, DC.*

## Stuck in the Mud: An in-depth interview with A. Pe'er, Hamodia's military correspondent on the latest political, security and defense developments in Israel

By Gavriel Meir

hamodia.com

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Lebanon, once the "Switzerland of the Middle East," has become a Third World country. It faces an unprecedented economic-political crisis that no one can solve and that could threaten Israel.

**Q: What's behind the rioting in Lebano, which appears to have become more intense, widespread and violent?**

Something terrible has happened to Israel's northern neighbor. Just 50, 60 ago, Lebanon was ranked the wealthiest country in the Middle East. It was known as "the Switzerland of the Middle East" and world-class luxury hotels that attracted masses of European tourists, as well as wealthy Arab potentates and businessmen. These visitors invested a fortune in Lebanon and its banks, which were well run and highly respected.

The picture has changed dramatically. There are no tourists, no investments, no wealth. Lebanon has been turned into a forward position in the Shiite revolution that is being led by the ayatollahs in Iran. The change began around 20 years ago, with the emergence of Hezbollah, Iran's representative, as a political force in the country.

The number of Lebanese who want to shake off Iranian control is growing, because people understand that they are likely to be draased into a military clash that will exact a painful price, and that they will be forced to pay.

The bottom line is that Lebanon has gone from being one of the region's wealthiest countries, to one of its poorest. It is a Third World country, on the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

The leaders in Tehran are proud of their success in installing a government headed by Hassan Diab and controlled by Hezbollah. But they fail to grasp the mood in Lebanon, the frustration and rage, which is fueling huge demonstrations across the country.

"Iranians, go home - You've destroyed our pearl [of a country]."

Many of the ministers in the new government, which was set up in January, recognize that the vital interests of the Lebanese are not shared by the Iranians. The Lebanese long for the days when their country was tranquil and

prosperous, while the ayatollahs seek to turn the country into a forward position in their campaign to disseminate Shia Islam throughout the world.

So you have a government that is divided between those pulling in one direction and those pulling in the exact opposite direction. Lebanon is stuck in the mud, and no one knows how to get it out.

"We are in a genuine catastrophe," say senior economists in Beirut.

**Q: Can you give us some specifics on the state of the economy?**

Lebanon's external debt tops \$100 billion, which is close to 190 of its GDP. There's practically no country in the world in that bad a situation. Last year, economic growth was a negative 2, but in the wake of corona it's expected to deteriorate further to negative 12.

In the past 18 months, a million Lebanese have lost their jobs, and we're not talking about "vacation without pay" like in Israel. We're talking about jobs that evaporated.

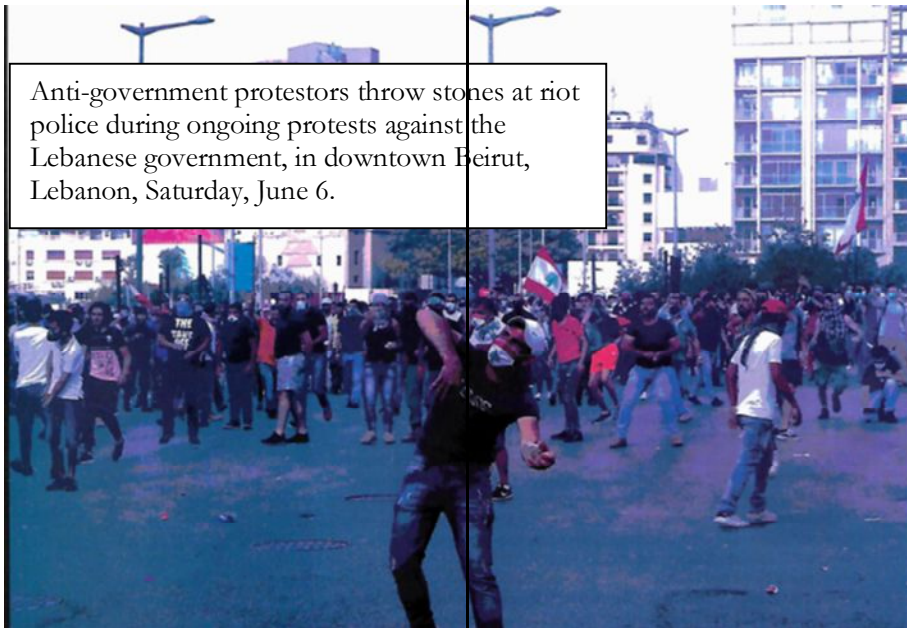
A quarter of the citizens of Lebanon are living below the poverty "bright red" line, which means they earn \$2 a day. Another 55 are living below the regular poverty line.

So it's no surprise that hundreds of thousands of people are taking to the streets, almost every day, burning down banks and government offices, and clashing with Hezbollah soldiers.

Add to all this the terrible corruption that is rife within the government, and the economic blow suffered by hundreds of thousands of Lebanese who'd moved to the Gulf states for work and sent their wages back home to their families. Due to the collapse in the price of oil, they're sending back very little.

**Q: Who is the target of these demonstrations? Who and what is being blamed for the economic catastrophe?**

Protesters point a finger at Hezbollah and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah. "Stop investing in weapons for wars that are of no concern to us, and invest in us," they write on their signs. "Disband the bloated public sector," says another sign. "End the corruption," says yet another.



Anti-government protestors throw stones at riot police during ongoing protests against the Lebanese government, in downtown Beirut, Lebanon, Saturday, June 6.

In the meantime, the Lebanese pound has plunged in value. Officially, it takes 1,550 of them to buy a single dollar, but on the black market, which is the main market in Lebanon, it takes 6,700 pounds to buy a dollar. That means that all of the citizens' savings have been wiped out. That helps you understand what's happening on the streets these days, including giant demonstrations in Tripoli last week that saw 160 people injured. And we haven't seen the end of it.

Hezbollah knows it's in trouble and is trying to shift the blame for the economic situation to the head of the country's central bank. It wants to get him dismissed so that it can get its hands on the few billion dollars that still remain in the public coffers.

In the meantime, the U.S. Caesar Act - which levies stiff sanctions on any country that does business with the Assad regime in Syria - has gone into force. This impacts greatly on Hezbollah, which has taken charge of the border crossings between Lebanon and Syria and is responsible for all trade between the countries.

