



## ELECTION '22

Israel decides  
“to Bibi or not  
to Bibi”



### IRAN'S SECOND REVOLUTION?

Why the current protest movement  
recalls 1979 .....PAGE 22

### UKRAINE WINNER

Russia's use of  
Iranian drones is  
reaping benefits for  
Teheran .....PAGE 25

### FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Zionism as an  
ongoing movement  
of national  
liberation .....PAGE 29

### STEPPING ON THE GAS

Scoring the Leba-  
non-Israel maritime  
deal .....PAGE 27



WITH COMPLIMENTS



**FOR A BETTER WORLD**

**S H . V**

SH.V  
**SURRY HILLS  
VILLAGE**

# A new Surry Hills Village story

A limited collection of Residences.

DISPLAY GALLERY AT 3 BAPTIST STREET, REDFERN  
[SURRYHILLSVILLAGE.COM.AU](http://SURRYHILLSVILLAGE.COM.AU)  
1800 554 556

 **TOGA**

ESTABLISHED 1963



## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**his *AIR* edition offers a preview of Israel's general election on Nov. 1 – the fifth national election there in four years.

Amotz Asa-El analyses how this campaign compares to the last four elections in Israel, each of which largely turned into a contest between blocs supporting and opposing long-serving PM and current Opposition Leader Binyamin Netanyahu. We also offer readers a guide, authored by BICOM and AIJAC staff, to the ideologies, candidates and prospects of the parties competing in the contest. Plus, Calev Ben-Dor dives into one of the key controversies of this election: the rising poll numbers for far-right extremist politician Itamar Ben Gvir and his Jewish Power party, and the reasons for them.

Also featured this month is Iran expert Ray Takeyh, who notes some startling parallels between the current unprecedented wave of unrest against Iran's theocratic regime and the 1979 revolution that created that regime. Plus, American writer Bret Stephens explains why Zionism has always been and remains a liberation movement.

Finally, don't miss military expert Aaron Pilkington on the strategic implications of the growing use of Iranian drones in Ukraine, Michael Shannon on Malaysia's snap election, and Jeremy Jones on the madness of some recent local government and union motions in Australia.

As always, please give us your feedback on any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

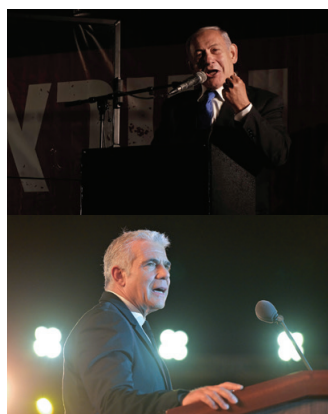
## CONTENTS

### FEATURE STORIES

#### TO BIBI OR NOT TO BIBI

AMOTZ ASA-EL

It appears as static as the Dead Sea. With the Nov. 1 general election less than two weeks away, polls detect almost no electoral movement between the right-wing alliance headed by Opposition Leader Binyamin Netanyahu and the rival configuration headed by Prime Minister Yair Lapid. ....



PAGE 12

#### THE PARTIES AND THEIR PROSPECTS

BICOM & AIJAC STAFF ..... PAGE 14

#### THE RISE OF ITAMAR BEN GVIR

CALEV BEN-DOR ..... PAGE 18

#### A SECOND IRANIAN REVOLUTION?

Why the protests this time appear different

RAY TAKEYH ..... PAGE 22

#### IRAN IS A WINNER IN UKRAINE

AARON PILKINGTON ..... PAGE 25

#### SCORING THE LEBANON MARITIME DEAL

HUSSAIN ABDUL HUSSAIN ..... PAGE 27

#### ESSAY: A FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Why Zionism was and remains a liberation movement

BRET STEPHENS ..... PAGE 29

### ON THE COVER

Posters for leading party candidates Binyamin Netanyahu and Yair Lapid on display as Israel nears its national election (Images: Oded Balilty/AAP)



### REGULAR COLUMNS

#### FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN ..... PAGE 4

WORD FOR WORD ..... PAGE 5

#### SCRIBBLINGS

TZVI FLEISCHER ..... PAGE 6

#### DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

DAVID HOROVITZ ..... PAGE 7

#### ASIA WATCH

MICHAEL SHANNON ..... PAGE 8

#### EUROPA EUROPA

ALEX BENJAMIN ..... PAGE 9

BEHIND THE NEWS ..... PAGE 10

STRANGER THAN FICTION ..... PAGE 11

NOTED AND QUOTED ..... PAGE 35

IN PARLIAMENT ..... PAGE 36

#### MEDIA MICROSCOPE

ALLON LEE ..... PAGE 39

#### THE LAST WORD

JEREMY JONES ..... PAGE 40

With compliments

**OMNICO CORPORATION**

TEL: (03) 9501 5588

**Australia/Israel Review**

Published by the Australia/Israel &amp; Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC)

**Editorial Chairman****Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Editor-in-Chief****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Senior Contributing Editor**  
**JEREMY JONES AM****Staff Writers****ALLON LEE, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, AHRON SHAPIRO, OVED LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD, TAMMY REZNIK****Publishing Manager****MICHAEL SHANNON****Correspondents****ISRAEL: AMOTZ ASA-EL**  
**NEW ZEALAND: MIRIAM BELL**  
**EUROPE: ALEX BENJAMIN****National Editorial Board****KEITH BEVILLE, RABBI RALPH GENENDE OAM, GARY HERZ, MIRIAM LASKY, STEVE LIEBLICH, RABBI JOHN LEVI AC, Hon. HOWARD NATHAN AM, IAN WALLER SC****AIJAC****National Chairman****MARK LEIBLER AC****NSW Chairman****PAUL RUBENSTEIN****Executive Director****Dr COLIN RUBENSTEIN AM****Director of International & Community Affairs****JEREMY JONES AM****Policy and Research Coordinator****Dr TZVI FLEISCHER****Executive Manager****JOEL BURNIE****Senior Policy Analysts****AHRON SHAPIRO, JAMIE HYAMS OAM, ALLON LEE****Policy Analysts****OVED LOBEL, JUDY MAYNARD****Research Associate****Dr RAN PORAT****Multimedia Designer****AREK DYBEL****Digital Communications Producer****ALANA SCHETZER****Digital and Policy Analyst****TAMMY REZNIK****Events Coordinator****HELEN BRUSTMAN OAM****Administration****MELBOURNE: ROSEMARY SANDLER, RENA LANGBERG**  
**SYDNEY: LOUISE DE MESQUITA****Israel Liaison****PETER ADLER****Founding Chairmen****ISADOR MAGID AM (OBM), ROBERT ZABLUD (OBM)****HEAD OFFICE****Level 1, 22 Albert Road,  
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia**  
Telephone: (03) 9681 6660  
Email: [aijac@aijac.org.au](mailto:aijac@aijac.org.au)**SYDNEY OFFICE****140 William Street  
East Sydney, NSW 2011, Australia**  
Telephone: (02) 9360 5415  
Email: [ldemesquita@aijac.org.au](mailto:ldemesquita@aijac.org.au)**SUBSCRIPTIONS**Please send all remittances, changes of address and subscription inquiries to:  
**Australia/Israel Review**  
Level 1, 22 Albert Road  
South Melbourne, VIC 3205, Australia  
Email: [admin-aijac@aijac.org.au](mailto:admin-aijac@aijac.org.au)  
ISSN No. 1442-3693  
Print Post Approved – 100007869**[www.aijac.org.au](http://www.aijac.org.au)****FROM THE  
EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN**  
**COLIN RUBENSTEIN**

# CANBERRA MISSTEPS AS ISRAEL GOES TO THE POLLS

The announcement by the Australian Government that it was reversing the previous government's 2018 decision to recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital was not only very disappointing, but an own goal which damaged the Albanese Government's self-declared policy objective of seeking to encourage a negotiated two-state Israeli-Palestinian peace. It also risked denting Australia's credibility with some of our closest allies, raising questions about our Government's moral clarity and level of understanding of the positive, historic dynamic in Israel-Arab relations reflected by the Abraham Accords.

Why is Israel alone, of all the countries in the world, seen as not having the right to choose its own capital, especially since west Jerusalem is not part of the land Israel gained control over in 1967? It has been Israel's capital since 1950, hosting the Knesset, Israel's parliament; Supreme Court; and most government ministries. When foreign dignitaries travel to Israel, including leaders of Arab countries, they meet Israeli leaders in Jerusalem.

Moreover, no one doubts that west Jerusalem will remain in Israel after any final status negotiations with the Palestinians.

The international refusal to recognise any part of Jerusalem as Israel's capital previously was not because of Palestinian demands but because of an unworkable and long defunct proposal back in the 1940s that Jerusalem and Bethlehem should become an "international city" under UN control.

Later, the main argument became that altering the long-standing policy of not recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital could spark an angry or violent reaction, especially by the Palestinians, and set back hopes for peace negotiations. Yet when the Morrison Government recognised west Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the US Government moved its embassy there, the reaction was extremely mild. Alarmist claims that Morrison's decision would sink a free trade agreement with Indonesia also proved unfounded.

Israel should not be treated in a discriminatory way just because Palestinian intransigence has currently made final status negotiations impossible – especially in the wake of three Israeli offers of a Palestinian state with a capital in east Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Authority has refused to even negotiate with Israel since 2014, instead seeking to demonise Israel in international forums and hoping to eventually achieve statehood without having to compromise or make concessions for peace.

When governments like ours take steps that treat Israel differently to all other countries, Palestinian leaders see it as vindication of their tactics, making them even less likely to negotiate or compromise. The fact that rejectionist terror groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad welcomed Australia's changed stance only highlights how such moves do not help bring peace.

Moreover, the timing of the announcement was especially puzzling. Firstly, it effectively rewarded PA President Mahmoud Abbas after he recently offered support and legitimacy to Russia President Vladimir Putin, hailing the butcher of Ukraine as a supporter of "justice" and "international law". In addition, Canberra's announcement came just two weeks before an Israeli election, when every foreign policy development affecting Israel has direct political consequences.

Predictably, Israel's Opposition Leader and former PM Binyamin Netanyahu wasted no time in releasing a campaign video for his Likud Party blaming Israel's centrist Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Defence Minister Benny Gantz for inviting the Jerusalem downgrade through their own policy failings.



Australia's diplomatic intervention probably won't significantly affect the outcome of the November 1 election, yet who would have guessed that the Australian Labor Party would inadvertently risk undermining the fortunes of political allies abroad, such as the Israeli Labor party, in the context of a tight election campaign?

Israel's election – its fifth in less than four years – is once again primarily a contest between a bloc of parties supporting Netanyahu's return to the top job despite his current trial on corruption charges, and a diverse bloc led by current PM Lapid, united by opposition to Netanyahu's return to office while under indictment. Likely outcomes include: A narrow right-wing government led by Netanyahu; a new anti-Netanyahu unity coalition similar to the outgoing "Coalition of Change" Government, with possible outside support from the mostly Arab Joint List; and another deadlocked Knesset triggering yet another election, with the current Government staying on in "caretaker" capacity.

Few either in Israel or among its friends abroad want to see another deadlock after four years of political stalemate. At the same time, another concerning issue is the probability that a narrow Netanyahu government would depend on the support of the Religious Zionist party and its vehemently anti-Arab Jewish Power faction led by right-wing extremist Itamar Ben Gvir (see p. 18).

So some innovative ideas are being canvassed, many centred on Gantz becoming a temporary compromise PM in some of sort of unity agreement, with or without Netanyahu.

**"When governments like ours take steps that treat Israel differently to all other countries, Palestinian leaders see it as vindication of their tactics, making them even less likely to negotiate or compromise"**

Other issues at stake for Israeli voters include curbing rising costs of living, improving education and health care, and strengthening national defence, especially in the face of Iranian nuclear and conventional threats. The foreign policy agenda also includes efforts to bring more regional neighbours into the Abraham Accords, as well as the recent maritime boundary agreement with Lebanon.

Looming large, too, is the wave of Palestinian violence that has cost the lives of many Palestinians and Israelis this year, a result mainly of the growing weakness of the increasingly out of touch PA Government. Any conceivable Israeli government is going to face a serious challenge in relating to a divided and hostile Palestinian people whose often dysfunctional leadership still remains disinterested in statehood if it means coexistence with Israel.

Israel's vibrant democracy is doubtless up to the challenge, but a priority for the next Knesset should nonetheless be to enact electoral reforms to attempt to address the paralysis of the past few years, which has made long-term policymaking much more difficult.

As for Australia, the Albanese Government will likely be eager to put both the Jerusalem controversy, and the very ill-conceived and insensitive way it was handled, behind it. AIJAC hopes the experience will encourage the Government to make better choices in the future when faced with pressure from political forces seeking to undermine the close Australia-Israel relationship – a relationship that serves Australian national interests and values very well.

AIR

## WORD FOR WORD

"In light of the way in which the decision was made in Australia, as a hasty response to incorrect news in the media, we can only hope that the Australian government manages other matters more seriously and professionally. Jerusalem is the eternal capital of united Israel and nothing will ever change that."

**Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid slams the Australian Government's decision to undo its recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel's capital (Times of Israel, Oct. 18).**

"The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas welcomes the Australian government's decision to drop recognition of occupied Jerusalem as the capital of the Israeli occupation state, and considers it a step in the right direction towards supporting the Palestinians' rights."

**Hamas welcomes Australia's decision on Jerusalem (Sky News, Oct. 19).**

"The enemies are working to do something so that the Zionist regime, this cancerous cell, won't be called 'the enemy' anymore. They wish to create more discord between the countries of the region. These #normalizations are one of the biggest acts of treachery against the Muslims."

**Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (Twitter, Oct. 14).**

"[Iran is] killing our people. So what trust can we talk about? Iran supplied [Russia] with drones, [they] supply murders, murders of Ukrainians. This is their agreement. A financial agreement. Blood money for Iran."

**Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy (CBC, Oct. 19).**

"We don't trust America and you know our position... We know perfectly well that Russia stands for justice, for international law."

**Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas praises Russia and rejects a US role in Israeli-Palestinian peace talks during a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin (Jewish Chronicle, Oct. 13).**



# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## THINKING OF THE VICTIMS OF IRANIAN REGIME BRUTALITY

In November 2021, the *AIR* was proud to publish the words of a brave Iranian dissident, Hossein Ronaghi, who risked his life to tell the truth about what it is like to live in the Islamic Republic. In his article, which originally appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, Ronaghi presciently wrote about the oppression of women in Iran by means of the morality police and enforcement of dress standards such as the mandatory hijab (headscarf), the spark for the current unprecedented wave of protests in Iran:

“Roaming morality police brutalise women for not wearing the mandatory hijab. They burst into parties where there is alcohol and co-ed mingling to beat and arrest young people. Repeat ‘offenders’ are imprisoned, publicly flogged or executed.

*“This isn’t 1984 or The Handmaid’s Tale. This is our Iran.”*

Now, Ronaghi is reportedly paying the price for his courageous truth-telling.

Since Sept. 24, Mr. Ronaghi had been in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison, and his family says that on Sept. 26, he called his mother and said the following: “Mom I can’t talk now; they’ve broken my legs.” Then the connection was cut. His friends and family also say an eyewitness in the prison saw him “being dragged to the infirmary with a visibly broken leg,” while another saw him vomiting blood.

Ronaghi’s brother, Hassan, tweeted on Oct. 14, “The Islamic Republic intends to kill my brother Hossein.” And he may be right – death could very well be the outcome for this remarkably courageous individual, who had already endured six years in Iranian prisons as well as torture by security forces even before his latest arrest.

But if that is his fate, he will not be the only Iranian individual to be murdered after exhibiting remarkable bravery in confronting Iran’s oppressive theocratic regime over its abuses of women, of religious and cultural minorities, or of freethinkers and ordinary working Iranians.

Reports say hundreds of protestors have been killed in the regime’s crackdown on the protests, many of them young women, even schoolgirls.

One remarkable story concerns an Iranian security forces invasion of the Shahed Girls High School in Ardabil on Oct. 13. Reports say security forces demanded students sing a pro-regime song praising Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and violently beat any that refused to do so. Numerous girls were hospitalised as a result and 16-year-old Asra Panahi reportedly died of her injuries.

This does not appear to be an isolated incident. There

have been numerous videos published on social media of Iranian schoolgirls across the country removing their hijabs, and chanting anti-regime slogans. There are also videos of security forces firing tear gas into schools and dragging arrested students into waiting cars. At least two other schoolgirls, 17-year-old Nika Shahkarami and 16-year-old Sarina Esmailzade, were also reportedly killed by security forces over the past couple of weeks.

The Iranian protests are astonishing and inspiring – but the stories of people like Hossein Ronaghi and Asra Panahi are a reminder of the terrible suffering so many Iranians are enduring to try to change the unbearable situation in their country. Whatever happens with the protest movement, their suffering must be neither forgotten nor forgiven.

## “RACIST TALMUDIC PRACTICES”

Jewish prayers – the kind of prayers that Jews recite in synagogues all over the world every day – are actually “racist Talmudic practices”, according to an official media outlet of the “moderate” Palestinian Authority (PA).

Wafa, the official news agency of the PA, filed a report on Oct. 15 about Jews reciting their Sabbath prayers that day at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Judaism’s holiest place of prayer, during the Jewish festival of Sukkot. The Wafa report describing this anodyne event, which has occurred every year for many decades, said:

“Hundreds of settlers performed today, Saturday, racist Talmudic rituals, at Al-Buraq Wall (the western wall of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque). Our correspondent reported that hundreds of settlers stormed the western area of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque and performed Talmudic rituals, on the sixth day of the Hebrew “Sukkot”, under the strict protection of the Israeli occupation forces...”

These statements show just how ugly – and undeniably antisemitic – official Palestinian media discourse about Jews can get.

Characterising everyday Jewish prayer as “racist Talmudic rituals” is clearly demonising all Jewish religious worship, painting Judaism itself as offensive, conspiratorial and unacceptable.


