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after Government passes first bill

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This *AIR* edition focuses on the latest stage in the unprecedented political and social turmoil that has rocked Israel this year over judicial reform, following the tumultuous passage of the first element of the reform package on July 24.

Washington Institute scholar David Makovsky looks at the details of the bill that was passed limiting the Supreme Court's use of a "reasonableness" test, the context, and some economic and security implications. Focusing on how the judicial reform divide is presenting significant challenges to the IDF is security analyst Yaakov Lappin. Khaled Abu Toameh looks at Palestinian perspectives on all this while AIJAC's Colin Rubenstein offers some informed thoughts on what Israel's political leaders should be doing next.

Also featured this month is Aviva Winton's exposé of the explosion of online antisemitism which has accompanied Australia's debate about a constitutional amendment to create an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. Plus, law professor Greg Rose pleads for the International Court of Justice to be saved from politicisation by anti-Israel elements in the UN General Assembly.

Finally, don't miss British academic David Hirsh on the conspiratorial worldview behind much anti-Zionism, Amotz Asa-El on Israel-Azerbaijan relations, and Jeremy Jones' insider account of the roots of pro-Palestinian obsessions in the ALP.

As always, we invite your feedback on any aspect of this edition at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

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Protesters take cover as a police water cannon fires at them during an anti-judicial overhaul demonstration outside the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) in Jerusalem, July 24 (Image: Eyal Warshavsky/ Alamy Stock Photo)



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EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN
COLIN RUBENSTEIN**

COOLING THE CONTROVERSY

Wherever you stand on Israeli politics or the controversial judicial reforms that have been on top of PM Binyamin Netanyahu's Government's agenda since January, the way the "reasonableness" element of the reform package was passed into law on July 24 is deeply concerning.

The law removed from Israel's Supreme Court the power to overturn administrative decisions and appointments by the government or ministers on the basis that they are "unreasonable".

Opponents of the law are now lining up to challenge the law in the Supreme Court itself, opening up the possibility of a constitutional crisis the likes of which Israel has never known should the Court invalidate the law, and the Government refuse to accept this.

Israel, of course, has no written constitution, but makes do with a number of "Basic Laws" that have been introduced piecemeal over the years – a fluid constitutional arrangement that is far from comprehensive.

So Israel's legal system, for all its merits, is a complicated work in progress, and polls show that most Israelis agree that some kind of judicial reform is appropriate. The Israeli judiciary is indeed unusually powerful, and the limits of that power are not well defined in any written legal framework. In principle, it makes complete sense for the Knesset to pass one or more basic laws clearly setting out and delimiting the courts' roles and powers.

Furthermore, polls show that limiting the subjective "reasonableness" standard for evaluating governmental decisions is the least controversial element of the judicial reform proposals.

Yet even the strongest proponents of such changes cannot credibly argue that the Netanyahu Government has handled its judicial reform agenda well. It has not only failed so far to pass most of it, but the controversy it has engendered through its efforts has also been so intense that it has created serious strains on social cohesion, as well as adverse economic and security implications for Israel as a whole – something no responsible government would want to witness.

Among other problems, the Government started out with a wildly ambitious ambit claim for reform, and initially appeared completely uninterested in public consultation or dialogue with the Opposition regarding its proposals. It has also repeatedly allowed extreme members of the governing coalition to put forward legislative proposals which alarm and horrify large segments of Israeli society.

The partisan, hasty and divisive process which led to the passage of the current bill seemed to be part and parcel of this clumsy and abrasive approach.

There are certainly valid arguments for the Court's use of "reasonableness" to be codified and limited, and for other aspects of the proposed legal reforms. Yet, for the good of the country, this should only have been done through a process that includes respectful negotiations, conducted in good faith, with the goal of achieving something approaching genuine national consensus.

Netanyahu's coalition, which holds 64 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, does have a clear mandate to govern the country. It does not, however, have a mandate to unilaterally change the way the country is governed without achieving a wider consensus for its reforms – especially given the details of its reform proposals were not revealed before the last election.

Meanwhile, while the ruling coalition, by definition, shoulders the greatest responsibility to act in the national interest and serve the entire country – and not only its own voters – critics and elements of the Opposition have also certainly been guilty of irresponsible behaviour.