The Lebanese government has announced that it will abide by the U.S. restrictions, since it doesn't want to lose aid to the tune of more than \$300 million a year. But that puts it on a collision course with Hezbollah, which is determined to continue doing business with Damascus.

Considering that Hezbollah nets tens of millions of dollars a year in income from import and export duties, it's

likely going to put up a fight to hold on to its concession. That means we may well see the Lebanese army facing off against Hezbollah in battle.

**Q: How do you see things playing out? And what will be the impact on Israel?**

The Netanyahu government is concerned that at some point Iran will press Hezbollah to open a military front against Israel, using the missiles in its arsenal. This will be the ayatollah's promised response to the attacks on Iranian sites in Syria and in Iran itself that they have attributed to Israel.

The IDF is on alert and sending constant messages to Hezbollah, warning it not to fire. But in the end, it all depends on who is in control on the ground, whose finger is on the button that fires the missiles. If it is Hezbollah officers, they won't push the button, because they have the most to lose by war. They know that the IDF will respond fiercely and that the people of Lebanon will blame them for the destruction. But if the Iranians are in charge on the ground, they are much more likely to fire; Israel will respond, and things could spin out of control.

**Q: And the attacks on targets in Iran, which have been attributed to Israel. are a message to the ayatollahs not to start up with them?**

That's part of it. Israel wants Iran to know that if something happens, it has the ability to reach Iranian installations not just in Syria but in Parchin, Iran.

Visit [suburbanorthodox.org](http://suburbanorthodox.org) for the current issue.

## Why the Jordan Valley Is Essential for Israel's Safety—and Jordan's

By Yaacov Ayish

realclearworld.com

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### What the extension of sovereignty protects.

While there has been much debate over Jerusalem's possible decision to apply Israeli law to the Jordan Valley, the move's underlying security imperative is not often recognized. As a retired Israeli major general, I believe that Israeli sovereignty over the valley is critical to Israel's ability to defend itself by itself. The benefits outweigh the potential costs, and the move would not preclude a future agreement with the Palestinians.

Israel faces myriad security threats. In Lebanon, Hezbollah has amassed an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles, while the Assad regime, Iranian forces, and Shiite militias have solidified their hold over Syria. ISIS remains active in the Sinai, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are entrenched in the Gaza Strip, and extremist cells are routinely uncovered in the West Bank. Iran proudly broadcasts its violent opposition to Israel's existence while continuing to develop its nuclear capability and ballistic missiles.

This context is critical to understanding the Jordan Valley's centrality within Israel's defense strategy, as outlined in a new report by the Jewish Institute for National Security of America. The valley is a natural barrier and Israel's longest border, separating Jordan from Israel and the West Bank. Compared to the pre-1967 armistice lines, it provides Israel with much-needed

strategic depth, allowing IDF forces to more efficiently neutralize threats in Palestinian Authority territory. Through Israel's close security relationship with Jordan, this depth also extends east.

Ties between Jerusalem and Amman are anchored by a 1994 peace treaty, and include extensive military and intelligence cooperation. Israel also supplies water and natural gas to the kingdom, which has limited natural resources. Despite hostility from parts of the Jordanian public, the monarchy -- itself grappling with a beleaguered economy, influx of refugees, and Islamist opponents -- has long recognized the value of this relationship in a volatile region. A decade has not yet passed since the so-called Arab Spring, which most sharply demonstrated how quickly countries can plunge into years of chaos, with severe regional consequences.

By applying Israeli law to the Jordan Valley, Israel would be able to permanently contribute to Jordan's stability and its own. IDF forces already routinely thwart arms smuggling and other terrorist activities along the Jordan river. Continued Israeli presence will prevent the valley, and by extension the West Bank, from devolving into a terrorist haven akin to Gaza. Such a scenario in a territory adjacent to Jordan, whose population is majority Palestinian, would dangerously undermine Jordanian

security. For Israel, when compounded with existing threats, it could be disastrous.

The territory's topography likewise presents a clear advantage, allowing Israeli troops to effectively monitor incoming threats, whether from Jordan, Iraq, or Syria. It also requires any invading forces to launch an uphill attack when proceeding westward, making defense easier and granting Israel valuable time to mobilize reserve troops.

While such a scenario in the quiet border region may be currently difficult to imagine, Syria's violent unraveling and the turbulent power changes in Egypt were also difficult to predict a decade ago. No Middle Eastern country is impervious to sudden, violent changes. Israel must have defensible borders. The valley can provide those.

Some have argued that, should the valley turn into a hotbed of terrorism without Israeli presence, the IDF would be able to easily reassert control. This rationale is undercut by past experience. During Operation "Defensive Shield," launched amid the Second Palestinian Intifada, Israeli forces engaged in a major incursion to remove terrorist elements from the West Bank. Thirty IDF soldiers died. Gaza, where Israel carried out three major operations in six years, is another case study. Once Israeli forces withdraw, it becomes far more difficult to uproot a

territory's terrorist infrastructure and leadership.

Other critics have cautioned that applying Israeli law to the valley could harm the country's security, at least in the short term, by destabilizing Jordan. The move will certainly create challenges for King Abdullah, who said it would hurt prospects of "peace and stability in the region."

These concerns are valid, yet they should not deter policymakers in Jerusalem from acting on widespread domestic support and fulfilling Israel's historic and natural rights. Jordan still relies on security and intelligence cooperation with Israel, as well as supplies of water and natural gas. With Syria and Iraq as neighbors, it also needs a stable border -- something only permanent Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley can provide.

Moreover, such a move does not rule out a future agreement with the Palestinian Authority. Rather, it establishes a reality on the ground that can shape a sustainable arrangement that Israel can accept. No Israeli majority will agree to returning to the indefensible pre-1967 lines. Until Palestinian leaders decide to pursue a lasting solution, Israel must act to secure its interests with American coordination. Applying Israeli law to the Jordan Valley ranks high among those interests.

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## I No Longer Believe in a Jewish State

By Peter Beinart

**For decades I argued for separation between Israelis and Palestinians. Now, I can imagine a Jewish home in an equal state.**

I was 22 in 1993 when Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat shook hands on the White House lawn to officially begin the peace process that many hoped would create a Palestinian state alongside Israel. I've been arguing for a two-state solution — first in late-night bull sessions, then in articles and speeches — ever since.