PA sources have used similar language before – about potential Jewish prayer at the Temple Mount, from which the PA has been campaigning to exclude Jews. They had to demonise Jewish worship to do so because just saying Jews should not be allowed to visit or pray, but Muslims should, is not a very convincing argument. Now that language is being extended to ordinary prayer at the Western Wall – never historically a Muslim religious site or place of prayer, as it has been for Jews for centuries (except when Jews were physically excluded between 1948 and 1967).

The Wafa report’s reference to the site as the “Al-Buraq Wall (the western wall of the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque)” reflects a wider Palestinian campaign to deny any Jewish



historical or religious connection to any part of the land of Israel, and insist all Jewish sites are really stolen Muslim and Palestinian ones (moreover, the Wall is not part of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, but a retaining wall of the Temple Mount compound).

Furthermore, all Jews praying at the Wall are characterised as “settlers” who “stormed” the site – also language developed to demonise Jews who visit the Temple Mount.

The “moderate” Palestinian Authority is promoting the grossest hate against not only Israelis, but Jews generally, through its official channels. And people wonder why Israel has struggled to make peace with it? 



David Horovitz

## WHY THERE IS NO PALESTINIAN STATE

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’ speech to the United Nations General Assembly on September 23 was laden with questions.

Why are the Palestinians still living under occupation? Why, after hundreds upon hundreds of pro-Palestinian resolutions passed by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council, have the Palestinians still not been granted full membership status at the UN? Why do they not yet have a state?

I’m not deaf to his people’s aspirations for independence. And I’m deeply aware of the threat to Israel’s Jewish democracy if we cannot separate from millions of Palestinians.

Nevertheless, I found the answers to Abbas’ frustrated, ostensibly baffled questions were in his speech as well.

He claimed to genuinely want peace with Israel, but in other passages of his address made clear that he rejects Israel’s very legitimacy. He denounced the Balfour Declaration – “of course you do not remember it,” he ad-libbed, “because we are the only ones suffering its consequences.” He described Israel as a colonising power for “75 years” – that is, since its historic rebirth in 1948. He airbrushed Judaism out of his “eternal” Jerusalem, in which there are only Muslim and Christian holy sites, under relentless, daily Israeli attack.

In his narrative, furthermore, there was no acknowledgment, no sign of internalisation, of why Israel might hesitate to hand over any more of the territory he has sought all these years for a Palestinian state.

His comments included powerful passages on the terrible deaths of children in Gaza, complete with a *New York Times* front page filled with the faces of young people killed in May 2021’s conflict.

But there was no mention that Israel dismantled its settlements and withdrew all its soldiers from Gaza in 2005. No hint that Hamas took over, and has provoked conflict with Israel ever since, using its civilian population as human shields for its indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israel, subverting all relevant resources for weaponry.

In his depiction, last year’s 11-day war between Hamas and Israel was the latest of “50 massacres” carried out by Israel against the Palestinians since 1948; at least this time he refrained from calling them “holocausts”.

Moreover, his championing of the heroic “martyrs” who “have lit the way to freedom and independence with their blood,” was a debasement of his claim that the Palestinians “will not resort to weapons... will not resort to terrorism.”

Indeed, so deaf or indifferent to his own transparent bad faith was Abbas that he devoted some of the closing passages of his address to the case of Nasser Abu Hamid. Abbas allowed that Abu Hamid “committed a crime”, but described him as a heroic martyr who was now dying in jail because – he again produced a picture to make the point – of ostensible Israeli medical negligence, with his mother not allowed to visit him.

Abu Hamid, who has cancer, is serving multiple life terms for the murders of seven Israelis and the attempted murders of 12 more.

Palestinian prisoners “are the living conscience of our people,” Abbas declared, treading his well-worn path of championing the killers of Israelis – terrorists to whom his Palestinian Authority insists on paying salaries, thus nurturing the next generations of murderers. Heroes who “have taken four or five life sentences,” he specified; no minor offenders, these.

Abbas affected to welcome Prime Minister Yair Lapid’s readiness-in-principle for a two-state solution, as set out at the same podium the previous day.


But he ignored the “one condition” Lapid set for the implementation of that vision: “That a future Palestinian state will be a peaceful one. That it will not become another terror base from which to threaten the well-being and the very existence of Israel.”

For three-quarters of an hour, the Palestinian Authority President fulminated against Israel’s refusal to grant the Palestinians full sovereignty on all the territory they seek, and condemned the international community, led by the United States, for failing to force Israel’s hand.

But his speech contained the explanations. Like his unlamented predecessor Yasser Arafat, he continues to resist Israel’s legitimacy as the revived historic homeland of the Jews, encourages his people to believe that it is a colonising presence that can be ejected, and incites and rewards murderous hostility toward it.

Lapid offered Abbas a one-sentence formula for Palestinian independence: “Put down your weapons, and there



will be peace.” But as ever, tragically for our people and for his, the Palestinian leader was not minded to listen. 

*David Horovitz is the founding editor of the Times of Israel. © Times of Israel (timesofisrael.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

### RESTORE FROM BACKUP?

Malaysia will soon have the chance to reset its protracted governmental instability through national elections, but the afflicted body politic appears well beyond the scope of any vote.

Elections could have been held at the latest by September 2023, but caretaker Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob had been under intense pressure from his United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) to call an early vote to capitalise on recent state election victories by the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition and get ahead of economic headwinds that are expected to worsen next year.

With the Parliament now dissolved, the election must be held within 60 days, but the approaching monsoon season will compress the time frame, ensuring UMNO has the inside running against a disunited opposition and even its erstwhile allies. Its clear aim is to win big in its own right, having dispensed with recent coalition partners the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) led by former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

That Sabri was pressured into calling an election speaks to the enduring power of the UMNO old guard. Despite being Prime Minister, as junior party Vice-President Sabri is lower in the UMNO hierarchy than Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, UMNO President, and by extension, former Prime Minister Najib Razak. With Zahid and Najib facing corruption trials, the elevation of Sabri to the prime ministership last year was the price UMNO was willing to pay to form a new coalition to replace the previous alignment headed by Muhyiddin Yassin, which was another unelected government built upon the implosion of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government elected in 2018.

Arguably the only useful outcome of the 22-month Pakatan Harapan coalition headed by Mahathir Mohamed, along with perennial bridesmaid Anwar Ibrahim, until February 2020, were the court proceedings instituted against Najib and Zahid.

Najib was found guilty by the High Court in July 2020 on all charges of abuse of power, criminal breach of trust,

and money laundering, but was allowed to remain free and politically active for more than two years until his legal appeals were finally exhausted in August, whereupon he began a 12-year jail term. He still faces four other trials.

Zahid is also battling graft charges, although he got a reprieve when he was acquitted in September in one of two cases. In the second case, he faces 47 criminal charges related to the alleged misappropriation of US\$11.42 million from his family-owned foundation set up to help the economically disadvantaged.

Despite the stench of corruption, the UMNO old guard retains the loyalty of the party rank-and-file. The UMNO's patronage culture, deeply embedded over several decades, rewards such loyalty over merit – a core national handicap. Yet, this very culture has helped UMNO sweep a string of state and national by-elections over the past three years, entrenching an expectation that the next election will usher in some kind of restoration of “normality”. This could include judicial reversals in the aforementioned corruption cases, although UMNO leaders do not declare such wishes – history suggests they do not need to.

While UMNO is divided into Zahid-Najib and Sabri factions, it faces a demoralised opposition still smarting from the ignominy of losing government less than two years after its historic election win. Their prime ministerial candidate is Anwar Ibrahim, but this time without the support of Mahathir, whose refusal to honour his agreement to handover the prime ministership led to the collapse of their government.


Mahathir has announced that his Gerakan Tanah Air (GTA) coalition of small Malay-Muslim parties has decided that he should recontest the seat he won in 2018. The 97-year-old former prime minister also stated that he would consider working with Bersatu, which he founded and led before being sacked, as well as Anwar's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). “The problem is that he (Anwar) doesn't want to work with me. I am a very nice man,” he said, drawing laughter from the media.

Mahathir's grouping will contest in Malay-dominated parliamentary seats, although analysts say Mahathir's pull may no longer hold ethnic Malay voters who supported him in 2018.

Meanwhile, Anwar appears a spent force, with his Pakatan Harapan coalition beset by infighting, intra-party rivalries and low member participation in recent elections. The original PH manifesto had pledged to undo the counterproductive excesses of the Malay agenda that Mahathir himself had inaugurated, winning overwhelming non-Malay support in 2018 for equitable governance based on need, not race. But that vision alarmed heartland Malays, who felt sidelined by a government that no longer privileged their needs and sensibilities.

The coming election may well default in favour of UMNO, but with the judicial process for its leadership yet



to fully play out, the lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18, and a new law preventing members from switching parties once elected, the outcome is far from certain. 



Alex Benjamin

## THE TERMS OF ASSOCIATION

Blink and you could have missed it. Possibly the most important meeting between Israel and the EU in a decade (for that was how long had elapsed since the last similar meeting) – the EU Association Council – took place on October 3.

By all accounts, it was a wide-ranging meeting, discussing the many close and mutually beneficial political, cultural, people-to-people, tourism, trade and investment relations between the EU and Israel, as well as the significant economic, financial, research and innovation, and security cooperation arrangements in place.

The EU praised Israel over the recent signature of a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation related to natural gas between the EU, Israel, Egypt and Lebanon, and for Jerusalem's cooperation with the EU on COVID-19, on Ukraine and on research and development.

On the peace process, the EU reiterated its commitment to a two-state solution, restated its opposition to settlements and condemned recent terror attacks against Israel.

But my favourite bit from the anodyne statements that came out of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU equivalent of a foreign ministry, was this gem: "The EU underlines the importance of communicating to European and Israeli citizens about the mutual benefits of EU-Israel cooperation with a view to increasing the public awareness on both sides."

Why did this tickle me so much? Because, as any pro-Israel advocate operating in Brussels will tell you, the EEAS could hardly imagine anything worse than communicating to EU citizens the mutual benefits of working with Israel.

How else to explain the minimum fuss made over this ten-years-in-the-making meeting? Yes, we are amid a war, Iran is beset with protests and the British economy is tanking. Yet that doesn't explain it.

I subscribe to the EEAS press service newsroom. I'm pinged at least half a dozen times daily even on quiet days (more on busy ones) with urgent news such as EEAS Chief Josep Borrell's remarks to the EU's diplomatic academy or his thoughts on the Horn of Africa. The EEAS isn't exactly shy about promoting itself or its activities and opinions.

The real reason for the lack of fanfare was confirmed to me by a senior Israeli official less than a year ago, when I

pointed out to him that Borrell was adamant about linking any resumption of the Association Council to significant movement in the peace process with the Palestinians.

The Israeli official's answer was clear: the EEAS had been dragged reluctantly – like a petulant teenager to a family dinner – by the 27 EU member states themselves to resume Association Council meetings. Like the teenager, EEAS would have happily sat in the corner with its headphones on staring at a mobile if it could have gotten away with it. Instead, it released the perfunctory statement I referenced earlier.

Consider this: in terms of high-level EU visits to Israel, the freshly elected President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, visited the Jewish state in May 2022. President of the European Commission Ursula Von Der Leyen visited in June 2022. Earlier meetings occurred between then Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and EU Foreign Ministers at the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council in July 2021. Borrell? I understand from high-level sources in Israel that while a high-level trip to Israel has been requested from EEAS, the Israelis are not beside themselves with enthusiasm to invite the recalcitrant Borrell, or his headphones and mobile, to dine with them.

The rest of the EU and diplomatic world is moving forwards on Israeli relations. The Abraham Accords have significantly changed the dynamics, coupled with general fatigue with a Palestinian Authority that offers nothing except incendiary rhetoric and unrealistic expectations that cannot be delivered.

Israel, the 'start-up nation', is replete with skills it wants to share, so it is natural that a majority of EU member states want to cooperate, given that the EU is hardly renowned as a dynamic innovation hub. So most EU member states simply shrugged and said "well, if Israel's old implacable enemies in the Middle East can work with it, why shouldn't we?"

Mr Borrell's answer to this question was given in remarks he made on his way to the Association Council: "It's all very well having peace with Arab states but you also need peace with the Palestinians." It's a statement that everyone can agree with in principle, except that Borrell means any movement, political or economic, with Israel must be linked to peace-processing with the Palestinians. This barmy and unrealistic position is, in essence, a de-facto policy of permanent exclusion of Israel straight out of the far left's playbook (Borrell is a Spanish Socialist), given the stance of Israel's current ostensible partner for peace on the Palestinian side.

Thus, we can be grateful that overall foreign policy is fully in the hands of the 27 EU member countries and not Borrell. This means we have to swallow bland and reluctant statements from the EEAS, but this is a small price to pay for moving forwards with EU 27-Israel relations without him.



# BEHIND THE NEWS



## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

No rockets were fired into Israel between the end of Operation Break-ing Dawn on Aug. 8 and late October. A drone operating from Gaza was shot down over Israel on Oct. 11.

Multiple shootings targeting both Israeli security forces and civilians have taken place in the West Bank and Jerusalem, including on Sept. 14, 15, 19, 27 and 28 and Oct. 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14 and 15. Car rammings took place on Sept. 24 and Oct. 2. Staff Sgt. Ido Baruch was killed in the Oct. 11 at-tack and 18-year-old female Military Police officer Noa Lazar was killed in the attack on Oct. 9. Several other Is-raeli soldiers, policemen and civilians were wounded in these attacks.

Multiple Palestinian assailants have been killed, wounded or detained in these attacks or subsequent IDF raids to arrest suspects.

According to data from Israel's Shin Bet security agency, shooting at-tacks increased overall by about 47% in September compared to the previ-ous month.

An 85-year-old woman was beaten to death in the central Israeli town of Holon in a suspected terrorist attack on Sept. 20.

Major Arab rioting occurred in Jerusalem in mid-October, employing both Molotov cocktails and fireworks, resulting in injuries to at least two police officers.

## ELECTION DEAL BETWEEN PALESTINIAN FACTIONS

On Oct. 13, the two main rival Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, reached a reconciliation agreement. Signed in Algiers and mediated by the Algerian Government, the under-standing is supposed to result in elec-tions for the Palestinian parliament

next year. However, several previous similar agreements failed to result in either reconciliation or new elections, and no elections have been held in the Palestinian Authority since 2006, when Hamas won a majority of parlia-mentary seats.

Also in the PA, on Oct. 5, 25-year-old Palestinian Ahmad Abu Murkhiyeh was beheaded in Hebron, with foot-age of his execution being uploaded to social media. Murkhiyeh was part of the LGBTQI+ community and, following threats on his life, had fled to Israel and lived there and in Jordan for two years, while trying to im-migrate to Canada. It is suspected he was kidnapped from Israel and taken to Hebron.

## MAHMOUD ABBAS MEETS, PRAISES PUTIN

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas used the occasion of a summit in Astana, Kazakhstan, to have a personal meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Oct. 13. Abbas told the Russian leader that he has no faith in Washington as a Mideast peace broker, saying "We don't trust it, we don't rely on it, and under no circumstances can we accept that America is the sole party in resolving a problem." Abbas said that the Palestinians would only consider US mediation as part of the "Quartet", a grouping of nations that includes Russia, adding that "Russia stands by justice and international law and that is enough for us." Abbas is one of only a few world leaders to sit down with Putin since Rus-sia launched its war on Ukraine in February.

A US Administration spokesperson responded, "We were deeply disap-pointed to hear President Abbas's remarks yesterday to President Putin.



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas meets Russian President Vladimir Putin at a conference in Astana, Kazakhstan (Image: Twitter)

Russia does NOT stand for justice and international law."

Meanwhile, Russia hosted a several-day visit by a Hamas delega-tion led by leader Ismail Haniyeh in late September — a move analysts said appeared to be part of Russian efforts to pressure Israel over its stance on Ukraine.

## ISRAEL TREATS WOUNDED UKRAINIANS, PROVIDES INTELLIGENCE

Israel has reportedly been shar-ing some intelligence with Ukraine regarding the hundreds of Iranian drones now being deployed by Russia as part of its invasion of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, at least two severely wounded Ukrainian troops have begun to undergo advanced treat-ment at Israel's Sheba hospital, part of an agreement between Israel and Ukraine to treat at least 20 wounded Ukrainian soldiers in need of pros-thetics and advanced care.

Israel has come under increasing criticism from the Ukrainian Gov-ernment over its ongoing refusal to provide weapons to Ukraine.

## IRAN ADDS MISSILES TO RUSSIA AID

On top of the hundreds of drones it has sold to Russia, which reports



confirm have caused havoc in Ukrainian cities, Iran reportedly finalised a deal on Sept. 18 to transfer Fateh-110 and Zolfaghar ballistic missiles to Russia.

Western officials have also confirmed that Iranian advisers are on the ground in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine to help train the Russians in drone use and oversee attacks on civilian infrastructure.

## IRAN INSTALLS MORE ADVANCED CENTRIFUGES

A confidential report issued in early October by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) revealed that Iran has accelerated the pace of its installation of advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges in a new underground hall at Natanz. When inspectors last visited the site on Aug. 31, the Iranians were setting up a cascade of six IR-2m and one IR-4 centrifuges, meaning 12 advanced cascades were now installed there. Teheran also told the IAEA it would introduce three additional IR-2m centrifuges.

In recent weeks, Teheran has also renewed historical claims that the nation of Bahrain is in fact a part of Iran. State-controlled media in Iran has repeatedly been calling the small Gulf sheikhdom “Iran’s 14th province”.

## ISRAEL OKAYS PA’S GAZA GAS FIELD EXPORT DEAL

After months of negotiation, Israel has reportedly reached an agreement with Egypt to allow the latter to extract natural gas from a field off the coast of Gaza on behalf of the Palestinian Authority (PA). The field in question, discovered in 2000, is located about 30 kilometres west of the Gaza coast, and is believed to contain more than 28 billion cubic metres of natural gas. In Feb. 2021, the Palestinian Authority and Egypt signed a memorandum of

understanding to jointly develop the gas field, but Israeli agreement was required for the plan to go ahead. Reports say the deal will see production begin in 2024, and gas both sent to Egypt and exported to Europe, with the PA to receive the revenue from the exports.