Emotionally charged terms such as a judicial “coup”, or a would-be “dictatorship” have been thrown around in response to every proposal by the Netanyahu Government. Such rhetoric amounts not only to wild exaggeration, but creates resentment that makes it harder to bring the two sides together.

Whether one supports or strongly opposes the recently passed “reasonableness” bill, there is simply no factual basis for the hyperbolic assertions being made that its passage represents the end of Israeli democracy or the beginning of authoritarianism.

Likewise, the encouragement being given for pilots and other key reservists in the Israel security forces to issue threats to stop volunteering over the judicial reform controversy is also foolishly short-sighted. Besides increasing the already intense polarisation in society, it creates a precedent for employing similar pressure tactics over controversial issues in the future which could make it difficult for any government, left or right, to function.

In addition, throughout the past 75 years, keeping politics out of the IDF has been one of the secrets to its strength. Anything that projects an image of a weaker, divided IDF only invites provocations and direct challenges from Iran, Hezbollah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Israel’s other dedicated and determined enemies.

Despite the above, it is also worth noting that, through the demonstrations and counter-demonstrations and

parliamentary mayhem that has sometimes bordered on chaos, there have been positive signs for Israel’s democratic future.

With few exceptions, protests both for and against the judicial reform have been peaceful, and the police response restrained.

Israelis have largely been shown to deeply care not only about their country, but about one another, as videos taken on July 24 in Jerusalem’s train station remarkably showed. Anti-reform demonstrators arriving in Jerusalem, and pro-reform protesters headed to Tel Aviv, passed each other on long escalators and greeted one another with not only civility, but more than a few

high-fives.

It is a lesson that both the Israeli Government and its Opposition should take to heart in the aftermath of the vote. With the Knesset’s summer recess now in effect, lasting until the end of the the September/October High Holiday season, moves to pass even more contentious parts of the judicial reform are now on hold. Netanyahu has called for a period of negotiations until November to reach a consensus on reforms that can be introduced later this year.

This timely pause should not be wasted. It presents another chance for the two sides to come together in a spirit of mutual respect, goodwill and patriotism and genuinely try to reach a consensus position – which remains the only possible way forward.

AIR

WORD FOR WORD

“This is an extraordinary moment. We have taken a first step in the historic, important process of fixing the judicial system and returning the authority that has been taken from the government and the Knesset over the course of long years.”

Israeli Justice Minister Yariv Levin following the passage of the Government’s bill limiting Supreme Court use of a “reasonableness” test (JTA, July 24).

“Anyone who thinks he won today will soon discover that this was a terrible mistake for all of us. I am a man who has known battle; I say to you today: We may have lost the battle, but we will all win the war. We will do whatever it takes to reverse course and to fix things... Everything that passed today will be annulled and erased from the statute books.”

Leading Israeli Opposition figure Benny Gantz in response to the passage of the aforementioned bill (Jerusalem Post, July 24).

“As a lifelong friend of Israel, President Biden has publicly and

privately expressed his views that major changes in a democracy to be enduring must have as broad a consensus as possible. It is unfortunate that the vote today took place with the slimmest possible majority... The United States will continue to support the efforts of President Herzog... to build a broader consensus through political dialogue.”

White House statement on the passage of the aforementioned bill (White House, July 24).

“This specific day is the worst day in the history of Israel, as some Israelis testify, and this day sets the country on a path toward disappearance.”

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah on the crisis in Israel after the passage of part of the judicial reform package (Ynet, July 24).

“As President of Israel, I am here to tell the American people... that I have great confidence in Israeli democracy. Although we are working through sore issues, just like you, I know our democracy is strong and resilient. Israel has democracy in its DNA.”

Israeli President Isaac Herzog addressing the US Congress (Haaretz, July 19).





SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

CHILDREN'S STORIES

In the June edition of this column, I noted Israel achieved something remarkable in its war with Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in May, known as “Operation Shield and Arrow”. After an initial strike on May 9 which took out three key terror leaders of PIJ, and killed some family members and bystanders, Israel conducted 419 attacks on terrorist targets in Gaza. And despite Gaza’s density and the tendency of groups like PIJ to hide their bases in built-up areas, these strikes apparently were so careful that Israel managed to avoid killing a single Palestinian civilian.

In Israel’s military operation into the West Bank terror haven city of Jenin on July 3-5 – known as “Operation House and Garden” – Israel seems to have repeated this remarkable feat. Twelve Palestinians were killed, and according to the most accurate reports available, every single one of them was an armed militant.