I believed in Israel as a Jewish state because I grew up in a family that had hoppedscotched from continent to continent as diaspora Jewish communities crumbled. I saw Israel's impact on my grandfather and father, who were never as happy or secure as when enveloped in a society of Jews. And I knew that Israel was a source of comfort and pride to millions of other Jews, some of whose families had experienced traumas greater than my own.

One day in early adulthood, I walked through Jerusalem, reading street names that catalog Jewish history, and felt that comfort and pride myself. I knew Israel was wrong to deny Palestinians in the West Bank citizenship, due process, free movement and the right to vote in the country in which they lived. But the dream of a two-state solution that would give Palestinians a country of their own let me hope that I could remain a liberal and a supporter of Jewish statehood at the same time.

Events have now extinguished that hope.

About 640,000 Jewish settlers now live in East

nytimes.com

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Jerusalem and the West Bank, and the Israeli and American governments have divested Palestinian statehood of any real meaning. The Trump administration's peace plan envisions an archipelago of Palestinian towns, scattered across as little as 70 percent of the West Bank, under Israeli control. Even the leaders of Israel's supposedly center-left parties don't support a viable, sovereign Palestinian state. The West Bank hosts Israel's newest medical school.

If Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fulfills his pledge to impose Israeli sovereignty in parts of the West Bank, he will just formalize a decades-old reality: In practice, Israel annexed the West Bank long ago.

Israel has all but made its decision: one country that includes millions of Palestinians who lack basic rights. Now liberal Zionists must make our decision, too. It's time to abandon the traditional two-state solution and embrace the goal of equal rights for Jews and Palestinians. It's time to imagine a Jewish home that is not a Jewish state.

Equality could come in the form of one state that includes Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, as writers such as Yousef Munayyer and Edward Said have proposed; or it could be a confederation that allows free movement between two deeply integrated countries. (I discuss these options at greater length in an essay in *Jewish Currents*). The process of achieving equality would be long and difficult, and would most likely

meet resistance from both Palestinian and Jewish hard-liners.

But it's not fanciful. The goal of equality is now more realistic than the goal of separation. The reason is that changing the status quo requires a vision powerful enough to create a mass movement. A fragmented Palestinian state under Israeli control does not offer that vision. Equality can. Increasingly, one equal state is not only the preference of young Palestinians. It is the preference of young Americans, too.

Critics will say binational states don't work. But Israel is already a binational state. Two peoples, roughly equal in number, live under the ultimate control of one government. (Even in Gaza, Palestinians can't import milk, export tomatoes or travel abroad without Israel's permission.) And the political science literature is clear: Divided societies are most stable and most peaceful when governments represent all their people.

That's the lesson of Northern Ireland. When Protestants and the British government excluded Catholics, the Irish Republican Army killed an estimated 1,750 people between 1969 and 1994. When Catholics became equal political partners, the violence largely stopped. It's the lesson of South Africa, where Nelson Mandela endorsed armed struggle until Blacks won the right to vote.

That lesson applies to Israel-Palestine, too. Yes, there are Palestinians who have committed acts of terrorism. But so have the members of many oppressed groups. History shows that when people gain their freedom, violence declines. In the words of Michael Melchior, an Orthodox rabbi and former Israeli cabinet member who has spent more than a decade forging relationships with leaders of

## How to Think Politically About the Jews

By Bruce Abramson and Jeff Ballabon

**Most American Jews no longer vote in a way that sets them apart from non-Jews. But a growing subsection stands out.**

In his 1973 Commentary article "The Jewish Vote (Again)," Milton Himmelfarb famously quipped: "The Jews earn like Episcopalians and vote like Puerto Ricans." But history would come to mock Himmelfarb's wit. For, by 2020, Episcopalians (along with most of the Protestant mainline) have come to vote like Jews. And where does that leave the Jews of 2020? The answer is subtle, enlightening, and very Jewish: it depends.

Let's start with a thought experiment to illustrate the logic of representative, democratic politics. Imagine for a moment that you convene a group of your neighbors to fight for a single issue: removing automatic speed cameras from along the side of the road. You hate those cameras, and you know that most of your neighbors do, too. You want your representatives to have them removed. How do you get the politicians to take your concern seriously, and prioritize it above all the others?

Hamas, "I have yet to meet with somebody who is not willing to make peace."

Rabbi Melchior recently told me that he still supports a two-state solution, but his point transcends any particular political arrangement: It is that Palestinians will live peacefully alongside Jews when they are granted basic rights.

What makes that hard for many Jews to grasp is the memory of the Holocaust. As the Israeli scholar Yehuda Elkana, a Holocaust survivor, wrote in 1988, what "motivates much of Israeli society in its relations with the Palestinians is not personal frustration, but rather a profound existential 'Angst' fed by a particular interpretation of the lessons of the Holocaust." This Holocaust lens leads many Jews to assume that anything short of Jewish statehood would mean Jewish suicide.

But before the Holocaust, many leading Zionists did not believe that. "The aspiration for a nation-state was not central in the Zionist movement before the 1940s," writes the Hebrew University historian Dmitry Shumsky in his book, "Beyond the Nation-State." A Jewish state has become the dominant form of Zionism. But it is not the essence of Zionism. The essence of Zionism is a Jewish home in the land of Israel, a thriving Jewish society that can provide refuge and rejuvenation for Jews across the world.

That's what my grandfather and father loved — not a Jewish state but a Jewish society, a Jewish home.

Israel-Palestine can be a Jewish home that is also, equally, a Palestinian home. And building that home can bring liberation not just for Palestinians but for us, too.

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You'd start by inhabiting the politicians' point of view. Their immediate, practical interest is to stay in office. And that suggests a pretty straightforward argument. You'd tell your representatives that if they have the cameras removed, your neighbors will reward them with their votes. That's the logic of interest groups. Voting matters. Elected representatives will care about issues that energize voters. That's not cynical; it's democratic accountability at its best.

But of course, in order to persuade the politicians, you'd have to have some evidence that voters really do care about the speed cameras; and not only care about them in an abstract way, but intensely enough to vote on that issue. It doesn't do a politician much good if the voters in her district merely care about something. They have to care enough about it to manifest that care politically—in the voting booth. So your next step would be to demonstrate to the politician—through polling, for example—that your neighbors care enough about those speed cameras for the issue to affect their voting decisions.