Meanwhile, on Oct. 6, UK-Greek exploration and production company Energean announced a new commercial gas discovery in Israeli waters, estimated to yield 7-15 billion cubic metres.

## SPANISH COURT FINDS BDS INHERENTLY DISCRIMINATORY

On Sept. 20, the Supreme Court of Spain ruled that the Israel boycott movement is discriminatory and infringes basic rights. The judgment, published on Oct. 4, came after a pro-Palestinian not-for-profit association appealed a lower court ruling

that had called a specific action to boycott Israel discriminatory.

While other lower courts in Spain had handed down similar decisions, the specific nature of those cases meant the rulings were of limited significance in deciding other matters. This new judgment by Spain’s highest court now sets a precedent for all future cases in that country.

## ISRAELI POPULATION NOW 9.6 MILLION

According to an annual report released in late September by Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics, the nation’s population has grown to 9,593,000, a growth of 187,000 or 2%, over the last 12 months. Seventy-four percent, or 7,069,000, registered as Jewish, with 21%, or 2,026,000 Arab, and the remaining 5% from neither group. New immigrants made up 60,000 of the figure, the largest number in 20 years.



## STRANGER THAN FICTION

### A RIGHT ROYAL CONSPIRACY

The passing of Queen Elizabeth II was met mostly with sadness. Even people who are not particularly fond of the monarchy or Britain conceded she seemed a decent, kind person who performed her duties with great diligence and dignity.

As is often the case, however, a notable departure from civilised norms was Iran. On Iran’s *Channel 1*, Pejman Karimi, host of a special about the Queen’s death on Sept. 9, the day after she died, said the Queen had “left a grade sheet full of crime, abomination and filth.” Academic Foad Izadi of Teheran University’s Global Studies Department concurred, saying the Queen was “one of the greatest criminals in the history of mankind,” and perhaps “should be included in the same list with Hitler.”

Meanwhile, that night on Iran’s *Ofoq TV*, Mohammad-Hassan Ghadiri-

Abyaneh, a former Iranian Ambassador to Australia, took the opportunity to also air an antisemitic conspiracy theory with a royal twist.

After repeating normal Iranian tropes about Zionists controlling the West, he claimed that according to the Talmud, Jewish women may only marry non-Jewish men if those men are wealthy and powerful, so they can transfer the wealth and power to their Jewish children.

This, he explained, is why Kate Middleton, who he falsely claimed is Jewish, married Prince William. He warned that when they get married, Jewish women “start to have children, so that their cut of the inheritance will be bigger,” and then “hatch schemes” so “the mortality rate in the family rises.” He added that Prince Harry marrying a “somewhat coloured American woman” was also “part of their plan,” because they want William to replace Harry. Apparently, he didn’t realise William has always preceded Harry in the line of succession (All translations from the Middle East Media Research Institute).

## COVER STORY

## ELECTIONS '22

## TO BIBI OR NOT TO BIBI

Amotz Asa-El

It appears as static as the Dead Sea. With the November 1 general election less than two weeks away, polls detect almost no electoral movement between the right-wing alliance headed by Opposition Leader Benjamin (“Bibi”) Netanyahu and the rival configuration headed by Prime Minister Yair Lapid.

Netanyahu’s Likud, Israel’s largest party, is polling around 30 of the Knesset’s 120 seats, the same as it currently holds, while Lapid’s *Yesh Atid* (“There is a Future”) polls 25. Though this figure is more than 50% higher than Lapid’s current 17 seats, the addition is coming almost fully from other anti-Netanyahu parties, and does not shift the balance between the two “blocs” dominating Israeli politics.

Netanyahu’s partners in the pro-Likud bloc are three long-time allies, the two ultra-Orthodox parties, Shas and United Torah Judaism, and the ultra-nationalist Religious Zionism party. The three parties currently poll a combined 29 seats, which means that, according to the polls, Netanyahu and his allies are close to winning the 61 seats they failed to gain in the last four elections, but may fall just short.

Lapid’s key partner is Defence Minister Lt-Gen (res.) Benny Gantz, a former IDF chief of staff whose National Unity party includes hawks like Justice Minister Gideon Sa’ar, a former Likud minister and party chairman, and doves like Lt-Gen (res.) Gadi Eisenkot, who succeeded Gantz as IDF chief of staff. National Unity is polling 12 seats, suggesting two of the 14 seats currently held by Gantz and Sa’ar will shift to Lapid.

To Lapid’s right in the anti-Netanyahu camp stands Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman, a secular hawk with a strong following among Russian-speaking voters, whose

*Yisrael Beiteinu* (“Israel is Our Home”) party is polling five seats, meaning that two of its current faction’s seven seats may migrate to Lapid.

On Lapid’s left flank stand Labor and Meretz, which are also predicted to win roughly five each, lower than their current seven and six seats respectively, with the balance also largely shifting to Lapid.

Further to the left, Lapid’s Arab ally, Mansour Abbas and his Ra’am (an

acronym for United Arab List) party is polling four seats, the same as its current size.

Finally, the larger, mostly Arab, multi-party alliance that did not join Lapid’s coalition, known as the Joint List, has lost one of its constituent parties, the radically anti-Zionist Balad (acronym for National Democratic Alliance), which is running independently. According to all polls, Balad will not pass the electoral threshold of 3.25% and without it, the Joint List is polling roughly four seats, just above the electoral threshold, down from its current six.

The splintering of the Arab vote, and the prospect that some Arab-majority parties will fail to enter the Knesset, means that the Arab electorate’s generally low turnout – 44% last year as opposed to the overall electorate’s 67% – may have major impacts this time around.

The Joint List’s breakup began with Abbas’ independent run last year, which was followed by his revolutionary decision to join the coalition, and thus depart from



PM Yair Lapid’s *Yesh Atid* party looks set to pick up seats, but only from parties already part of his bloc – not from the pro-Netanyahu bloc (Image: IGPO/Flickr)



the historic insistence by Israel's Arab majority parties on staying out of any Zionist-led Israeli government.

The Arab electorate's conduct will be nationally crucial in two ways. Ideologically, it will be a referendum of sorts about Abbas' integrationist policy. Politically, if either Ra'am or the Joint List fail to cross the electoral threshold, Netanyahu will likely be handed, indirectly, the extra seats he needs in order to return to the premiership.

The drama on the extreme left of the Israeli political spectrum is paradoxically reflected by what is happening on its opposite far-right end.

Former prime minister Naftali Bennett's decision to take a time out from politics has left his long-time ally, Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked, the task of attempting to hold on to the seven seats Bennett won last year. Polls suggest she is not succeeding and her *Bayit Yehudi* ("Jewish Home") party will fail to even cross the electoral threshold.

Polls suggest that the original seven seats held after the last election by Bennett and Shaked's *Yamina* ("Rightwards") party are migrating, almost fully, to the Religious Zionism party. This party is headed by ultra-hawks Bezalel Smotrich, a former transport minister who says he wants to be defence minister, and Itamar Ben Gvir, an anti-Arab provocateur and a disciple of racist Rabbi Meir Kahane. Kahane was barred from politics because of his racism in 1988, before his assassination in 1990 in New York. Ben Gvir hopes to be minister of internal security.

These, in brief, are the election's contours in terms of the political numbers game. Meanwhile as in the last four elections, the political agenda boils down to one issue: Netanyahu.

**H**e is the man who, until last year, served as prime minister for 12 straight years, in addition to another three in the 1990s, and has led Israel longer than anyone else, including Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion.

Netanyahu's indictment two years ago on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust has divided Israeli society, and produced the political paralysis which the approaching election, Israel's fifth in less than four years, will again try to undo.

Netanyahu's attacks on the judiciary, and his public allegations that police conspired against him, along with the prosecution, the media and the courts, have frightened away a large part of his original following.

Represented by people like Gideon Sa'ar, who served as Netanyahu's minister of education and interior, and Benny Begin, the son of Likud founder Menachem Begin, this right-wing anti-Netanyahu electorate feels that



Despite trying to refocus this campaign on economics and the outgoing Government's foreign policy performance, Opposition Leader Binyamin Netanyahu has again found his legal situation the main focus of this election (Image: Eddie Gerald/ Alamy Stock Photo)

### **"As in the last four elections, the political agenda boils down to one issue: Netanyahu"**

defending Israel's judiciary from Netanyahu is right now more urgent than the hawkish agenda with respect to the Palestinians and the West Bank that they share with him. Others on the right, like Avigdor Lieberman, who once was the Likud party's director-general, oppose Netanyahu for his ironclad alliance with, and fiscal generosity towards, the ultra-Orthodox parties.

Between them, the defection of these once supportive constituencies now deprives the pro-Netanyahu bloc of about one-third of its historic electorate. Even so, more than a quarter of Israeli voters remain staunchly loyal to Netanyahu regardless of what is said or written about him,

substantially more than any rival politician.

Eager to secure the Knesset majority he failed

to win in his last four attempts, Netanyahu has tried to steer the election's focus away from his own personal situation and onto the Lapid Government's performance, on two fronts. The first is the economy.

Holding aloft an apple in a Jerusalem supermarket while facing a random collection of shoppers, the former prime minister declared: "Take down this Government, and we will bring prices down!" Netanyahu apparently believed that he could harness the distress caused by the global inflation crisis to win votes.

Israeli prices have indeed been rising in recent months, but at an annual rate of 4.6%, which is among the lowest in the world, as is the 3.4% unemployment rate. Meanwhile, economic growth, at 4.6%, is almost the highest in the developed world. Netanyahu has thus largely abandoned his economically-focused campaign over recent weeks, apparently realising Israeli voters don't feel that economically desperate.

A second effort to change the election's subject came in the diplomatic realm, after Lapid struck a deal with Lebanon on Oct. 12 that regulates access to a Mediterranean

gas field in the two countries' adjacent offshore Economic Exclusion Zones (EEZs).

Netanyahu charged that the deal, which was mediated by the US, forfeited some of Israel's territorial waters. His government, he said, would undo the deal. However, when the deal's terms were published, it became clear that it did not affect Israel's territorial waters as such, which extend 12 nautical miles under international law, but only the EEZ waters that sprawl to their west for another 188 nautical miles. Netanyahu has recently backtracked, and now says he will improve the deal rather than cancel it.

As a campaign issue, the gas deal died quickly, and it appears to have swayed almost no voter either way, according to the polls. In its final weeks, the focus of the campaign thus returned to Netanyahu's legal situation, and forcefully so, after Religious Zionism's Smotrich said he would present a bill to erase the Israeli laws creating fraud and breach of trust offences, the main offences for which Netanyahu has been indicted (he also faces one charge of bribery).

Smotrich says this legislation will not be retroactive, and thus would not affect Netanyahu's trial. However, his bill, which would also allow the Knesset to overrule the Israeli High Court if it declares legislation unconstitutional, places the constitutional crisis created by the charges against Netanyahu at the heart of Israel's 25th general election campaign.

Chances are, therefore, that if Netanyahu gets the votes to return to the premiership, the political and legal drama

that has already defined his recent career will reach new heights.

Conversely, if he fails again to win a majority, chances are believed to be high that Netanyahu's own Likud colleagues will make him clear the stage. In such a case, an alternative Likud leader should easily be able to build a solid coalition with Gantz, and possibly also with Lapid and Lieberman, although teaming up with either of the latter might be vetoed by the ultra-Orthodox parties, who distrust both intensely.

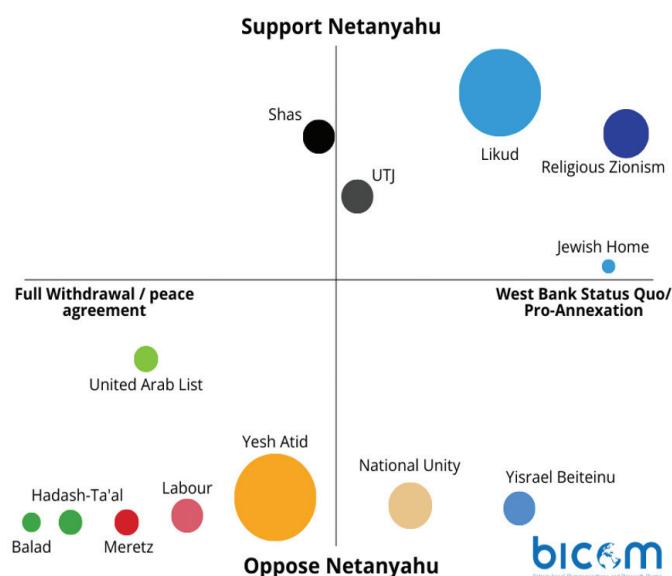
If indeed Netanyahu's colleagues do end up removing him, what they will tell him is clear: we gave you five chances, we can't give you a sixth. You have a trial to face, and we have a country to run.

AIR

## THE PARTIES AND THEIR PROSPECTS

BICOM, with AIJAC staff

Positions on the key political and security issues by party



(Note: Numbers below based on aggregated polling as of Oct. 14)

### LIKUD

- **Party Leader:** Binyamin Netanyahu
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Centre-right
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Primary vote by party members
- **Current Seats:** 30
- **Projected Seats:** 32



Following Binyamin Netanyahu at the top of Likud list are many of his loyalists. Yariv Levin, a trusted Netan-

With Compliments

R L Webb  
Nominees  
Pty. Ltd

Property, investment,  
development & finance



yahu confidant, is second, followed by Eli Cohen and Yoav Galant, both former ministers who merged with Likud from Moshe Kahlon's *Kulanu* ("All of Us") party in 2019. Filling the next three slots are outspoken supporters of Netanyahu: David Amsalem, Amir Ohana and Yoav Kish. Meanwhile, those who had challenged Netanyahu for the leadership – or were perceived to have leadership ambitions – came further down the list in the Likud primaries. Israel Katz, the former Finance Minister, and Yuli Edelstein, the former Knesset Speaker, have consistently been placed in the top five over the last two decades, but fell to 12 and 18 respectively.

Netanyahu was able to place three individuals in reserved slots 14, 16 and 28. He chose two former *Yamina* "Rightwards" party MKs, Amichai Chikli and Idit Silman, who had helped topple the Bennett-Lapid Government. He also chose Moshe Saada, the former deputy head of the Justice Ministry's Police Internal Investigations Department. Saada had made allegations against top members of the country's legal establishment, who he claimed ignored misconduct by the then-police chief due to fears it would damage efforts to prosecute Netanyahu. There has been some criticism within some Likud quarters that Saada was chosen over a female representative or a Druze or Ethiopian candidate.

## YESH ATID ("THERE IS A FUTURE")

- **Party Leader:** Yair Lapid
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Centrist and Secularist, anti-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Party leader selects
- **Current Seats:** 17
- **Projected Seats:** 24

יש עתיד

The first 12 spots on Yesh Atid's slate are the same as the previous election, with three women, Orna Barbivai, Karine Elharrar and Meirav Cohen, in the top five places. In 13th spot is Michal Shir who joined the party from Gideon Saar's New Hope. Muslim activist Muhammad "Shoko" Elhega, who runs the party's outreach to Arab voters, is placed in 29th spot. The fact that the party does not conduct primaries means Lapid can ensure that his list includes women, minorities and a regional spread.

## THE NATIONAL UNITY PARTY

- **Party Leaders:** Benny Gantz and Gideon Saar
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Centrist, anti-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Party leaders select
- **Current Seats:** 8 for Gantz's Blue and White; 6 for Sa'ar's New Hope
- **Projected Seats:** 12

המחנה  
הממלכתי

The National Unity Party's list represents a merger of Gantz's Blue and White party and Gideon Saar's New

Hope. Saar described the joint venture as the embodiment of the "stately right and security centre" while Gantz said the merger had the potential of extricating Israel from its ongoing political stalemate. The party is hoping that if another political stalemate occurs, the ultra-Orthodox parties may be persuaded to leave the Netanyahu camp and support Gantz for Prime Minister.

Gantz and Saar succeeded in bringing in former IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, who was considered *the* star candidate to jump into politics before these elections. Eisenkot will be placed third on the slate. The rest of the top ten include Pnina Tamano-Shata, Yifat Shasha-Biton, Chili Tropper, Zeev Elkin, Michael Biton, Matan Kahana (formerly of the Yamina party) and Orit Farkash-Hacohen. The merged party is currently polling at less than the sum of its parts. Blue and White had eight seats in the previous Knesset while New Hope received six.

Eisenkot has recently made comments stating the importance of Israel separating from the Palestinians. He described politicians wishing to restore Israel's occupation of Gaza as seeking to "create an irreversible situation, that will lead to catastrophe." He has also called for the country to take active steps to prevent what he termed the dangerous development of a bi-national state. It is unclear how these comments will go down with the more right-wing senior members of the party such as Saar and Zeev Elkin, as well as the National Unity Party's attempts to woo votes within the moderate right-wing.

## RELIGIOUS ZIONISM PARTY

- **Party Leaders:** Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Right-wing and nationalistic, pro-settler, pro-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** National Union component has primaries, Jewish Power component list selected by leader
- **Current Seats:** 6
- **Projected Seats:** 13

הציונות הדתית

The Religious Zionist party is a union between the National Union, Jewish Power, and Noam ("Pleasant") parties. Noam is a small nationalist-religious party whose main focus is condemning LGBTIQ+ influence and same-sex marriage, while the other two are right-wing nationalists and pro-settler, with Jewish Power considered the more extreme (for more on Jewish Power, see p. 18). National Union and Jewish Power each have five representatives in the first ten slots with Avi Maoz of Noam in the 11th slot. Having initially all decided to run separately, the three parties were encouraged to run together by Netanyahu who feared right wing votes 'going to waste' if any of the parties failed to cross the 3.25% electoral threshold.



## SHAS

- **Party Leaders:** Aryeh Deri
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Ultra-Orthodox and Sephardic, pro-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Religious Council
- **Current Seats:** 8
- **Projected Seats:** 8



Shas is a party representing the interests of ultra-Orthodox Jews of Sephardic or Middle Eastern descent. It continues to be led by Aryeh Deri and the party's top ten remain the same as in the previous election.