As former British army commander Col. Richard Kemp noted following the operation:

To conduct an operation of such intensity in an urban area without killing any uninvolved civilians at all is a remarkable achievement by the IDF and probably unprecedented in modern warfare. Casualty ratios in most such operations have often been 3 to 5 civilians killed for every fighter, and that is by Western armies that do their best to avoid civilian casualties and adhere to the laws of war.

And yet, despite the IDF’s “unprecedented” success in avoiding civilian casualties, demonstrating extraordinary carefulness, there were still attempts by anti-Israel NGOs, UN bodies and hostile commentators to paint the whole operation as some sort of war crime or human rights violation.

One claim bandied about by both UN bodies and, surprisingly, the *Wall Street Journal*, was that the operation killed “at least five children.” Pictures are worth a thousand words, so here are images of all of the Palestinian “children” killed (see opposite).

As you can see, every single one of them was a 16- or 17-year-old armed fighter and acknowledged as such by a terrorist organisation which claimed them as a “martyr”. They would not be described as “children” in any other context, but instead “minors” or perhaps “teens”. However, convention often goes out the window when it comes to talking about Israel. Use of emotional language and imagery to score points, even in defiance of reality, often becomes the norm.

It is of course tragic that the lives of these five people were cut short at such a young age – but responsibility for

their deaths must be sheeted home to the terrorist groups which recruited them in defiance of all the laws of war. When these armed teen terrorists fired at Israeli troops, were the IDF soldiers supposed to stop and ask them their ages before firing back? That is not required by any of the laws of war – nor indeed common sense.

Another claim that was made was that it was a war crime for Israel to use a bulldozer to tear up the road leading into Jenin as IDF troops came into the city on July 3. But the IDF didn’t do that just for fun, or to harm Palestinian transport infrastructure, as critics implied. It was known that Palestinian militant groups in Jenin had set up Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) under the roads to attempt to kill Israel soldiers entering – one had disabled an IDF armoured vehicle during a smaller-scale raid in Jenin on June 19.

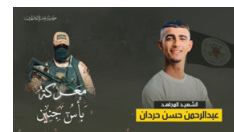
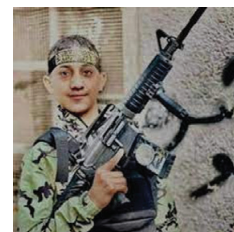
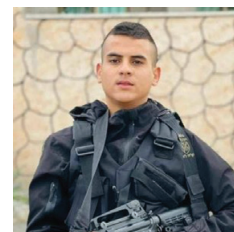
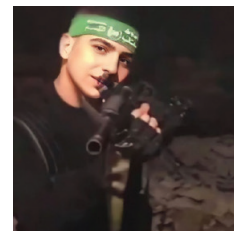
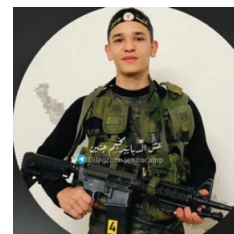
The bulldozer proved absolutely necessary. Reports say Israeli forces detonated at least 11 IEDs hidden along roads in the Jenin refugee camp during “House and Garden”.

From a security point of view, “Operation House and Garden” was an unequivocal Israeli success.

Israel entered a lawless town which had been the source of dozens of terror attacks over the last six months which had left at least 28 innocent Israelis dead. Once in Jenin, the IDF managed to:

- Seize over a thousand weapons, among them explosive devices, ammunition, guns, dozens of kilograms of chemical materials for making explosives, remotely operated weapons and propane tanks. These weapons were located in a mosque, in pits concealed in civilian areas, in operational situation rooms and in vehicles.
- Close down and dismantle two operational situation rooms used by terrorists in Jenin to plan and coordinate attacks.
- Arrest at least 30 wanted terrorists.
- Facilitate Palestinian Authority forces re-entering Jenin to hopefully restore a measure of law and order and security to a town which had come to be dominated by terror gangs.

There seems little doubt that Israeli security was



(From top) Majdi Yunes Arawi, Ali Hani al-Ghoul, Nur al-Din Husam Marshoud, Ashraf Murad Saadi, Abdulrahman Hasan Ahmad Hardan

strongly improved by these achievements – but so was security for Jenin’s civilian residents.