The purpose of this thought experiment is to illustrate political relevance, which is not the same as voter preferences or attitudes or feelings, however widely shared. It doesn't matter if all your neighbors want the street cameras removed if the intensity of that desire isn't sufficient to change their votes. Thinking politically in a democracy requires demonstrating the electoral advantages that come from removing the speed cameras, and the electoral costs that voters will extract if you don't.

That seems like an elemental insight, but it's one that is conspicuously absent from most political analyses of the Jews of America.

In fact, prominent interest groups claiming to represent Jewish political views proclaim proudly that their members do not prioritize the group's preferences when it comes to voting. Take the self-described "pro-Israel, pro-peace" interest group J Street, whose agenda is to move American foreign policy on Israel to the left. Much like our hypothetical anti-speed-camera activist, J Street surveys American Jews (ostensibly) to convince politicians that voters will reward or punish them according to their support for its agenda. You'd expect J Street to try to demonstrate that American Jews care quite a lot about Israel, and that they are prepared to bring those intense views with them into the voting booth. But J Street makes no such claim.

For the last decade, on each election night, J Street has asked American Jews about their views of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Their own polls show that American Jews by a large margin believe in J Street's core priorities: the establishment of a Palestinian state, support for the 2015 Iran deal, the Democrats' superiority over the Republicans, and so on. While the poll offers some evidence that respondents support J Street's positions, these data are belied by the low intensity of support.

To wit: J Street's polling indicates that 90 percent of American Jews—regardless of what they think about Israel—do not determine their votes because of Israel. And that was back in 2012, when the number of American Jews who rated Israel as one of their top-two voting priorities was at a high of 10 percent. In 2018, the most recent poll date, Israel was a top-two voting issue for only 4 percent of American Jews; 96 percent of American Jews said that they prioritized other matters of public concern, usually healthcare or the economy.

Now, why would an interest group publish, for all the world to see, evidence of how few of its members will vote against the politicians who oppose the group's defining issue? Don't those data suggest that politicians can safely ignore J Street's Israel policies so long as they cater to the other concerns that actually determine the votes of their members? J Street has depicted itself as an Israel-focused, Jewish political organization whose members don't vote on Israel. Has any non-Jewish political-advocacy group ever advertised that the people it claims to represent don't vote on its flagship issue?

No savvy political operation would ever make such a

seemingly counterproductive argument. But what if the true purpose of J Street and other progressive Jewish organizations is not to encourage politicians to serve the interests of their Jewish constituents, but instead to make progressive ideas palatable to their Jewish constituents? The message that J Street's poll conveys to politicians is that it is electorally safe to disregard the Jews because they don't vote on Jewish issues like Israel. Its message to Jewish voters is that they can call themselves pro-Israel even if they support candidates who wish to pursue policies that undermine both the security of the Jewish state and the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Far from conceding its own irrelevance, J Street capitalizes on progressive Jewish apathy concerning Israel, exploiting the muted but crucial difference between its members' inclinations and their priorities. And they do so in order to promulgate a narrative according to which Jewish progressives declare as "pro-Israel" whatever positions progressive politicians might take.

Far too many analysts contemplating the Jewish vote have swallowed the false narrative. Seeing clearly requires looking at Jewish political preferences in a new way. The 2004 re-election campaign for George W. Bush was the first to acknowledge that it no longer made sense to speak of a single Jewish vote. From the perspective of a political consultant or a campaign, it was instead necessary to consider two distinct Jewish demographics. The first and larger one is urban or suburban, highly educated in secular terms, affluent, professional, and politically and socially progressive. In short, this is the conventional picture of the liberal, American Jewish demographic. They both earn and vote like college-educated secular Gentiles.

The second group is smaller. Like the first, it is also urban and highly educated. But it is educated in Jewish history and law, separated culturally from mainstream America, and imbued with a high level of religious observance. "Traditionalist" is the term we give to this second, rapidly growing, Jewish American identity.

Analysts of American voting behavior who repeat conventional wisdom about the Democrats' lock on the Jewish vote are either confused themselves or intentionally misleading their readers and clients. Because its members are indistinguishable from non-Jews who fall into the same demographic in terms of education, income, and geography, and moreover because in our partisan times they're unlikely to consider voting for non-Democratic candidates, the Jewish mainstream has become politically irrelevant. Democrats don't have to court them.

By contrast, the minority of Jewish Americans who fall into the traditionalist camp are politically salient, as Jews, in American elections.

And here is where the question of political priorities comes into play. Every Jewish voter must consider three set of issues. First are issues whose primary effects have little effect on them as Jews—taxation, the environment, trade, immigration. Second are issues whose effects are felt more intensely by members of certain Jewish communities,

including religious freedom and school choice. Finally, there are issues that most Jews (including those who do not prioritize them) see as “Jewish issues,” of direct concern to the Jewish community. The two most prominent such issues are the U.S.-Israel relationship and anti-Semitism.

Now, let’s see how these categories of political preference map onto America’s two Jewish demographics, the progressives and the traditionalists. According to the aforementioned J Street poll following the 2018 elections—“Jews identify with Democrats on culture, values, and policy both in the domestic and international realms.” Similarly, a 2012 Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) poll of Jewish voters showed an overwhelming emphasis on social justice and economic distribution; only 4 percent prioritized Israel. From these two surveys, which are indicative of other data sources we’ve studied, mainstream American Jews care most about issues of broad effect and concern. Their priorities mirror those of their non-Jewish neighbors, and their politics skew heavily to the left.

Explicitly Democratic Jewish organizations, like the Jewish Democratic Council of America or the now-defunct National Jewish Democratic Council, point to this majority in order to argue that the overriding Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, social justice, simply amounts to progressive politics. And it is why the Jewish Currents editor-at-large Peter Beinart could recently write these remarkable lines: “What makes someone a Jew—not just a Jew in name, but a Jew in good standing—today? In *haredi* circles, being a real Jew means adhering to religious law. In leftist Jewish spaces, it means championing progressive causes.”