## UNITED TORAH JUDAISM

- **Party Leaders:** Moshe Gafni (Degel HaTorah) & Yitzchak Goldknopf (Agudat Yisrael)
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Ultra-Orthodox and Ashkenazi, pro-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Religious Council
- **Current Seats:** 7
- **Projected Seats:** 7



UTJ's two constituent factions, Degel Hatorah and Agudat Yisrael, representing different European ("Ashkenazi") ultra-Orthodox traditions, had been at odds over who would lead the party before an agreement between them was consolidated by Netanyahu. Netanyahu agreed to fund ultra-Orthodox schools in Israel regardless of whether they meet state standards and teach a core secular curriculum should he return to power. Degel Hatorah head Moshe Gafni described the previous lack of full state funding for ultra-Orthodox schools refusing to teach core subjects as "unwarranted discrimination... For me, it's signed and sealed." He added, "we will not enter any coalition without this discrimination being dealt with and the salaries of teachers in Haredi schools being put on equal footing as the general school system." This deal may have ended the hopes of Gantz and Saar that the ultra-Orthodox parties would join a coalition headed by Gantz in the case of political deadlock. The UTJ list is led by Yitzchak Goldknopf, an educator and political novice who was picked by

the party's rabbinical overseers to lead the Agudat Yisrael party (in a move that angered Gafni). Following Goldknopf is Gafni of Degel HaTorah.

## YISRAEL BEITENU ("ISRAEL IS OUR HOME")

- **Party Leader:** Avigdor Lieberman
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Nationalist and secularist, appealing mainly to Israelis from the former USSR, anti-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Party leader selects
- **Current Seats:** 7
- **Projected Seats:** 5



The first seven places on the Yisrael Beitenu list are the same as the previous election apart from Sharon Nir in fourth place, who replaced Eli Avidar, who has formed his own party. Nir is a retired Brigadier General in the IDF and was the first woman to be appointed to the position of commander of the National Cyber Defence School. She also served as an advisor to the Chief of Staff on gender issues. The top candidates on the list include, Avigdor Lieberman, Oded Forer, Evgeny Sova, Sharon Nir, Yulia Malinovsky, Druze candidate Hamad Amar and Alix Kushnir.

## LABOR PARTY

- **Party Leader:** Merav Michaeli
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Left-wing, dovish on Israeli-Palestinian issues, anti-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Primary vote by party members
- **Current Seats:** 7
- **Projected Seats:** 5



Merav Michaeli is followed in the Labor list by Naama Lazimi, a 36-year-old politician with limited public exposure, known as a campaigner on social issues and the cost of living. In other realistic slots are Rabbi Gilad Kariv, who represents the interests of reform and progressive Judaism and chaired the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee; Efrat Rayten, chair of the Labour and Welfare Committee in the Knesset as well as Ram Shefa and Emilie



WESTERNPORT  
MARINA

GREAT BY DAY – MAGIC AT NIGHT  
MORNINGTON PENINSULA

PHONE (03) 5979 7400

EMAIL: [clientservices@westernportmarina.com.au](mailto:clientservices@westernportmarina.com.au)

Moatti, both young politicians who were elected in 2021 for the first time with Labor. Two party veterans, ministers Omer Bar-Lev and Nachman Shai, came in unrealistic slots in the party primaries. Michaeli consistently rejected suggestions by Yair Lapid to merge her list with Meretz.

## MERETZ

- **Party Leader:** Zehava Galon
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Left-wing, dovish on Israeli-Palestinian issues, anti-Netanyahu
- **Mode of Selecting Party List:** Primary vote by party members
- **Current Seats:** 6
- **Projected Seats:** 5



Meretz Party Chairwoman Zehava Galon is followed on the list by Mossi Raz, Michal Rozin, Druze politician Ali Salalha and former IDF Deputy Chief of Staff Yair Golan, who ran against Galon for the leadership. Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz, the former party leader, is seventh in the list and is unlikely to return to the Knesset. Other current Meretz ministers, Esawi Frej and Tamar Zandberg have taken a time out from politics (This means none of Meretz's current government ministers – the first time the party has had ministers in the last 20 years – will be in the next Knesset). Galon was more open to uniting forces with Labor but when this door was closed, stated that the party would run with “full confidence in the path we have chosen and with pride in the achievements Meretz has made in the framework of the government of change.”

## RA'AM (“UNITED ARAB LIST”)

- **Leader:** Mansour Abbas
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Islamist
- **Mode of Selecting List:** Religious Council
- **Current Seats:** 4
- **Projected Seats:** 4



Mansour Abbas will hope that voters reward the party for his decision to support the Bennett-Lapid Government. The November 2021 budget approved billions of shekels for programmes for Arab society which aimed to address healthcare, social welfare, education and high-tech, but not all of this money filtered through to residents. Ra'am officials are also deeply troubled by the potential impact the splintering of the Joint List might have. Internal polling points to a certain loss of support for the UAL among former voters who have now shifted their support to Balad. Abbas is followed on the party's list by Walid Taha, the former number three in the previous elections, Waleed Al-hawashla, Iman Khatib-Yasin, the former number five who was the first hijab-wearing woman elected to the Knesset, and Yasser Hujirat.

## JOINT LIST/ HADASH-TA'AL

- **Leaders:** Ayman Odeh & Ahmad Tibi
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Communist/Palestinian Nationalist
- **Mode of Selecting List:** via electoral council
- **Current Seats:** 6 as part of the Joint List comprising Hadash, Taal and Balad
- **Projected Seats:** 4



Following the dissolution of the Joint List with Balad, this slate is headed by Hadash leader Ayman Odeh followed by Taal leader Ahmed Tibi. Current Hadash MKs are Aida Touma-Sliman in third and Ofer Cassif in fourth, with former Hadash MK Youssef Atauna in fifth. Tibi said that they had wanted to maintain the Joint List with Balad out of a sense of public responsibility, but regrettably it was not possible, adding that “Now our mission is to win the confidence of the Arab public and of the Jews who want democracy.”

## BALAD (“NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE”)

- **Leader:** Sami Abu Shehadeh
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Palestinian Nationalist and strongly anti-Zionist
- **Mode of Selecting List:** By committee
- **Current Seats:** 6 as part of the Joint List comprising Hadash, Taal and Balad
- **Projected Seats:** 0



Balad continues to blame collusion between Yesh Atid, Hadash and Taal for the dissolution of the Joint List. Balad's first five candidates are leader Sami Abu Shehadeh, Mtanes Shehadeh, the former chairman, Doaa H'osh, Walid Kaadan and Mahasin Qais. The party is believed to currently have the support of between 20,000 – 40,000 people, far short of what it would need to reach the electoral threshold. Members of the Joint List have called on Balad to withdraw from the race if they have little chance of passing the electoral threshold. Ahmad Tibi said that while he did not mean to tell others what to do, he hoped everyone would act responsibly so as not to harm Arab representation. Tibi said he refrained from running in a past election, in 1996, because he “saw there was no chance [of passing the threshold].” But Balad did not respond despite its poor polling.

## JEWISH HOME (“HABAYIT HAYEHUDI”)

- **Leader:** Ayelet Shaked
- **Affiliation/Ideology:** Right-wing nationalist, pro-settler, open to joining Netanyahu government
- **Mode of Selecting List:** By committee
- **Current Seats:** 7, as the Yamina party
- **Projected Seats:** 0





Shortly before the deadline for registering electoral lists in September, Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked of Yamina signed an agreement with the national-religious Jewish Home party (which failed to get into the previous Knesset) to run jointly in the upcoming general election under the latter name. Shaked will head the list and will be followed by Givat Shmuel Mayor Yossi Brodny, the Jewish Home chairman. A Yamina candidate, Amitai Porat, holds the third slot on the list, and a Jewish Home candidate, Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, is fourth. The fifth slot is held by former Yamina MK Yomtob Kalfon. Shaked said she was pleased “we succeeded in rebuilding a home for the religious Zionists and the responsible right in Israel” adding that the party would “act together to form a broad and stable right-wing government.” However, Shaked’s party will likely struggle to pass the electoral threshold. The right wing has not forgiven her for joining Naftali Bennett in the ‘Government of Change’ with Yair Lapid, Mansour Abbas and others. Centrist and left-wing voters, meanwhile, are put off by Shaked’s right-wing positions on several issues. AIR

© Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM).  
Reprinted by permission, all rights reserved. AIJAC staff contributed to the above summaries.

## UNDERSTANDING THE RISE OF ITAMAR BEN GVIR

**Calev Ben-Dor**

*In the March 2020 Israeli election, Itamar Ben Gvir’s “Jewish Power” party was shunned by other right-wingers and managed 0.42% of the total votes. Vetoing him was so self-evident, Naftali Bennett wrote at the time, that he was amazed he even had to explain it. But with Ben Gvir having joined up with National Union chair Bezalel Smotrich, the alliance is polling at 10% and could be a key player after the election if the Netanyahu-led bloc gains a majority of Knesset seats. Calev Ben-Dor explores the reasons for Ben Gvir’s rise.*

Itamar Ben Gvir first came to infamy as a teenager when he stole the Cadillac emblem from the car of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin. “Just as we got to his car,” the earnest Ben Gvir told the camera, “we’ll get to him too.”

Within weeks Rabin had been assassinated. Over the years, Ben Gvir has had countless run-ins with the police and courts. He was convicted of incitement to racism, interfering with a police officer performing his duty, and support for a terrorist organisation, Meir Kahane’s Kach

Movement. Due to these convictions, the IDF thought it too dangerous to draft him when he was 18.

Before being banned in 1988 for inciting racism, Kahane’s political party had successfully entered the Knesset in 1984. While he promoted legislative proposals such as revoking citizenship for non-Jews and banning Jewish-Gentile marriages and sexual relations, other parliamentarians shunned him. Whenever he approached the podium to speak, Likud Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir would lead the Likud faction in a demonstrative walkout. Kach never gained mainstream popularity – at its electoral height in 1984 it garnered 25,000 votes.

The son of an Iraqi father and a mother whose family came from Kurdistan, Ben Gvir was also a relatively peripheral figure in Israeli politics. In the September 2019 election, his “Jewish Power” slate managed 83,600 votes before dropping in the March 2020 election to just under 20,000 votes, 0.42% of the total vote. Having teamed up with National Union head Bezalel Smotrich – a union midwived by then Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, in an attempt to ensure no right-wing party fell below the electoral threshold – the two then soared to 225,000 votes in March 2021 (in Israel’s full proportional representation system, they received 5.1% of the total vote and six Knesset seats). Pollsters estimate that they have now doubled their support, positioning the Religious Zionist party as the third or fourth largest in the Knesset. If Netanyahu returns to become Prime Minister, they will almost certainly be an integral component of his coalition.

It has been quite a turnaround.

It wasn’t that long ago that Naftali Bennett had refused to run in the same list as Ben Gvir due to the latter hanging a picture in his living room of Baruch Goldstein, who infamously murdered 29 Muslim worshippers at Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs in a mass shooting in 1994. “It is so self-evident,” added Bennett, “that I’m amazed that I have to explain it at all.”

That was March 2020. Yet now – at least for many within the Israeli public – it is seemingly far from self-evident. What has changed, and why?

**“There are few politicians who do spectacle – and provocation – like Itamar Ben Gvir”**

### POLITICS AS ENTERTAINMENT

The rise of extremist parties is not unique to Israel, as the far-right has made gains all over Europe. Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Front party, captured more than 40% of the vote in the French Presidential election in April. The Swedish Democrats – a political misnomer alongside the Democratic Republic of Korea – are the second largest party in the country and hold the key to the next government.

Tamar Hermann, Israeli professor of political science at the Open University and a Senior Fellow at the Israel Democracy Institute, argues that Ben Gvir's rise in popularity must be partially seen in the context of the rise of the European right. "On the meta level," she tells *Fathom*, "people don't feel democracy has delivered. In the 19th and 20th centuries, citizens expected that liberal democracy would be very effective in dealing with a wide range of issues. But people have now begun to wonder what they gain from this system of governance."



Itamar Ben Gvir: Part of a wave of populists, provocateurs and anti-establishment political figures that have tapped into feelings of fear and vulnerability in Western democracies (Image: Twitter)

Waiting to take advantage of this are populists, provocateurs, and anti-establishment figures. For example, the representative of the state of São Paulo in the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress of Brazil is Tiririca, a professional clown and stand-up comedian with no clear ideology. In 2015, Jimmy Morales, a TV comedian without a clear platform, won the presidency of Guatemala with a 67% landslide. That's not to say non-establishment comedians in politics are all bad. Without one of them, Putin would now be celebrating his army's six-month anniversary of occupying Kyiv.

In *The Revenge of Power, How Autocrats are Reinventing Politics for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Venezuelan commentator Moisés Naim writes that 'in a world where policy debates put everyone to sleep, the wall between policy and entertainment collapses.

Politicians always had fans and admirers. But what's new, argues Naim, is the extent to which people look at politics first and foremost as spectacle, as a battle where celebrities face off with each other in an antagonistic contest for supremacy.

And indeed, there are few politicians who *do* spectacle – and provocation – like Itamar Ben Gvir. In May 2021, he was accused by Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai of fanning the flames of violence between Jews and Arabs in mixed cities such as Lod and Acre. In October 2021, he

faced off with Joint List leader Ayman Odeh during Odeh's visit to a Hamas operative on hunger strike in an Israeli hospital. In February, he set up a parliamentary 'office' in the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah at a time of increased tensions. In May 2022, he interrupted a live interview with the Public Security Minister at the scene of a terrorist attack in Hadera to shout that the minister was a leftist and a failure. He also barged into a press conference of the Islamic Movement's Shura Council to accuse it of being responsible for the deaths of IDF soldiers.

And in October this year he pulled out his pistol during clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in east Jerusalem.

If politics is increasingly more like the "Big Brother" household than a debate over ideas, who would ever vote out Ben Gvir?

Through his exploits, and the media attention they have garnered, Ben Gvir has become an Israeli celebrity. Political loyalty has come with it.

## CANDIDATE FOR THE IGNORED, REBELLIOUS AND FRIGHTENED

In *Trump and Us: What He Says and Why People Listen*, Roderick Hart argues that Donald Trump and his persona successfully tapped into the public's feelings along four powerful axes: their feelings of being ignored, of being trapped, of being under siege, and into their overall weariness about politics.

Similarities abound with Ben Gvir supporters. Many hadn't voted before and were not historically part of the political game. "Ben Gvir gave disenfranchised Ultra-Orthodox youth an outlet for their high energies and nationalistic sentiment and for their sense of being marginalised by the ultra-Orthodox establishment," explains Hermann. Meanwhile Ben Gvir also became a candidate for 'hilltop youth' [*a small ultra-radical settler group – ed.*] who were looking for someone who could be more rebellious than Naftali Bennett or Ayelet Shaked [the heads of the right-wing Yamina party]."

Yet Ben Gvir has also successfully tapped into feelings of fear and vulnerability within wider parts of the Israeli

with compliments



---

Phil Green
Trevor Loewensohn
Morris Symonds

Sydney • Melbourne • Brisbane • Perth

Tel: 02 8023 4000  
[www.alceon.com.au](http://www.alceon.com.au)

public. These feelings were exacerbated during the riots that swept mixed Jewish-Arab cities in May 2021, in which ten synagogues and 112 Jewish residences were set ablaze and three Jews murdered. As many Israelis were holed up in safe rooms against Hamas rockets from Gaza, others felt threatened from Arab neighbours in Lod, Ramle, Jaffa and Acre.

“Israeli Jews glimpsed a vision of their worst nightmare: Arab citizens of Israel violently undermining the most basic stability of the country,” journalist and best-selling author Yossi Klein Halevi told *Fathom*. “When I speak to Ben Gvir supporters I hear over and over references to those riots and the sense that we are dealing with a fifth column.”

The violence as well as the erosion of trust in the police led to worrying consequences. “Both Jews and Arabs felt that the police were not able to effectively protect them,” explains Hermann. “That sense of insecurity brings people to rely on vigilantes. Some Arabs tried to get support from criminal families, while some Jews sought protection from settlers from illegal outposts and Ben Gvir and his crew.”

## A MOVETOWARDS MODERATION?

In the lead up to the current election, Ben Gvir has been at pains to paint a more moderate picture of himself. Former ally Baruch Marzel, whom the Supreme Court disqualified from running in the 2019 Knesset election due to incitement to racism, suggested Ben Gvir’s ideology was “flexible”. When supporters broke out in a chant of “death to Arabs” he corrected them, saying “death to terrorists”. On a visit to a Tel Aviv high school, he admitted that he had been a teenage extremist, but subsequently emphasised that now he is a father and a lawyer, and no longer believes “Dr Goldstein” is a hero. And how can he be racist, he argued, if he not only wants to expel all disloyal Arabs but also disloyal Jews?

When asked last year about his links to Kahane, Ben Gvir denied that Jewish Power was the continuation of Kahane’s path but was at pains to emphasise that he saw “Rabbi Kahane” as a righteous and holy man. In the same vein, he attended and spoke at a memorial service for Kahane, behind a large slogan saying “Kahane was right”. If he wanted to disabuse the notion of a connection, Ben Gvir has a strange way of showing it.

“Consciously or not”, Yossi Klein Halevi tells *Fathom*, “Ben Gvir has taken a page out of the European far right playbook who have worked hard to rid themselves of their overt antisemitism and to present themselves as normative right-wing parties. Ben Gvir is doing the same with his anti-Arab racism.”

Klein Halevi, whose first book *Memoirs of a Jewish extremist* tracks his younger days as part of Kahane’s group, is unimpressed with the rhetoric. “Ben Gvir’s slogan [‘death to terrorists’] still has the word death in it,” he says. “That’s

what he is about. I don’t think that most of his voters understand this – the hardcore do – but most kids who greet him in the street like a popstar aren’t responding to that ideology that is below the surface. They are responding to a guy who talks straight and who validates their fears of Arabs and who seems to be a fresh force.”

“Ben Gvir isn’t saying that he is a disciple of Kahane, a man who created an ideology and theology of racism and Jewish revenge,” says Klein Halevi. “He never talks about the real core, but instead talks about security. He understands what his mentor didn’t or wasn’t interested in understanding – that the public isn’t going to buy into theological [religiously sanctioned] racism. But anger, power, and to some extent revenge those are coin of the realm.”