And the IDF did it all without killing any Palestinian civilians, despite the difficult urban environment.

Yet to some, any Israeli military action must always be presented as a war crime – no matter what facts or laws have to be distorted to arrive at this conclusion. Anyone with a working brain should be able to see that the knee-jerk denouncers of everything Israel does only make things worse for Palestinians as much as for Israelis.

AIR

DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

A J Caschetta

THE OPPOSITE OF “ARBITRARY”

Francesca Albanese, the “Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967,” issued a new UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) report on alleged Israeli crimes against Palestinians in mid-July

Critics have been withering in response, but perhaps most remarkably, Albanese does not appear to understand what the word “arbitrary” means.

It is certainly the most abused word in the 21-page report, appearing an astonishing 32 times.

Albanese accuses Israel of “arbitrary deprivation of liberty,” “arbitrary arrest” and “arbitrary exercise of power.” Israel “arbitrarily and severely restricts Palestinians’ movement,” she complains. “Arbitrary detention” is commonplace, she states.

Each iteration of the word is egregiously inaccurate. For example, the report’s opening sentence states that it presents “concerns related to the widespread and *systematic arbitrary* deprivation of liberty in the occupied Palestinian territory” (emphasis mine). This is an oxymoron. Something cannot be both “systematic” and “arbitrary” simultaneously.

The word “arbitrary” comes from the Latin word *arbitr* or “judge”. By the mid-17th century, the word had acquired its current meaning of “random, irrational, capricious, injudicious.”

Of course, Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is the opposite of arbitrary. It is consistent, logical, circumspect and judicious. For example, when Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) launch missiles at Israel, Israel’s response is calibrated to target only the combatants and their infrastructure in Gaza. The terror groups’ poorly-made and wildly inaccurate missiles, on the other hand, are quite arbitrary, often killing more Palestinians than Israelis.

Palestinian suicide bombers, car-rammers and stabbers are in many ways “arbitrary” in their selection of targets,

relying on chance and opportunity in order to attack shoppers, pedestrians, commuters and others.

If Israel wanted to act in a genuinely arbitrary fashion, it could kill Palestinians wholesale, efficiently and quickly eliminating threats. It could make no discrimination between combatants and civilians. It could have chosen not to spend nearly eight decades offering peace deals to implacable enemies who deny its right to exist.

But Israel has decided not to be arbitrary. Thus, it faces the very difficult task of determining which Palestinians plan to kill Israelis and which do not. This requires counterterrorism measures, surveillance and, when suspects are detected, prosecution and incarceration. To Francesca Albanese, all such measures, especially incarceration, are war crimes.

Speaking of “incarceration,” the second most abused word in Albanese’s report is “carceral”. It appears 18 times in various forms, sometimes in conjunction with “arbitrary”, such as “arbitrariness of the occupation’s carceral regime.”

Israel, a “carceral state”, has created a “carceral landscape” by employing “physical carcerality”, “bureaucratic carcerality” and “digital carcerality”. Israel treats “Palestinians as a collective, incarcerable threat” and has turned the West Bank into a prison through its “carceral architecture”.

If one sentence summarises the entire 10,700-word report, it is this one: “The widespread and systemic arbitrariness of the occupation’s carceral regime is yet another manifestation of Israel’s inherently illegal occupation.”


Nowhere is Albanese’s fantasy more wrong-headed than in her treatment of Palestinian children. She sees Israel’s occasional detention of child soldiers as a grievous crime, but the real crime is obvious: Palestinians turn their children into soldiers. The entire Palestinian educational system inculcates children to embrace terrorism, filling their heads with dreams of martyrdom. Hamas and PIJ have devoted a great deal of energy to recruiting, training and deploying children as killers, training them in firearms and explosives use, hand-to-hand combat and other military tactics at their summer camps.

Albanese ignores these facts, complaining instead that children are sometimes arrested and treated “like dangerous criminals”. Some of them, despite their tender age, are in fact dangerous, but Albanese sees any Israeli attempt to counter this danger as an unacceptable repression of Palestinian “civil society”.

Of course, not everyone criticised Albanese’s report. Hamas officials loved it. “We hail the speech of Francesca Albanese,” the terrorist organisation wrote in a statement. Hamas’ affinity for Albanese is understandable, but she doesn’t return the favour in her report – she takes great pains to avoid mentioning the word “Hamas”, preferring to refer to it as “the *de facto* authorities in Gaza.”