We do not dispute this cohort’s sincere commitment to ecumenical progressivism, or their belief that it is the ideal expression of Jewish values. But in response to the evidence of the mainstream Jewish community’s widely shared progressive beliefs we ask if there is anything specifically “Jewish” about progressive Jewish politics. This question has nothing to do with their ethnic or religious status as Jews, or the authenticity of their understanding of Judaism. It is rather a statistical question. For a category that does not alter political behavior is not worth polling. In a poll—as in any statistical model—every variable is supposed to add valuable information. In the mathematical back end behind the questions, useful answers divide the data into multiple streams. If the data stream marked “Jewish” differs from the data stream marked “non-Jewish,” the Jewish variable is relevant; knowing it can change predictions. If the two data streams are statistically indistinguishable, the “Jewish” variable is statistically irrelevant. To make the Jews an interesting subject of political analysis, the model must introduce a new variable to split the Jewish data stream: progressive vs. traditionalist. Only Jewish traditionalists exhibit political behavior that is distinct—and thus politically meaningful.

Jewish traditionalists differ from their non-Jewish

demographic counterparts because they elevate Jewish issues and identity to the forefront of their political decision-making. Such traditionalist thinking is especially manifest in two Jewish American groups: the Orthodox and recent immigrants (particularly from Israel and the former Soviet Union) and their children. Together, they and others from among the Jewish MENA (Middle East and North Africa) communities, account for (at least) hundreds of thousands of right-leaning voters who are systematically undercounted in polls of American Jews—hardly an insignificant oversight. They all tend to prioritize Jewish security and continuity above universal issues.

Voting data tracked at the precinct level show that heavily Jewish neighborhoods stand out only if their residents are primarily Orthodox or are immigrants. Every Orthodox precinct whose voting behavior has been tracked has swung appreciably towards the Republicans since 2004.

Those Republican leanings have proven to be robust. During the summer of 2018, *Ami Magazine* surveyed 263 Orthodox Jews in the tristate area surrounding New York City. Republicans outnumbered Democrats 91 to 76 (others were independent or declined to state their party affiliation). Over 90 percent (241 of the 263) rated President Trump’s approval satisfactory or better, and 215 said they would vote for him in 2020. In late 2019, *Ami* conducted a broader, more methodologically sound poll of 723 Orthodox respondents in fifteen states; about 40 percent were registered Republicans versus about 26 percent registered Democrats. President Trump again enjoyed a job-approval rating around 90 percent; only about 5 percent disapproved (the remainder were undecided). Perhaps even more telling, however, were a pair of questions about the core Jewish issues: “When it comes to fighting anti-Semitism, who[m] do you trust more?” A stunning 92.5 percent chose “Donald Trump and the Republicans”; only 1.4 percent chose “Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats.” When asked which of the past six presidents “accomplished most for the security of Israel,” 82.7 percent chose Trump. (Reagan ranked second at 9.5 percent.)

Traditionalist Jews are statistically interesting because their behavior defies expectations of income and zip code—and because their votes are genuinely in play. Many of the same traditionalist voters who vote for Republicans in the White House support down-ticket Democrats who promise and deliver financial assistance to their communities. Jewish progressives, on the other hand, have followed the path of other assimilated immigrant groups such as the Irish and Italians: their politics are no longer distinguishable from those who share their zip code, age, education, and income bracket. They have rendered themselves statistically and politically uninteresting.

Traditionalist Jewish voters, however, remain interesting in the same way that Catholic voters remain interesting; they elevate a set of particular priorities that are unique. Presidential campaigns once had dedicated

outreach to Irish and Italians. That ended decades ago, but Catholic outreach persists.

Dismissing the political relevance of so many American Jews may raise hackles, but their leading organizations already acknowledge every part of the argument other than the conclusion. Even groups hewing closer to the center-left than towards hardcore progressivism concur, though more subtly. For decades, AIPAC's ironclad commitment to bipartisanship implicitly argued that Jews need not consider Israel's security when determining how to vote, with the organization literally describing presidential elections as "win-win" contests and—unlike every other issue lobby—resolutely refusing to acknowledge any advantage based on which party controls Congress. According to AIPAC then, the quintessential "Jewish issue" of Israel's security should not be a material contributor to political decision-making. Political donations by AIPAC-affiliated PACs and bundlers famously reflect that logic.

That is not to say that Israel isn't important to non-traditionalist Jews. In 2012, the PRRI reported that "when asked which qualities are most important to their Jewish identity, nearly half (46 percent) of American Jews cite a commitment to social equality, twice as many as cite support for Israel (20 percent) or religious observance (17 percent)." Likely many more, however, would identify as caring about or supporting Israel, but for few is it a priority at the voting booth.

And priorities set policy. If progressive Jewish voters list healthcare, gun control, immigration, and climate change as their top priorities—the issues that actually decide their votes—why should anyone defer to their views on Israel and anti-Semitism? How voters who cite healthcare and climate change as their top concerns feel about the Jewish state may be of interest to sociologists and activists, but it is entirely moot to political calculations.

Jewish progressive organizations spend far more time and effort trying to persuade Jews—and America at large—that progressive positions are "good for the Jews" than they do convincing progressives to embrace particular Jewish concerns. In spending their energy and resources making the progressive argument to the Jewish community rather than bringing Jewish issues to their fellow progressives, they have effectively become reverse

lobbying groups. A recent investigation of the progressive political organization Bend the Arc, for example, noted that it was "not working to advance American Jewish life, but rather to obtain and cement Jewish-branded support for progressive political causes. . . . The specificity and particularism of one's Jewishness would be tempered and made subservient to the greater cause of a universally acceptable, humanistic society."

Bend the Arc does not equivocate. The organization does not speak for Jews who happen to agree with progressive positions; it speaks for progressives who happen to be Jewish.

And they are not alone. There is a flourishing ecosystem of progressive political operatives leading Jewish, or nominally Jewish groups, perhaps none less forthrightly than the "Anne Frank Center for Mutual Respect" whose board chair has admitted that it is "neither a Jewish organization nor a Holocaust organization."

Needless to say, America's traditionalist Jews do not make their Jewishness "subservient" to "the greater cause of a universally acceptable, humanistic society." To them, the functioning of America's Jewish community and the security of Jewish communities around the world (including Israel) are paramount; there are no "greater" causes. The minority of traditionalists who happen to agree with progressive positions on unrelated issues may find it uncomfortable to support conservative politicians, but given the choice between a conservative whose policies will strengthen the Jewish community and a progressive whose policies will harm the Jewish community, the overwhelming majority of them will either vote for the conservative or stay at home. America's progressive and traditionalist Jews elevate different political priorities. Only the traditionalist priorities are sufficiently distinct to mark them as a politically salient voting bloc.