## DIFFERENT SIDES OF THE SCALES

Much could change before election day. Netanyahu has a habit of cannibalising his own ‘bloc’ – trying to siphon votes away from smaller right-wing “satellite” parties in favour of enlarging Likud (while making sure they still pass the electoral threshold.) When looking at the numbers, one could make the argument that the percentage vote share of Likud and its nationalist ‘satellite’ parties sympathetic to Netanyahu over the last four elections has remained more or less constant at approximately 35%. Why should it suddenly rise now?

It was less than 18 months ago that the most significant player in Israeli politics was arguably Mansour Abbas, leader of the first Arab party to join a coalition. Yet now his mantle has been taken by Jewish Power head Ben Gvir. Abbas and Ben Gvir are on opposite sides of the same scales. They represent mutually exclusive models for how Israel relates to its Arab minority. Victory for one, signals defeat for the ideology of the other.

“The irony”, notes Klein Halevi, “is that Ben Gvir’s rise comes after the best year in Jewish-Arab history with the coalition.” Indeed, Abbas’ entry into the Bennett-Lapid Government created a rainbow coalition spanning religious and secular pro-annexationists, long-standing anti-occupation politicians, and Abbas’ religious Muslim party. The November 2021 budget approved a program for Arab society which aimed to address healthcare, social welfare, education and high-tech. This election thus not only comes down to which model Israeli citizens believe is preferable, but which memory has deeper resonance. “In one way this election is about a contest about which model of Arab-Jewish relations Israeli Jews believe in – is the real story the Bennett-Lapid-Abbas coalition or the violence in Lod?” says Klein Halevi. “Ben Gvir is tapping into the latter.” On Nov. 1, we’ll see how successful he has been.

AIR

*Calev Ben-Dor is the Deputy Editor of Fathom magazine and a senior research associate at BICOM. © Fathom (www.Fathom-journal.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*





# R.Iconic Melbourne

R.Corporation's latest project re-defining inner city living.

Construction commenced.

Display Showroom | 367 Collins Street  
[www.rcorporation.com.au](http://www.rcorporation.com.au)

## R.Corporation

Everything considered

With compliments



SquarePeg  
capital

[www.squarepegcap.com](http://www.squarepegcap.com)



# A Second Iranian Revolution?

## Why this round of protests appears different

Ray Takeyh

**T**he strange echoes of the 1970s over the past 18 months – with runaway inflation, an energy crisis, and an expansionist Russia – were startling enough. And then a revolt began in Iran, just as one did at the start of 1978. It features an ageing autocrat who's dying of cancer and overseeing a rebellious nation that has tired of his rule and the corruption of his cronies. History may not repeat itself, but it is surely rhyming in the streets of Teheran. And indeed, the best way to chart the possible trajectory of the current Iranian revolution is to look to the last one.

"Iran, because of the leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world," said US President Jimmy Carter during a visit to Iran in 1977. Although Carter's unfortunate toast would be much ridiculed in the years ahead, it is important to note that until the last days of Mohammad Reza Shah's Pahlavi

dynasty, Western chancelleries and intelligence services, as well as the foreign-policy intelligentsia, were united in their belief that somehow the cagey monarch who had weathered so many crises would survive the latest one.

Behind the glitter of a rapidly modernising and increasingly wealthy elite, Iran of the 1970s was a land of discontent. The corruption of the ruling class, the provocative social cleavages that oil wealth suddenly generated, and the frustration of working in a system that discounted merit in favour of patronage and nepotism, led many to join the rank of the opposition. In a paradoxical manner, the Shah was bedevilled by his own success. He created a modern middle class but then refused to offer it a meaningful venue for political participation. His compact with his people was a transactional one, in which he exchanged financial rewards for political passivity. Even if Iran had not experienced a steep recession in the mid-1970s, this bargain would have been unsustainable. The Iranian masses wanted a say in how their nation was governed. Even more

striking, the crass Westernisation had a vast swath of the Iranian public eager to restore the central place of Shi'ite tradition.

Every revolution needs a spark, a watershed event after which things are not the same. In the early days of the Iranian revolution, which began in earnest in October 1977, the Iranian people were not calling for the disbanding of the monarchy but rather for meaningful constitutional reform. They wanted a free press, free political parties, and free elections. The intelligentsia wrote letters and petitions, the university students tore up their dorm rooms, the mullahs called for respecting religion in public life, and demonstrations were small and sporadic. In exile, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini thundered as the storm gathered.

This all changed in August 1978. On Aug. 9, terrorists set ablaze Rex Cinema in the city of Abadan and killed 479 people. This was the most egregious act of arson in Iran's modern history. Exiled in Iraq, Khomeini did a masterful job of blaming the Shah for the fire even though it was later revealed that Khomeini's own followers were responsible. The Rex Cinema bombing was an inflection

point in the history of the revolution prior to which, only the hardcore opponents of the Shah had participated in demonstrations. Now many fence-sitters began tilting toward the opposition. The size of the marches grew by the thousands as Iran's uprising became a popular revolt with Khomeini as its leader. The Shah's belated promises of reform were swept aside as no one could trust a leader



Iran's 1979 Revolution: Hopes it would bring cultural authenticity, a stable economy and participatory politics were dashed by the development of theocratic absolutism (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

who set his people on fire.

As significant as street protests were, it was the nationwide strikes that crippled the monarchy. A dynamic country suddenly went dark. Newspapers stopped publishing, electricity flickered, bazaars shut down, banks stopped processing transactions, and ports were filled with unprocessed cargo. Most importantly, Iranian oil production came to a halt. The country stopped functioning. In his palaces, the Shah, who was dying of cancer, brooded more than plotted and concocted various conspiracy theories to explain his predicament.

In the White House, Carter assured himself that even if the Shah had lost his will, Iran's armed forces could be counted on to restore order. He was not alone in this misapprehension, as most observers of Iran believed that the formidable army would take control. Too often, we ignore the fact that national armies don't like shooting their own people. Battling foreign enemies and suppressing ethnic uprisings are different from going into neighbourhoods day

after day and killing civilians. A determined national protest movement can erode the morale of an army, shatter its cohesion, and lure conscripts away from their unenviable task of killing their countrymen.

The Shah fled, his army crumbled, and the revolution triumphed as one of the great populist revolts of modern history. It was all things to all people. For liberals, it was a chance to construct a representative government that was accountable to its citizens. For the devout, it was an opportunity to forge an order in which religion informed politics. Islamic canons were seen as flexible enough to accommodate both faith and freedom. The Islamic Republic was to offer the hard-pressed masses cultural authenticity, a stable economy, and participatory politics. No one thought of theocratic absolutism as the endgame – except the clerics in charge.

**“Iranians today are bereft of delusions. They know the theocracy remains in the grip of an unelected few and is drowning in corruption”**

**T**he durability of the current Iranian regime cannot be attributed simply to brute force. The genius of the system is that it contains within its autocratic structure elected institutions that have little power but that still provide the public with some means of expressing their grievances. In the absence of such a safety valve, however superficial, the mullahs would have confronted even more protests than they have over the past two decades. The theocracy bears all the hallmarks of a dictatorship, but it has also maintained a thin veneer of collective action.

To become a revolutionary and risk one’s own life for a cause that seems distant, if not improbable, is one of the most crucial decisions a citizen can make. All social protest movements battle against great odds; history has shown that most revolutions fail. The Islamic Republic offered the masses the opportunity to participate in the national scene, but cleverly hemmed them in on all sides with clerical bodies who vetted candidates for public office. Still, when an average citizen is faced with the choice of rebelling against a vicious system or casting a ballot that will have a limited impact, he or she will probably opt for the latter.

The regime has had lively elections in which a diverse range of candidates made all sorts of promises. In the 1990s, Mohammad Khatami captured the national imagination by pledging to harmonise religious precepts with democratic norms. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is best remembered for his crass denials of the Holocaust – but at home he spoke of fair wealth distribution. More recently, Hassan Rouhani insisted that his nuclear diplomacy would generate foreign investment and revive Iran’s moribund economy.

But none of these dreams materialised, and Iranians today are bereft of delusions. They know the theocracy remains in the grip of an unelected few and is drowning in corruption. The current uprising shows that the head mul-

lah, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, forgot the most essential lesson of the Shah’s demise – that, at times, desperate masses have little choice but to revolt.

The 2021 presidential election is likely to be remembered as the most consequential in the history of the Islamic Republic. As Khamenei, suffering from cancer, contemplated his succession, he sought to ensure a republic manned by his most reliable henchman and an economy immune to foreign sanctions. There was not even the pretence of a competitive race, as conservative stalwarts such as former speaker of the parliament, Ali Larijani, were disqualified from running. The presidency went to Ibrahim Raisi, a laconic and unimaginative mass murderer who had spent his life manning the regime’s dungeons. A sullen citizenry battered by a mismanaged pandemic watched all this with considerable angst. Khamenei’s attempt to cement his legacy began to undo his republic.

From its inception, the Islamic Republic has faced protests. Liberals, secularists, student activists, disgruntled clerics, and middle-class elements have all turned against the state at various points. The regime’s leaders were quick to dismiss all of it. They believed that the students had been seduced by America’s cultural temptations. They thought the middle class focused too narrowly on its material wealth and was therefore unable to see the true benefits of the divine republic. To them, liberals are mere apostates.

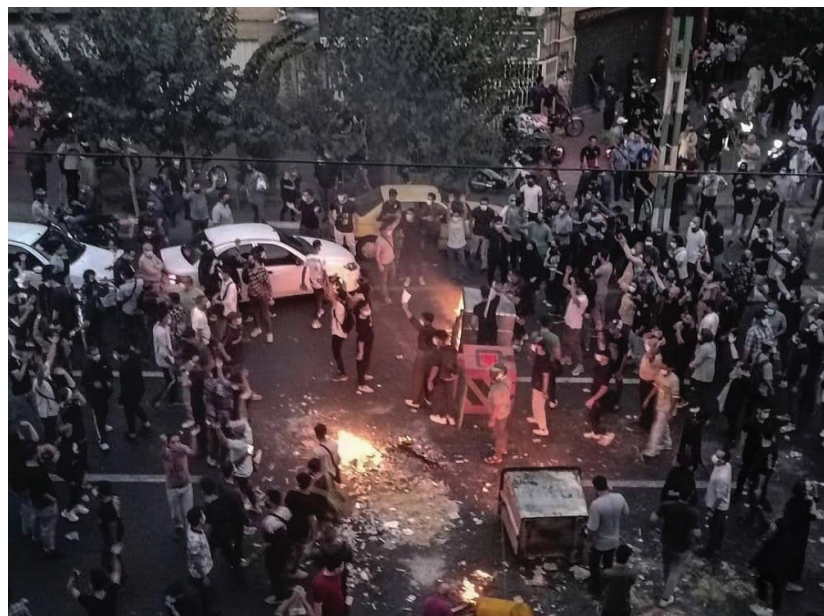
But there was something new and dangerous about the demonstrations of the past few years. This was the revolt of the poor.

As he embarked on his latest confrontation with the West, Khamenei sought to fashion an economy that would be lean and self-reliant. The American sanctions imposed after then US President Donald Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 were presented as a blessing; they would force the state to put its house in order and trim the subsidies that were draining the treasury. In yet another miscalculation, the regime assumed that the poor, the primary beneficiaries of the welfare state, would once more

WITH COMPLIMENTS







Many different classes and subgroups of Iranians are protesting – a result of the way the regime has arrogantly shut off all channels for political expression (Image: Twitter)

sacrifice on behalf of the revolution. This was, after all, a revolution of the oppressed, waged in their name and for their salvation. Unlike the upper classes, the poor were the essential pillar of the republic. But in both 2017 and 2019, the poor took to the streets, calling for the overthrow of the regime.

The challenge for the clerical oligarchs was to dispatch a conscript army to shantytowns that were culturally familiar to them. The fearsome Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or IRGC, may be manned by an indoctrinated class of officers, but Iranian foot soldiers are still largely drawn from the pool of draftees. The average conscript may relish beating up pampered university students but would have a tough time turning on his own. The regime enforcers understood this and developed a clever containment strategy. A quick show of violence would be followed by disabling social media and thereby cutting off the demonstrators from one another. They would then wait for the protests to peter out. The immediate demonstrations were eventually quelled – but the cause of discontent lingered.

In the summer of 2022, an unusually divisive spirit

seemed to descend on Iran, and the state and society moved in completely different directions. The mullahs were preoccupied with their nuclear gamesmanship, economic tinkering, and the reimposition of severe religious strictures. In the meantime, ordinary Iranians were protesting: Teachers protested about their pay, retirees about their benefits, farmers about lack of water, and women about their mandatory attire in stifling heat. As in 1978, economic anxiety, social envy, and political disenfranchisement became powerful forces directed against the regime. The Islamic Republic had done it to itself. All channels for political expression were blocked by a corrupt and arrogant ruling elite that was demanding discipline and sacrifice.

And then came the spark. On Sept. 16, 22-year-old Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested by the morality police for wearing her hijab improperly, died in custody. Her senseless killing symbolised the cruelty of clerical rule. Cities, provinces, and towns were suddenly engulfed in protests. The chants of “Mullahs get lost” and “We don’t want your Islamic Republic” echoed throughout the country. The old playbook for containing the demonstrations did not seem to work, as the conscripts were asked to shoot women. They hesitated; the demonstrations persisted. Iran’s Chief Justice, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Eje’i, is reported to have complained that the security forces are “tired and broken, with very low morale.” A semblance of normalcy may yet return to the country, but Iranians of all classes and genders have lost their sense of fear.

The events of this summer seem eerily similar to those of 1978. Amini’s murder provoked a sense of national outrage like the bombing of the Rex Cinema. As with the monarchy, the regime has lost its narrative and its bearings. Ali Khamenei has said, “I openly state that the recent riots and unrest in Iran were schemes designed by the US, the Zionist regime, their mercenaries, and some treasonous Iranians abroad who helped them.” The Shah thought and said the same things and dispatched his diplomats to ask the Carter Administration why the CIA was plotting against him. In an ominous sign for the regime, in September 2022 the nation’s oil workers issued a statement: “We support the people’s struggles against organised and everyday violence against women and against the poverty and hell that dominate the society.” A young revolutionary at the time of the last Iranian revolution, Khamenei surely recalls that it was strikes that crippled the monarchy and hastened its collapse.

Today, the regime seems to be taking comfort in the fact that at this point there is no charismatic personality

**C | F | S | G**  
CONCEPT FINANCIAL SERVICES GROUP

**MERGER & ACQUISITIONS**  
**CAPITAL RAISINGS**  
**DIRECT INVESTMENT**

For more information visit [cfsg.com.au](http://cfsg.com.au)  
or contact Marcus H. Rose, Executive Chairman,  
on 03 8676 0581 or [info@cfsg.com.au](mailto:info@cfsg.com.au)  
Suite 501, Level 5, 606 St Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004

or political party leading the opposition. A revolution, after all, needs revolutionaries. And the mullahs are still in command of an array of security organs. But these are thin reeds. The longer the protests linger, the more they are likely to generate leaders who will take charge of the movement. In the meantime, every day, the mullahs will ask their taxed military to kill poor people and unarmed women. If the regime has only the army as its mainstay of support, then it has little in the way of national strength. The Shah had a well-armed military and a seemingly all-knowing secret service, SAVAK, but their combined might could not contain a movement seeking change. The records of the Pahlavi monarchy published by the Islamic Republic reveal that the Shah's generals were most alarmed about the cohesion of their conscript army dispatched to the streets to quell peaceful demonstrations. It is entirely possible that similar conversations are taking place today in the regime's corridors of power.

The Islamists have made nearly all the same mistakes as the monarch they overthrew. The regime lacks an appealing ideology and shields itself in rhetoric that convinces no one. It is led by a corrupt and out-of-touch elite that relies on conspiracy theories to justify its conduct. It has pursued a foreign policy whose costs are more apparent than its benefits. And the mullahs have forgotten the most essential lesson of their revolutionary triumph: Persian armies don't like killing their own people *en masse*.

The new Iranian revolution may have begun, we just don't know it yet.

AIR

*Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the US Council on Foreign Relations. © Commentary magazine (www.commentary.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## IRAN IS A WINNER IN UKRAINE

Aaron Pilkington

**T**he war in Ukraine is helping one country achieve its foreign policy and national security objectives, but it's neither Russia nor Ukraine.

It's Iran.

That was starkly clear on the morning of October 17, as Iranian-made drones attacked civilian targets in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv. Russia used the drones to inflict damage on Ukraine's national energy company headquarters and also killed four civilians.

Iran is among Russia's most vocal supporters in the war. As a military analyst who specialises in Iranian national security strategy, I see this having little to do with Ukraine



An Iranian drone over Ukraine (top), and some of the havoc such drones have wrought in Ukrainian cities (bottom) (Images: Creative Commons, Twitter)

and everything to do with Iran's long-term strategy vis-à-vis the United States.

As Russia's war on Ukraine passed six months and continued eroding Russia's manpower, military stores, economy and diplomatic connections, Russian President Vladimir Putin opted for an unlikely but necessary Iranian lifeline in Ukraine and also in Syria where, since 2015, Russian soldiers have been fighting to keep Bashar al-Assad's Government in power.

And at a time when the Islamic Republic of Iran's Government is facing growing citizen protests against its autocratic rule, Putin's move has, in turn, helped Iran make progress in promoting its national interests, as defined by its leadership.

### OPPOSING THE US EVERYWHERE

Since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Iran's leaders have believed the United States has been constantly scheming to topple its government. They view leaders in Washington as the greatest threat and obstacle to promoting Iranian national interests — achieving economic self-sufficiency, international legitimacy, regional security, power and influence.

The fears of Iran's leaders are not completely irrational; the long history of the US meddling in Iranian affairs, continuous open hostility between the two countries and decades of US military build-up in close proximity to Iran greatly concern leaders in Teheran.



The US has military forces in many Middle Eastern countries, with or without invitation. To promote its national interests, Iran is working to force the US military out and reduce its influence in the region.

