

## ISRAEL FLIES EMIRATES



The dramatic implications for the whole Middle East of the UAE-Israel normalisation deal

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**his *AIR* edition's cover story looks at the implications of the dramatic and unexpected announcement on Aug. 13 of plans for the normalisation of diplomatic relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Amotz Asa-El looks at why the UAE normalisation deal is so widely seen as an important breakthrough in Israel, strategic affairs reporter Yaakov Lappin explores its implications for the wider Middle East, while Israeli columnist Haviv Rettig Gur explains why the Palestinian reaction to the deal has been so vehement and what the Palestinian leadership is so concerned about.

Also featured this month is Jack Gross' analysis of how Israel's transformation into a major gas exporter is having important diplomatic and security, as well as economic, consequences. Plus, noted author and academic Jonathan Spyer reviews the tellingly strange background of the terrorists responsible for the infamous 1976 Entebbe hijacking.

And don't miss: An informed look at the background and mechanics of US plans to "snapback" UN nuclear sanctions on Iran from James Carafano and two colleagues; American expert Danielle Pletka on Lebanon's past and present curse; or Jeremy Jones' discussion of the fight to contain Holocaust denial on social media.

As always, please let us know what you think about any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

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### ON THE COVER

On Aug. 13, 2020, Tel Aviv City Hall was lit up with the flag of the United Arab Emirates as the UAE and Israel announced they would be establishing full diplomatic ties. (Photo: AAP/Oded Balilty)

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# FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN

## MORE THAN NORMALISATION

Every supporter of peace, particularly in the turbulent Middle East, should applaud the recently announced normalisation agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The UAE takes its place as the third Arab country to open diplomatic relations with the Jewish State, after Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).

However, the UAE deal, unlike those before it, grew not out of the cold, transactional “land for peace” framework of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 242 that followed the 1967 Six Day War, but a new model of “peace for peace” and shared mutual interests. It is the organic product of both economic opportunity and common security concerns, particularly vis-à-vis the threat to both countries from Iran through conventional warfare, proxy militias and terror groups, and nuclear weapon ambitions.

While the earlier treaties led to “cold” relationships focussed on security, borders and non-hostility arrangements, with few people-to-people contacts, the UAE promises Israel a warm, hospitable peace built upon a foundation of mutual respect and shared interests between historic regional neighbours.

But it represents even more than this.

Since 1967, generations of peace negotiators have built their careers around the principle that Arab acceptance of Israel could come only after the Palestinians make peace with Israel. They have now been proven wrong.

Over the decades, the Palestinians have repeatedly and flagrantly exploited the good faith and sympathy of their Arab neighbours, “vetoing” any normalisation as the keystone to a broader international campaign to question Israel’s right to exist, without regard for how this rejectionism might negatively affect the interests of the Middle East’s other nations.

The UAE’s shift toward normalisation therefore removes a major obstacle to a two-state peace, while simultaneously making a case for normalisation as a better way to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking.

The UAE insists the normalisation deal dissuaded Israel from unilaterally extending sovereignty to areas of the West Bank, and in doing so, served the Palestinians’ best interests by helping safeguard the two-state Israeli-Palestinian peace paradigm. Perhaps. But more importantly, enlightened Arab leaders now have the chance to counsel the Palestinians regarding their current counter-productive rejectionist stance, and, while advocating for Palestinian interests, also talk directly to their Israeli counterparts about what can realistically be done to meet Israel’s essential security needs in any two-state peace.

As UAE Deputy Foreign Minister Omar Saif Ghobash told the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* on Aug. 21, “We will not remain hostages to the internal problems of the Palestinians.” Ghobash said: “If the Palestinians cannot agree on a way forward – after [our] helping them repeatedly over the years – we need to choose the right path for us. This way can open up opportunities for the Palestinians and the Arab world and show them that there is nothing to fear.”

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made state visits to Sudan and Bahrain in late August, hoping to capitalise on the momentum created by the UAE’s move. He is seeking to organise a regional summit in September to include Bahrain, Oman, Morocco, Sudan and Chad, alongside Israel and the UAE, and hopefully encourage one or more of these countries to follow the UAE’s example.



Discreet Israeli relations with Sunni Gulf states have of course been something of an open secret for some time now, and there have been many signs over recent years of these ties becoming deeper and more overt.

In other words, the UAE normalisation is the tip of a much wider regional iceberg of changing strategic thinking and a far-reaching re-alignment.

At a time when the United States is committed to drawing down the number of troops it bases in the region, the UAE and its Western-aligned regional allies are recognising the value of partnering more openly with Israel in their common goal of thwarting Iran's expansionism.

Unfortunately, this determined diplomatic stance from the regional forces of stability – which provides support to the US' "maximum pressure" approach to Iran to renegotiate the fatally flawed 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal – is not being backed up by the European powers.

In the UN Security Council on Aug. 14, Europe – as well as Russia and China – allowed a US resolution to extend an arms embargo on Iran to fail, setting up a disastrous situation where, thanks to the JCPOA, Iran can freely modernise its arsenal after mid-October.

Likewise, Europe, Russia and China have signalled they won't back the US right to activate the "snapback" provision to restore international sanctions on Iran under UNSC Resolution 2231, arguing that the US forfeited that right when it withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018. However, this argument ignores both the plain language of Resolution 2231, and the arguments about how "snapback" would work made by then-US President Barack Obama back in 2015.

**"The UAE's shift toward normalisation therefore removes a major obstacle to a two-state peace, while simultaneously making a case for normalisation as a better way to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking"**

In the context of the apparent paucity of resolve by the UN Security Council to address blatant Iranian violations of the JCPOA and Non-Proliferation Treaty, the UAE's move casts in sharper relief the alliances shaping today's Middle East. There is every reason to hope it will empower the Western-leaning Sunni Arab side via more open ties

with Israel, boosting stability, expanding cooperation on defence and intelligence affairs, trade, investment and joint technological development, modernisation and the potential for increased cross-cultural dialogue. Meanwhile, it should weaken the rejectionist forces determined to destabilise

the region, especially Teheran and its Hezbollah proxy in Lebanon; the Assad regime; Turkey's Islamist ruler Erdogan; Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

The UAE-Israel deal is a hugely positive, watershed development. Australia has welcomed the deal, but it, and every other nation of goodwill, would be wise to offer any and all possible support to this epic and potentially profoundly promising regional reorientation.

AIR

## AIJAC MOURNS DR. DANIEL MANDEL

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) wishes to convey our deepest sympathy to the wife, children and family of Dr Daniel Mandel, who passed away on August 14 in the United States and was buried in Israel.

Dr Mandel, a former associate editor of the *Australia/Israel Review* and author of *H. V. Evatt and the Establishment of Israel*, was a highly respected and admired former AIJAC staff member whose memory will long be a blessing for all who had the privilege to know him.

## WORD FOR WORD

"President Donald J. Trump, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, and Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates spoke today and agreed to the full normalisation of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates. This historic diplomatic breakthrough will advance peace in the Middle East region and is a testament to the bold diplomacy and vision of the three leaders."

**Joint statement released by the White House on normalising relations between Israel and the UAE (CNN, Aug. 13).**

"They [the UAE] better be mindful. They have committed a huge

mistake, a treacherous act. We hope they will realise this and abandon this wrong path."

**Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on the Israel-UAE normalisation announcement (Reuters, Aug. 15).**

"This process will lead to those sanctions coming back into effect 30 days from today. Our message is very, very simple: The United States will never allow the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism to freely buy and sell planes, tanks, missiles and other kinds of conventional weapons."

**US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stating that the US had begun the process of trying to "snapback" UN sanctions on Iran (NPR, Aug. 20).**

"We share the pain of the Lebanese people and sincerely reach out to offer our aid at this difficult time."

**Israeli President Reuven Rivlin after the massive explosion in Beirut (CNN, Aug. 4).**







# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## THE PALESTINIANS' ISLAMIST MESSAGING ON THE UAE DEAL

In this month's edition, noted Israeli columnist Haviv Rettig Gur (pp. 16-18) makes the point that Palestinian secular nationalist anti-colonialist claims against Israel are no longer resonating in the Arab world as they once did – yet Islamist messages still do among Muslim radicals. This is why most Arab states were not strongly opposed to or critical of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) decision to normalise relations with Israel in violation of the Arab tradition of opposing normalisation until the Palestinians achieve their demands. And this is why it is leaders of the Sunni and Shi'ite Islamist blocs – dominated respectively by Turkey and Iran – who have most strongly attacked the UAE decision.

The nominally secular Palestinian Authority (PA), led by Mahmoud Abbas, seems to be recognising that Islamist themes get a stronger reaction, and has been employing them heavily in its angry response to the UAE deal.

Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque has featured especially prominently in its campaigns. The first official PA response to the UAE-Israel joint statement announcing plans to normalise relations was to declare it “treason against Jerusalem, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the Palestinian cause.” Similarly, the deputy chair of Abbas' Fatah movement Mahmoud Al-Aloul said the UAE-Israel accord “constitutes a knife in the back of Palestine and treason against Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

An official spokesman of the Fatah party, Osama Al-Qawasmī, told official *PA TV* on Aug. 18 that the UAE deal risked encouraging “some of the remaining states to hurry towards normalisation – with whom? With the Israeli entity that is stealing the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the first direction for [Muslim] prayer, the second of the mosques, and the third in its sanctity for Islam.”

One of the key protests organised by Fatah against the deal, in which UAE flags and pictures of UAE Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed were trampled on and burnt, took place during Friday prayers at the Temple Mount outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque on Aug. 14. Fatah

openly boasted of that protest on social media.

The noted Palestinian affairs journalist Khaled Abu Toameh has pointed out that this demonstration was in effect a warning to citizens of the UAE not to visit Jerusalem or the Al-Aqsa Mosque via Israel, as opposed to entering via the West Bank. He points out that, in the past, certain Saudi and Bahraini visitors to the Mosque have been expelled or even physically attacked by local Palestinians on the basis that the people in question were engaged in “normalisation” with Israel.

PA religious officials have been explicit that this is indeed the message the Palestinians are now sending to UAE citizens. The PA's Supreme Shari'ah Judge and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Shari'ah Justice Mahmoud Al-Habbash told official *PA TV*, “Whoever wants to come visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque through the gate of Palestine: Welcome, and we will rejoice over him... But whoever wants

to come through the Israeli gate is unwanted, and he will find nothing but the shoes of the people of Jerusalem and the spit of the people of Jerusalem in his face.”

Al-Habbash also called the UAE deal “treason... Not just against the Palestinian people. This is a denial of the heritage of Prophet Muhammad,” and said, “Normalisation means that you agree to natural relations with your brother's murderers...

... with the enemies of Prophet Muhammad.”

The PA's Grand Mufti, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, went even further than Al-Habbash, issuing a *fatwa* – a religious ruling – that forbids Muslims who come from the UAE via Israel from praying at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. He reportedly ruled such prayers are “forbidden” if worshippers arrive via Israel's Ben Gurion Airport, as well as “legally false, religiously offensive.”

As Abu Toameh wrote, “The Palestinians have often accused Israel of denying them access to their holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque. Now the Palestinians are showing the world that they are the ones who are seeking to prevent Muslims who believe in peace with Israel from praying at Al-Aqsa Mosque.”

At this point, this reliance on religious messaging by the PA, in addition to more secular messaging about Arab obligations to the Palestinian cause, is mostly rhetorical. The question that must be asked is: Will the PA at some point decide that, with secular messaging now largely ineffective across most of the Middle East, it needs to genuinely move into one of the Islamist camps to get support? Will it at some point seek to gain actual patronage from Iran or



Palestinians demonstrate against the UAE and its de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed, at Jerusalem's Temple Mount



Turkey, which it has avoided up until now because both are sponsors of the PA's main rival, the Islamist group Hamas that rules Gaza?

I asked Khaled Abu Toameh this during a recent AIJAC webinar and he agreed it was a worrying possibility.

Despite a sometimes naïve perception to the contrary, the PA has never actually looked at the Arab-Israel conflict as a dispute over land, amenable to compromise, as I have tried to demonstrate in this column over the years. However, the embrace of Islamism can only make any prospect of a two-state resolution even more distant and difficult.

Some Palestinians have noted that the UAE deal could provide opportunities for the PA leadership to finally reach a two-state agreement financed and backed by the wealthy Arab states. If the Palestinian leadership instead react to losing their traditional kneejerk support from the Arab world by turning to the Islamist extremist blocs, the long-suffering Palestinian people will miss yet another such opportunity.

AIR



David May

## THE UN AND THE UAE DEAL

The United Arab Emirates and Israel took the historic step of normalising diplomatic relations. But you would never know how positive this development is for regional peace based on the United Nations' tepid response, which focused on the Palestinians. The UN's continued fixation upon the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underscores how the international organisation, whose mission is to promote "international peace and security," has become an overt champion of one side of a conflict and a detractor of another side.

This was not the first time the UN has promoted the Palestinian agenda to the detriment of regional peace initiatives. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat shocked the Arab world in September 1978 when he became the first Middle Eastern leader to sign a peace agreement with Israel. Three months later, in resolution 33/28A, the UN General Assembly condemned Egypt for bypassing the UN and for not resolving the Palestinian issue. The General Assembly followed up in December 1979 with resolution 34/65, which again argued that regional security, somehow subordinate to the Israeli-Palestinian issue, would deteriorate with an Egyptian-Israeli deal. Both resolutions drew heavily from reports produced by the UN Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

That committee is part of an infrastructure of pro-Palestinian institutions within the UN system. To be sure, Palestinians deserve international support. Even while their

situation today, in part, results from decades of rejectionism by failed leaders who have openly engaged in terrorism against Israel and others, Palestinians need humanitarian assistance. However, the UN's unconditional acceptance of the one-sided Palestinian narrative has served to unfairly malign Israel and harm prospects for peace.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was created in 1975, in the same session as the infamous "Zionism is Racism" resolution, which vilified the movement for Jewish autonomy. To this day, the Committee produces a steady stream of anti-Israel resolutions that the General Assembly rubber-stamps.

The UN created additional bodies to assist in the Committee's work. The Division for Palestinian Rights, with an annual budget of nearly A\$4 million under the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, serves as the Committee's secretariat. The UN Information System on the Question of Palestine operates under the Division for Palestinian Rights as a pro-Palestinian propaganda arm. Tellingly, the UN has no other similar network of bodies devoted to promoting one people's narrative.

But the UN's pervasive anti-Israel bias does not end there. In December 1968, the UN created the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People, whose mandate is to investigate alleged Israeli abuses.

That UN committee is reminiscent of the UN Human Rights Council's commissions of inquiry following Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. These commissions presumed Israeli guilt and were directed to focus only on Israeli actions. Indeed, the UN Human Rights Council has a rapporteur whose mandate exclusively calls for exposing Israeli crimes and not Palestinian ones. Systematic bias is hard to deny, as this flawed forum has produced about as many resolutions criticising Israel as resolutions criticising every other country in the world combined.


In recent years, the United States has begun to push back against these biased UN bodies. Other countries are beginning to express concern about the UN's Palestinian bias too.

The United Kingdom has opposed all Human Rights Council resolutions presented under an agenda item dedicated to castigating Israel over the past few years [*Ed. Note: so too has Australia*]. And, recognising the discriminatory nature of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, Ukraine departed the committee in early 2020.

New possibilities are emerging in the Middle East. The UAE has broken the taboo of normalisation with Israel, while other countries, such as Bahrain, Oman, and Morocco, may soon follow. The UN should encourage this instead of promoting the false notion that Palestinian grievances should supersede support for peace and security efforts. When the UN encourages maximalist Palestinian





demands, it makes regional peace less likely. System-wide changes are needed. 

*David May is a research analyst at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies. The article originally appeared in the Washington Examiner. © Foundation for Defence of Democracies (www.fdd.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

# ASIA WATCH

**Michael Shannon**

## GLASS HALF-FULL, HALF-EMPTY

The Philippines Armed Forces has been bolstered by advice, equipment and financial assistance from the United States for decades in its efforts to subdue violent Islamist militants in the archipelago nation's southern islands.

The current iteration of this cooperative effort has been known as Operation Pacific Eagle – Philippines (OPE-P), launched in September 2017, when Philippine government forces were battling pro-IS fighters who had taken over the southern city of Marawi. The US deployed military advisers and drones to help the Philippines retake the city, kill the top leaders of the militant siege and flush out their forces a month later.

But nearly three years later, the two forces have differing assessments of the success of their joint mission.

The latest report to the US Congress from the Pentagon said the current counter-terror offensive had not made any significant inroads against Islamic State-aligned extremist groups.

"[T]here has been little change in the capabilities, size, financing, and operations of ISIS-EA [East Asia]," said Sean W. O'Donnell, the US Defence Department's acting inspector general, in the quarterly report on the US military aid program to Manila.

"In general, efforts to reduce extremism in the Philippines do not appear to have made a substantial difference since the launch of OPE-P. ISIS-EA and the other violent extremist groups in the Philippines that either coordinate with or share members with ISIS, have remained about the same size and strength for the last few years," O'Donnell said, noting that the militant groups have operated in the same region for decades and that "little progress has been made" in improving the economic, social, and political conditions there.