In 2020, Jewish progressives remain the larger group, but their numbers are in decline, and they have little political power because they are not, as such, politically distinctive. Jewish traditionalists comprise a highly engaged "Jewish vote" that is worth tracking and engaging. Perhaps more importantly, it is growing. If current trends continue, Jewish traditionalists will define the American Jewish future, and it's time pundits, politicians, and pollsters paid attention.

## **The Growing Independence of India's Defense Industry Will Strengthen the Israel-India Alliance By Dr.**

**By Dr. Alvi Ningthoujam**

[jiss.org.il](http://jiss.org.il)

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**How Israel's technical capacities serve its foreign relations.**

In the present-day India, under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government headed by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, there is a greater push for indigenisation in the defense sector, that is, to develop and produce defence items within the country. In order to make the country a self-reliant nation in defense production, a few important steps have been announced by the government recently, including gradual "banning of

imports of select weapon systems; corporatisation of ordnance factories; enhancement of Foreign Direct Investment in defense sector on automatic route [raised from 49 per cent to 74 per cent]; and quick defense acquisitions based on 'realistic' "General Staff Qualitative Requirements" of the three services. The focus, therefore, is clearly on augmenting domestic production under the 'Make in India' initiative (which was launched in September 2014), with an aim to promote Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India Mission), a clarion call

given by the PM during his address to the nation on 12 May this year.

For the last good five years, India has remained the second largest importer of arms in the world, next to another close partner from the Middle East – Saudi Arabia. But this is the status which the current political dispensation is attempting to change in the coming years. It is by placing importance on homegrown defense manufacturing programs, New Delhi has made transfer of technology (ToT) as one of the components of strategic partnerships with some of its international weapons suppliers, including Israel, the United States (US), Russia, France and the United Kingdom (UK). Alongside their traditional arms trade, there are ongoing discussions regarding ToT with these global arms exporters.

One of the factors that has triggered the need for establishing a self-reliant defense industry is the rapidly rising security challenges facing by India, which demand a round-the-clock availability of military equipment for all the three services and related law enforcement agencies. This is mainly in the light of the escalating threats from cross-border terrorism as well as aggressive and expansionist behaviour of a few neighbouring countries, which also have increased threat perceptions in the Indian subcontinent. Further, as explained by a strategist, “indigenisation of a defense industry is a necessary and worthwhile national security objective, particularly for a large country like India with an expanding economy, a wide variety of security challenges, and growing international obligations.” As in the Israeli case, there is also economic incentives of having a robust defense industry, since exports of domestically developed weapon systems will earn foreign currency and drastically cut import bills, which could then lead to the subsidisation of the country’s annual defense budget.

As the above-mentioned initiatives mostly pertain to long-term planning by the Indian government, the country occasionally will continue to import certain categories of armaments from external sellers. This is mainly because some of the defense industrial base remains underdeveloped as compared to Western exporters and it will take time to manufacture technologically advanced systems. Added to this limitation is the failure to deliver timely indigenously developed items. A source, in late 2019, indicated that no major ‘Made in India’ projects in the defense sector had taken off since the inception of this initiative. Under such circumstances, it is very likely that India will use longstanding defense cooperation with countries like Israel to modernise its armed forces, to face emerging security challenges. By exporting state-of-the-art defense items as well as incorporating Israeli technology in some of the joint-collaborative programs, Israel and India have created a synergy not only between the governments but also between defense firms, and the enhanced arms trade is manifest.

### **Comprehensive Indo-Israeli Arms Trade**

Undoubtedly, Indo-Israeli bilateral ties were strengthened tremendously after BJP came to power in May 2014. Since then, the camaraderie between the two countries is visible in numerous fields, including agriculture, water, science and technology, education, healthcare, trade and commerce, and, most importantly, defense and security. This cooperation forms the backbone of a growing strategic partnership which could have important implications for both countries in the economic, political, and security realms. Modi’s visit to Israel in July 2017 (the first visit to Israel by an Indian head of government) is what truly sparked the development of strong political ties. Both sides used this rare visit to raise the status of bilateral relations to that of a “strategic partnership.” Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu’s reciprocal visit to India in January of 2018 paved the way for further expansion of overall bilateral ties. These visits reflected the importance accorded by both countries to promoting bilateral ties, with defense cooperation one of the mainstays.

Military-security cooperation in the form of arms trade as well as technology transfer and licensed production has emerged as an important dimension of the Indo-Israeli strategic relationship and this pattern is likely to continue for some time. As it is, Israel’s share in India’s defense market began to increase significantly from 2014 on. During the period 2015-2019, India’s arms imports from Israel increased by 175%, making the latter New Delhi’s second largest supplier of major arms. The importance of defense cooperation, moreover, was underscored during Modi’s visit, when both the leaders “agreed that future developments in this sphere should focus on joint development of defense products, including transfer of technology from Israel, with a special emphasis on the Made in India initiative.” The maturation of defense cooperation is signified by existing collaboration programs, involving Israeli technology in the field of missiles, air defense systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and more.

While most of India’s purchases from Israel were initially confined to surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence gathering equipment, including maritime patrol vessels and Phalcon airborne warning and control systems (AWACS), the latter has become an important supplier of light arms and ammunitions. It should be mentioned that Israeli-made weapons, such as Tavor assault rifles and Galil sniper rifles, are being used by Indian security forces. Alongside this, India also has appreciated Israel’s proficiency in upgrading Soviet-origin weapons systems, which constituted a significant portion of its defense stockpile. In the past, for instance, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) signed contracts with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for upgrading the avionics on Russian-made MiG-21 aircraft. Continuing with such salient engagements, both countries, since mid-2014, have signed various defense deals.