Iran has an even greater aim: to overthrow what it sees as the US-dominated global political order.

Iran counters US influence by maintaining partnerships with an assortment of non-state militias and governments united by their fierce anti-US hostility. Teheran nurtures a network of militant partner and proxy groups, whose own political preferences and ambitions align with Iran's objectives, by providing weapons, training, funds – and, in some cases, direction. Among the recipients are the terror groups Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, friendly Iraqi militias and Ansar Allah in Yemen, better known as the Houthis or the Houthi rebels.

Through these militias and their political arms, Iran extends its influence and works to shape an Iran-friendly government in states like Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. It threatens US forces and antagonises Western-allied governments in states such as Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

At the national level, Iran maintains no permanent mutual defence treaties. Its closest strategic partners include Syria, Venezuela, North Korea, China and Russia. They cooperate politically, economically and militarily to create an alternative to what their leaders perceive as the US-led world political order.

That cooperation includes undermining US national interests and helping ease or circumvent Western political pressure and economic sanctions.

## TEHERAN TO THE RESCUE

Russia's war in Ukraine has left Moscow with only a handful of sympathetic friends.

Few political leaders understand Putin's newfound political isolation and related animosity toward the US more than Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But Iran-Russia relations are complicated.

The two countries found common cause in helping Syrian strongman, dictator and war criminal Assad defeat his country's opposition forces, but for different national interests.

Saving Assad helps Russia reassert itself as a major power in the Middle East. For Iran, a friendly Syria is a critical link in Iran's anti-US, anti-Israel coalition.

As Russia and Iran fought to sustain Assad, they also competed for lucrative post-war reconstruction and infrastructure contracts in Syria, and to shape the post-civil war political environment to their advantage.

But neither country was bold enough to influence the way the other operated in Syria. Consequently, sometimes Iranian-backed and Russian forces cooperated, and at other times they squabbled. Mostly they left each other alone.

Ultimately, though, Russia's plight in Ukraine compelled Putin to solicit Iran's help in two ways.

First, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a separate branch of the Iranian forces (different from the military, called Artesh) which is in charge of protecting the regime (not the state) against internal and external threats, provided supplementary manpower to fill the void left when Russia reallocated troops from Syria to its Ukraine campaign.

Second, Russia has used Iran's low-cost and battle-proven drones to counter Kyiv's Western-supported arsenal and buttress its own struggling forces and surprisingly



The defence ministers of Russia and Iran, Sergey Shoigu and Hossein Dehghan, sign an agreement in Teheran (Image: MoD Iran)

inept warfighting capabilities.

In July, Iran hosted numerous Russian officers and conducted training on Iranian Shahed-129 and Shahed-191 drone operations. As of early August 2022, anonymous intelligence sources and Ukrainian officials indicated that Russia had obtained and used Iranian drones in Ukraine. Reports in mid-October said Iran has sent its own military personnel to Russian-occupied Crimea to help the Kremlin's troops deploy the drones against Ukraine.

After acquiring Iranian drones in early September, by mid-October Russia had launched more than 100 Iranian Shahed-136 and Mohajer-6 attack and reconnaissance drones in over a dozen attacks against a large range of targets: Ukrainian special forces, armour and artillery units, air defence and fuel storage facilities, Ukrainian military and energy infrastructure, civilian targets and a recent series of drone and missile attacks against Kyiv.

Russia is expected to soon rely on Iran further to supplement its dwindling weapons supplies by acquiring two types of Iranian-made short-range ballistic missiles for use in Ukraine, according to US and allied security officials.

## UKRAINE WAR PROMOTES IRAN'S INTERESTS

This warming alliance may not help Russia defeat Ukraine. It will promote Iran's national interests.

Russia's Syria drawdown brought additional Iranian



soldiers there to further prove their fighting abilities and entrench themselves in Syria. That then allows Iran to control territory threatened by anti-Assad forces and maintain an open corridor or “land bridge” by which Iran extends support to its network of anti-America and anti-Israel partners and proxies.

Russia’s acquisition of Iranian arms will significantly boost Iran’s weapons industry, whose primary clientele right now is its own militias. Iran’s recent efforts to expand drone manufacturing and exports yielded limited success in small, mostly peripheral markets of Ethiopia, Sudan, Tajikistan and Venezuela.

Moscow is the second-largest global arms exporter, and its surprising transformation to Iranian arms importer signals the seriousness of Russia’s problems. It also legitimises and expands Teheran’s weapons industry beyond arms production for the purpose of self-sufficiency. This one alliance moves Iran toward a more prominent role as a major arms exporter.

Lastly, Russia’s war in Ukraine extends a new avenue by which Iran might directly counter US-provided weapons, as well as the opportunity to undermine US and NATO influence in Eurasia. Iran’s drones could afford Moscow an effective and desperately needed response to the US weapons wreaking havoc against Russian forces in Ukraine.

Iranian weapons may force Ukraine’s Western benefactors to allocate additional billions of dollars for counter-drone or air defence systems, or aid to replace assets that Iranian weapons potentially neutralise.

## ZERO-SUM GAME

The introduction of Iranian ballistic missiles to Ukraine would compound the limited tactical victories scored by Iranian drones. They will bring further unnecessary suffering and prolong and further destabilise the war in Ukraine, but I don’t believe they will tip the scales of conflict in Russia’s favour.

Their greater contribution is to Iran’s national interests: They allow Iran to directly check and undermine the US and NATO outside of Iran’s usual regional area of operations. They boost Iran’s profile among countries that also wish to challenge the United States and NATO’s political, military and economic power. And they strengthen solidarity among those countries.

As Iran’s fighters, advisers and weapons proliferate to new areas and empower US adversaries, Iran further promotes its national interests at the expense of US national interests.

AIR

*Aaron Pilkington is a US Air Force analyst of Middle East affairs. He conducts research on Iranian defence strategy and is a PhD student at the University of Denver. This article originally appeared in the Conversation (theconversation.com), all rights reserved.*

## SCORING THE LEBANON-ISRAEL MARITIME DEAL

Hussain Abdul-Hussain

The headline-grabbing maritime boundary deal announced between Lebanon and Israel on October 12 produced several winners and losers. Determining who is who is another matter.

Leaders in each country claimed victory after US President Joe Biden unveiled the agreement, while opposition groups on both sides accused their own governments of conceding national wealth. There are also questions about the deal itself and whether it will survive the political storms that are coming.

So, before finalising the score, we must first identify what was, and remains, at stake.

The long-standing dispute was over a maritime border serving two key purposes: security, and delineation of the countries’ exclusive economic zones (EEZs).

On the security side, Israel clearly came out on top. Israel will maintain control over a line that starts five kilometres from the coast and stretches into territory that Lebanon considers its own. Lebanon tried to push this line south, but Israel resisted, concerned that a shift would give the Lebanese direct access to Israel’s north.

The tally on economics is more mixed.

Until the early 2000s, when Israel and Egypt began discovering gas reserves in their territorial waters, there had been little economic activity in the eastern Mediterranean. Once gas was found, Lebanon began conducting seismic



With Compliments

**Minnie Smorgon and Family**

On behalf of

**GBM Group**

10 Queens Road  
Melbourne VIC 3004  
Tel: +61 3 9869 1333





A gas rig in Israel's offshore waters (Image: Shutterstock)

explorations of its own, which hinted that it too had gas reserves that were commercially viable.

Exploration rights to the most promising Lebanese blocks – 4 and 9 – were awarded to the French oil giant Total in 2018.

Total drilled Block 4, off the coast of Beirut, in 2020, but came up dry. Total said it would not drill Block 9, whose southern border was disputed by Israel, without Israel's consent – which in turn required having Hezbollah on board.

Not long ago, Hezbollah's buy-in for a deal with Israel would have been inconceivable. But the free-falling Lebanese economy forced Hezbollah to bend.

Lebanon is a rentier state. Oligarchs use its resources to offer their partisans social services, including government jobs, health care and pensions. With the state going bankrupt, millions of Lebanese find themselves without a social safety net. Some have started to rely on Hezbollah's services, which are also stretched to breaking point.

For instance, the Great Prophet Hospital, Hezbollah's main health-care facility in Beirut, has been unable to cope with an ever-growing roster of patients. The hospital can barely keep the lights on, and medicine is in such short supply that those who live with chronic diseases, such as diabetes, have few options. Lebanon has already run out of affordable insulin.

As Lebanon falls apart, Hezbollah is being squeezed. Lebanon's Shi'ites, from whom it draws its support, are hurting, while the party – and its impoverished sponsor Iran – can do little to ease the suffering.

In the hopes of producing gas to help mitigate Lebanon's economic disaster, Hezbollah sued for settlement of the maritime border issue to allow Total to dig up Block 9.

But before the party's chief, Hassan Nasrallah, went on national television on the eve of the deal's announcement to metaphorically drink the poison, he'd flown a couple of drones into Israeli airspace in the summer, presumably targeting Israel's Karish gas field.

Nasrallah pretended that he had put Israel on notice: He would hit Karish if Israeli production began before a deal with Lebanon was reached. In other words, Hezbollah was threatening Israel with war to force a deal.

Everyone, especially Israel, knew Hezbollah couldn't drag Lebanon into war in its current state. Yet Israeli officials likely believed they could extract some concessions from Lebanon, such as the demarcation of borders between them, both on land and at sea.

Hezbollah wanted a compromise, but not one that recognised Israel and demarcated borders in a way that would end all territorial disputes between the two sides. Hezbollah, after all, exists to fight Israel. Thus terrestrial border demarcation was taken off the table.

In its place came a maritime boundary that stopped five km short of shore, leaving most of Block 9's Qana field in Lebanese hands.

If gas is discovered in Qana, Lebanon will receive 83% of its revenue, while Israel will get 17%. In previous scenarios offered by the United States, Israel was given 45% of the disputed area.

While assessing Qana's reserves has to wait until later stages of exploration, the Israeli Ministry of Energy predicts that Qana holds just US\$3 billion worth of gas. With \$68.9 billion in external debt, Qana's potential won't move the economic needle in Lebanon. Unless Qana proves to be a mega field, or unless other fields are suddenly discovered, Lebanon's claim of economic victory in maritime talks over Israel will prove misplaced.

But if Qana surprises with big reserves, or if other fields with sizable amounts of gas are discovered, Israel would have shot itself in the foot by taking the US-brokered deal.

Moreover, the temporary nature of the deal could allow Israel to ask for reconsideration, or it could crumble completely. The deal itself is not a treaty between two countries, but a US document and deposit of maps with the UN (the second such deposit since 2009).

None of this went through a ratification process – at least not in Lebanon. In Israel, the cabinet voted but the Knesset did not, and an Israeli cabinet vote could be reversed by a future cabinet vote.

Finally, if Israel's opposition leader, Binyamin Netanyahu, who trashed the deal during its run-up, becomes prime minister again after Nov. 1, Israel could withdraw before it's clear how much gas Qana holds, if any.

No matter how all of this plays out, this much is certain: Declarations of victory, by either side, are premature.

AIR

*Hussain Abdul-Hussain is a research fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies (FDD) in Washington, DC. © FDD, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



## A Freedom Struggle

**Zionism was and remains a liberation movement**

**Bret Stephens**

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, it had just 51 member states. Today, there are 193. Most of the new states were born from the twin processes of decolonisation and so-called national-liberation struggles.

Among the first was Israel.

The subsequent trajectory of most of the decolonised countries has not been a happy one. From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, their politics have been marked by despotism, anarchy, or civil war; their economies by kleptocracy, mismanagement, and destitution; their social dynamics by ethnic strife, religious fanaticism, and the oppression of women. They are countries from which people flee: more than a million refugees from Burma; 2.6 million from Afghanistan; 3.4 million from Zimbabwe. They are countries in which people die: an estimated 2 million civilians in the Biafran war of 1967–1970; as many as 3 million in the Bangladesh genocide of 1971; at least 1.5 million in Cambodia's killing fields between 1975 and 1979; some 800,000 in the Rwandan genocide of 1994; another 5.4 million in the Second Congo War of 1998–2003.

Israel, too, has been scarred by sectarian and ethnic strife, from the early days of the *Yishuv* (pre-state Jewish community) to the intercommunal riots of 2021. This is a fact its critics often pretend is unique, and uniquely awful, when it has mainly been the



Israel exists and flourishes and will soon house a majority of the world's Jews. But does that mean Zionism is no longer needed? (Image: Isranet)

tragic norm throughout the world.

Yet in other respects, the Jewish state has been the remarkable exception: nearly the only postcolonial state that has flourished in independence. Israel regularly ranks as one of the world's happiest countries, behind Australia but ahead of the United States. Nearly 500,000 Jews have made *aliyah* (emigrated to Israel) in the past 20 years alone. Gross domestic product per capita exceeds that of Britain and France. Its economic base is geared toward future-oriented technologies. It is an anchor of regional security on which its neighbours depend: Jordan for Israel's water; Egypt for Israel's reconnaissance capabilities; Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States for the tools it brings in the fight against Iran. And it has managed to do all this while maintaining, however imperfectly, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and an ability to live with its partisan and

religious differences.

That Israel is a decolonised nation, liberated from imperialism just as surely as Kenya or Indonesia was, is a fact that lies buried in most conversations about the Jewish state. But it matters. It is a reminder of how normal Israel's problems are given the circumstances into which it was born, and of how remarkable its achievements have been, when viewed in the correct historical context. And it is a testament to what Zionism is: an attempt to unshackle Jews not just from foreign rule but also from foreign ideas.

Let's explore these points in turn.

Students of 20th-century decolonisation agree on one thing: It was a mess.

The partition that would divide India from Pakistan, the border drawn on five weeks' notice by an English civil servant named Cyril Radcliffe – a man who had never so much as visited the subcontinent – resulted in a death toll estimated at up to 2 million people, as well as the forced displacement of another 14 million. The European scramble out of Africa and Asia created a slew of nations whose new borders rarely corresponded to ethnic, sectarian, or tribal lines, leading to decades of oppression and violent conflict.

Israel emerged from the same shambolic process. Promises were made in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 only to be withdrawn in the White Paper of 1939. Policies such as the wartime restrictions on Jewish immigration were capricious and cruel. The partition plan proposed for Mandatory Palestine was unworkable. The borders foisted on the proposed Jewish state were indefensible. Inevitably, the result was violent and chaotic. Whatever view one takes of the birth of Israel, its rights and wrongs, it was of a piece with the tragic circumstances of its era.

Most postcolonial states have spent decades trying to work their



way out of this kind of rubble. Just as Israel has never fully settled territorial claims with all of its neighbours, neither has Pakistan with India (over Jammu and Kashmir), nor Cyprus with Turkey (over northern Cyprus), nor Armenia with Azerbaijan (over Nagorno-Karabakh), nor Morocco with the so-called Sahrawi Republic (over Western Sahara), nor Georgia with Russia (over Abkhazia and South Ossetia), nor, most recently, Russia with Ukraine (over Ukraine itself).

A complete list would be much longer, but this one already provides a sense of just how unexceptional the Israeli-Arab conflict really is. Equally unexceptional have been the reasons why it has persisted for so long. Wherever ethnic groups are locked into conflict, the competition for power tends to be zero-sum. Sectarian strife is especially difficult to resolve because it involves value systems that are self-justifying, nonrational, and prone to fanaticism. Borders are hard to agree on when they involve not just land and resources, but also memory and meaning.

There is also a profound tension between the claims of collective identity and those of personal liberty.

Look closely at the history of decolonisation and it is mostly a story of foreign imperialism giving way to local tyranny. Jomo Kenyatta helped free Kenya from British rule only to preside as a tyrant until his death. The same goes for the revolutionaries who defeated the French in Algeria. Each supposed liberator left his people with even fewer civil rights, legal protections, and economic freedoms in their independent states than they had enjoyed under colonial rule.



Israel's establishment in 1948 was actually part of a wave of nations created as part of decolonisation and arguably the most successful example of national liberation (Image: Flickr)

The Jewish state might easily have succumbed to the same dynamics. In David Ben-Gurion, it had a charismatic founding father who could have sought a dictatorial path. The prominent role of the military in Israeli life, along with the constant threat of invasion, has given generals a position in politics that elsewhere is the stuff of coups and juntas. And the country has always felt the tension between the claims of identity and freedom. It lies at the heart of controversies such as the 2018 nation-state law, the egalitarian prayer space at the Western Wall, marriage laws, and the exemption of Israeli Arabs from military service.

Yet Israel's commitment to democratic and liberal values for its citizens has been resilient and profound. Why?

Part of the explanation is rooted in Jewish history and text. In Genesis,

the usual hierarchical expectations of patriarchal authority passing from father to firstborn are repeatedly overturned – in the story of Ishmael and Isaac, and then of Jacob and Esau, and again with Joseph and his brothers. Merit (or divine favour), not primogeniture, determines one's fitness to lead. In Exodus, the Jewish story explicitly becomes a freedom struggle. And while Jewish antiquity had its kings and dynasties, there was also a pronounced current of mistrust for unjust authoritarian rule, foreign or domestic.

Then there is the history of the Diaspora. Israeli political scientist Shlomo Avineri has observed that a paradox of Jewish politics in exile is that the absence of Jewish sovereignty, combined with the exclusion of Jews from Gentile society, led to a remarkable degree of self-governance within Jewish communal life. Rabbis were frequently elected, not appointed by distant ecclesiastical authorities. Taxes were collected and spent by communal officials who met in representative councils. Rules were developed to curb nepotism and other self-dealing practices. The

# REBEL

PROPERTY GROUP

PROUDLY SUPPORTING AIJAC

depredations of the Gentile sovereign served as a constant reminder of the evils of absolute power, while also cultivating an instinct for political dissent.

Hovering above this was a spiritual dimension. For many persecuted religious and ethnic minorities, the experience of oppression begets two distinct emotions: the desire to belong, or to avenge.

For many Diaspora Jews, by contrast, the desire is to get going. *Next year in Jerusalem*, a phrase that dates to the 15th century CE, if not earlier, is the wish for a home that is elsewhere: a home that is remembered, imagined, envisioned; a home that nevertheless, astonishingly, exists.