The Philippines' military chief and other generals responded with a more upbeat assessment. Armed forces head Gen. Gilbert Gapay said, "WestMinCom [Western Mindanao Command] has accomplished so much as far as degrading. Maybe we have not yet defeated [them] but we have degraded their capabilities, especially the Abu Sayyaf."

Government forces have depleted the Abu Sayyaf Group ranks by up to 70% since last year, Gapay said. He did not give estimates of the group's current strength, but military sources place its troop levels at between 300 and 500 fighters.

Gapay made his comments days after a senior Abu Sayyaf commander, Abduljihad "Indang" Susukan – wanted for at least 23 cases of murder and five kidnapping cases, including of Westerners who were executed by their Abu Sayyaf captors – was taken into custody. He voluntarily surrendered to Philippine authorities after being wounded in fighting on Aug. 13.

Susukan was alleged to be a contemporary of Zulkifli bin Hir, the Malaysian militant and bomb maker also known as Marwan, who was killed by Philippine police commandos during a raid in January 2015. Marwan was a primary suspect in the 2002 Bali bombings.


Susukan also became a lieutenant to Hatib Hajan Sawadjaan, an Abu Sayyaf militant who took over the command of the Philippine branch of Islamic State after Isnilon Hapilon was killed at the end of the Marawi siege in October 2017. Sawadjaan's group was also blamed for twin bomb blasts that killed 23 people at a church in Jolo, the capital of Sulu province, in January 2019.

With the Abu Sayyaf under pressure from security forces and reportedly short of cash, experts predict that an increase in kidnappings is likely. Five Indonesians, including a minor, are currently being held by the group, according to the Indonesian Foreign Ministry, but there have been no new kidnappings since January, according to authorities.

Deka Anwar, a researcher at the Jakarta-based Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict (IPAC), told a recent online forum that there was a lull in kidnappings in 2016 and 2017 following large-scale operations by the Philippine military against the militants and a series of money transfers from Islamic State to Abu Sayyaf.

But with those funds largely depleted, the Abu Sayyaf is increasingly targeting Indonesian shipping crews because ransom payments have been secured for their release, he said, adding that about 93% of coal exports from Indonesia to the Philippines pass through Mindanao waters. The slow-moving boats allow Abu Sayyaf militants to abduct sailors.

Ali Fauzi, a former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) member and executive director of the Circle of Peace Foundation, has a different take, telling *BenarNews* that the Abu Sayyaf's piracy has deep roots.

"Their ancestors in the Sulu Kingdom were notorious for their piracy tradition," Ali said. "They need money, not only for their struggle but to support poor people. They are considered Robin Hoods. They and their community need each other. If they are pursued by the Philippine authorities, they can blend in with the people and the people will protect them," he said. 



Miriam Bell

## A CONTROVERSIAL “LEGACY”

This year has seen the world taking a fresh look at notable “personalities” from the past and what they represent in a broader, historical context. In New Zealand, statues of colonial figures are being reassessed amidst discussion of how to better address the injustices of the country’s past.

In addition to the colonial era, New Zealand’s post-war policies around immigration and the response of successive governments to the presence of Nazi war criminals in the country have long been the subject of criticism from the Jewish community.

A recent controversy over the legacy of a post-war Austrian émigré, who died on August 9, has brought these issues to the fore again.

Willi Huber immigrated to New Zealand in 1953. He made a name for himself on the ski-fields and is considered one of the “founding fathers” of Canterbury’s Mt Hutt ski area. The mountain features a lasting memorial to him in the form of the Huber’s Run trail, a plaque and a café.

There is more to Huber’s past than his endeavours on the ski-fields, though. At 17, Huber volunteered for the Waffen-SS, where he served as a machine-gunner, earning two Iron Cross medals on the eastern front. After the war, he was held as a prisoner of war for 16 months.

Despite this, Huber has been the subject of several laudatory media stories, including a controversial *TVNZ* programme in 2017, which was heavily criticised for glossing over and minimising his Nazi past.

Huber denied knowledge of any atrocities by the Waffen-SS and never expressed any remorse for his war-time activities.

Shortly after Huber’s death, Mt. Hutt Ski Area manager James McKenzie told the media the Huber’s Run ski trail would keep his name; “He made a new life and a new start here and tried to put that behind him. We are happy to respect his legacy. The context of what he went through in the war, nobody knows for sure what people did way back then.”

This comment ignited a maelstrom of criticism. Zionist Federation of NZ President Rob Berg started a petition calling for the removal of the “honouring legacy” for Huber from Mt Hutt, while community leaders like NZ Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses wrote impassioned columns asking why New Zealand was intent on honouring the legacy of an unrepentant Nazi.

The Holocaust and Antisemitism Foundation contacted

the renowned Nazi hunter Dr Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre’s office in Jerusalem. He said he could “state unequivocally that serving in a Waffen-SS unit on the eastern front, there is no way that Mr Huber could possibly not have been aware of the massive atrocities carried out by the SS... If we add the fact that he volunteered for the SS, and his comments that Hitler was ‘very clever,’ and ... ‘offered [Austrians] a way out’ of the hardships after World War I, it’s clear that Mr. Huber was an unrepentant Nazi, who doesn’t deserve any sympathy or recognition.”

For the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand’s chief executive, Chris Harris, there’s no doubt that Huber was aware of what was going on in the Waffen-SS. “Even if he didn’t participate in it, he was aware of it. For us that means that he should not be honoured and paid homage to.

“So we would love Mt Hutt to reconsider the renaming of that area... They can say he made a new life and so on. But that wasn’t possible for the millions of victims of the Nazis who never got that chance.”



Willi Huber (left), New Zealand skiing pioneer and unrepentant former SS member

The Huber controversy has also reignited niggling questions about exactly who was allowed into New Zealand after World War II and the lack of a satisfactory government response to post-war arrivals subsequently identified as war criminals.

Harris says that between 40 and 46 Nazi war criminals are known to have migrated to New Zealand after the war.

“They committed horrors, so how did

they get in? You have to ask how was Immigration NZ assessing refugees? Were they just saying ‘oh, well you fought on the other side but it’s over now so you can come in’?”

In fact, New Zealand was the only Anglo-Saxon country that chose not to attempt any legal action against alleged Nazi war criminals within its borders, a reality described as “an embarrassment” by Zuroff.

Holocaust & Antisemitism Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand co-founder Sheree Trotter says that it is difficult to explain the government’s lack of response on identified war criminals – especially as it was so out-of-step with allies.

“The specific case of Willi Huber could be explained by a number of factors. Many New Zealanders struggle to face our own colonial past where injustices and crimes were perpetrated by our forebears. It’s easier to take the view that we should just move on. That type of attitude, combined with lack of education and an easy-going-accept-people-at-face-value attitude, could explain how Huber managed to ingratiate himself into the local community.”

In both Harris and Trotter’s view, there is a great need for more research into New Zealand’s relationship with the Holocaust, as well as education on the Holocaust, to better address these issues.





# BEHIND THE NEWS

## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

After months of relative quiet, there have been frequent rocket launches and explosive and incendiary balloon attacks from Gaza in recent weeks. Israel has retaliated with strikes against Hamas targets.

One rocket was fired on Aug. 3, several on Aug. 16, one on Aug. 19, 12 on Aug. 21, one on Aug. 22, and a failed launch on Aug. 23.

Incendiary balloon terrorism has been a very frequent occurrence over recent weeks, with dozens of fires being lit daily, causing environmental and agricultural damage in southern Israel.

On Aug. 22, Israeli officials accused Hamas of deliberately diverting sewage into Israel after sewage treatment plants in Gaza were shut down due to restrictions on fuel imports imposed by Israel in retaliation for the balloon attacks.

On Aug. 26, Rabbi Shai Ohayon, 39, a father of four, was stabbed to death by a Palestinian in Petah Tikva — the first death in a year of an Israeli citizen as a result of Palestinian terror.

In the north, on July 25, the IDF reported munitions had been fired from Syria towards Israel, prompting retaliatory strikes. On July 28, a Hezbollah infiltration attempt from Lebanon was thwarted. On Aug. 3, an Iran-linked terrorist cell tried to plant explosives along the security fence between Syria and Israel. A shooting attack on IDF soldiers along the Lebanon border on Aug. 25, most likely by Hezbollah, saw Israel respond by shelling several Hezbollah surveillance outposts on the Lebanese side of the border.

## HAMAS POLITICS FUELS VIOLENCE

Analysts say that internal Hamas politics is likely a major factor fueling

the escalation in violence towards Israel from Gaza over recent weeks. An internal election for the leadership of Hamas, both inside and outside Gaza, which started a few months ago, is expected to conclude by early next year. Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, is competing against current Head of the Political Bureau Ismail Haniyeh, who recently left Gaza, and Qatar-based former leader Khaled Meshaal.

All candidates are seeking credit for extracting concessions, benefits and money from Israel and Qatar, and the recent upsurge in rockets and incendiary balloons directed at Israel from Gaza is understood to be part of these efforts.

## INTRIGUING REPORTS ABOUT BEIRUT PORT EXPLOSION

The ammonium nitrate store held at the Beirut port, which exploded on Aug. 4 killing at least 220 people, was originally carried by a ship called the *Rhosus*, owned by a Cypriot businessman named Charalambos Manoli.

The ship, bound for Africa, docked in Beirut in 2013, reportedly due to leaks and technical defects, and never left because local authorities deemed it unseaworthy. Its cargo was kept in unsafe storage at the port until the explosion.

According to a report by *Der Spiegel* and the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), Manoli offered the *Rhosus* as collateral for a US\$1.1 million debt to a Lebanese-owned Tanzanian-registered bank, FBME, which has been accused by the US of laundering money for Hezbollah.

The report also noted that a large quantity of ammonium nitrate that had originally been aboard the ship



The Aug. 4 blast at Beirut's port devastated the city

went missing from the warehouse prior to the August explosion.

Israeli geophysics experts also revealed the massive port explosion was preceded by six smaller explosions at exactly 11-second intervals, leading to speculation the original source of the explosion may have been a cache of Hezbollah weaponry stored at the port.

## ISRAEL OFFERED AID TO LEBANON AFTER THE BLAST

Shortly after the Aug. 4 Beirut explosion, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi announced that Israel had offered Lebanon medical and humanitarian aid. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) confirmed that Israel was holding advanced talks to transfer equipment capable of detecting missing people under collapsed buildings, as well as medical supplies.

The heads of several Israeli hospitals also offered assistance, suggesting UNIFIL could transfer the blast victims to and from Israel.

After a lack of response from Lebanon, Israeli disaster specialists offered to fly to European countries to work in teams there in order to help treat the injured.

## HARIRI TRIBUNAL VERDICT

The Special Tribunal for Leba-

non, established with the backing of the UN Security Council in 2009 to try, in absentia, suspects allegedly responsible for the truck bomb that killed former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri and dozens of others in 2005, handed down its verdict on Aug. 18. Of the four suspects – Salim Jalil Ayyash, Hassan Habib Merhi, Hussein Hassan Oneissi and Assad Hassan Sabra – all of whom were affiliated with Hezbollah, only Ayyash, whose whereabouts are unknown, was convicted. The court did not directly implicate either the Syrian regime or Hezbollah of involvement in the bombing, saying it lacked evidence to do so.

However, Dr. Matthew Levitt, a Hezbollah expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told AIJAC, “My takeaway is that a senior Hezbollah commander has been convicted by an international court with carrying out and overseeing the assassination of Rafiq Hariri... They make it very, very clear that this was not an operation that could have been carried out by... some renegade.”

## REVELATIONS ABOUT PAST ISRAEL-UAETIES

The Israel-UAE normalisation deal announced on Aug. 13 has led to new revelations about the many business arrangements that have already been taking place covertly between the two countries.

According to the Manufacturers Association of Israel, about 200 Israeli companies are already exporting products to the UAE, particularly medical, telecommunications and defence equipment. The trade was coordinated through subsidiaries in a third country, often in the US or Europe.

In addition, there has reportedly been significant interest from the UAE recently in employing Israeli experts in cybersecurity and big data analysis.

Reports have also revealed that top officials from Israeli intelligence agencies have been frequent visitors to the UAE in recent years to discuss plans to thwart Iran’s regional aggression.

## GULF NUCLEAR FACILITIES

According to media reports from early August, US intelligence has detected an undeclared facility in Saudi Arabia that is processing yellow cake, used in uranium enrichment, and was allegedly built with Chinese assistance.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, the UAE successfully began operating its Barakah Nuclear Energy Plant, the first in the Arab world, on Aug. 1. The South Korea-made reactor will be fully monitored by the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency.

## ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN COVID-19 NUMBERS

Israel continues to endure high morbidity during its second wave of coronavirus infections. As of Aug. 26, there were 21,779 active cases in Israel with 427 serious cases, and a seven-day moving average of more than 1,400 new cases per day. The national death toll was 859.

In the PA-controlled areas at that time, there were 7,210 active cases of coronavirus, and had been 133 deaths. In the week to Aug. 24, 2,653 new cases were identified, compared to 2,324 the previous week.

On Aug. 25, the first cases of coronavirus were detected within the Gaza Strip outside its quarantine facilities, with four people from the same family testing positive. There had until then been 109 coronavirus infections among those quarantined in the Gaza Strip and one death.



## STRANGER THAN FICTION

### SOCIOLOGY OR SOCIOPATHY?

The general consensus is that the tragic Beirut explosion of Aug. 4 was the result of criminal negligence or worse by those who run Lebanon. However, Qatari sociologist Abd al-Zaziz al-Khazraj al-Ansari apparently knows better.

In a video uploaded on Aug. 6, al-Ansari, whose country imposes the death penalty for same-sex relations, bizarrely said the explosion was “caused by the Lebanese people’s propensity towards blasphemy, plastic surgery and sodomy.”

According to a translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), he particularly focused the blame on Lebanese women, stating, “85% of Lebanese girls are not married. What do you think they are doing? Making original models with the boys? Collecting stamps? Most of them are involved in forbidden relationships.”

On plastic surgery, he thundered,

“Lebanon is famous for changing Allah’s creation. You want to puff your lips? Augment your breasts? Change your face? Go to Lebanon.”

Accusing the Lebanese of wide scale blasphemy, he said they “curse Allah and His religion, and you expect Him to give you success? This might be the main reason for the torment you are experiencing. The cursing of Allah has become as prevalent as the drinking of water.”

Helpfully, however, he had a suggested remedy: “Each Lebanese must go out on the street and cut out with scissors the tongue of anyone cursing Allah... Start with that and you shall see how Allah will change your situation for the better.”

Apparently, the stricture against “changing Allah’s creation” doesn’t apply in this case.

Sociologists, at least in the West, are largely regarded as compassionate observers of humanity, seeking to understand people and their relationships so they can help improve society. If this is what passes for a sociologist in Qatar, one can only imagine what a firebrand preacher would be like!



## COVER STORY

## FLYING EMIRATES

## OUT OF THE BLUE, A NEW ALLIANCE

by Amotz Asa-El

**A**nnounced out of the blue, the fourth Arab-Israeli peace deal in 41 years seems set to be the simplest, happiest, and most lucrative.

Struck between Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and United Arab Emirates Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ), and mediated by President Donald Trump, the deal caught everyone in Israel off guard, even though extensive commercial relations between the two countries have been an open secret for years.

Publicised in a joint statement, together with Washington, the deal said the two countries “agreed to the full normalisation of relations.” Israeli and Emirati teams are already discussing the agreement’s terms in Abu Dhabi, and diplomats said the deal will be signed at a public ceremony in Washington, probably in September.

The Emirati move did not come without a price. Firstly, Netanyahu agreed to suspend previous plans to apply Israeli sovereignty to parts of the West Bank in line with the US Trump Administration’s peace plan. Second, according to Israeli media reports, Israel agreed not to oppose Washington’s sale of its advanced fighter jet, the F-35, to the UAE military.

Netanyahu has denied the F-35 report, saying Israel continues to oppose American sales of weapons that might hinder Israel’s qualitative edge over any Middle Eastern military. Concerning the application of sovereignty, he has claimed such a move remains “on the agenda,” even though the Trump Administration’s Middle East envoy, Jared Kushner, has said that Israel “agreed with us that they will not move forward [on applying sovereignty] without our consent.”



Covert partners: Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu and UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed managed to keep their normalisation discussions a secret from almost everyone

Despite this dissonance, there is broad agreement in Israel that the deal is historic, and in some ways even more substantive than the deals signed with Egypt, the Palestinians and Jordan respectively in 1979, 1993, and 1994.

Unlike Israel’s previous peace partners, the UAE is both geographically distant and wealthy.

Located in the Arabian Peninsula’s north-eastern tip, the confederation of seven sheikhdoms is almost 2,000 kilometres from Israel, and is halfway between Tel Aviv

and Mumbai. Though a member of the Arab League since gaining independence in 1971, the UAE has never technically been at war with Israel, which is why the agreement signed between Jerusalem and Abu Dhabi will formally be not a “peace agreement”, but a normalisation pact.