Given all this, it seems long past time to ignore ev-



ery report the UNHRC issues on Israel. The UN should instead concentrate on real abuses in countries like China, Pakistan, Cuba and Russia – all of which, not surprisingly, currently serve on the Human Rights Council. 

A.J. Caschetta is a principal lecturer at the Rochester Institute of Technology and a Ginsburg/Milstein Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum. © Jewish News Syndicate (JNS.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

POLITICS 2 – SPORT 0

It hasn't been a great period for Indonesian sport, not just on the result sheets but also in terms of political meddling.

For a nation of over 275 million people, Indonesia underperforms on the world stage and even within its own region. At the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, it came 59th in the medals tally. It came 10th in the 2018 Asian Games, despite being helped by the fact that it was the host. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia struggled and came third, behind Vietnam and Thailand, in this year's South East Asian (SEA) Games in Cambodia.

Fresh from losing the hosting rights to the FIFA U-20 football World Cup, Indonesia has also backed out of hosting the World Beach Games that were to take place in Bali in August, citing funding constraints – forcing organisers to cancel the event entirely.

The political question dogging both events was the participation of Israel. The interventions of presidential candidate Ganjar Pranowo and Bali Governor I Wayan Koster against Israeli participation effectively torpedoed the FIFA tournament, while Koster's ambiguous statements on the same issue in regard to the Beach Games created uncertainty as to whether they would go ahead.

The official reason for the pull-out, according to Raja Sapta Oktohari, the chairman of the Indonesian Olympic Committee, was that the government budget approval process was too lengthy and complicated, leaving only 30 days before the event. He said the situation was worsened by some sponsors pulling out, which forced the committee to finance the preparatory activities by itself. Youth and Sports Minister Dito Ariotedjo said the Government could only afford to allocate Rp 446 billion (A\$43.6 million) for the games, far below the Rp 1 trillion (A\$97.8 million) proposed by the organising committee.

Many are suspicious that the Israel issue was behind the cancellation of the World Beach Games as well, although

the organisers deny this. Israel had qualified for two sports: swimming and 3x3 basketball, but basketball was later removed from the Bali games. According to the Indonesian Olympic Committee, the qualified Israeli athletes had not re-registered as required for the Bali event.

Given the beach games were awarded in October 2021, Indonesia had almost two years to prepare the venues and secure the funding. The ignominious withdrawal displays a troubling lack of commitment to ensuring the beach games were a success. Indonesia has already submitted its bid to host the Olympics in 2036, and is considering a bid, individually or with neighbouring countries, to host the FIFA World Cup in 2034, but its prospects will now be severely compromised.

The truism that 'politics ruins everything' applies here. Both events were undermined by the looming presidential elections and the shadow campaign that has been ongoing for more than a year. The Israel issue is a political hand grenade that was invoked by Ganjar and Wayan at the behest of their PDI-P party leader Megawati Sukarnoputri in an apparent attempt to ward off attacks from Islamic conservatives.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry was prepared to issue visas for the U-20 Israeli football team and its band of supporters, and Indonesia has hosted several international events where Israelis were present, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Bali last year. However, it appears that the football tournament and beach games were too visible not to be ensnared by politics – it seems no-one running for office can take the risk of being perceived as endorsing visits by Israelis.

Appearing increasingly desperate in her attempts to maintain political relevance, Megawati cynically invoked the legacy of her father Sukarno and five words in the preamble to the 1945 Constitution – "all colonialism must be abolished" – to justify her opposition to Israel participating in the FIFA U-20 tournament. Her enduring pre-eminence within her party ensured that Ganjar and Wayan were obliged to follow.

At any rate, Megawati's gambit has backfired badly for her chosen presidential candidate Ganjar, who has now lost his frontrunner status largely because his public support for Megawati's position not only angered millions of football fans but, crucially, painted him as a weak functionary who will unquestioningly do the bidding of an overbearing matriarch.

The beneficiary is Prabowo Subianto, leading in a recent Indikator Politik survey at 38%, with Ganjar on 34% and Anies Baswedan adrift and struggling to make headway on 19%. Sticking to his strategy of staying away from controversy, Prabowo did not join the clamour to exclude Israel. Beholden to no-one, he has sat back, continued his role as defence minister and developed a good working relationship with President Joko Widodo.