A culture of yearning can lead to different kinds of politics, including the utopian and the revolutionary. But the flip side of yearning is dissatisfaction, and the most natural politics of dissatisfaction is democracy. Everyone has a gripe, a dream, and a voice. These were the politics that so many of the early Zionists brought with them from their shtetls. Avineri notes:

When a few members of a pioneering group decided to establish what eventually became the first kibbutz, the only way known to them to do this was to have a meeting, vote on the structure proposed, elect a secretary and a committee... And when they eventually disagreed, and some wanted slightly different institutions and arrangements, these dissidents went to the other side of the hill and established their second kibbutz. That is why we have Degania Aleph and Degania Beth.

A society typified by constant disagreement, breaking with consensus and going your own way, creating tribes within a tribe, is sometimes seen both as a Jewish peculiarity and one of Israel's crippling faults, the source of its social polarisation and political paralysis. But it is Israel's

defining strength. Consider a few contrasts:

- The notion that someone like Gamal Abdel Nasser or, more recently, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, would install himself as a president-for-life may have been sadly predictable given the pharaonic nature of Egyptian politics. The idea that anything similar could happen in Israel – despite the stature of a Ben-Gurion or the ambitions of a Netanyahu – is preposterous in a political culture that prizes arguments and upstarts.

- In many postcolonial states, rulers held on to power by dispensing favours to their tribal group while discriminating against their tribal foes. In Israel, the nature of the state as an ingathering of exiles has meant constant evolution with each fresh wave of immigration, beginning with the early pioneers from Eastern Europe, to the next wave of escapees and survivors from western Europe, to Mizrahi and Ethiopian refugees, to the Anglos who came after the Six-Day War and the Russians who came after the collapse

**“Zionism, and the state it created, was a bottom-up enterprise, more horizontal than vertical in its communal and religious life, often fractious but, for the same reason, mobile and dynamic”**

of the Soviet Union, and thence to Argentinians, French, and now Ukrainians. Each wave of immigrants has brought with it a new outlook, and new votes, requiring the rest of the country to adjust and evolve.

- Elsewhere, too, elites tend to come from particular social backgrounds and educational upbringings. In India, for instance, Jawaharlal Nehru attended Cambridge, his daughter Indira Gandhi attended Oxford, her son Rajiv Gandhi went to Cambridge, and each served as prime minister. In Israel, the early generation of elites tended to be left-wing secular Jews from the kibbutzim, who rose in the army and civil service: Think of Golda Meir and Ariel Sharon. Then came the

right-of centre secular Jews from cities, who rose in business and politics: Think of Ehud Olmert and Binyamin Netanyahu. Now more observant Jews, epitomised by Naftali Bennett, are rising to the fore.

The broader point is that Zionism, and the state it created, was a bottom-up enterprise, more horizontal than vertical in its communal and religious life, often fractious but, for the same reason, mobile and dynamic. As a result, it was able to escape national-liberation movements' typical fate of falling into tyranny, or collapsing into chaos, or ossifying into a social order rigged by an entrenched elite.

The argument that Zionism is a freedom struggle runs up against an obvious objection: What about the Palestinians? This is a serious objection, though not in the intellectually unserious way that Israel's most acidic critics usually mean.

What is unserious? The allegation that Israel is a white, racist, illegitimate, colonialist, “apartheid” regime.

Jews are not “white” to start with, and even by the invidious racial categorisations of Israel's critics, it's worth noting that a plurality of Israel's Jewish population is of Middle Eastern descent. A state whose

right to exist was affirmed in one of the UN's first resolutions may be many things, but it is not illegitimate. A nation whose ties to a land are millennia-old and continuous is not colonialist, particularly when the territories it is supposedly colonising were acquired in wars it did not seek and include land it has repeatedly tried to give back.

Regarding apartheid, even hardened critics of Israel generally acknowledge there is no such thing for Israel's Arab citizens. As with other minorities around the world, they have experienced serious discrimination. Yet they are nonetheless members of the Israeli Knesset, the Cabinet, the Supreme Court, the medical



and academic establishment, the legal profession, and so on.

The more insistent charge is that, because of policies like checkpoints and security walls and the refusal to allow Palestinians to vote in Israeli elections, Israel practises apartheid against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. But most of these security restrictions came about because, in wave after bloody wave, terrorists continually capitalised on the inadequacy of security measures *to kill Jews*.

As for the argument that Palestinians experience apartheid because they don't get a say in Israeli politics, the entire point of the 1993 Oslo Accords was to provide Palestinians with a *separate* polity in the form of the Palestinian Authority. The principal reason that Palestinians don't get a vote is that, fearing democracy, Palestinian leaders in both the West Bank and Gaza have effectively banned elections. And the principal reason that Palestinians don't live in a state of their own, democratic or otherwise, is that Palestinian leaders have repeatedly rejected one. As Esawi Frej, Israel's first Arab-Muslim Cabinet member, recently wrote, "Israel has many problems that must be solved, both within the Green Line and especially the Occupied Territories, but Israel is not an apartheid state."

If these are the unserious objections, what is the serious one? It's that Zionism cannot be true to its calling as a freedom struggle for Jews if that entails exercising a substantial degree of control over another people without their consent.

The reasons why this control is currently being exercised may be defensible and necessary. Israel cannot be expected to agree to the immediate creation of a Palestinian state if Israelis have good reasons to fear that ending the occupation is a prelude to ending Israel itself. To adapt Justice Robert Jackson's famous line about the Constitution, a peace deal cannot be a suicide pact.

Still, it should be said: There needs

to be a horizon.

A horizon is neither a deadline nor a *démarche*. It's a goal that is years if not decades away. It is based on an idea: in this case, the idea that the fulfillment of Zionism as a freedom struggle requires a recognised border that preserves the political viability of Jews as a people neither above nor below, but fundamentally *apart*. And it's an idea that requires patience:



Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Jews have ritually invoked "next year in Jerusalem" for centuries, a longing for a home that now exists, but comes with numerous challenges and complexities (Image: Shutterstock)

both the patience to hold fast to the idea when circumstances make it seem unnecessary or irrelevant, and the patience not to hurry it when circumstances make it premature and dangerous.

The most effective way to advance that idea isn't through international diplomacy or political decision-making. It's through Zionist dialogue — there being no point in discussing the Zionist future with people who don't want a future for Zionism. It's by asking, first, in an aspirational sense, what Israelis want for the next 50 or 100 years, and whether that includes a perpetual "Palestinian problem"; second, in a prudential sense, how to get there without doing Israel grave injury along the way. There is no reaching the long term without surviving the short.

**W**e come to the final point: Zionism as liberation from foreign ideas.

Seen at a distance, Zionism is just the Jewish branch of the global phenomenon known as nationalism. In many senses it is. But Zionism isn't mere Jewish nationalism, given that Jewishness isn't merely a national or ethnic identity; it is also a religious and moral one. And the goal of Zion-

ism isn't merely to give Jews "a place *among* the nations" (per the title of Binyamin Netanyahu's 1993 book). It's to make Israel a light unto the nations.

The point may seem flattering, but it isn't always an easy one to accept. It imposes a set of moral burdens and expectations, many of them unfair. "Other nations when victorious on the battlefield dictate peace terms," Eric Hoffer wrote in 1968. "But when Israel is victorious it must sue for peace. Everyone expects the Jews to be the only real Christians in the world."

The Jewish state is expected to conduct its battles with greater regard for the safety of its enemies than for that of its own people. It is expected to make diplomatic concessions that put the lives of its own citizens at serious risk. It is expected to strengthen



its “democratic” character, but only if its democratic choices conform to progressive sensibilities. It is expected, when struck, to turn the other cheek.

These expectations aren’t wrong for holding Israel to high standards: Nobody should hold Israel to a higher standard than Zionists themselves. But they are wrong when they are based on ethical concepts inimical to Jewish traditions, ideals, and practical realities. Israel did not liberate itself politically from colonial masters merely to remain a captive of their ideas.

A Jewish state is not just a political and security concept. It is also a civilisational opportunity; a chance to rediscover, rearticulate, and redevelop a uniquely Jewish way of thinking, being, and doing in the world; a means of finding out how a culture that was both stunted and enriched in its long exile can, with the benefit of sovereignty, create a healthier model of human community. Are there ways of doing politics, Jewishly, that aren’t simply a facsimile of the way politics are done in other advanced democracies? Is there a way of managing differences in society, and of enriching the human experience in the modern state, that is not only distinctive but can also offer a model for other nations wrestling with similar dilemmas?

Three areas come to mind:

- Can the tension between identity and freedom, which elsewhere has led to so much conflict and repression, achieve a more sustainable and dynamic balance? The freedoms of modern liberal societies are almost limitless; these freedoms are especially precious to those with the inner resources to make the most of them. But they come at a cost: the disconnection of individuals from their community, the lack of a sense of personal purpose, the moral entropy that often goes with what Rudyard Kipling called the “Gods of the Market Place.” On the flip side, a powerful sense of identity, tradition, and place of-

fers its own emotional and spiritual comforts. But it’s frequently stifling, most of all to the free spirits and free thinkers who usually move the world forward, and which Jewish civilisation produces in such abundance.

- Can there be a model of religious-secular coexistence that is less frictional, less distanced, and more mutually enriching? Contrary to the hopes or expectations of some of the early Zionists, a Jewish state was never going to leave Judaism in the atavistic dust. And contrary to the beliefs or predictions of some of today’s religious Zionists or Haredim, the state of Israel cannot succeed without the cultural and economic dynamism of its secular side.

- Can democratic states with large, and largely separate, cultural minorities find a middle path between bitter communal rivalry and complete assimilation? The intercommunal violence of 2021 was a loud alarm for many Israelis that not only have they neglected this challenge, but also – in legislation such as the 2018 nation-state law and the neglect of basic policing in Israeli-Arab communities – that they have moved in the wrong direction. On the other hand, the creation of last year’s extraordinarily broad coalition government, along with the signing of the Abraham Accords, gives reason to hope that there are hidden reserves of good will between Jews and Arabs, as well as opportunities to create a far more inclusive Israel than the one we have today.

**A**n argument is sometimes made that the term “Zionism” no longer means much. In this reading,

Zionism was a 19th- and 20th-century project to regain a secure and recognised Jewish homeland. It succeeded in 1948. Those who approve of the project have gotten on with it; those who don’t approve need to get over it. End of story.

But leaving aside the fact that this homeland is neither universally recognised nor truly secure, this view of Zionism sells its true meaning short.


- A struggle for freedom begins with a quest for a homeland – but it doesn’t end there.

- A homeland isn’t truly free until it is self-governing – but self-governance doesn’t lead to freedom unless rulers are bound by law and the consent of the governed.

- Democracy is the essential precondition for living a free life, but not the only condition – there is also the need for freedom from want and freedom from fear.

- The blessings of a prosperous and secure state are not sufficient for freedom – there is also the need for moral, spiritual, and intellectual freedom, both at the individual and national level.

- The pursuit of ever fuller forms of freedom is often a blessing – but it becomes a curse when it diminishes or blocks the same pursuit by others.

To say that Zionism *remains* a freedom struggle does not merely vindicate the distance it has travelled so far. It reminds us that the journey is far from over. 

*Bret Stephens is the Editor-in-Chief of Sapir journal and a New York Times columnist © Sapir (www.sapirjournal.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*



With Compliments  
**SOUTHERN**  
**STEEL GROUP Pty Limited**

Telephone: (02) 9792 2099  
www.southernsteelgroup.com.au





[www.noahsjuice.com.au](http://www.noahsjuice.com.au)  
[www.facebook.com/NoahsCreativeJuices](https://www.facebook.com/NoahsCreativeJuices)

With compliments from

 **Sandra & Barry  
Smorgon  
Family**

 **SANDBAR**  
INVESTMENTS

# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### CAPITAL CRIMES

Numerous media reports of Foreign Minister Penny Wong's announcement on Oct. 18 that Australia would no longer recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital incorrectly interpreted this to mean that henceforth Tel Aviv would be regarded as Israel's capital.

The *Guardian's* initial report misquoted Wong, claiming she said, "This reverses the Morrison Government's recognition of west Jerusalem. Australia's position has always been and remains in Tel Aviv."

Wong actually said "Australia's embassy has always been and remains in Tel Aviv."

During *Sky News's* live coverage of Wong's press conference, an onscreen graphic said "GOVT RECOGNISES TEL AVIV AS CAPITAL OF ISRAEL", while a report on the *Australian* website claimed that "Foreign Minister Penny Wong has denied Labor has dropped recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel instead of Tel Aviv."

A primer on the website *The Latch* asked, "What's the capital of Israel? Well, depending on who you ask, it's either Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. According to the Australian government, it was Tel Aviv, then, under Scott Morrison, it was West Jerusalem and now, according to Foreign Minister Penny Wong, it's once again Tel Aviv."

On the *Conversation* website (Oct. 18), Tony Walker, a former Middle East correspondent and biographer of Yasser Arafat who should know better, wrote, "The simple fact is Australia has now realigned itself with all its friends and allies, with the exception of the United States, in its decision to again recognise Tel Aviv as Israel's capital."

The "simple fact is" that, until the Morrison Government recognised west Jerusalem as Israel's capital,

Australia, like much of the rest of the world, had not recognised any city as Israel's capital, but had chosen to locate its embassy in Tel Aviv.

### SIMON SAYS

Talking to *Sky News* (Oct. 19), Opposition Foreign Affairs spokesperson Senator Simon Birmingham said the process leading to the change in designation was "shambolic".

He noted that "at the last election, senior Labor figures... reassur[ed] Australia's Jewish community there was no difference between the parties in relation to their support for Israel and their position on these sorts of matters. Then we had leaks coming out of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade earlier this week suggesting that there was to be a change in relation to Australia's recognition of west Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. These were then emphatically denied by Minister Wong's office itself... stating very clearly that there was no change in the position. And yet then hours later we have the Minister coming out and making an announcement that there has been a change in position. She did so on a holy day in the Jewish calendar, showing complete disrespect for the Israeli and Jewish communities... with little to no consultation."

On *ABC TV "Breakfast"* (Oct. 19), Birmingham said that "the Government has not provided any compelling reasons as to why it is in Australia's national interest to take this decision at this time. It's a decision that has been welcomed by terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, yet has been condemned by the Israeli Prime Minister Lapid."

### LEESER KNOWN

On *ABC TV "Afternoon Briefing"* (Oct. 18), Liberal MP Julian Leaser said of the decision, "West Jerusalem has been part of Israel since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The Parliament is there, the Supreme Court is there, the Prime Minister lives there, the President lives there. It looks like the capital of Israel to me."

The *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 20) quoted Leaser in the context of reports that Hamas and Islamic Jihad had praised Labor's announcement, with Leaser noting Australia lists these as terrorist organisations.

### LABOR LINE

On *ABC Radio National "Breakfast"* (Oct. 19), Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen decided attack was the best form of defence when asked if the Government could have "managed better" how the decision was announced given it was a Jewish holiday.

Bowen said, "I'll tell you what could have been managed better... The previous government cynically, pathetically changing what had been a bipartisan policy for decades since the 1940s in a pathetic attempt to get votes in the Wentworth by-election."

On *ABC TV "Breakfast"* (Oct. 19), Labor Senator Don Farrell said, "Australia remains a great friend of Israel. Our embassy has always been in Tel Aviv and despite statements from the previous government, they didn't move our embassy from Tel Aviv."

On *ABC TV "Afternoon Briefing"* (Oct. 18), Labor MP Michelle Ananda Rajah said, "we are... maintaining a long-standing bipartisan agreement that has stood the test of time with the Abbott Government, the Turnbull Government and successive other



governments, whereby we have always maintained that Tel Aviv is the site of our embassy.”

Ananda Rajah added that the decision did not indicate a drop in support for Israel, and that Australia has “a lot to learn from Israel, especially with respect to innovation and mitigating the effects of climate.”

## FRIENDLY FIRE

On *Sky News* (Oct. 18), former federal Labor MP Michael Danby questioned the ALP’s foreign policy priorities, noting the Government’s recent decision to double Australia’s annual funding to the UN Relief and

Works Agency (UNRWA), described as “the Palestinian agency that has employed terrorists and publishes bigotry to its Gaza students.”

Danby said the Jerusalem decision also went against “the Abraham Accords, the zeitgeist in the area for peace” and asked if the Labor party wants “to get Benjamin Netanyahu elected.”

On *ABC TV* “Afternoon Briefing” (Oct. 18), Liberal MP Bridget Archer whacked both her own party and Labor, saying, “It’s unfortunate that [the 2018 decision] created that sort of divisive discussion at the time, and it’s unfortunate that it’s been further exacerbated or reignited, it seems, with

this action or decision today.”

## DISTRACTIONS

The *Guardian Australia* — whose reporting regarding the DFAT website led to the Government’s hasty announcement undoing recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, said the impetus for trying to ascertain the Albanese Government’s stance on Jerusalem was then newly minted British PM Liz Truss’ statement she might move the UK embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

In the lead up to the *Guardian Australia*’s investigation, it ran two articles from its UK parent railing



## IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) — Sept. 21 — Jewish New Year message: “Shanah Tovah u’metukah—a sweet and happy new year—to our Australian Jewish community as you mark your precious season of High Holy Days.

“For generations, Australian Jewish communities have united in the traditions of faith. Sustained and strengthened by continuity, you have shared in the struggles and triumphs of our nation and enriched the culture and society we cherish. . . Your spirit of unity and community will continue to be a light to Australia as we face a year filled with new opportunities and challenges.

“May this season and year ahead be as sweet as the symbolic apple dipped in honey.”

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson) — Sept. 21 — Jewish New Year message: “On behalf of the Coalition and the federal opposition, I extend best wishes to all Australians of Jewish faith, for a happy new year. . . As you pray at your local synagogue, listen to the blowing of the hollowed-out ram’s horn — the shofar — light candles in your homes, and gather as families for meals, you will renew the same strength and resilience that has defined the Jewish people for centuries.

“The Australian Jewish community enriches our society. . . I wish you all joy and success as you welcome in the new year. Shana Tova!”