One of the first breakthroughs, in terms of India's arms imports from Israel, was the announcement made by the BJP-led government in September 2014 that it would procure Barak-1 anti-missile defense (AMD) systems, manufactured by IAI. This was a significant step, mainly noting the depleted defensive capabilities of the Indian warships. Further upgrading the cooperation, both sides successfully test-fired (in December 2015) the Barak-8 Long Range Surface to Air Missile (LRSAM), jointly developed by India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), IAI and the Indian Navy (IN), aboard an IN's Kolkata class destroyer. Significantly, prior to Modi's mentioned visit, India's Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) signed a contract worth \$630 million with IAI in May 2017 to jointly develop four LRSAM for the IN. In March of that year, India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) also cleared the purchase of additional two Israeli-made AWACs at an estimated cost of \$1.1 billion (an item which the US vetoed Israel from selling to China during late 1990s). The decision taken by the Indian government to procure this technology is timely and strategic, considering the rising airborne threats, which has also increased an urgent need for more 'eyes in the sky.'

It is worth mentioning that Israeli-origin defense items were important during the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan. The quick response to India's request for military assistance during this conflict increased Israel's credibility as a reliable arms supplier and helped in bolstering the relationship. Likewise, following the Balakot airstrikes in February 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) spoke of arming its fleet of Sukhoi Su-30MKI multirole fighters with the Rafael-manufactured I-Derby ER (extended range) beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM), after the service phases out its aging Russian-made Vympel R-77 (AA-12 'Adder') AAMs by 2021-22. The IAF opted for this radar-guided missile because of its superiority over Russian technology, which reportedly failed to intercept Pakistani missiles during the dogfight in February 2019.

Furthermore, after using Rafael-developed SPICE (Smart, Precise, Impact, Cost Effective) 2000 bombs in the Balakot airstrikes against terrorist training camps, the IAF signed another deal with Rafael to procure a batch of these items, with delivery slated for September last year. Following this clash, the Indian Army (IA) also reportedly approved an "emergency purchase" of 240 Rafael-made Spike medium-range (MR) anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and 12 launchers for immediate operational requirements. In the wake of current border tensions with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Eastern Ladakh region, India is considering acquisition of more Israeli defense items, including Negev light machine gun manufactured by Israel Weapons Industries (IWI). This clearly demonstrates how some of Israel's defense products have caught the attention of the Indian armed forces because of their performance in times of crisis.

For the last several years, Israeli-made high-altitude and medium-altitude UAVs have become sought after items in India, for help in protecting borders and sensitive sites. By duly recognising the quality and technical specifications of the IAI-developed Heron TP drones, India (in mid-2018) reportedly approved the purchase of 10 such systems at a cost of \$400 million. These UAVs could carry a payload of over 1,000 kilograms and would be equipped with air-to-ground missiles with the capability to detect, track, and take down targets deep in enemy territory. India is already operating Israeli-origin Searcher UAVs for surveillance and intelligence gathering purposes. Moreover, as the IAF has started conducting cross-border airstrikes (first time since the 1971 Indo-Pak War), these systems would prove to be of immense utility in the event of another similar strike in the future. Following the recent standoff at the LAC, Indian military and the National Technical Research Organization (NTRO) are reportedly deploying Heron medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAVs to provide technical surveillance.

Strengthening cooperation in the field of UAV, IAI signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 2020 with Indian firms – Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Dynamatic Technologies Limited (DTL) – to manufacture advanced UAVs in India and to market the products abroad. A couple of years earlier, a similar initiative was agreed between India's Adani Defense and Aerospace and Israel's Elbit Systems to launch Adani Elbit Unmanned Aerial Vehicles complex at Hyderabad in Telangana (in India). This joint collaboration is the first private UAV manufacturing facility in India and the first one outside Israel to manufacture Hermes 900 MALE UAV. Such a collaboration could also be seen in the small arms category as India's Punj Lloyd Raksha Systems and IWI agreed (in May 2017) to establish a manufacturing plant in Madhya Pradesh (in India) to produce advanced weapons, such as X95 assault rifle, Galil sniper, Tavor assault rifle, Negev light machine gun, and the Ace assault rifle. These are some of the popular Israeli arms systems which would be useful for India's law enforcement agencies.

Israel has earned an international reputation in the development of some of the most-advanced missile and anti-missile systems. In 2019, rockets and air defense systems constituted 15 per cent of its total arms exports (with a value amounting to \$7.2 billion), and India is one of its top clients. Indicating its preference, in May 2017 India test-fired Rafael-made Python and Derby (Spyder) missiles. In July 2019, India's Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) bagged a contract worth \$100 million from Rafael to supply the IAF and the IA with approximately 1,000 missile kits for Barak-8 missiles. Cooperation in this domain, however, has also been extended to co-production. For instance, under an agreement signed between the IA and DRDO in July 2018, the latter will jointly develop with IAI Medium Range

Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM), at an estimated cost of \$2.5 billion. This particular system would have a substantial indigenous component. The MRSAM is a land-based variant of the above-mentioned LRSAM, which the IN test-fired again in mid-2018 and early 2019. As recent as February 2020, IAI and BEL have entered into a MoU for collaboration on establishing a new center for providing product lifecycle support, including repair and maintenance services for the air defense systems in India. The need for these items has increased in recent times due to the aggravation of threats on India's territorial sovereignty.

### Conclusion

It is evident that the growing strategic partnership between India and Israel increasingly involves long-term co-development and defense production programs as well as technical support. These aspects are crucial from the standpoint of India's current military modernization initiatives and the drive for localised production of

armaments. Both countries consider the collaboration between Indian and Israeli defense firms on sophisticated defense technologies to be a success.

The strengthening of ties in this specific domain has come at this juncture when the two countries are facing both traditional and non-traditional security threats. Increasing demand for defense items due to these emerging security challenges, the quest for technological advancement in defense industries, and Israel's readiness to meet some of the requirements of India – will lead to further expansion of defense cooperation. As Israel continues to design and develop a wide range of state-of-the-art weapon systems, it will remain an important source of defense equipment and technology for India. And Israel's technological expertise is sure to be a key source in India's drive to develop a self-reliant defense industry.

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## Where Is the Outrage Over Anti-Semitism in Sports and Hollywood?

By Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

hollywoodreporter.com

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**The Hollywood Reporter columnist calls out the hateful outbursts against Jews by Ice Cube, DeSean Jackson and others and explains how the muted response "perpetuates racism" and contributes to an overall "Apatholypse."**

Recent incidents of anti-Semitic tweets and posts from sports and entertainment celebrities are a very troubling omen for the future of the Black Lives Matter movement, but so too is the shocking lack of massive indignation. Given the New Woke-fulness in Hollywood and the sports world, we expected more passionate public outrage. What we got was a shrug of meh-rage.