Normalisation will apparently mean an exchange of ambassadors, direct flights, tourism and fully open trade. Considering that the UAE’s per-capita GDP, at US\$70,000, is among the world’s ten highest, and with its sovereign wealth funds totalling more than US\$1 trillion, the deal clearly opens up new economic horizons for both parties.

Having used its oil and gas wealth to build a diversified economy, the UAE is now an international transportation hub whose national airline, Emirates, is considered one of the best in the world, while its financial capital, Dubai, has long succeeded Beirut as the Middle East’s banking centre.

The deal’s first noticeable result is expected to be an influx of Israeli tourists. Though distant compared with Jordan and Egypt, Dubai is a mere three-hour flight from Ben Gurion Airport, and its combination of glitzy hotels and

affordable prices seems custom tailored for the middle-income Israeli vacationers who flock to destinations like Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and Spain annually.

More substantively, the UAE's financial sector is expected to join American, European, and Far Eastern investors who have been buying into Israel's advanced hi-tech, biomed and agritech sectors since the 1990s. A harbinger of this future emerged three days after the agreement's announcement, when the Emirati investment company Apex and Israeli R&D firm Tera Group signed a deal to jointly develop a coronavirus testing device.

The UAE is also expected to buy Israeli defence goods, the F-35 brouhaha notwithstanding. With a US\$23 billion defence budget, and with its arch-enemy Iran a mere 140 kilometres across the Persian Gulf from Dubai, the UAE has reportedly already been buying drones and radar systems from companies like Rafael and Israel Aerospace Industries, as well as cyber-warfare products from Israeli software makers.

Unlike Israel's trade with Egypt and Jordan, which is dominated by long-term deals for Israeli natural gas (see pp. 20-24), energy is not expected to play much of a role in Israeli-Emirati trade. The UAE, with the world's seventh-largest oil reserves, doesn't need Israeli gas. Israel, for its part, today not only has its own gas, but has an assortment of steady, long-term suppliers of petroleum, such as Azerbaijan and Russia, on which it can rely.

Trade will therefore be about finished goods, venture capital, and thousands of tourists, both Israeli vacationers on the Gulf's shores and Emirati pilgrims in Jerusalem's mosques.

In all, Israeli-Emirati trade is expected to quickly surpass US\$1 billion, fueled by tourism and services, but dominated by defence. And defence is in this case about the two countries' shared enemy – Iran. That is why, despite its exciting economics, the deal's most important dimension is diplomatic.

**T**he Emirati move, driven by its Western-educated leader's hostility to fundamentalism, is bold because of its departure from pan-Arab policy.

Since 2002, when the Arab League formally adopted the so-called Saudi Peace Plan, Arab governments main-

tained that normalisation of relations with Israel must follow rather than precede an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement. That settlement, in its turn, would have to include the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and "a just settlement" of the Palestinian refugee problem in line with UN Resolution 194 – implying a so-called "right of return" to Israel.

The Emirati move has changed this.

The move was welcomed by Egyptian President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, who called MBZ to congratulate him on "the historic peace step," and also tweeted his "appreciation" to the parties for "taking steps to bring peace in the Middle East."

Sisi's endorsement underlines the Palestinian problem's steady marginalisation amongst key Arab states. However, hopes that the Emirati decision would quickly spread to neighbouring countries seem premature for now.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan, speaking in Berlin, said his government will establish diplomatic ties with Israel only after it strikes a peace deal with the Palestinians.

This may mean that Bahrain, which initially welcomed the UAE-Israel deal as "advancing the region toward peace," might defy forecasts that it will follow the UAE's example. The tiny kingdom, an islet of 1.6 million inhabitants 23 kilometres off Saudi Arabia's eastern coast, is effectively a political satellite of Riyadh.

Another candidate to follow the UAE's move was Sudan, whose foreign ministry's spokesman Haidar Badawi Sadiq told *Sky News* that Khartoum and Jerusalem were engaged in a dialogue, adding that Sudan wants to make peace with Israel and that "there is no reason for enmity to continue."

The following day, however, Sadiq was fired by acting Foreign Minister Omar Qamar al-Din, who denied contacts with Israel and said he was "astonished" by his aide's statement.

These setbacks are in addition to the open hostility with which the Emirati move was met by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which called it "despicable" and "a betrayal," and prompted PA President Mahmoud Abbas to recall the PA's ambassador from Abu Dhabi.

Turkey toed the PA line, with its foreign ministry ac-



Dubai (top) and Tel Aviv: Modern, forward-looking cities that reflect what Israel and the UAE have in common



cusing the UAE of “hypocritical behaviour” as President Recep Erdogan threatened to recall Ankara’s ambassador as well.

Even so, from Israel’s viewpoint the deal is a major breakthrough, which former head of Mossad Shabtai Shavit said was, in some ways, even more significant than the

**“The Emirati move, driven by its Western-educated leader’s hostility to fundamentalism, is bold because of its departure from pan-Arab policy”**

path-breaking peace with Egypt.

The 81-year-old Shavit’s enthusiasm reflects sentiments elsewhere in the Israeli left, with which he has become identified during his second career as a businessman. In the political centre, opposition leader Yair Lapid called the move “important”

and sent “blessings to Netanyahu and Trump.”

However, the Israeli right protested the terms of the deal. “Netanyahu missed an opportunity that comes once in a hundred years,” said former defence minister Naftali Bennett, referring to the shelving of the West Bank sovereignty plans.

Bennett’s position is pivotal, since his Yemina party, which now holds a mere six Knesset seats, had been forecast to treble its following at the time news of the peace deal broke.

Netanyahu and the Likud, at the same time, had plunged from 36 to 30 seats in the polls, reflecting dismay with the government’s handling of the coronavirus pandemic and the recession it caused.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu has been flirting with the possibility of an early election, the fourth within less than two years, hoping to perhaps restore the right-wing coalition he headed before election results forced him into a coalition with the centrist Blue and White party, and to forestall his agreement to turn over the premiership to Blue and White leader Benny Gantz in October next year.

Ultimately, legislation passed on Aug. 24 extended a legal deadline to pass a budget, thus averting a fourth gen-

eral election within 20 months. However, Likud and Blue and White must still hammer out and jointly pass a budget by Dec. 31 if their coalition is to remain intact.

Netanyahu kept Blue and White’s leaders, Defence Minister Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, largely in the dark about his talks with MBZ, informing them about the agreement only on the day it was made public.

Netanyahu apparently wanted the popular move to be seen as his personal and exclusive achievement.

Yet recent polls suggest the peace deal offset Netanyahu’s declining political fortunes only marginally, with Likud rising slightly at Bennett’s expense.

If Netanyahu indeed intends to use the peace deal as a springboard to call an early election after the December deadline, he will be gambling on diplomatic optimism overpowering pandemic pessimism. That would be a brave throw of the dice, since voters might conclude that, even if Netanyahu alone is responsible for the new friend Israel has gained, then he is also the one responsible for the jobs so many Israelis have lost.

AIR

## UAE-ISRAEL DEAL CHALLENGES MIDEAST RADICALS

by Yaakov Lappin

The peace agreement between the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Israel is an important boost to the formation of a strategic Middle Eastern alliance between Israel and moderate Sunni states.

The pact takes Israel’s central role in cooperating with Sunni Arab states out of the shadows. A boost to regional stability, the peace agreement will enable expanded cooperation on defence and intelligence affairs, trade, investment and joint technological development, and could foster a positive religious-cultural dialogue.

No less importantly, it also deals a blow to two radical Islamist forces that are determined to destabilise the region, threatening Israel and Sunni-Arab countries alike. The deal threatens these forces’ ability to control the region’s dialogue about Israel’s presence and Islam, and challenges to some extent their ability to promote a dark vision for the future.

The Iranian-Shi’ite axis is the first of those radical forces that stands to lose from the agreement. Iran and its armed proxies – militant, well-armed Shi’ite militias deployed across Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen – have reacted vehemently to news of the pact, reflecting deep

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concern over its implications.

The second force concerned about the agreement is the Muslim Brotherhood camp, which is led by Turkey, and includes Hamas, Qatar and hard-line Sunni political Islamists across the region.

Both the Iranian axis and the Muslim Brotherhood camp are inherently threatened by the UAE-Israel pact, since it challenges their ideology and the justification they provide for their destabilising actions.

"The [Iranian] regime fears the emergence of a new international alliance that will have greater power to contain its hegemonic regional aspirations, and there is a new urgency to the need to prove to the Iranian people that the government's imperialist foreign policy works to their benefit," said Doron Itzchakov, an Iran specialist from the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

Itzchakov explained that the Iranian regime's leadership is "covering its embarrassment and apprehension with a stream of defamation and threats," including a statement by Iranian Parliament Speaker Muhammad Bakr Qalibaf, who called the agreement "despicable and a betrayal of human and Islamic values," and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who warned the UAE's leaders "not to open their gates" to Israel.

Israel and several Sunni Arab states share a vision of the threat the Iranian axis poses, a fact that has helped to push the Gulf states closer to Israel.

Cities and strategic sites in Saudi Arabia have come under missile fire from the Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen, which, like Hezbollah, are armed by the Iranian Quds Force. The Houthis claimed to have fired a cruise missile at the UAE's nuclear power plant in 2017 (though the UAE said no missile targeted its plant). Both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have been engaged in a bloody war with the Houthis, although the UAE withdrew its forces from southern Yemen last year.

Several ships docked at UAE ports were sabotaged last year in attacks widely attributed to Iranian forces, and the Islamic Republic has repeatedly threatened the Gulf states' ability to export oil.

The Gulf states clearly recognise that the threat posed by Iran's quest for hegemony is the same threat that is seeking to turn Syria into a network of missile bases that target Israeli cities. They see that the Iranian axis has already turned Lebanon into a frontline Iranian military attack post that threatens Israel with 130,000 projectiles, and is active throughout the region to subvert and threaten

countries in its way. Iran has repeatedly sought to destabilise and set up terror networks in Bahrain.

The recognition of these common interests led the foreign minister of the UAE, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to state in 2019 that Israel was justified in attacking Iranian targets in Syria.

"Every nation has the right to defend itself, when it's challenged by another nation, yes," he said, when asked about Israeli strikes.

**T**he formation of a Middle Eastern coalition of states that views radical Islamist actors as severe threats could mean enhanced coordination and the sharing of intelligence as well as defence technology.

Israel is a world leader in the development and deployment of drones and cyber defence systems, while its

intelligence-gathering capabilities on Iranian activities are well known throughout the region. Such assets could be shared with the UAE – a fact that nearby Iran will surely be displeased about. The possibility that a succession of other Gulf states, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, will eventually follow the UAE's path will also disturb the Ayatollah's regime and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The Muslim Brotherhood camp, for its part, is also vehemently opposed to the agreement because it weakens its regional position. Sunni Islamists have long accused Arab governments of seeking normalisation with Israel, and instead of denying the claim, the UAE has emerged to own it, in a bold manoeuvre that pushes back against the radical rhetoric.

Hamas Political Bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh condemned not only the pact, but also Egypt's support for it, describing the agreement as "a violation of Arab and Islamic consensus as well as a stab in the backs of the Palestinian people."

The UAE and Turkey are rival states, and Turkey, which has become increasingly hostile to Israel and hosts Hamas operatives on its soil, has threatened to suspend ties with the Gulf state.

The UAE and other Gulf countries view Turkey as part of the Muslim Brotherhood club that rejects their moderate interpretation of Islam and drive to create prosperity and stability in the Middle East.

Qatar, which is sympathetic to the Muslim Brotherhood, but which also hedges its bets and maintains low profile unofficial ties with Israel, has been involved in a



Turkish President Erdogan and Iranian President Rouhani: The UAE-Israel deal will be a blow to the Sunni and Shi'ite Islamist blocs that Turkey and Iran lead



two-year diplomatic crisis with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, both of which accused Doha of supporting terrorism.

According to the Saudi-owned *Al Arabiya* news agency, Qatar has in recent days launched a massive campaign to influence Arab public opinion via media channels it funds, primarily *Al Jazeera*, against the landmark UAE-Israel agreement.

Ultimately, the UAE's decision to normalise ties with Israel has alarmed Islamists, and put them on the defensive.

AIR

*Yaakov Lappin is a military and strategic affairs journalist and is defence correspondent for the Jewish News Syndicate. His book, The Virtual Caliphate, explores the online jihadist presence. © The Investigative Project on Terrorism (www.investigativeproject.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## THE PALESTINIANS AND THE UAE DEAL

by Haviv Rettig Gur

**P**alestinian leaders worked hard developing a response to the announcement of the normalisation of ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates on August 13.

Their options were limited. Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh was reduced to announcing Palestine would now boycott the Dubai Expo scheduled for October 2021.

As Mahmoud Habbash, adviser to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, complained on Aug. 17, even the Arab League and multinational Muslim organisations seem to have been struck dumb by the agreement.

"Is this the Arab nation?" he demanded in an interview on Palestinian television, vowing that any Arab who visits Israel on a pilgrimage to Al-Aqsa will be met at the holy site with "the shoes and spit of the people of Jerusalem." The Arab world's "shameful" silence, he contended, "shows we face a conspiracy with many participants."

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Moments of profound frustration can spark anger and inspire conspiracy theories, but it's not a conspiracy that has the Palestinians over a barrel. It is a long-delayed reckoning with one of the most bitter facts of their situation: that the Arab world has always been more concerned with Palestine as a symbol than with Palestinians as human beings.

The vision of "colonialist" Israelis stampeding over a weak, hapless Arab people was for many Arab thinkers and political leaders a stand-in for anxieties about the larger and older Arab weakness in the face of Turkish and European dominion and imperialism. Nowhere was Arab weakness in the modern age reified more viscerally than in the slow-moving but seemingly implacable failure of the Palestinian cause.

It should therefore come as no surprise, least of all to Palestinians, that the Arabs' fervent declarations of loyalty to Palestine never translated into meaningful succour for Palestinians, whether in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or in the communities of refugees and their descendants scattered throughout the region and variously denied social services, citizenship and even the right to own land by the countries in which they have resided for seven long decades.

The Palestinian national movement is now at a crossroads. To be sure, the Arab world still cares about the Palestinians, sometimes deeply. But the Palestinian story has nevertheless shrunk from representing a broader Arab story to a tragedy that affects only the Palestinians, and in the process lost its grip on Arab policymaking. The oil-rich Gulf states are now respected global business hubs that view the West not as an oppressor or competing civilisation, but as a target for investment and a source of stability. The new threats that loom over the Arab world are regional – Iran, Turkey, Islamist factions of various sorts – or deeply local, from corruption to sectoral strife. The Arab world has changed, the Palestinian narrative has not.

### HANIYEH'S DEMAND

Then, too, there is the sheer intractability of the conflict. One doesn't need to like Israel to appreciate that Palestinian politics, from Hamas' rejectionism to Fatah's corruption, are a wrench in the works for the Palestinian cause.

In a July 26 interview with Qatar's *Lusail News*, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh revealed something important about the interaction between Palestinian political factions and the broader Arab world.

"Parties, who we know are on the payroll of certain superpowers" – an apparent reference to wealthy Gulf states – "came to us, and offered to establish new projects in the Gaza Strip to the tune of perhaps US\$15 billion," he said, according to a translation by MEMRI.

Those projects included a lifting of the Israeli-Egyptian blockade on the beleaguered territory, an airport and a seaport.

“We said to them: ‘That’s great. We want an airport and a seaport, and we want to break the siege on the Gaza Strip. This is a Palestinian demand, but what are we supposed to give in return?’”

The answer: “They want us to disband the military wings of the factions, and incorporate them into the police force. Naturally, we completely rejected that offer.... We want these things because we are entitled to them and not in exchange for relinquishing our political principles, our resistance, or our weapons.”

The interviewer asked, “What are your political principles?”



Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh: We turned down a port, an airport, an end to the Gaza blockade and US\$15 billion out of rejectionist “principles”

Haniyeh’s reply: “We will not recognise Israel, Palestine must stretch from the river to the sea, the right of return [must be fulfilled], the prisoners must be set free, and a fully sovereign Palestinian state must be established with Jerusalem as its capital.”

Haniyeh did not seem to reflect seriously on what he was acknowledging. It makes sense that the wealthy parts of the Arab world would try to buy their way free of the Palestinian issue, since it no longer resonates as a question of identity. Those who now seek to ally with Israel against Iran or to partner with the Jewish state on commerce and technology are willing to shower the Palestinians with cash not for the Palestinians’ welfare, but to make the political problem they represent go away.

Haniyeh’s response to that desire was a simple demand for Israel’s complete disappearance, a response that probably sounded to his would-be benefactors like a demand that all the benefits that may accrue to Arab states from a relationship with Israel must be subordinated to a Palestinian narrative they no longer really identify with, and to the needs of Palestinian factions they no longer respect.

It is now mostly in Islamist religious politics that one still finds intense ideological anxieties about the Palestinian question. It’s no accident Hamas now finds its main patrons in Ankara and Teheran. To the present-day leaders of Turkey

and Iran, the Palestinian condition symbolises something important about the standing and trajectory of the Muslim world. Their support is thus assured for the time being, though only for the part of Palestinian politics raising the Islamist banner.