Foreign Minister Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) — Oct. 18 — Media Release: “Today the Government has reaffirmed Australia’s previous and longstanding position that Jerusalem is a final status issue that should be resolved as part of any peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian people.

“This reverses the Morrison Government’s recognition of West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Australia’s embassy has always been, and remains, in Tel Aviv.

“Australia is committed to a two-state solution in which Israel and a future Palestinian state coexist, in peace and security, within internationally recognised borders. We will not support an approach that undermines this prospect. . .”

**Allegra Spender** (Ind., Wentworth) — Oct. 19 — Statement: “The federal government’s decision to withdraw recognition of West Jerusalem was rushed and badly handled — made without proper consultation. Announcing the decision on a Jewish holiday was even worse, as it precluded community organisations from making a public response.

“Every sovereign nation, including Israel has the right to determine its own capital. Australia should play a constructive role in supporting a two-state solution, and these actions undermine our efforts without any gains.

“I am writing to the Foreign Minister to express my deep concerns.”

**Scott Buchholz** (Lib., Wright) — Sept. 28 — “When we went into the West Bank we saw memorials not that dissimilar to the memorials in our small communities where we honour our Anzacs. In the West Bank they also have memorials, but they honour those who have strapped suicide vests to themselves and gone to take the lives of innocent people. The government pays their families a stipend. It’s called ‘pay for slay’. The more people you take out — innocent people, children — with a suicide vest, the higher your family’s remuneration, and then you’re honoured in perpetuity on these memorial-like stone markings outside significant buildings.”

**Andrew Wallace** (Lib., Fisher) — Sept. 26 — “Today we see the tabling of the [Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security] report into the then home affairs minister’s listing of eight terror groups listed as terrorist organisations under the Criminal Code. Some of these names are well-known. . . These include Hamas, whose unmitigated violence and hatred against the Jewish people, the state of Israel and her allies has continued for over 33 years. . .”

against Truss.

On Sept. 29, the UK *Guardian* editorialised that US President Trump's decision to relocate the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was "incendiary" and Britain following suit would "tear up" any "meaningful" two-state solution.

An op-ed in the same edition by author Donald McIntyre also claimed recognition would "help to bury the notion" of a division of Jerusalem into two capitals.

Both articles ignored the fact that Trump Administration officials explicitly said recognition did not mean a future Palestinian state couldn't also have its capital in Jerusalem.

McIntyre stressed maintaining the status quo was in keeping with "every UN resolution over five decades" and EU policies earmarking east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.

That, of course, ignores the fact that the international community refused to recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital prior to its gaining control of east Jerusalem in 1967.

## THE NEW NORMAL

On the *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* website (Oct. 19), Josh Feldman asked how reversing recognition of west Jerusalem would advance peace, while challenging the notion that Trump's recognition of Jerusalem set back peace efforts.

Feldman hailed "the ground breaking normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco through the Abraham Accords in 2020. In March this year, Israel hosted a similarly unprecedented summit with the foreign ministers of the UAE, Egypt, Morocco, Bahrain and the United States. Even Turkey, whose president has a history of making inflammatory remarks about Jews and Israel, has sought to repair relations with the Jewish state in recent months."

## BETTER NOT CALL SAUL

On the *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* website (Oct. 19), academic Ben Saul's history of Jerusalem since the end of the British Mandate was riddled with errors.

Saul claimed that the 1947 UN Partition "plan was supported by many Zionists, but opposed by most Arabs, since it unfairly allocated a disproportionate share of land to Jews relative to their share of the population."

Arab leaders were opposed to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine regardless of its size.

Saul also claimed that "Zionists relied on the plan for legitimacy when declaring Israel to be an independent state in 1948, a unilateral move not envisaged by the UN. But Israel refused to accept the plan for Jerusalem [as a *corpus separatum*]."

This is nonsense. Speaking to the UN on Oct. 2, 1947 on behalf of the Jewish pre-state authority Jewish Agency (JA) in accepting partition, Dr Abba Silver said "we would not question the propriety of placing the old city of Jerusalem... in the custody of an international trustee" but at the same time he "strongly urge[d]" that the 90,000 Jews in "new" west Jerusalem "be included in the Jewish state," with the JA's hope being that this "modification" could be negotiated for before partition was implemented.

By contrast, Palestinian Arabs boycotted the partition plan implementation process entirely.

After the war ended, the UN General Assembly absurdly still insisted that Jerusalem be internationalised, despite the Arab states refusing to make peace with Israel, which was a necessary precondition to making the plan work. Under that new reality, Israel now publicly opposed the *corpus separatum* proposal for Jerusalem.

## SNARK AND NON-SEQUITURS

On Oct. 20, the *Sydney Morning*

*Herald's* snarky "CBD" column clearly felt the need to get in on the action, calling PM Scott Morrison's 2018 recognition of west Jerusalem as Israel's capital a "hasty decision", which has now been reversed, thus "bringin[g]" Australia back into line with most of the rest of the world."

Given that David Ben-Gurion took the decision to locate Israel's capital in west Jerusalem way back in 1949, CBD has a funny definition of "hasty".

The column then segued into making cheap points about AIJAC organised study tours for Australian politicians to visit Israel, which it termed "political junkets". CBD quoted Senator Hollie Hughes, who recently returned from an AIJAC trip, noting that participants did not only hear from pro-Israel speakers, but also met with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh as well as Arab journalists and business figures.

## IT'S ALL ACADEMIC

An opinion piece in the *Australian* (Sept. 29) by Keren Zelwer discussed growing levels of antisemitism on Australian university campuses that is "cloaked as anti-Zionism" and is "very much spurred on by the woke movement."

On Oct. 14, the *Australian* reported on the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) passing a shameful motion that accused Israel of practising apartheid and demanded a boycott of Israeli academic institutions which it said are "complicit in the violation of Palestinian rights through... ties... with the Israeli army." The motion also opposed the adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Antisemitism (see p. 40).

## STRANGE BED FELLOWS

Anti-Israel leftist commentator Guy Rundle criticised the NTEU motion, but not because he didn't agree with its substance.



Writing in *Crikey* (Oct. 14), Rundle said, “Part of the resolution... is proper: banning its members, as members, from accepting Israeli state-funded trips; opposing the adoption of policies prohibiting criticism of Israel, such as the new IHRA definition of anti-Semitism; and criticising university attempts to silence pro-Palestinian academics.”

But Rundle said, “alas, the NTEU [is a] ‘special case’... It may appear paradoxical that the union with the most left-wing active membership should stay well away from any resolutions with political content, but it’s essential... to defend unrestrained free inquiry in a society where it is under numerous petty attacks.”

## ANTI-ANTI-PALESTINIANISM

On *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” (Sept. 29), AIJAC’s Tzvi Fleischer explained why it was not “appropriate” for Canterbury Bankstown Council to adopt “The Sydney Statement on Anti-Palestinianism” (see p. 40).

An SBS reporter said the statement issued by the Australian Arab Federation is meant “to combat discrimination and racism against Palestinians.”

Federation spokesperson Hassan Moussa was featured saying, “This statement is to give space to people interested in this Palestinian cause to speak freely without being accused of antisemitism.”

Dr Fleischer responded that whilst “discrimination and racism” against Palestinians is real, the Statement “revolves around political demands” and to “disagree... with some aspects of the Palestinians’ demands against Israel is not anti-Palestinian or a form of racism, as the statement suggests.”

## LEARNING ONE’S ABCS

The ABC faced criticism along the lines that AIJAC has levelled many times over the years but this time at close quarters.

On Oct. 3, the *Australian* reported that Fiona Cameron, who has taken up the newly created position of ABC Ombudsman to oversee the in-house ABC complaints process, has told staff in an email that “the ABC can always do better” and that “it is always good to embrace change and review how things can be improved.”

On Oct. 7, Nine Newspapers columnist Osman Faruqi attacked the ABC for its “kneejerk defensiveness of any criticism,” adding that “one of the biggest media companies in the country... shouldn’t be immune from interrogation.”

## MIDDLE EAST REPORTING MUFFLED

The challenges of reporting objectively in Gaza were exposed by former Australian-Lebanese Middle East correspondent Daa Hadid on *ABC Radio National* “Late Night Live” (Sept. 20).

According to Hadid, who speaks Arabic, “I was particularly critical of Hamas. I think I was famously critical of Hamas because I was speaking to Palestinians who would really open their hearts and tell me their experience of living under the rule of a militant Islamic group.”

Revealingly, Hadid said “some of the other Western correspondents who came in, who were also of Arab origin, who were dealing with Hamas” were “tend[ing] to be quite sympathetic to them in a way that I think would really like rile my gut... [Hamas] expected me to be more sympathetic to them because I was an Arab and I just wasn’t. In fact, I was even more critical... it was made clear to me that I was not welcome anymore in the strip.”

## OTHERWISE OCCUPIED

*SBS TV* “World News” (Oct. 4) claimed that “ahead of elections next month, Israel has been conducting almost nightly raids in territory considered to be illegally occupied under international law.” This is incorrect.

Israel has a legal right to be in the West Bank, a disputed territory.

The territory did not come under Israeli control during the 1967 war as a result of Israeli belligerency but only after Jordan started firing at Israel from the West Bank.

Because Israel’s actions were widely regarded as defensive, UN Security Council resolutions have never said Israel was illegally occupying the West Bank and predicated Israel’s withdrawals on the country’s neighbours making peace with it – which Palestinians have repeatedly refused to do, despite numerous opportunities.

## BULLY FOR THEM

The campaign by Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) activists who disrupted the 2022 Sydney Arts Festival to protest the Israeli embassy in Canberra providing \$20,000 in funding to stage a dance performance by an Israeli choreographer has ultimately backfired, with Festival organisers announcing a ban on all foreign funding until at least 2024.

The *Age/Sydney Morning Herald* (Sept. 28) noted that the activists claimed Israeli funding “made the festival unsafe for people of Arab backgrounds and would ‘contribute to the normalisation of the apartheid state.’” The article quoted Festival director Olivia Ansell saying “some artists felt pressured... to withdraw, or else they would be publicly shamed”, suggesting it was actually BDS activists who made people feel unsafe.

The *Australian* (Sept. 28) quoted singer Katie Noonan, saying that she was subjected to “repeated, vigorous and quite aggressive” pressure to withdraw.

The *Guardian Australia* (Sept. 28) story omitted any reference to the intimidation, shaming and pressure placed on festival participants.

Disappointingly, all the media reports failed to note that it was Festival organisers who had solicited Israeli Embassy funding for the dance performance in question.



Allon Lee

## IN REVERSE

The fumbling manner in which the Albanese Government reversed the Morrison Government's 2018 decision to formally recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital

prompted two types of commentary. Some were interested only in the process that led to Foreign Minister Penny Wong's announcement, while others were willing to discuss the underlying substantive issues.

On Oct. 19, *ABC Radio National* "Breakfast" host Patricia Karvelas questioned Federal Labor Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen solely on the handling of the announcement. In the same bulletin, Karvelas pushed former Australian Ambassador to Israel and former Liberal MP Dave Sharma to justify criticising the Government, when it was well-known Labor intended to take this step.

Karvelas appeared disinterested in Sharma's explanation that recognition acknowledged "the reality that... Israel... has all its offices and national institutions there" and "under no conceivable two state solution... does... West Jerusalem... cease to be the capital of Israel." By contrast, Sharma was able to discuss policy substance unimpeded in an op-ed in the *Australian* (Oct. 19) and multiple appearances on *Sky News*.

On *ABC TV* "7.30" (Oct. 20), Laura Tingle insisted that the response to the decision "mostly provoked criticisms of process, rather than of the underlying decision."

*ABC TV* "Breakfast" host Madeline Morris (Oct. 19) was an exception, asking left-wing Israeli activist Yariv Oppenheimer about the significance of the decision for Israelis and Palestinians. Oppenheimer's claim that "40% of the population in Jerusalem are not Israeli citizens. They are Palestinians" omitted the key point that Palestinian residents of Jerusalem can apply for Israeli citizenship but most choose not to.

On *ABC RN* "Religion & Ethics Report" (Oct. 19), Sydney-based, Israeli-born academic Eyal Mayroz said the decision will have no practical effect, but urged that states recognise "west Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but at the same time on condition that they also support the recognition of a Palestinian state with east Jerusalem as its capital."

On *ABC RN* "Drive" (Oct. 18), Izzat Abdulhadi, head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, claimed the decision will help "save the two-state solution and the peace process in the Middle East."

**"The fumbling manner in which the Albanese Government reversed the Morrison Government's 2018 decision to formally recognise west Jerusalem as Israel's capital prompted two types of commentary"**

In the *West Australian* (Oct. 21), *Channel Seven* political editor Mark Riley focused on process, particularly Labor denying changes were afoot, only to admit the next day it was happening, "with Jewish leaders given just a few minutes warning."

By contrast, in the *Herald Sun* and *Advertiser* (Oct. 19), AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein recapitulated the pro-recognition case and examined how the claims made against doing so in 2018 have fared. He said, "It is simply not reasonable that Israel alone, of all the countries

in the world, [cannot] choose its own capital," and noted, "Palestinian intransigence has currently made final status negotiations impossible, despite three previous Israeli offers of a Palestinian state with a capital in east Jerusalem." Dr Rubenstein's media statement that the decision was an "own goal" for Labor was widely reported.


On Oct. 20, News Corp's Andrew Bolt accused the Government of making policy based on the fact Muslims far outnumber Jews in Australia.

Visiting AIJAC guest Michael Rubin's analysis in the *Daily Telegraph* (Oct. 21) made the point that "when Israel and the overwhelmingly Muslim country of Kosovo established diplomatic relations, Kosovo established its embassy in Jerusalem." He argued Palestinian leaders have shown no interest in making peace, so reversing recognition actually "encourages Palestinian radicals to believe they can erase Jews entirely from Jerusalem and end the Jewish state."

Earlier (Oct. 19), on *Sky News*, Chris Kenny editorialised, "if you really want to understand how bad this decision was, you only have to look at who welcomes it... [Hamas] says the decision opens the way for free countries to withdraw recognition of the Israeli occupation entity."

The *Australian's* Foreign Editor Greg Sheridan called the decision "antique, foolish" (Oct. 21), noting that former US President Donald Trump's recognition and embassy move was retained by the Biden Administration and hasn't impeded peacemaking.

On Oct. 21, a *Guardian* Australia primer defended the Government's decision claiming that "[Foreign Minister] Penny Wong... said in December 2018 that Labor would reverse the decision."

Except that subsequently, before the 2022 election, having been asked by Jewish organisations for an update on its Jerusalem stance, Labor's written responses carefully avoided explicitly committing to reversing recognition. 

# THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

## MOTION SICKNESS

Local government plays an essential role in providing services and community building, yet some councillors appear determined to depart from their responsibilities and duties and become involved in issues on which they have no expertise and even less authority.

The Canterbury Bankstown Council, in southwest Sydney, demonstrated a dearth of decency and self-awareness with the recent adoption of a document called the “Sydney Statement on Anti-Palestinianism.”

The mover of the motion, Labor Councillor Christopher Cahill, turned international law on its head, spouted meaningless anti-Israel clichés, and presented dubious contentions as fact, before claiming that this endorsement of the maximalist Palestinian political agenda was “simply a plea for very basic level of fairness and human rights for all.”

In either a bad-taste joke or a sign of complete lack of a grasp of reality, Cahill told the *Daily Telegraph*, “I don’t think any fair-minded person with even a passing interest in social justice could object” to the motion, which is in fact a pretty superficial attempt to provide cover to people who employ racism in attacking Israel or Jewish aspirations.

Eddie Zananiri, whose organisation produced the document, thundered that the resolution would allow people “to express and speak about the current oppression and to confront the oppressors legitimately without being hindered by fabricated accusations of

anti-Semitism (sic).”

Zananiri is best known as a former activist and leader of the General Union of Palestinian Students, one of the most extreme units of the PLO.

Canterbury Bankstown Mayor, Khal Asfour, demonstrating amazing delusions of relevancy, claimed his Council had, through the resolution, “provided space for residents concerned to speak their mind on the rights of Palestinian people” and was about “their long overdue aspirations for self-determination on their own land.”

On *SBS Radio*, Hassan Moussa promoted the statement as a device to fight what he described as fear of speaking out against Israel.

There is no contradiction in supporting dignity and respect for both Israelis and Palestinians – yet for supporters of this motion, doing so is “anti-Palestinianism”!

The Councillors have embarrassed their office – and also the parties they represent.

Not to be outdone by these local government representatives, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) demonstrated that education is no guarantee of wisdom, morality or basic decency.

A far-left group which failed miserably at winning control of the Union through a popular ballot managed to have a resolution passed which, as academic Phillip Mendes wrote, “contains multiple falsehoods and blatant misrepresentations” in its all-out assault on positive relations between both Australians and Israelis and Palestinians and Israelis.

The resolution rejects Israel’s right to exist, misrepresents both the origins and aims of the bullies, defamers and slanderers of the “BDS” movement and then, with particular venom and intellectual dishonesty, mischaracterises and maligns the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of Antisemitism.

Given that the Union includes Jewish tertiary workers, it is outrageous that a useful tool for understanding anti-semitism was treated as anathema, while there was no offer of protection from the very real intimidation on campus of Jews from a variety of ideological sources.

Criticising the action of the NTEU (but not even the most ludicrous parts of the motion), even left-wing ideologue Guy Rundle commented “I suspect some in the union would like to read [it] out from a balcony over loudspeakers.”

Rundle sensibly argued, “the university is a collection of scholars, dedicated to teaching and thought unbounded” and thus the NTEU should not take positions on any political controversies.

The resolution’s action plan recommends ties with a BDS-supporting entity but not with any Israelis, presents pro-Israel Australians as uniquely problematic and pro-PLO groups as almost holy, and donates funds to a far-left pro-BDS talkfest.

The Canterbury Bankstown councillors should be treated as pariahs until they come to their senses. The NTEU has suffered a self-inflicted wound, greatly harming its ability to do its basic job of advocacy for its members, as Rundle noted.



Former PLO official Eddie Zananiri (YouTube screenshot)



9 771442 369017 >

Australia \$7.95 (inc GST)

AIR