When reading the dark squishy entrails of popular culture, meh-rage in the face of sustained prejudice is an indisputable sign of the coming Apatholypse: apathy to all forms of social justice. After all, if it's OK to discriminate against one group of people by hauling out cultural stereotypes without much pushback, it must be OK to do the same to others. Illogic begets illogic.

Ice Cube's June 10 daylong series of tweets, which involved some creepy symbols and images, in general implied that Jews were responsible for the oppression of blacks. NFL player DeSean Jackson tweeted out several anti-Semitic messages, including a quote he incorrectly thought was from Hitler (not your go-to guy for why-can't-we-all-get-along quotes) stating that Jews had a plan to "extort America" and achieve "world domination." Isn't that SPECTRE's job in James Bond movies?

These statements would be laughed at by anyone with a middle-school grasp of reason, but then former NBA player Stephen Jackson, a self-proclaimed activist, undid whatever progress his previous advocacy may have achieved by agreeing with DeSean Jackson on social media. Then he went on to talk about the Rothschilds

owning all the banks and his support for the notorious homophobe and anti-Semite Louis Farrakhan. That is the kind of dehumanizing characterization of a people that causes the police abuses that killed his friend, George Floyd.

June continued to bust out all over with anti-Semitism when performer Chelsea Handler, herself Jewish, posted videos of Farrakhan to her 3.9 million followers. That means almost 4 million people received a subliminal message that even some Jews think being anti-Jewish is justified.

That same month, President Donald Trump's reelection campaign also has been criticized for exploiting anti-Jewish biases, even though Trump's son-in-law and campaign honcho Jared Kushner is Jewish and his daughter Ivanka converted to Judaism before they married. Playing on the same Rothschild's trope, they issued a letter accusing three billionaires of Jewish descent of using their fortunes to "rig the November election." This is the kind of "very fine people on both sides" Trump has employed throughout his political career — pandering to hate groups that has emboldened racists who feel like they've gotten the presidential OK to attack people they don't like.

These famous, outspoken people share the same scapegoat logic as all oppressive groups from Nazis to the KKK: all our troubles are because of bad-apple groups that worship wrong, have the wrong complexion, come from the wrong country, are the wrong gender or love the wrong gender. It's so disheartening to see people from groups that have been violently marginalized do the same thing to others without realizing that perpetuating this kind of bad logic is what perpetuates racism.

Yes, some of the above have apologized — DeSean Jackson, Stephen Jackson, Chelsea Handler — while

others continue to defiantly marinate in their own prejudice. Their arrogant and irrational response to accusations of anti-Semitism, rather than dissuade us, actually confirmed people's worst opinions. Ice Cube's response was remorseless: "What if I was just pro-Black? This is the truth brother. I didn't lie on anyone. I didn't say I was anti anybody. DONT BELIEVE THE HYPE. I've been telling my truth." His "truth" was clearly anti-Semitic but, like Trump, he believes his truth exists outside facts. As writer Roxane Gay summed it up: "It is impossible to take you seriously with regards to social justice or anything when you post anti-Semitic imagery. What the \*\*\*\* are you doing?"

Even the apologies floundered, more attempts at spin than true contrition. In a CNN interview, Stephen Jackson was angry and belligerent at being called out: "I stated I could have changed my words. There's nothing that I said that I support any of that. There's nothing I said that I hate anybody. I apologize for my words and I could have switched up. That's the end of it. I love everybody." While it's possible the words were wrong, celebrities have a responsibility to get the words right. It's not enough to have good intentions, because it's the actual deeds — and words — which have the real impact. In this case destructive impact. In 2013, there were 751 reported hate

### **Charles Barkley calls out DeSean Jackson and other celebrities about anti-Semitism**

**By Reuben Frank**

**All-time Sixers great Charles Barkley has called out all-time Eagles great DeSean Jackson and other prominent celebrities for recent anti-Semitic comments and actions.**

Barkley, in a video tweeted out by NBA on TNT, criticized Jackson, who posted messages on social media earlier this month citing a quote he thought was from Hitler.

Former NBA player Stephen Jackson staunchly defended Jackson. Comedian and TV personality Nick Cannon was fired by ViacomCBS for anti-Semitic comments. And rapper and filmmaker Ice Cube blasted NBA Hall of Famer **Kareem Abdul-Jabbar** for an essay in the Hollywood Reporter asking why there hasn't been more outrage nationally about recent anti-Semitic comments and posts from celebrities.

*"Listen, DeSean Jackson, Stephen*

crimes against Jews, but by 2019 the number had nearly tripled to 2,107. That same year, a gunman in San Diego entered a synagogue and murdered one person while wounding three.

One of the most powerful songs in the struggle against racism is Billie Holiday's melancholic "Strange Fruit," which was first recorded in 1939. The song met strong resistance from radio stations afraid of its graphic lyrics about lynching:

Despite those who wanted to suppress the song, it went on to sell a million copies that year and became Holiday's best-selling record ever. The song was written by a white, Jewish high school teacher, Abel Meeropol, who performed it with his wife around New York before it was given to Holiday.

The lesson never changes, so why is it so hard for some people to learn: No one is free until everyone is free. As Martin Luther King Jr. explained: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality." So, let's act like it. If we're going to be outraged by injustice, let's be outraged by injustice against anyone.

*Mr. Abdul Jabbar is an NBA Hall of Famer and the author of Mycroft and Sherlock: The Empty Birdcage and other books.*

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*Jackson, Nick Cannon, Ice Cube," Barkley said in the video. "Man, what the hell are y'all doing? Y'all want racial equality. We*

*all do. I don't understand how insulting another group helps our cause. And the only person who called y'all on it was Kareem. We can't allow Black people to be prejudiced, also. Especially if we're asking for white folks to respect us, give us economic opportunity and things like that. I'm so disappointed in these men. I don't understand how you beat hatred with more hatred. That stuff should never come up in your vocabulary, and it should never come up in your heart. I don't understand it.*

*"I'm never gonna accept it, and I'm asking you guys, I'm begging you guys, man, you guys are famous, you've got a platform. We've gotta do better, man. I want allies. I don't want to alienate anybody and to take shots at the Jewish race, the white race. I just don't like it 'cause it's not right and I had to call them on it 'cause it's really — it's really been on my heart."*



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