## HAMAS VS. THE FRENCH

The Emirati decision to normalise relations with Israel is thus a kind of liberation from the Palestinian question. To the desperate frustration of the Palestinians, the Emiratis don’t even seem embarrassed by it.

Yet in the normalisation deal lies a lesson for the Palestinians. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who negotiated the agreement from the Emirati side, has demonstrated a key point about dealing with Israelis, a point the Palestinian factions, who spend surprisingly little time seriously studying how Israeli Jews think and feel, have yet to grasp. It is so simple it can seem cartoonish: To change Israeli Jews’ behaviour, you must convince them they have something to lose.

A better way to put it might be that Israelis must be made to believe they have something to gain that could compensate for all they might lose.

Israelis – forgive the generalisation, there are many kinds of Israelis with all kinds of views, but the term serves for the moment to describe the very large majority of them – do not actually believe that Palestinian politics are capable of offering them peace. That’s not just a convenient conceit, it’s a real, driving assumption for most Israelis when they come to think about the conflict with the Palestinians.

And it’s rooted in long and painful experience. Israeli withdrawals in recent decades have nearly all ended in waves of terrorism and violence so intense that they fundamentally altered Israeli voting patterns. After the Second Intifada began in 2000, Israel experienced the lowest voter turnout in its history. The left hasn’t won an election since 1999 because of the hundreds of terror attacks that struck Israeli cities in that intifada. The debate overseas about Israelis and Palestinians tends to forget the bloodletting; Israelis have not forgotten.

The point here isn’t just that Palestinians seem to Israelis to reciprocate territorial withdrawals – whether those of the Oslo agreements in the 1990s or from Gaza in 2005 – with massive violence. It is that Israelis no longer believe a withdrawal could possibly produce any other outcome except massive violence.

While the world’s attention focuses on Mahmoud Abbas and his commitment to security cooperation with Israel, Israelis are more liable to notice that Abbas is in the 14th year of a four-year term – and won’t call elections because he knows he will lose them to Hamas.

That is, Hamas is the future. Any political vacuum Israel leaves behind in a new withdrawal will be filled by the



terror group that has already transformed Gaza into the beleaguered battleground of its ideological war.

It hardly helps that Abbas' Fatah movement has responded to the fading of the Palestinian cause by trying to cleave closer to Hamas. Fatah invited Hamas to a special leadership summit following the UAE announcement. That's no accident. When the chips are down, Hamas is the only one of the two major Palestinian factions with a meaningful story to tell about the Palestinian condition.

Hamas views the conflict with Israel not as ethnic strife between two peoples, but as a version of the Algerian war against French colonialists in the 1950s and '60s. That was a bloody war, Hamas teaches in its sermons and school-rooms, and the more the French bled, the faster they withdrew. It's a powerful narrative that counsels patience and encourages especially cruel forms of terrorism against Israelis.

But in clinging to the colonialist interpretation of the conflict, Hamas has ignored a few pertinent facts about Israeli Jews that should have made it question the wisdom of its policy of permanent belligerence.

For example, unlike those French Algerians, Israeli Jews have nowhere to go. That's not a minor point. When you kill the children of someone who believes they can leave, they tend to leave. But when you target the children of someone who believes they have nowhere to go, the response tends to be the opposite.

Haniyeh turned down billions in aid for Gaza and rejected a lifting of the blockade, all in the service of a strategy that still insists – as he explained explicitly – that Israel can be dismantled. He does not stop to consider the possibility that his opponent is not French, has nowhere to go, and therefore that his strategy of permanent war is more likely to decimate Palestine than to hurt Israel.

## NEW OPTIONS

The global campaign for the Palestinians likes to think it models itself on the campaign around South Africa or on the US civil rights movement. It's a conceit that allows it, like Haniyeh, to carefully sidestep facts that don't fit the narrative. But the sidestepping of facts rarely delivers the desired outcome.

Israelis are inoculated to the boycotts and howling moral indignation of foreigners not because they are braver or perhaps dumber than other peoples similarly chastised by foreign activists, but because no boycott, however ferociously pursued, can bring more psychological pressure to bear than the costs Hamas vows to extract from Israel after a withdrawal.

Whether Israelis are correct in the lessons they draw from the failures of past withdrawals is a valid question, but the point here is simpler: those lessons are what now stands in the way of Palestinian independence. The most

stubborn obstacle to that independence lies in Israeli Jews' certainty, justified or not, that they have only violence and pain to gain from more withdrawals, and so have little to lose, relatively speaking, from refusing to do so.

## THE UAE LEFT THE PALESTINIANS BEHIND

Then came the Emiratis. A fascinating poll conducted by Direct Polls for Israel's *Channel 12* revealed the dramatic effect on Israeli opinion and politics that a sliver of hope could bring.

Asked explicitly whether they preferred the normalisation deal with the United Arab Emirates to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's promised extension of Israeli sovereignty to areas of the West Bank (the Emiratis conditioned the deal on stopping the "annexation"), fully 77% of Israelis preferred the peace agreement with the UAE. Just 16.5% favoured "annexation."

Even among self-described right-wingers, Netanyahu's constituency, the Emirati deal won handily, with a whopping 64% to 28%.

If a May poll found a plurality of Israelis – 45% – in support of extending sovereignty (with 32% opposed), the Sunday poll revealed how weak that support really was. Just 16.5% of Israelis continued to favour "annexation" when it meant losing a normalisation deal, even if it was with a distant Arab state that has never threatened them.

Palestinians lost a great deal on Aug. 13. They weren't "betrayed," as some PA leaders have complained, but simply left behind. They didn't lose vital allies who cared deeply for their cause, but one-time supporters who still vaguely support them but are tired of the intractability of their cause.

Palestinian leaders and activists may gall at the prospect, but the Emirati initiative demonstrates one thing above all: if they wish to change Israeli policy and behaviour, they must convincingly explain to Israelis that a withdrawal is not the catastrophe-in-waiting that so many expect. The Palestinians must give the Israelis something to lose, or rather something to gain that might justify the risk of abandoning some significant portion of the West Bank highlands to – not to belabour the point – a people that declares itself their bitter foes.

The Palestinians don't have much to offer Israel, except the one thing they've always had and that Israelis have consistently wanted from them: an end to the self-destructive Algerian war.

If that happened, Israel's newfound friends would likely be delighted to throw an airport, seaport and US\$15 billion into the bargain – out of sheer relief.

AIR

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# Israel Energised

## Security and diplomatic implications of Israeli gas production

by Jack Gross

The latest energy news from the Middle East marks an important turning point in Israel's energy security and diplomatic situation.

On July 20, American energy company Chevron agreed to purchase Noble Energy, a smaller US-based petroleum and gas company, for US\$5 billion (A\$7 billion). Noble Energy is the operator of Israel's largest natural gas field, Leviathan, and has other investments in the eastern Mediterranean. Chevron's presence in Israel adds legitimacy to Israel's claim to be a significant energy producer and may attract future investments from other energy companies. The deal also indicates that the eastern Mediterranean gas discoveries are large enough for a giant like Chevron to enter into the region.

Years ago, no large oil company would have dared to work with Israel over fears of boycotts from oil-producing Arab states. In fact, in 1957 Royal Dutch Shell stopped exporting oil to Israel after Saudi Arabia threatened to cancel contracts with the company if it did not. Now Chevron, which has investments in a number of projects in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, is investing in Israel's energy economy. A powerhouse like Chevron would never have offered this deal if it feared losing business with its Arab partners. The Chevron deal thus offers an outlook into the changing energy politics of the Middle East, and Israel's role within that strategic landscape. This article will highlight some of the most important energy developments in the region and how Israel has leveraged its discoveries for diplomatic and security benefits.

### NEW DISCOVERIES, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

For years, Israel was an energy importing country surrounded by hostile, energy rich Arab nations. The tide began to turn in 1999 when Noble Energy and the Israel-based Delek Group discovered the Noa Gas field 40 kilometres off the coast of Ashkelon in the Mediterranean

Sea. Since then, more than 840 billion cubic metres of gas have been found off the shores of Israel, the largest deposits being the Tamar and Leviathan gas fields (estimated to be worth more than US\$132.65 billion or A\$185 billion). The Leviathan gas field became operational on Dec. 31, 2019. There have been other gas fields discovered throughout Israel's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the eastern Mediterranean, as well as in the EEZ of neighbouring Cyprus. The benefits of Israel's emergence as an energy producer are two-fold: helping to advance diplomatic goals and improving national energy security.

Following the discovery of gas in the eastern Mediterranean there were many debates over whether Israel should



Gas production in the Mediterranean is providing diplomatic and strategic opportunities for Israel, as well as economic ones

implement an export focused policy or if it should prioritise retaining supplies for domestic use. Dr. Eran Lerman, who served as the deputy director for foreign policy and international affairs at the National Security Council in the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, argued for an export-focused policy to maximise the benefits of the discoveries. "What drove me, and still does, was a vision of regional integration not unlike what ultimately transpired as the

[Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum] later, and specifically the need to cement the common interests of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Cyprus and Greece: primarily for strategic reasons – common enemies! – but also in terms of re-defining the multi-coloured East Med, rather than the volatile and largely hostile 'Middle East' as our place in the world," Lerman said.

A primarily export-focused policy has indeed been implemented to strategically leverage Israel's energy discoveries. Newly developed energy partnerships have strengthened existing relations with regional allies, including Egypt, and become the foundation for new partnerships and forums. Meanwhile, Israel's emergence as an energy producer has also enhanced regional and national energy security overall.

### WILL THE EASTMED PIPELINE EVER BE BUILT?

The European Union is watching with interest the development of Israel's eastern Mediterranean natural gas fields. Europe-Israel relations remain strong at an economic level, while political relations have been mixed. Currently, many EU member states are dependent on natural gas and other fossil fuels from Russia for their energy needs, giving Moscow potential leverage over European policies. The EU imports approximately 40.1% of

its natural gas, 29.8% of its crude oil and 42.3% of its coal from Russia. The EU also imports a considerable amount of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from politically unstable countries, such as Nigeria and Algeria.

EU-Israeli energy trade could take place in two ways: through a proposed eastern Mediterranean subsea gas pipeline, known as the EastMed pipeline, or via LNG exported by tankers from Egypt. The EastMed pipeline would connect Israel's energy sector to the European Union and would incorporate EU member Cyprus into the EU natural gas network, a longtime goal of the EU. If investment is secured, the pipeline could be completed by 2025 and would be the longest underwater pipeline in the world. The cost is estimated to be over €5.2 billion (A\$11.8 billion). On June 18, Israel, Cyprus and Greece signed an official agreement on building the pipeline. At the signing, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu referred to the cooperation between the three nations as "a real alliance in the eastern Mediterranean" for diplomatic, security, and economic affairs, and also invited other nations to join the alliance.

While the EastMed pipeline would change the geopolitical landscape of the region, investors reportedly remain sceptical about the feasibility of the deal. Furthermore, the Italian government, one of the project's expected primary financiers, has not signed any agreement or made any commitment to the funding of the project. As things currently stand, it would be difficult to envision the construction of the pipeline anytime soon given its hefty price tag and lack of investors.

EU commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to increase renewable energy production may also play a role in the planning of the proposed pipeline. Reaching the EU's renewable energy goals will take large financial investments, so building a multi-billion-dollar pipeline at the same time may not seem like a viable decision.

The EU has certainly made it a goal to diversify European energy imports to release itself from dependence on Russia. However, the natural gas that Israel would be able to provide is insufficient to offer more than a marginal contribution to European domestic demands.

Moreover, innovations in hydro-fracking and the growth of production in the US have brought the price of natural gas down to all-time lows. Energy expert Simon Henderson, Baker Fellow at the Washington Institute, told *AIR*, "I think the pipeline is unlikely to ever be built. It's currently dependent not on government approvals, but on commercial viability. Such a pipeline costs 6 to 7 billion [US] dollars to build." He added that, "the price of natural gas going through the pipeline is not even enough to pay for it and be profitable at the other end."

Israel's energy discoveries will likely have larger impacts in other markets closer to home.

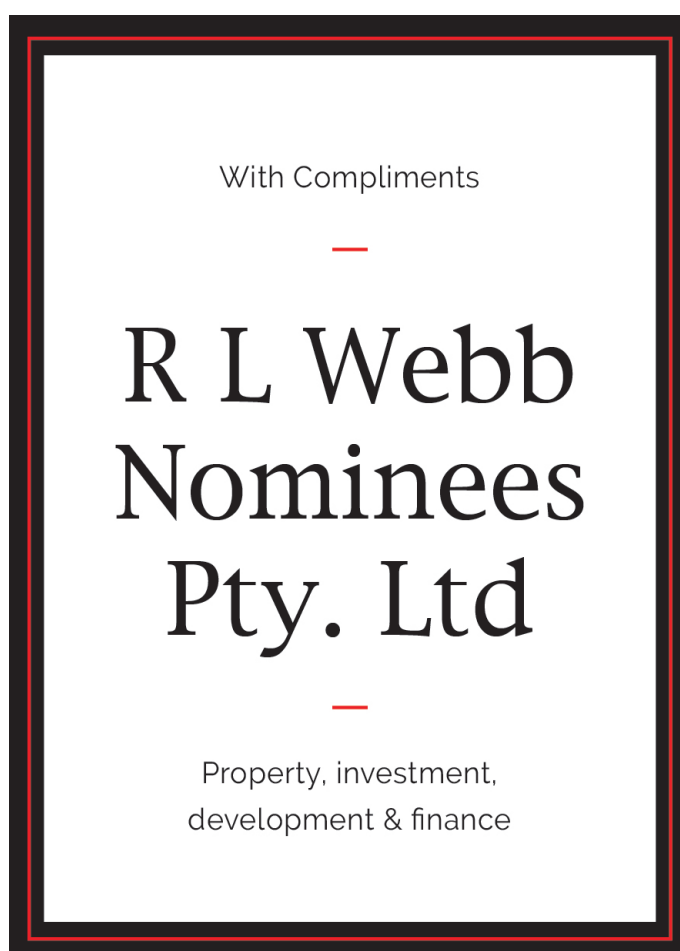
## EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS

Another important landmark in Israel's emergence as an energy producer is the development of a recognised regional grouping of nations in the eastern Mediterranean. One of Israel's main interests in the region has been to improve relations with Greece and Cyprus. Israel has long seen the Mediterranean as an attractive region, for coalition building and security, even before energy discoveries provided an additional basis for such cooperation.

Indeed, regional partnerships amongst Israel, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Jordan and Italy ultimately led to the establishment of the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF). The EMGF foundational charter was signed on Jan. 16, 2020 in Cairo, creating a platform for eastern Mediterranean gas policy discussion and coordination. The forum aims to develop a regional market for energy sales and coordinate the construction of infrastructure.

The formation of the EMGF is especially important for Israel's diplomatic strategy. Israel has arguably never before been integrated into a similar small, regional and multi-lateral forum. Now, Israel is playing a central role in the EMGF as one of the largest regional natural gas producers and a leader in innovation. Israel's emergence as a vital regional partner correlates with the improvement of its ties to Cyprus and Greece since 2016.

Representatives from the US and the EU were present at the signing of the EMGF. The US has requested to be a







There is much turmoil in the Mediterranean at the moment because Turkey, with help from its Libyan client government, is seeking to overturn the generally accepted distribution of maritime economic zones

permanent observer of the grouping and France has joined as a permanent member. Israel's strong relations with Greece and Cyprus also serve Israel very well in improving Jerusalem's standing politically within the EU.

These nations are linked together by a common interest in the exploitation of natural gas fields, security cooperation, development of a gas market, and most importantly, opposition to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's aggressive behaviour in the eastern Mediterranean, the most significant current threat to eastern Mediterranean security and energy development.

On Nov. 28, 2019, the Turkish Government and Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) under Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, which is supported by Turkey, signed a memorandum of understanding that established a shared maritime EEZ that purports to create a contiguous maritime boundary that completely traverses the Mediterranean Sea.

When creating the EEZ, the Turks ignored the existence of the Greek island of Crete, as well as many others. These islands give Greece a strong claim under interna-

tional maritime law to much of the territory claimed under the new Turkish-Libyan maritime agreement. If legal, the Turkish-Libyan EEZ would give these two countries exclusive rights to precious eastern Mediterranean hydrocarbons and would exclude any other eastern Mediterranean nation from developing infrastructure within the EEZ's boundary without Turkey's permission and participation, including the EastMed pipeline. Turkey's goal in creating this EEZ together with its Libyan client appears to be to block

Israel, Egypt, and Cyprus from reaching European natural gas markets without Turkey getting a share of the profits.

To combat the Turkish-Libyan EEZ, on Aug. 6, 2020, Greece and Egypt signed an agreement delineating EEZs in the eastern Mediterranean, which would practically nullify the Libyan-Turkish EEZ. On Aug. 12, the Government of Israel published a statement in support of the Greek-Egyptian agreement.

In direct response to the Greek-Egyptian EEZ, on Aug. 10, Turkish warships escorted the seismic research vessel Oruç Reis to a spot in the eastern Mediterranean claimed by both Greece and Turkey. The following day, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias announced that Greece would "defend its sovereignty and its rights." Turkish aggression in energy exploration and development at the expense of its neighbours is raising the risk of Greco-Turkish conflict to the highest level it has been in decades.

In the charter of the EMGF, the founding member states made it clear that any eastern Mediterranean country with similar goals could join the forum. While currently not a member of the EMGF, if Erdogan's Turkey were to sign on to the members' common goals for energy development, Turkey could be invited into the forum. However, the current geopolitical landscape signals that this likely won't be happening any time soon.

## EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ENERGY COOPERATION

Israel's new energy supplies may have the most impact in Egyptian markets. On Jan. 15, 2020, Egypt agreed to purchase US\$19.5 billion (AU\$27 billion) of natural gas from the Leviathan and Tamar gas fields. The deal, noted as one of the most important Israel-Egypt agreements since Camp David in 1979, improves both bilateral relations and mutual energy security.



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In the early 2000s, the Egyptians also discovered large offshore hydrocarbon fields and made investments in transnational pipelines, two LNG terminals, and energy infrastructure. Since then, Egypt has become one of the region's largest exporters of LNG.

Egypt began exporting natural gas to Jordan in 2003 via the Arab Gas Pipeline. An underwater extension of the pipeline that connects el-Arish, Egypt to Ashkelon, Israel was completed in Feb. 2008, after Egypt agreed to supply Israel with 2.1 billion cubic metres of gas per year. By 2010, the new pipeline was supplying Israel with over 40% of its energy needs.

However, following the Arab Spring in 2011, a section of the el-Arish-Ashkelon pipeline was repeatedly blown up, causing temporary gas shortages in Israel. The pipeline ceased operation in 2012 following further explosions and sabotage, as well as gas shortages in Egypt. It still faces similar terror threats as the Sinai Peninsula remains a hotbed for Islamist activity.

Egypt intends using the Israeli gas it will now be importing both for domestic use and to re-export to the world as LNG.

Israel's new energy partnership with Egypt is beneficial to both countries. For Egypt, Israeli natural gas is cheap, readily available, and local, increasing and diversifying Egypt's gas supplies. On the other hand, Israel is able to export surplus gas and grow its energy economy.

Throughout recent years, Egypt's insecure energy infrastructure has been subject to terror threats and extreme heat resulting in frequent blackouts. These factors, coupled with one of the fastest population growth rates in the world, puts extreme stress on local power infrastructure. The COVID-19 pandemic has put even more stress on Egypt's already unstable broader economy. Israel has a national interest in ensuring Egypt's security and stability, which in turn provides Israel with security and helps with Jerusalem's drive towards regional cooperation.

According to leading Israeli economics reporter and *AIR* Israel correspondent Amotz Asa-El, "There is no doubt that the energy relationship between Israel and Egypt has helped pacify the bilateral relations between Jerusalem and Cairo over the decades."

Egypt is preoccupied with many other security threats and cannot afford to risk its partnership with Israel. Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia have been feuding over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam across the Nile, which could lead to water and nutrient shortages downstream in Egypt. To the west, Egypt faces challenges posed by the patron-client relationship between the GNA Libyan government and Turkey. Egypt needs Israel as a partner for security, intelligence, economic, and now energy cooperation. Israeli-

Egyptian ties have thus never been stronger than they are today, and energy cooperation is an important reason why.

## ENERGY-STARVED JORDAN

Historically, Jordan has experienced similar energy security problems to Israel. Jordan has been dependent on energy imports to meet domestic demand. According to the US Energy Information Administration, Jordan's energy imports meet 90% of domestic demand and make up over 40% of the country's annual budget. A large portion of Jordanian natural gas imports come from Egypt via the Arab Gas Pipeline. On many occasions, natural gas supply from Egypt has been cut off due to pipeline disruptions.

In September 2016, Jordan's National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) signed an agreement with Noble Energy to purchase US\$10 billion (AU\$14 billion) worth of natural gas. The first pipeline was constructed in 2017 around the Sodom area near the Dead Sea, aiming to supply private customers with gas from the Tamar field. A second pipeline from Beit She'an will provide NEPCO with gas from the Leviathan field. Jordan received its first supplies of Israeli natural gas in January this year.

Asa-El told *AIR*, "Recent development absolutely fortifies the quiet but significant economic relationship between Israel and Jordan as a dimension to their relationship, but until now has been mainly about Israel supplying Jordan with

water and Israeli firms creating low-tech jobs in Jordan and now a very important energy development."

As expected, there has been heavy pushback from the Jordanian public against the energy agreement. Publicly, Jordanians have been very critical of the energy deal, as well as any cooperation with the Jewish state. However, on the ground and behind the scenes, the neighbours cooperate on a number of issues and Israel is a vital partner to Jordan. Simon Henderson noted that "Israeli gas provides a foundation for the Jordanian economy and it is also useful in diplomatic terms as it binds Israel and Jordan together."

## BORDER DISPUTES WITH LEBANON

Israeli offshore natural gas development is challenged by Hezbollah, the Iranian proxy terror group that dominates Lebanon.

For decades, Lebanon and Israel have been disputing an 860 square kilometre triangle of water, based on different claims concerning the angle of the maritime boundary from the coast. The maritime boundary dispute gained more significance in 2009 when major natural gas fields were discovered between Israel and Cyprus. The contested territory, which is expected to contain valuable natural gas supplies, could help jumpstart Lebanon's devastated economy or further expand Israel's energy development portfolio.

**"Israel's diplomatic achievements through its natural gas discoveries are part of a larger campaign to normalise and improve relations with its neighbours"**



However, after years of little progress even with US mediation, recent reports indicate that Lebanon may today be willing to resolve the boundary dispute in line with previous compromises proposed by the US. The devastating explosion at Beirut Port on Aug. 4 left Lebanon in disarray. Thousands took to the streets to protest the deteriorating living conditions in Lebanon and the corruption of the ruling elite. In response to the protests, Lebanese leaders including President Michel Aoun have expressed eagerness to finally put an end to the conflict. Energy discoveries could be critical to supporting the crippled Lebanese economy, but there could be trouble moving ahead with exploiting these as long as the maritime boundary is disputed.

## TERROR THREATS

When analyzing Israeli energy policy and infrastructure, it's imperative to mention the many terror threats that complicate the picture. Today, nearly every inch of Israel is vulnerable to rocket threats from terrorists in Lebanon, Gaza or Syria, including offshore energy infrastructure. According to Henderson, "for Israel there's the additional complication which they don't particularly want to talk about publicly ... any such structure whether onshore or offshore is vulnerable to military action or terrorist action from Gaza or the south of Lebanon. Any part of Israel is within rocket range of hostile forces. Such missiles at one point had bad accuracy, but these days they have greater accuracy."

Israel also faces cyber threats that could heavily disrupt energy production, refining and transportation.

To counter this threat, Israel has invested millions of dollars in protecting vulnerable infrastructure with navy vessels and private guards. Israel's Iron Dome missile defence system has also been proven to be successful in intercepting projectiles over water.

## CONCLUSION

Israel's diplomatic achievements through its natural gas discoveries are part of a larger campaign to normalise and improve relations with its neighbours. Most recently,

on Aug. 13, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the third Arab state and the first Gulf state to normalise relations with Israel. The landmark peace agreement, called the Abraham Accords, has been followed by reported talks of peace negotiations with Bahrain, Oman, and Sudan.

This new development marks a milestone in a very important shift in regional power dynamics, in which most Sunni Arab states view Iran and its many proxies as a greater threat to regional and national security than Israel – which is increasingly seen as potentially a valuable ally.

Political developments within the Mediterranean also reflect trends taking place across the region toward rethinking traditional enmity with Israel and looking at mutual interests that may be shared with the Jewish state. The potential for energy cooperation, on top of security and economic benefits, is certainly an important contributor to that rethink. Israel has leveraged its energy discoveries to advance its standing within the eastern Mediterranean through the creation of the EMGF, building strong new partnerships with Greece, Cyprus and Italy, and potentially beyond, and helping to conceive a whole new eastern Mediterranean regional bloc of nations. In addition, new economic partnerships with neighbours Egypt and Jordan are changing historically "cold peaces" with those countries into much more fundamental and stable partnerships. AIR

## THE UN DEBATES A ZOMBIE AGREEMENT

by James Carafano, James Phillips and Brett D. Schaefer

**T**he United Nations Security Council has been plunged into a momentous debate as the US Trump Administration seeks to kill the 2015 Iran nuclear deal once and for all by invoking "snapback" sanctions.

Despite the US withdrawal in 2018 from the Iran nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and multiple violations of the agreement by Iran, the agreement remains on life support.

That's because other parties to the nuclear deal benefit from continuing the sham, and hope that the deal can be cemented in place if Democratic nominee and former Vice President Joe Biden is elected US president in November.

Despite its violations, Iran values the nuclear deal because it schedules elimination of UN sanctions and would legitimise its illicit nuclear program.

China and Russia hope to sell arms to Iran after the UN arms embargo is lifted under the deal. Both value Iran as a destabilising, anti-Western actor in the Middle East that consumes US attention and resources.

The Europeans also remain wedded to the deal, partly



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in anticipation of future commercial opportunities in Iran. They also fear that confronting Iran on its violations would lead Iran to resume its nuclear program, which wilfully ignores evidence that Iran has never abandoned those ambitions.

These disparate interests have led the other parties to ignore Iran's violations and oppose US efforts to hold Iran accountable. This myopic view poses a threat to peace and security in the Middle East, which is why the Gulf Cooperation Council had urged the UN Security Council to extend the arms embargo on Iran, scheduled to expire in October under the nuclear deal.

The unwillingness to punish Iran for its violations is an abdication of responsibility on the part of the Security Council and compels the US to force the issue.

## AN INEFFECTIVE AGREEMENT

The zombie nuclear agreement, which is dead but not buried, was flawed from the beginning. The deal did more to legitimise Iran as a threshold nuclear power and dismantle US and UN sanctions on Iran than it did to dismantle Iran's illicit nuclear program.

None of the clandestine nuclear facilities built in violation of Iran's nuclear non-proliferation commitments were permanently dismantled under the deal – only temporarily repurposed.

Even if Iran had abided by the terms of the nuclear deal, the agreement's key restrictions on Iran's uranium enrichment program expire after 15 years. These "sunset clauses" leave Teheran free to ramp up enrichment to an industrial scale and position itself for a sprint to a nuclear breakout at its own convenience.

But Iran never intended to abide by the agreement. Iran's nuclear archive, a huge trove of official Iranian documents exposed in a major 2018 coup by Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, proved that Iran never declared the full extent of its nuclear weapons program and never abandoned it. The Islamist regime merely restructured, downsized, and concealed the nuclear program.

The nuclear archive exposed the shortcomings of the deal's inspection requirements, the sunset clauses on major nuclear limitations, and the failure to address Iran's continued work on nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles.

The nuclear archive also indicates that Iran likely was in breach of its nuclear non-proliferation commitments even before it began openly violating the nuclear agreement in 2019.

Since then, Teheran has publicly violated many aspects of the nuclear agreement, including:

- Surpassing the deal's limits on in-country stockpiles of low enriched uranium of 300 kilograms.

- Exceeding the deal's limits on the degree of enrichment of uranium.

- Increasing the number of centrifuges enriching uranium beyond the allowed number.

- Using advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium, which were not approved by the agreement, at the Natanz enrichment complex in nuclear research and development programs.

- Beginning the enrichment of uranium at facilities beyond its main enrichment plant at Natanz by introducing uranium gas into the centrifuges at the fortified underground Fordow enrichment facility, which ostensibly was repurposed under the deal as only for research.

- Surpassing 130 metric tons of heavy water at Iran's heavy water production plant at Arak.



Iran is openly violating the JCPOA nuclear agreement at its main enrichment plant at Natanz, as well as other sites

## SUNSET OF THE UN ARMS EMBARGO

Most immediately, the Iran nuclear agreement included a misguided concession: the expiration of the UN arms embargo against Iran after five years.

This sunset clause, based on the mistaken presumption that the nuclear agreement would lead Iran's Islamist dictatorship to moderate its aggressive foreign policy, clearly is not warranted by Iran's behaviour.

Since signing the 2015 nuclear agreement, Teheran has escalated its military intervention in Syria, ordered Iraqi Shi'ite militias to attack US troops training Iraqi military forces and helping them defeat ISIS, and increased the flow of arms to Houthi rebels in Yemen and other proxies, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

Yet despite Iran's clear violations of the nuclear deal and its continued export of prohibited arms to multiple battlefields, the UN arms embargo is set to expire on Oct. 18. Washington tried but failed to extend the arms embargo through several resolutions at the Security Council.

With this extension blocked, the US decided to trigger "snapback" UN sanctions under Security Council Resolution 2231, which implemented the Iran nuclear agreement, as the only path for restoring the arms embargo.

## COUP DE GRACE FOR ZOMBIE NUCLEAR DEAL

The US triggering of snapback sanctions on Aug. 21 ignited a firestorm at the UN Security Council, where many members insist that Washington lost its ability to invoke snapback sanctions when it withdrew from the nuclear agreement.

However, the United States has based its snapback efforts on the text of UN Security Council Resolution 2231.

Resolution 2231 is unusual in the adoption of the snapback process, under which any of the Security Council's



permanent members can reimpose UN sanctions suspended by the deal. This is the reverse of the usual process, which requires positive support in the Security Council for actions.

Language in that resolution clearly identifies the United States as an Iran nuclear deal “participant state” entitled to initiate the snapback of sanctions regardless of whether it continues to participate in the nuclear agreement.

Once Washington invoked snapback sanctions by notifying the Security Council of “significant non-performance of commitments” under the nuclear agreement on Aug. 21, the Security Council was given 30 days to pass a resolution that would extend sanctions relief. If the Council fails to do so, or if the United States vetoes such a resolution, as it surely will, then all UN sanctions suspended under the agreement would be reinstated.

September will be a month for diplomatic pyrotechnics at the Security Council. Parties interested in maintaining the zombie agreement will protest. Even opponents of the Iran nuclear deal have argued that the tactic would undermine the Security Council veto by forcing the issue.

In reality, the failure of other parties to demand Iranian compliance has made this confrontation inevitable. AIR

*James Jay Carafano is the Vice President of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation. James Phillips and Brett D. Schaefer are senior research fellows at the Heritage Foundation. © Heritage Foundation (www.heritage.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## LEBANON'S CURSE

by Danielle Pletka

It is almost as if Lebanon is cursed. The horrifying explosion at the city's port on Aug. 4 seems a cosmic slap in the face, a blow when the country is at its lowest. The Prime Minister has quit; ditto the rest of his cabinet. The Lebanese Pound has lost 60% of its value in the last 10 months (and 80% of its black market value). The International Monetary Fund is refusing to lend the COVID-stricken economy much-needed cash because of corruption.

The country is ruled, in a de facto fashion, by the terrorist group Hezbollah, which, apart from its manifest faults, is now also being pressed by Iran to attack Israel. And that's just this year. Years past whipsawed the Lebanese from civil war to war with Israel, terrorism and kidnapping, to Syrian and Iranian vassal state.

But what this narrative leaves unstated is that much of Lebanon's fate is its own making, or at the very least, the

making of an irretrievably corrupt elite, tolerated – and too often abetted – by a population that knows no other form of governance. The Beirut port tragedy is only the latest display of staggering corruption and incompetence. Was gross negligence behind the port disaster? Or was it a Hezbollah bomb supply depot?

The world will likely never know, as Hezbollah is resisting an international inquiry. But it is almost certain that this tragedy, like the many before it, is the product of the corruption, venality and incompetence that has brought the “Paris of the Middle East” to its knees. Indeed, at every twist in Lebanon's fate, there has been a seemingly inexhaustible supply of feckless leaders and the various foreign despots to whom they have turned for favour. All have conspired to destroy the nation.

Gauzy memories of the halcyon years before Lebanon's civil war broke out in 1975 are mostly false, but the decades that followed were certainly worse. In theory, the national pact of 1943 that divided the spoils of leadership among Lebanon's Christian, Sunni and Shi'ite populations might have sustained a unique experiment in sectarian and religious harmony in the Middle East. In reality, it cemented into place the patronage and corruption that have reached their apex in 21st century Lebanon.

Quibbles over leadership and rank mismanagement of Lebanon's growing Palestinian refugee population – and the attendant Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) terrorists that treated the nation as their own – led first to the creation of militias intended to suppress the proliferation of Palestinian militias; and then to the fateful moment when the then-president invited in the Syrians to keep the peace.

In a Faustian bargain, the likes of which Goethe could not have imagined, the nation was to become a playground for Syrian dictator Hafez al-Assad, his terrorist proteges, and his Iranian patrons.

Few remember the proliferation of Palestinian terror groups that targeted Jews and Israel, and bickered among themselves, through the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. The PLO was but the largest and best recognised. There was also the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; a dis-

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gruntled offshoot, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command; the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and others whose names have faded over the years. Each treated Lebanon as an arms depot, its teeming Palestinian refugee camps as operational headquarters, its airport as a private airfield for terrorist adventurism.

In those years, alliances shifted with lightning rapidity. Christians begged at Assad's feet, and when he proved



Lebanese citizens are desperately trying to remake their broken nation, but have little prospect of success

useless, at Israel's. Others begged world powers for favour, but the Marine barracks bombing of 1983 and a succession of terrorist attacks on US facilities and on Americans drove all but the most mercenary away.

Lebanese Christians fled in droves, taking their businesses, their assets, and their families. So too did

the Palestinian managerial cadres that had shared generous remittances with their families trapped in Lebanon. But at no moment – not a one – did the various Lebanese factions that promised a better future to their followers abandon the civil war model: foreign patrons, foreign allegiance, and corruption.

Presidents were murdered; prime ministers too. But even the murder of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005 – for which Syria and Hezbollah were almost certainly responsible – gave little respite to tiny Lebanon.

Yes, Hariri's brutal assassination ended the direct Syrian occupation of Lebanon, but by that point the physical presence of those troops no longer mattered, for two important reasons. The first was that everyone who could have been influenced, bought or sold had already been, and it did not take Syrian strongmen on the ground to keep them in line. The second was that the civil war had bred its most disastrous spawn, which would make the Syrian occupation look tame in comparison: Hezbollah.

**A** creature of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hezbollah grew in the 1990s and has since taken over Lebanon lock, stock and barrel. It answers to Iran, it fights for Bashar al-Assad in Syria, it governs in Beirut, and it dominates everyone and everything in Lebanon.

It is as if all the worst crimes of Lebanese leaders were concentrated in the person of Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's leader, and his minions. They are corrupt. They are sectarian. They kill on command, attack Israel on command, and oppress their internal foes as if the civil war were still at its height. The people of Lebanon they nominally represent have never been anything other than an afterthought.

Of course, Lebanon has mundane problems of corruption as well: the Central Bank arbitraging lending rates to benefit a few cronies; the President and his family and friends manipulating electricity prices; and the petty cronyism of every third world state with byzantine trappings that might be funny were they not so sad.

There are close to 500,000 civil servants supping at the government trough (in a country with a population of 6.8 million), their costs sucking up a third of the state's budget. The state railway office has dozens of staff, though not a single train has plied the nation's rails in decades. Bribery is not just widespread, it is ubiquitous: Just shy of 100% of companies report they had to pay bribes to secure government contracts, and more than a third of the nation's citizens have reported bribes to police.

Is all this obvious to the people of Lebanon? You bet. Does it outrage the crowds that teemed in Beirut's streets last year, and returned once COVID fears settled? Sure. Is their anger all the more intense now that much of their capital has been destroyed? Obviously. Will they throw the bums out? They'll try. But there will just be other bums.

In a dream world, it might be possible for a technocratic government to be swept in with the shockwave that levelled Beirut on Aug. 4. In a parallel dream, perhaps the state could again become a French protectorate, as some have asked. In fact, what will happen is that conspiracies will abound about the port blast; and money the international community gathers to repair this latest wound will be stolen, as so much has been stolen before.

There will be no peace because those who have power in Lebanon – Iran, Hezbollah and the shadowy thieves who run the government – will not relinquish their power or their ill-gotten gains. And eventually, another tragedy elsewhere in the world will catch our eye and Lebanon will be forgotten.

AIR

*Danielle Pletka is a senior fellow in foreign and defence policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). © AEI (www.aei.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## EHUD'S MIDEAST INSIGHTS

by Jamie Hyams

**I**srael is blessed with incisive, insightful and entertaining news analysts, likely the product of being the centre of so much news itself. However, not many of them can casually flavour an analysis of the dilemma facing the leader of an Arab country technically at war with Israel



with an anecdote about having regularly brought the man his favourite Middle Eastern delicacies during his exile in France. But more about Lebanese President Michel Aoun later.

With that level of both access and experience, you know a discussion with Ehud Yaari will always be something special, and his briefing to journalists for AIJAC on Aug. 20 was no exception.

Yaari began by discussing the recent normalisation agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He explained that the deal was initiated by UAE leader Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ), who saw an opportunity to publicly justify the move by representing himself as the one who stopped Israel's plans to apply sovereignty over parts of the West Bank.

One of MBZ's motivations, according to Yaari, was that Arab countries that make peace with Israel generally receive modern US weapons, and being a pilot, MBZ is particularly interested in the F-35 combat aircraft. Yaari expects the UAE will obtain these, despite Israeli public opposition, but they will be a "sterilised" version compared to those in Israel's Air Force.

Other Arab states have been slow to emulate the UAE, partly because, as Yaari revealed, MBZ wanted to bask in the limelight by himself, so he gave them very little notice. However, Yaari does expect a number of other Arab states to make similar arrangements.

As he puts it, "We are already watching a number of Arab leaders wearing their swimsuits, walking alongside the pool, waiting to jump in." He thinks the next country may be Bahrain, whose leader is very eager; Sudan; Oman, with which Israel has had good relations since 1978; or Morocco, with which Israel has been sharing tourists since the 1950s.

The Saudis, he says, are interested, but will be slower, while Kuwait was the only Gulf state to take a negative stance.

Turkey, he says, has become the capital of the Muslim Brotherhood, and is in an informal alliance with Qatar, which finances its adventures, including incursions in Libya and Somalia. It is "playing rough" in the eastern Mediterranean, opposed by Greece, Cyprus, Italy and Israel, which are backed by the EU and US.

The Trump Administration, however, believes Turkey is needed to bring order in Syria, as it stopped Iran and Russia in Idlib. Meanwhile, Yaari says, there is rapidly growing tension between Russia and Iran in Syria, because Russia wants control in Damascus, no longer needs Iran, and is not wedded to Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad.

On other fronts, Sudan is backing the Saudis in Yemen, and Oman, which has often been an intermediary between Iran and the Gulf states (and between Iran and Israel), can no longer play that role because of tensions with Saudi Arabia over Yemen.


Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas is frustrated with the Israel-UAE deal, but even some high-profile Palestinians have supported it. He asked for emergency meetings of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, but there have been no meetings.

Yaari said he doubts the recent violence from Gaza will escalate, saying that the Qatari financial assistance package to the Strip expires in September, so Hamas is stirring up trouble to pressure Qatar to extend it (the package has since reportedly been extended and enlarged).

Yaari also says it's safe to assume that the US policy of supporting Israel will remain regardless of who wins the US presidential election, as many of those advising Biden are from the Clinton era. However, the trend of US disengagement from the Middle East will also continue.

China's interest in the Middle East, he says, is mainly commercial for now, and Israel is now working to restrict sales of sensitive items to China, making clear it is with the US first. He is very sceptical about the purported Iran-China deal, given that, while Iran has been vocal about it, China has been silent, and he can't see why China would risk its achievements with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt.

And what about Michel Aoun and his recent comment his country could potentially have peace with Israel? Aoun, a Christian, is President under Lebanon's sectarian political system, which reserves that role for Christians, but got there due to support from Hezbollah, Yaari noted.

Yaari revealed that the Patriarch of Lebanon's Maronite Christian Church, whom no practising Maronite can oppose, is now campaigning to de-link Lebanon from all regional conflict. Trapped between his Patriarch and his political allies, and wanting his son-in-law to succeed him as President, Aoun, says Yaari, is currently paralysed. Perhaps he needs another delivery from Yaari's deli. 

## IS YOUR CHARITABLE DONATION SUPPORTING TERRORISM?

by Doron Goldbarsht

When we hear the term 'terrorist financing', we usually think of those who deliberately provide support for terrorists to prepare for attacks, undergo special training, purchase weapons or explosives, travel to planning meetings, and communicate with their collaborators.

Lone offenders and some small terrorist groups manage to sustain their campaigns on a shoestring budget. They have few members to train and equip, they rely on





Many terrorist groups have a “humanitarian wing” which seeks to turn welfare services, often financed by donations, into support for the organisation’s military goals

simple weapons such as knives, and they are not subject to the high and indirect costs of developing and maintaining a sizeable organisation. However, more sophisticated terrorist organisations require quite substantial amounts of money in order to survive and develop over longer periods of time. These groups tend to operate in a way that assumes some degree of social responsibility for their supporters by establishing a ‘humanitarian wing’ alongside the ‘military wing’, which complicates identifying funding for a terrorist group.

## FINANCING TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS

The day-to-day activities of terrorist organisations require an arsenal. While a boxcutter and a plane ticket can enable a terrorist attack, creating and sustaining an atmosphere of sustained fear and impeding the daily lives of ordinary citizens requires a substantial cache of weapons and trained people to use them.

Terrorist organisations are often able to access the same weapons used by military forces; for example, Hezbollah is equipped with unmanned aerial vehicles and advanced missile technology. Over the years, Hamas has fired thousands of rockets of varying types, with an average cost of US\$800 (A\$1,112) each. The tunnels that Hamas has dug from Gaza into Egypt and Israel are estimated to cost US\$140 million (A\$195 million) a year. Al-Qaeda possesses anti-aircraft missiles and has even tried to build an atomic bomb, including attempting to buy a component from South Africa for US\$1.5 million (A\$2.09 million) in 1993. Blocking the funds required for terror-related goals is therefore crucial in combating terrorist activity.

Hezbollah is thought to receive about US\$700 million (A\$973 million) annually in funding from Iran – but has numerous other sources of revenue as well. The estimated annual budget of Hamas is approximately US\$70 million (A\$97 million). Al-Qaeda is understood to receive approximately US\$50 million (A\$69 million) per year in foreign donations. During the war in Sri Lanka (1983–2009), the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are believed

to have received between US\$100 million and US\$200 million (A\$140 million to A\$279 million) annually. Finally, the Colombian organisations FARC and Movimiento 19 de Abril are said to have received US\$150 million (A\$208 million) a year during the 1980s.

## FINANCING THE HUMANITARIAN WING

The “humanitarian wing” of a large terrorist organisation generally provides a range of social services to the local community. This might include assistance to the poor, orphans and widows (who are often poor, orphaned or widowed due to the operations of the military wing of the organisation), as well as educational and health care services. Money directed to the welfare programs of the “humanitarian wing” of a terrorist group supports and helps perpetuate terrorism by generating loyalty and spreading the aims and ideals of the organisation among the public for which it ostensibly cares.

The humanitarian wing is also a tool for recruitment to the military wing. Teachers and religious leaders, paid for through the humanitarian wing, champion the goals and ideals of the organisation. Through promises of reduced tuition fees or university scholarships, people are enticed to join the organisation and are then offered financial compensation to commit terrorist acts. Thus, whether deliberately or inadvertently, the humanitarian wing serves to strengthen the military wing of the organisation.

To illustrate, in southern Lebanon, where the national government maintains only a token presence, Hezbollah-funded schools and hospitals serve thousands of the region’s mostly poor residents. The residents, in turn, revere the party and its still-active armed wing. In this way,

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funding received by the humanitarian wings of Hezbollah and other terrorist organisations is inextricably bound with support for their military activities – despite the fact that the costs of the military bodies are often relatively small in comparison to the humanitarian expenditure.

Terrorist organisations need money – a good deal of it – and charities are one way of securing it.

## THE ROLE OF CHARITIES IN TERRORIST FINANCING

Terrorists can misuse charities in a variety of ways. They can funnel money from a local organisation supported by charity to an overseas partner that funds terrorist acts. They can transport weapons in a charity's vehicles, or store weapons at its premises. With or without the charity's knowledge, they can raise funds in the charity's name and use those funds for terrorist purposes. Alternatively, they can establish a charity for a specific ostensible purpose and then use the charity's funds to finance terrorism.

The factors that allow charities to achieve their humanitarian outcomes make them vulnerable to being misused by terrorists. Charities may have a global presence that provides a framework for international operations and financial transactions. Many charities work in areas that are prone to terrorist activity and may provide humanitarian responses in locations where there are no banks, so they need to deal in cash. Furthermore, they often have complex financial operations and many donors, requiring them to deal with multiple currencies and small transactions, making it difficult to identify suspicious transactions.

Australian charities have a long history of helping the vulnerable and disadvantaged, both at home and abroad. Our 54,000 registered charities have a combined annual income of over A\$134 billion and assets totalling A\$267 billion. More than 8,000 of these charities conduct activities outside Australia, sending A\$1.5 billion in donations and grants overseas each year. Many of them operate in, or send funds to, conflict zones and other unstable regions. Thus, charitable donations from well-intentioned Australians can end up anywhere – including in the hands of the humanitarian wing of a terrorist organisation.

In 2015, the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force – the global standard setter for countering money laundering and terrorism financing – found that Australia's charitable sector and its regulatory framework were not in compliance with global counter-terrorist financing standards. In response, Australia undertook a comprehensive risk assessment of its charity sector. It identified the features and types of Australian charities that are likely to be at risk of terrorist financing: legal entities primarily based in

New South Wales, those with low annual turnover, those that were only recently established, those that are service-oriented, and those that undertake transactions with countries with high terrorist financing risks. The main terrorist financing threats to charities in Australia include the diversion of legitimate funds by senior charity personnel to finance offshore terrorist activity, attempts to infiltrate charities by terrorist groups, and the use of online platforms to solicit funds for terrorist purposes.

Australia has since then significantly improved its compliance with the global standard, but a few deficiencies in the regulatory regime remain. The registration of charities is still voluntary, although it provides access to tax concessions and other benefits. Unregistered charities are generally subject to other requirements that may prevent

**“It remains difficult to determine whether charitable funds are used to finance terrorism. What is clear, however, is that we cannot rely on an artificial distinction between the various components or “wings” of a terrorist organisation”**

terrorist financing abuse; for example, they may be unable to hold assets or open a bank account.

Australia has identified higher-risk charities, but it remains in the early stages of reviewing the legisla-

tive framework. Moreover, there are concerns that some smaller charities, identified as potentially high risk, are not subject to adequate monitoring.

**H**ow can we identify an illegitimate funds transfer involving a charity? Until it is spent, how do we know whether a donation will finance baby formula or terrorism?

It remains difficult to determine whether charitable funds are used to finance terrorism. What is clear, however, is that we cannot rely on an artificial distinction between the various components or “wings” of a terrorist organisation. Funds directed to the humanitarian wing contribute to the operations of the military wing. Therefore, funding the humanitarian wing should be seen as an indirect method of financing the terrorist activities of the military wing. A dollar donated to purchase baby formula could potentially allow the organisation to spend a dollar on bullets.

Targeting sources of funding is critical when attempting to limit terrorism. The basic premise is deceptively simple: smother the source of oxygen and a terror cell will die. However, the sources of funding for a terrorist organisation may be multifaceted and international. Charities are only one of them, but they are one whose vulnerabilities Australia can and should address as a matter of priority.

AIR

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## Who were the Entebbe hijackers?

### How German leftists became antisemitic terrorists

by Jonathan Spyer

The Entebbe raid of July 4, 1976 is remembered as a high point of counter-terror warfare in general, and of the Israeli contribution to that field in particular. The raid involved astonishing audacity, precise and pinpoint intelligence, great courage and professional military skills of the highest order. It remains a subject of study at military institutes across the world.

Less attention has been paid to the precise nature of the enemy that the IDF's Sayeret Matkal commandos and other forces confronted that night at the Ugandan airport.

The force that carried out the hijacking of Air France Flight 139 en route from Tel Aviv to Paris on June 27, 1976 represented the sharpened edge of an intricate structure. Included within this nexus were major Palestinian militant groups, German radical leftist organisations and, behind them, the logistical and material support of the USSR and a number of allied Arab states.

The terrorist team that carried out the hijacking was officially aligned with an organisation calling itself the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – External Operations (PFLP-EO). This lengthy set of initials obscures as much as it reveals.

The four-person team consisted of two Palestinian Arab men and,



Three of the hijackers of Air France Flight 139: (from left) Fayeze Abdul-Rahim al-Jaber, Wilfried Bose, Jayel al-Arja

famously, two Germans, a man and a woman. The Palestinians, Jayel al-Arja and Fayeze Abdul-Rahim al-Jaber, were senior PFLP operatives. The Germans, Wilfried Bose and Brigitte Kuhlmann, were members of a far-Left paramilitary network in Germany known as the Revolutionary Cells.

The four were joined by six more PFLP operatives on the ground at Entebbe. The four hijackers and three of the six who joined them on the ground were killed on the night of July 4.

The presence of two Germans among the hijackers killed by the IDF in Operation Thunderbolt at Entebbe Airport is one of the best-known elements of this entire episode. The background to how these individuals – a bookshop owner and a former educator, residents of Frankfurt am Main – came to be present at the airport is less familiar.

Delving into the organisational background and the biographies of the Entebbe hijackers offers a fascinating window on the tortured politics of post-war Europe and of the Cold War, the nascent Palestinian national movement and perhaps also the unresolved pathologies of Germany towards the Jews.

### THE PFLP-EO

The PFLP-EO, led by Dr. Wadie Haddad, is sometimes described as an “offshoot” or “splinter” from the more well-known Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Haddad, a Palestinian Christian born in Safed in 1927, was a close associate of PFLP founder George Habash. Both were medical doctors and graduates of the American University of Beirut. When Habash founded the PFLP following the Six Day War in 1967, Haddad became the leader of its military wing. In the subsequent years, he led a number of high-profile attacks on Israeli and Jordanian targets, including the Dawson's Field hijackings of September 1970, and the hijacking of an El Al plane in 1968.

A number of accounts sympathetic to the PFLP claim that at some point in the early 1970s, Wadie Haddad was expelled from the organisation and then continued to operate in the field of international terrorism, using the name PFLP-EO.

The motives for this claim are fairly obvious. The PFLP was and remains an integral part of the PLO. The PLO in turn was and is engaged in international diplomacy and formal political activity. Open association with an organisation that engaged in the deliberate targeting of civilians and civil aviation, the singling out of Jews as victims and association with antisemitic German terrorists would not be conducive to success in these endeavours.

No proof has ever been presented for the supposed “expulsion” of Wadie Haddad from the PFLP. Rather, all evidence suggests that the PFLP-EO





was a conveniently deniable front for the PFLP itself.

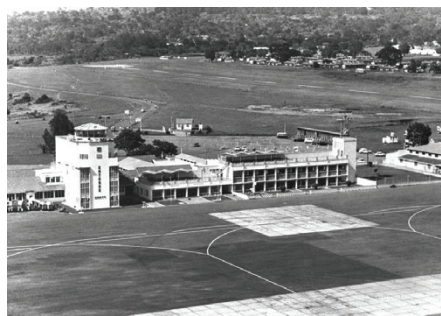
When Haddad died in 1978 (reportedly as a result of a poisoning by Israel's Mossad) he was afforded a grand funeral by the PFLP in Baghdad in April of that year. No mention was made of any split or division in the movement. The organisation's spokesman, Bassam Abu Sharif, eulogised Haddad as a "founding member" of the PFLP. He described Haddad as having "direct responsibility of the special operations branch in the PFLP. He was the leader of the special operations against the enemy."

Documents of the USSR's Committee of State Security, better known as the KGB, secretly translated from the KGB archive by Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky in 1992, further support the contention that any distinction between the PFLP and Haddad's organisation is bogus.

In a document dated April 23, 1974, then-KGB head Yuri Andropov describes Haddad as "Politburo member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), head of the PFLP's external operations section." The document is concerned with Haddad's request for assistance for the PFLP from the USSR for its external operations, and recommends a positive response.

Further documents in the archive indicate that this assistance was forthcoming. They also describe Haddad as himself an agent of the Soviet intelligence organisation: "KGB intelligence agent W. Haddad, head of the external operations section of the People's Liberation Front of Palestine, received a consignment of foreign-produced arms and ammunition (53 submachine guns, 50 handguns including 10 fitted with silencers, 34,000 rounds of ammunition)."

So the first and important element to understand regarding the hijacking of Flight 139 is that it was undertaken by the PFLP, which was and remains an integral part of the PLO. The second point to note is that at the time



Entebbe Airport, 1976

of the hijacking, the PFLP was the recipient of aid and assistance from the Soviet Union.

## THE REVOLUTIONARY CELLS

The KGB documents cited above note that weaponry intended for the PFLP was delivered to the Gulf of Aden. This area was in the territorial waters of the Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen. South Yemen was a Soviet-aligned Arab state. It was the hub for the USSR's covert activity in the Arab world.

Among the activities taking place on the soil of South Yemen were military training programs for militants from a variety of organisations set to take part in terror and paramilitary operations as part of the Soviet-financed, Palestinian-managed international network. Among the individuals who graduated from such a training program at some time in 1974-1975 were two young German supporters of the Palestinian cause – Wilfried Bose and Brigitte Kuhlmann.

How did these two young German leftist radicals find their way to an international terror nexus supported by Soviet money and logistics? It is a long way from the bookshops and cafes of Frankfurt am Main to the training camps of South Yemen, and then to the airport terminal at Entebbe.

Bose and Kuhlmann were founding members of a violent German leftist radical organisation called the *Revolutionäre Zellen*, or Revolutionary Cells (RZ). This group was one of three

armed organisations to emerge from the remnants of the German New Left in the early 1970s. The other two were the better-known Red Army Faction (or "Baader-Meinhof group") and the anarchist June 2 movement.

The Revolutionary Cells differed somewhat from the other two groups in that they did not seek to create a full-time underground cadre of committed activists. Rather, the RZ employed a loosely organised cell structure in which members continued with their regular lives, while at the same time participating in the activities of the group.

This led to them being described derisively by both the German police and their fellow leftists as "weekend revolutionaries." The loose and decentralised nature of the movement, however, served it well in avoiding detection and dismantling by the authorities.

Bose, who was a friend of notorious Venezuelan terrorist Ilich Ramirez

Sanchez ("Carlos the Jackal"), was a well-known figure in Frankfurt's left-wing scene. He was the co-founder of the "Roter Stern" (Red Star) publishing

house, which maintained an office and bookshop at Holzhausen Strasse in the city.

Kuhlmann, who was Bose's girlfriend, lived at a communal house maintained by Roter Stern at its offices and worked for the publishing house while studying part time at Frankfurt University.

But despite the part-time nature and bohemian trappings of these young radicals, the Revolutionary Cells were not merely poseurs. From the outset, Bose, Kuhlmann and the others made themselves available to Palestinian terror groups for assistance with infrastructure and logistics on German soil.

On this basis, according to Prof. Jeffrey Herf in his book *Undeclared Wars with Israel*, quoting from the tes-

**"The hijacking of Air France Flight 139 was the work of a network"**

timony of Hans Joachim Klein, a later defector from the group, the Revolutionary Cells offered accommodation and logistical help to the Black September organisation (Fatah's deniable equivalent to the PFLP-EO) during the attack on the Israeli delegation to the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Bose's group directly targeted Israeli targets in Germany. They attacked an Israeli travel bureau in Frankfurt on August 26, 1974. On February 8, 1976, they bombed the offices of Israel Bonds in Berlin.

The Revolutionary Cells also openly targeted Jewish community figures in Germany. In this, they were following a pattern of practical indifference toward that supposed distinction between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, which was their official stance. According to the testimony of Hans-Joachim Klein, the Revolutionary Cells had placed Heinz Galinski and Ignatz Lipinski, Jewish community leaders in Berlin and Frankfurt respectively, on a list of individuals to be assassinated. Even Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, according to Klein, was proposed by Wilfried Bose as a target for murder.

The Revolutionary Cells benefited from direct financial assistance from the PFLP at this time. According to Klein, Wadie Haddad paid 3,000 Deutschmarks per month to each member in West Germany.

A number of other countries – Italy, the US, France, Holland and the UK among them – witnessed the emergence of small armed groups from among the ranks of supporters of the New Left. All of these groups were pro-Palestinian. All supported Palestinian terror. None of them targeted institutions of the Jewish community (or indeed of Israel) with a similar level of focus and intensity as their German comrades.

## THE ROAD TO ENTEBBE

The hijacking of Air France Flight 139 was thus the work of a network that brought together Soviet weapons

and logistical assistance, Palestinian nationalist organisations, Arab states aligned with the USSR, and young Europeans motivated by a mixture of professed leftist radicalism and barely concealed hostility to Jews.

The conduct of both Wilfried Bose and, according to witness testimonies, in particular Brigitte Kuhlmann during the course of the hijacking was in line with the orientation described above. Kuhlmann, the former educator from Hanover who volunteered with mentally handicapped children in her spare time, was universally remembered for her particular cruelty and fury throughout the course of the hijacking.

The hijacking famously included a separation of Israeli and Jewish hostages from non-Israeli and non-Jewish passengers.

In this regard, it is worth noting recent claims that this selection included only Israeli Jews. Such claims are false. It is beyond dispute that at least 10 non-Israeli Jews were obliged by the hijackers to join the group of 84 Israelis. It is also indisputable that a number of Israeli dual nationals and non-Israeli Jews succeeded through subterfuge in joining the group that was released. These two facts suggest, unsurprisingly, that the hijackers were unable to ascertain with forensic certainty the ethno-religious identity of all their hostages.

But the undisputed involuntary presence of a number of non-Israeli Jews among the hostages refutes the notion that the hijackers did not also target people of this description among the passengers. Such benign indifference would have been entirely out of character for members of the Revolutionary Cells, given their known targeting of non-Israeli Jews in Germany.

In the event, almost all the hostages, Israeli and non-Israeli, were rescued. The long journey of Bose,



Family members reunite at Ben Gurion Airport after the Entebbe rescue

Kuhlmann and their colleagues ended in their encounter with the IDF's General Staff Reconnaissance Unit at the Entebbe Airport Terminal on July 4, 1976.

The structure that carried out the hijacking of Flight 139 seems rather distant now. The USSR has gone. The Peoples' Republic of South Yemen was soon to follow it. The Revolutionary Cells, starved of their funding, disbanded in 1991. The PFLP remains in business in a minor way. It has long been eclipsed by the organisations of political Islam as the most active face of Palestinian militancy. Some young Europeans are still attracted to the Palestinian issue. Few, though (in contrast with their Islamist comrades), today seem inclined to take up arms for the cause.

It is nevertheless worth recalling that 44 years ago, the joint efforts of a shadowy international network bringing together the resources of a superpower, the territory of an Arab state, the structures of a major Palestinian political movement and the beliefs and complexes of a number of leftist German radicals was engaged in the deliberate hunting of Israeli and Jewish civilians worldwide.

Can such a combination come together again?

AIR

*Dr. Jonathan Spyer is Director of the Middle East Centre for Reporting and Analysis and a Ginsburg/Ingerman Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

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# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### WHAT A TWEET

*Sky News* “Kenny Report” host Chris Kenny (July 29) slammed the “inordinate amount of time” UN bodies spend “seeking to discredit” Israel, and lauded Australia’s recent petition to the International Criminal Court (ICC) not to investigate alleged Israeli war crimes at the behest of “Palestine”.

Kenny said, “Perhaps the ICC could find injustices and atrocities elsewhere, perhaps in Syria, Yemen or Sudan and other nations that might be more worthy of its efforts.”

He also disparaged an ABC producer’s tweet which stated that “Australia argues China should obey international norms, but that Israel doesn’t need to.”

Kenny said, “How very typical of the ABC view on Israel. To even compare the level of human rights accountability, transparency and scrutiny on Israel, as compared to China, is ludicrous.”

Former Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer told Kenny the ICC move to investigate Israel is a “political stunt” that would damage the court’s reputation.

### UNDIPLOMATIC

Following the AUSMIN annual ministerial level talks, former diplomat John McCarthy argued in the *Australian Financial Review* (Aug. 3) for Canberra to determine foreign policy according to Australia’s national interests and not at the behest of the Trump Administration.

McCarthy claimed “no serious American ally, except Australia, has a policy on Israel-Palestine issues similar to that of Trump’s America.”

Successive Democratic and Republican Administrations, including President Trump’s, have backed a two-state formula that can only be achieved

through direct negotiations. This is Australia’s current position and hardly controversial.

In 2018, McCarthy opposed the Morrison Government recognising west Jerusalem as Israel’s capital – which it has been since 1949 – and which partially followed President Trump’s lead.

### JEWISH LIVES MATTER TOO

In the *Spectator Australia* magazine (Aug. 15), New Zealand Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses warned that firebrand Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan’s long history of anti-semitic statements is being overlooked by people wanting to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Moses said, “Farrakhan publicly calls Jews ‘termites’ and praises Hitler as a ‘great man.’” She added his ideology blames Jews not only for “the perceived sins of white people” but says Jews are “orchestrating and profiting off it.”

Whilst antisemitic remarks by high profile blacks have been condemned, “far from being ostracised and ‘cancelled’, [Farrakhan] is embraced and promoted by celebrities and those who profess to be progressives and anti-racists. He sat upfront onstage at Aretha Franklin’s funeral alongside Bill Clinton.”

Citing US civil rights leader John Lewis’ recent passing, she called on people “to embrace his legacy”, which included “spurn[ing] Farrakhan because of his ‘divisive and bigoted’ statements.”

### A GOOD SEED

Musician Nick Cave’s condemnation of cancel culture was picked up

by the media, with a number of outlets referencing his previous criticisms of the anti-Israel Boycott, Sanctions and Divestment (BDS) movement.

On Aug. 13, *Sky News* “The Kenny Report” host Chris Kenny applauded Cave for “staring down” the BDS movement and “doing what he does best, sharing his music” with Israelis. In file footage, Cave said he toured Israel because he loves the “Israeli people and to make a stand against anyone who tries to censor and silence musicians. So in a way you could say that the BDS made me [come to] Israel.”

The *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* (Aug. 13) report said “in December 2018, he condemned a cultural boycott of Israel and said playing concerts in Tel Aviv with his band the Bad Seeds did not signify support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government.”

### ALY’S FOLLY?

Network Ten’s light entertainment news program “The Project” (Aug. 5) and co-host Waleed Aly drew flak for the line of questioning during an interview with Beirut-based Portuguese photographer João Sousa on the potential cause of the Aug. 4 Beirut port explosion.

Asked by Aly if the official explanation that poorly stored ammonium nitrate caused the explosion is “being widely accepted”, Sousa said, “99 per cent of the people I’ve spoken with – and I’m talking about Lebanese people exclusively – they all feel that that’s not necessarily the correct explanation. So, people are more likely to believe that this was an attack, a military attack – possibly by Israel – than an accident.”

Aly asked if it’s “because of a general culture of suspicion of govern-



ment for example, or the geopolitics of the region? Or do they have, kind of, more specific reasons for doubting that explanation in this case?”

Sousa said, “Lebanon and Israel are not really on good terms. And so, there’s always this tension going on. People are always expecting something like this to happen... But I mean like you said, the official version is that it was an accident. So until proven otherwise, I can’t say anything else.”

Commentator Gerard Henderson’s “Media Watch Dog” column (Aug. 7) chided the show’s hosts for not asking “Sousa to provide any evidence to support his view. And no one challenged his Blame the Jewish State conspiracy theory. These days The Project seems

to be competing with the ABC to be more Green/Left-than-thou.” Henderson also critiqued the segment during his regular appearance on *Sky News* “The Bolt Report” (Aug. 9).

On *Sky News* “Outsiders” (Aug. 9) co-host James Morrow ridiculed the show for asking a photographer the sorts of questions best left to qualified experts, asking “does it get any sillier?”

On Aug. 7, Chris Kenny slammed the insinuation on a “mainstream commercial television program” of Israeli culpability, saying that “this is the ugly sort of blame-shifting that fuels anti-semitism and... hatred in the Middle East.” Kenny interviewed former federal Labor MP Michael Danby about “The Project” segment.

## NOTHING TO SEE HERE

Following complaints about the segment, the producers of “The Project” refused to apologise but removed a clip of the segment from the program’s Facebook page.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry announced it had lodged a formal complaint with FreeTV Australia over the segment.

## IN THE FRAME

Hezbollah’s role in Lebanon was highlighted in the media in a way that it has not been since the 2006 Lebanon war.



## IN PARLIAMENT

Foreign Minister Senator **Marise Payne** (Lib., NSW) Twitter – Aug. 14 – “The agreement between Israel & the UAE to normalise relations and Israel’s undertaking to suspend annexation plans in the West Bank are important steps forward. Australia welcomes these commitments.”

**Josh Burns** (ALP, Melbourne Ports) *Australian Jewish News* – Aug. 14 – “Peace is always worth celebrating. This announcement is an historic turning point between Israel and the UAE. May it be the first of many in the region and it may lead to further opportunities and engagement for Australia in the two economic hubs.”

Australian Greens Leader Senator **Adam Bandt** (Greens, Victoria) Twitter – Aug. 14 – “Where’s Palestine in this ‘vision for peace’? Signing deals while ignoring a key party won’t bring peace & security to Israel & Palestine. And it’s disturbing that Netanyahu says that despite this deal, his plans for illegal annexation remain unchanged.”

**Kevin Andrews** (Lib., Menzies) – Aug. 26 – “Today I want to acknowledge one of the many ethnic and multicultural communities here in my electorate of Menzies – namely, the North Eastern Jewish War Memorial Centre and synagogue. For many decades now, the North Eastern Jewish Centre has played a vital part in the vibrant multicultural community here in Menzies, and I was delighted recently to be able to announce, along with the assistant minister, the member for La Trobe, a community safety grant for the centre.”

NSW Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier the Hon. **Gabrielle Upton** (Lib., Vaucluse) – Aug. 5 – “Yesterday afternoon, the Australian Jewish community came together on an Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), Executive Council of

Australian Jewry and the Zionist Federation of Australia webinar to farewell Israel’s Ambassador to Australia, Mark Sofer. He took up this important post in 2017 and discharged it with distinction. Under Ambassador Sofer’s leadership, there have been a number of memorable visits including Israeli President Reuven Rivlin’s visit to Australia earlier this year. Ambassador, your outstanding efforts have been warmly appreciated by Australia and by the Jewish community alike. I wish you and Sarah all the best and for your return to Israel.”

**Dr Marjorie O’Neill** (ALP, Coogee NSW) – July 29 – “I express my deep concern regarding the disturbing rise in antisemitism within my electorate of Coogee and beyond. Antisemitism is racism and bigotry towards Jews. It is a prejudice spanning 3,000 years... This year the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) released its 30th annual analysis of reports of antisemitic violence, vandalism, harassment and intimidation in Australia. Some 368 incidents were reported, many of which involved face-to-face harassment and property vandalism. That figure is high, considering social demographers estimate the Jewish population to be 115,000, or 0.5 per cent of the Australian population... Jeremy Jones, the Director of International & Community Affairs at the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, said: ‘If we are to successfully push back against bigotry and stop racism becoming entrenched, there are few measures as important as vocal and principled condemnations of these ills from our political leaders...’

“Examples [of antisemitism] include the demonisation of Israel, its actions blown out of rational proportion – such as the comparison of Israelis to Nazis – and the double standards that are applied when Israel is called out for criticism while the human rights violations of Saudi Arabia, Iran or China are ignored. A denial of Israel’s right to exist – a nation sanctioned by the United Nations – is always antisemitic.”

On *SBS TV* “World News” (Aug. 11), CNN correspondent Ben Lewis said, “Hezbollah remains more powerful itself than the Lebanese state. It has a massive and rather powerful military presence. It has a presence in Parliament and of course it has its own system of funding, a great deal of which is connected to quite a lot of international crime.”

Middle East correspondent Eric Tlozek in an Aug. 9 report on *ABC TV* “7pm News” said, “some cast blame for the explosion on the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah, a dominant faction in Lebanese politics, like Nada Zgheib, who lost her nephew.” The report included footage of the grieving woman saying, “We will pull you out from the gutter. I will hang you by the neck. You killed Joe, you killed all the boys. We want to kill all of you.” The report also showed Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah’s TV denial that the port was used to store Hezbollah weapons, rockets, guns, bombs, bullets or nitrate.

## RIFFING ON HEZBOLLAH

The most stinging expose of Hezbollah’s influence came in the *Australian* (Aug. 12) from high profile Lebanese-Australian leader Dr. Jamal Rifi.

According to Rifi, “Hezbollah-aligned Lebanese President Michel Aoun and Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah have tried to blind-side the people with outrageous claims. Among them is that the explosions were caused by a bomb or a missile fired, they say, by a malevolent force. But where is the evidence? Lebanon’s Prime Minister, Hassan Diab, declared he would chair a local investigation to report in five days. On the fifth day, he and his government resigned. With the country in election mode, there will be no investigation... Aoun has closed down the possibility of an international investigation by claiming it would undermine Lebanese sovereignty. No Lebanese investigator would risk their

life or the lives of their family by presenting an impartial report.”

He said it was known the port was “under the control of Hezbollah. This accounts for the repeated bombings of Iranian road shipments destined for the port by the Israeli air force.”

The ammonium nitrate was not moved despite many requests to do so, he said, because emptying the deadly cargo would expose Hezbollah’s cache of military assets stored there.

He called for “Hezbollah to hand over its arms to the Lebanese army and let independent Lebanese politicians run the country.”

## HEZBOLLAH’S ENCORE

The spotlight on Hezbollah was sustained with the verdict handed down on Aug. 18 by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in the trial in absentia of four Hezbollah members alleged to have carried out the 2005 car bomb attack that killed Lebanon’s former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 21 others.

Despite three of the four defendants being found not guilty and the court finding it had no direct evidence of Syrian or Hezbollah involvement, the fact that a Hezbollah operative was found guilty was prominently reported. Eric Tlozek’s *ABC TV* “7pm News” report (Aug. 19) included former NSW Deputy Police Commissioner Nick Kaldas – who led the Hariri investigation for two years – saying that “We now have definitive... evidence that a senior member of Hezbollah was, in fact, involved in the assassination.”

On *SBS TV* “World News” (Aug. 19), CNN’s Ben Wedeman told SBS anchor Janice Peters that Hezbollah saw the result as “something of a victory” and its supporters were celebrating with fireworks after the verdict was announced.

## A POOR COMPARISON

In the *Australian Financial Review* (Aug. 11), *New York Times* columnist

Thomas Friedman said the United States is “becoming like Lebanon and other Middle East countries” where political differences are “so deep that our two parties now resemble religious sects in a zero-sum contest for power.”

“Il liberal populists like [US President Donald] Trump”, he said, undermine trust in institutions by telling people, “‘Don’t believe the courts, the independent civil servants or the fake news generators; only trust me, my words and my decisions’... This kind of thinking, in the extreme, is what destroyed Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, and is eating away at Israel.”

Israel, like a lot of countries, is not immune to accusations of overreach by the executive and judiciary, and genuinely has a uniquely powerful judiciary compared to most democracies.

Moreover, contrary to the impressions of political deadlock in Israel, there is a solid consensus in the electorate on most of the country’s key issues and challenges, including the conflicts with the Palestinians and Iran.

## MISSING PIECES

In the *Age*, a primer on the complicated and conflicted history of the Lebanese state by features editor Maher Mughrabi included discussion of the interplay between the country and Palestinians.

Mughrabi said, “Lebanon is also a frontline state in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, with Palestinian attacks on Israel launched from its territory and repeated invasions and attacks by Israel, most notably in 1978 and 1982. Palestinians who fled north during the Arab-Israeli war of 1948 still live in refugee camps across the country, barred from citizenship and many professions. Many Lebanese blame the country’s wars since 1970 on Palestinian militants in these camps.”

They have reason to do so. One of the sparks that ignited the 1975 civil



war was PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and his thousands of armed loyalists imposing on Lebanon what was essentially a state within a state through violence and intimidation after being expelled from Jordan in 1970 for trying to do the same thing there.

After the PLO was forced out of Lebanon in 1982, Iran created Hezbollah as a forward column in its campaign to further the Shi'ite Islamist revolution in the Middle East, an essential part of which includes destroying Israel.

Mughrabi did not include this important point.

## TWO PEAS IN A POD

*ABC Radio National* "Late Night Live" host Phillip Adams and US writer Peter Beinart were in furious agreement that only a one-state solution, i.e. Israel's demise as a Jewish state, will end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (July 22).

Adams interviewed Beinart – who is not Israeli and doesn't live in Israel – to discuss his recent essay arguing Israelis should embrace a binational state.

Beinart claimed that early Zionist thinkers, including Theodore Herzl, were not committed to a Jewish state but more interested in establishing a homeland where the Jewish people could be rejuvenated.

This is bunk. Herzl's Zionist treatise published in 1896 was called *Der Judenstaat* i.e. "The Jewish State" and after the First Zionist Conference ended in 1897 he famously wrote in his diary that "at Basel, I founded the Jewish state."

Beinart blamed Israel for the two-state resolution's failure because it had "inexorably taken more of the West Bank" and so the notion of what a Palestinian state "means has been defined down and down" and Israel's control over the West Bank is now permanent.

He also accused Israeli Jews of a "conscious" attempt to present Palestinians to Americans and Israelis as

having a "kind of compulsive pathological desire to hate and even to kill Jews" which "dehumanises" them.

Yet, since the 1880s, the rhetoric against the political movement for Jews to return to the historic Land of Israel has been couched in blatantly antisemitic rhetoric, and accompanied by genocidal threats and actual acts of indiscriminate violence clearly motivated by raw hatred.

Beinart claimed that the Palestinian national movement has "done some things that I consider to be indefensible but if you compare it... to other national movements... fighting to get individual and national rights for their peoples, the Palestinian national movement doesn't look particularly pathological. In fact... in the last 15 years it's proved considerably more moderate than the ANC or the IRA ever proved."

The reality is that unlike other national movements that have never been given the chance of statehood, such as the Tibetans or the Kurds, Palestinian leaders have spent the past 20 years rejecting Israeli offers to create a state.

Beinart also implied that the Palestinian terror of the Second Intifada, which he acknowledged was "enormously traumatic" for Israelis, had ended voluntarily, and said that since then "the amount of Palestinian violence towards Israeli Jews has been much, much lower" yet bemoaned that neither the Israeli government nor Israeli Jewish public have "mov[ed] towards a greater willingness to embrace a genuine Palestinian State."

The Second Intifada broke out in 2000 after Palestinian President Yasser Arafat rejected Israeli offers of a state on more than 90% of the West Bank and all of Gaza. Only through the construction of a security barrier and a successful combination of other Israel military tactics, many of which are still in place because of ongoing threats, did it end.

Beinart also overlooked how Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 led to Hamas using the territory as a

launching pad to fire tens of thousands of rockets at Israeli towns and build tunnels into Israel with the aim of carrying out terror attacks, leading to several wars.

And in 2015-16, Palestinian Authority incitement on the West Bank based on antisemitic rhetoric that Israeli Jews were coming to destroy the Al-Aqsa mosque led to a spate of stabbings and car ramming attacks.

All this occurred during Beinart's mythical 15-year period of Palestinian restraint, yet Israeli PMs have remained committed to negotiating with the Palestinians.

In 2008, then Israeli PM Ehud Olmert's offer of a state included all of Gaza, the equivalent of 100% of the West Bank and shared control in Jerusalem. Current Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas admits he rejected the offer "out of hand".

Current Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu has invested time and political capital in futile peace talks, yet since 2014 his offer to resume peace talks without preconditions has been flatly rejected.

However, in Beinart's world, these offers show how Israel has not offered the Palestinians "genuine" statehood since the Intifada.

## BLIND SPOT

Also interviewed on *ABC Radio National* "Religion and Ethics Report" (July 29), Beinart claimed that "Israel is also holding millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza... as stateless non-citizens with no voice in the government that dominates their lives."

Since the mid-1990s, more than 90% of Palestinians on the West Bank and all Palestinians in Gaza have had self-rule under leaders they have picked for themselves (Jerusalem Palestinians are eligible for Israeli citizenship if they want it). It is only the Palestinian leadership's stubborn refusal to end the conflict that has ensured this status quo has not developed into full independent statehood.

Allon Lee

## THE ART OF THE DEAL

The historic August 13 announcement that the UAE will establish normalised diplomatic relations with Israel appeared to receive a somewhat muted response by a media uncertain of how to react to a peace accord not involving the Palestinians and brokered by two figures many in the media love to hate, Donald Trump and Binyamin Netanyahu.

The *Australian* (Aug. 15) editorialised that the deal has proved “utterly wrong” the “doomsayers’ forecasts of a Middle East firestorm following... Trump’s 2018... recognis[ing] Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and mov[ing] the US embassy [there]... Arab states are unmoved by the claptrap of anti-Israel campaigns such as the boycott, divestment, sanctions movement.”

*Australian* Foreign Editor Greg Sheridan noted, “This... deal could not have come about under... the Obama White House [which] would have thought diplomatic recognition of Israel by its neighbours was leverage to be withheld until Israel made further concessions.”

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Aug. 16), former Australian ambassador to Israel Dave Sharma wrote, “the agreement itself speaks to a growing recognition among the Middle East’s major actors that they can no longer rely on Washington alone to keep the peace in the region.” Earlier, Sharma said the UAE’s role as a regional transport and logistics hub, means the deal is a “game changer,” *ABC News Radio* (Aug. 14).

US analyst and past AIJAC guest Michael Rubin told “The Bolt Report” on *Sky News* (Aug. 18) this is the “first warm peace” between an Arab state and Israel but its significance “is being downplayed out of animosity for Donald Trump.” He said Arab countries no longer want to “sacrifice their national interests” whilst Palestinian leaders keep rejecting peace deals.

US President Barack Obama’s Ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro was quoted in the *Australian Financial Review* (Aug. 15) saying normalisation between Israel and the Arab states was “a long-term, bipartisan goal” which “everyone should welcome”. On Aug. 21, the paper ran Palestinian-American analyst Hussein Ibish who said the deal is part of the UAE’s foreign policy vision “that emphasises religious tolerance, ethnic diversity, social and cultural openness, and confident Arab engagement with the outside world.”

**“The *Guardian Australia* (Aug. 17) blasted the deal, saying that ‘any rapprochement built on the ruins of Palestinian hopes of an independent state is suspect and fragile...’”**

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry’s Alex Ryvchin said that, while US and EU leaders cosied up to Iran, Gulf States “observed that the world leader most outspoken and fearless in opposing the Iran deal, and the only one who seemed to truly share their understanding of the brutal malevolence of the Iranian mullahs, was the Israeli Prime Minister,” *Australian* (Aug. 15).

Former Middle East correspondent Tony Walker told *ABC News Radio* (Aug. 15) the deal is a “very significant breakthrough obviously,” but predicted likeminded states will wait to see what the consequences are for the UAE.

On *Channel 7* “Sunrise” (Aug. 14) commentator Keith Suter listed the deal’s pros but predicted “peace in the Middle East is [still] a long, long way off.”

Commentator Michael Friedson told *ABC TV* “The World” (Aug. 17) the Palestinians are facing “another crisis moment” and must “decide whether to get with the program or be left behind again” because “there is nothing... to indicate that anybody is going to... take their side.”

A hostile *Observer* editorial in the *Guardian Australia* (Aug. 17) blasted the deal, saying that “any rapprochement built on the ruins of Palestinian hopes of an independent state is suspect and fragile. This flawed deal may yet come to be seen as a historic mistake.”

The *Herald Sun* didn’t cover the initial announcement whilst the *Age*’s reporting was limited to a *New York Times* article (Aug. 15) which included veteran US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross saying the UAE pushed for a deal “after concluding that Netanyahu was bent on annexation” but they “had to give Trump a reason to say no.”

The *Canberra Times* (Aug. 15) welcomed the deal as a “step in the right direction”, but added, “nobody is shouting ‘peace’ yet and nor should they,” and appeared to imply Israel is to blame for the insolubility of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Academic Lana Tatour told *ABC TV* “News” (Aug. 14) the deal is “unprecedented” in “reward[ing] Israel with full diplomatic relations after it made “threats to illegally annex Palestinian territory against international law.”

However, an online ABC report (Aug. 17) noted the practical and immediate benefits of the deal, with the UAE no longer blocking direct telephone calls between the two countries.

# THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

## “ABJECT FILTH”

Holocaust deniers in Australia and elsewhere have been consistently exposed as fabricators with anti-Jewish agendas, and Holocaust deniers in a number of countries have faced sanctions and punishment for the promotion of antisemitism.

It is nearly 20 years since a Federal Government body determined that Holocaust denial is “insulting and offensive”, is “intended to be offensive and intimidating” and is directly aimed at denigrating Jewish people.

This was far from the first occasion in which Holocaust denial had been clearly and unambiguously identified as antisemitism, anti-Jewish racism, but was the first time this could be tested at the federal level in Australia.

In a ruling in September 2000 on a complaint made to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in May 1996, Commissioner Kathleen McEvoy noted in *Jones v Toben* that “no recognised academic or educational institution within Australia or elsewhere recognises Holocaust denial or revisionism as genuine academic research.”

One might have thought that, with the progression of time since the defeat of Nazism, Holocaust deniers might have been able to exploit an expected waning of interest in the subject of the Nazi Genocide. Yet in fact, what we have seen has been ongoing serious research into the subject and consistent overall lack of mainstream impact by the antisemites.

However, social media has proven to be fertile ground for a range of racist conspiracy theories, including Holocaust denial.

A report by the think tank the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) this August concluded that Holocaust denial content was widely available on Facebook and that the social media network also had algorithms in place which actively promoted it.

The report “Hosting the Holofoax: A Snapshot of Holocaust Denial Across Social Media” found a widespread problem not just on Facebook but on other platforms, despite efforts by anti-racist groups to address this.

The Australia/Israel & Jewish

Affairs Council joined with more than a hundred other groups recently in urging Facebook to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of antisemitism and to be proactive in preventing antisemitic conspiracy theories – including Holocaust denial.

The ISD report noted that another platform, Twitter, had acted against some Holocaust denial but that a significant part of the problem remained unaddressed, while YouTube and Reddit were lauded for limiting Holocaust denial.

Another report published in August, by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE), found large volumes of Holocaust denial and other antisemitic material on Polish language Twitter and YouTube.

On the day the GPAHE report was issued, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was calling on Walmart to remove from its website books which promote Holocaust revision-

ism and which claim Jews are “pernicious, conniving shifty liars”.

The same books available on the Walmart site in August had been removed from sale by Amazon earlier this year.

The online licence freely given to Holocaust deniers cannot but encourage the activities of racist

thugs and vandals, and it is no surprise that the global wave of antisemitic activity includes manifestations where this particular pernicious motif appears.

In late August, vandals daubed the word “Lie” on a remembrance wall in Oradour-Sur-Glane, near Limoges in central France, as well as crossing out the inscription “Martyr Village”.

On June 10, 1944, an SS Division locked 642 Jewish people, mainly women and young children, in a church there, then set it on fire, in the biggest massacre of French civilians by the Nazis during World War II.

Prime Minister Jean Castex said the graffiti “dirties the memory of our martyrs” and Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin denounced it as “abject filth”.

Holocaust denial is not just “abject filth” but is outlawed in many jurisdictions.

It is shameful that some online platforms have been abrogating morality and responsibility and it is beyond time they acted with decency.



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