While “Jokowi” is notionally aligned with Ganjar in the PDI-P, he has consistently refused to be subservient to a self-entitled party leader who never won an election in her own right, let alone two. While not backing Prabowo, Jokowi has conspicuously not opposed him either.

AIR



Alex Benjamin

IS MY ENEMY’S ENEMY MY FRIEND?

What makes Katja Hoyer’s excellent recent book *Beyond the Wall* so useful for understanding Germany today is that it does neither of the things that have been the hallmarks of most books about the former German Democratic Republic (GDR)/East Germany. There’s no dewy-eyed nostalgia (sometimes called “*ostalgie*”) for that state, nor does the book simply reinforce what we all know about the GDR – repression, the Stasi police and a populace hemmed in by a brutal wall.

Instead, it talks about daily life and an ideology that was nanny-statism at its absolute worst, but which guaranteed a safety net for all citizens in terms of employment and housing. In the later chapters, Hoyer goes into depth about what happened after the wall fell and its lingering impacts today.

For anyone seeking to understand the apparent inexorable rise of Germany’s far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* party (AfD), this is a good place to start.

Pretty much overnight, the entire edifice of the GDR was wiped out when reunification occurred between 1989-1991. The rationale for the establishment of the GDR in the first place – as an insurance policy against any further self-destructive adventures in the all-conquering nationalism which had quite literally decimated the German people – was cast aside, along with an entire generational culture, way of thinking and way of life. The physical wall was gone, but it lived on in unified Germany via a large swathe of the country inhabited by a workforce whose skills were a very poor fit for national demand and whose educational qualifications had largely become worthless.

In the decades that followed, an entire generation, and their disaffected children, came to feel more and more aggrieved, providing fertile ground for populists. And the former East German states of Saxony and Thuringia, where issues of economic re-integration were most keenly felt, proved to be a rich hunting ground for the AfD.

Since its formation in 2012, the AfD has steadily grown in influence, and is attempting, somewhat in the mould of the French National Front, to make itself more “mainstream”. It just won its first local election – electing

a district leader for Sonneberg district in Thuringia – in late June.

This seems a good place to recall a brief anecdote: Within the Brussels EU institutional bubble, my work as an advocate for Jewish issues and Israel is fairly well known. And so, some years ago, as I was sitting in one of the European Parliament cafés, an immaculately suited gentleman approached me and introduced himself as National Front leader Marine Le Pen’s Chief of Staff. He said Ms. Le Pen wanted to meet with me to discuss Israel and improving relations with Jewish communities. My first reaction, taken somewhat aback and unprepared, came from my gut: “Why?” His answer was disconcertingly simple: “Because my enemy’s enemy is my friend.” I didn’t meet Ms. Le Pen.

“My enemy’s enemy is my friend” – this sums up the attempts to cosy up to European Jewry, assailed as we are by increasing anti-Zionism, from far-right figures including Le Pen, the Netherlands’ Geert Wilders, Austria’s Freedom Party, and Italy’s Lega Nord. And to some Jews, it may present a compelling narrative.

Wilders, for example, proudly boasts that he spent time on an Israeli kibbutz in his youth. Meanwhile, the AfD has made standing up for Israel a foreign policy imperative.

The trouble is that domestically, their policies, whilst not antisemitic per-se, directly and very adversely affect Jewish communities. Legislation targeting circumcision, religious dress in public, and ritual slaughter are clearly directed against the self-declared “enemy” of these far-right populist parties – Islam and Islamic immigrants. Yet Europe’s Jews are caught in the crosshairs.

Whenever confronted with this problematic juxtaposition – support for the world’s only Jewish state abroad and attempting to legislate Jewish life out of existence at home – far-right populists offers a disconcertingly simple answer: “collateral damage”. No, thank you, that is not something I can live with.

Voices such as the AfD trumpet pro-Israel talking points on Palestinian incitement and don’t call terrorists “militants”, which can make some Jews forget the underlying nastiness here.

A couple of generations ago, it was the Jews that were a threat to Germany’s “national character” (whatever that means) – who were infiltrating the culture, stealing jobs, and whose dress and habits were a slap in the face to the traditional German way of life (again, whatever that means). Replace the word “Jews” here with “Muslims” and you have the essence of the policy platform of the AfD and most other far-right/populist parties in Europe.

With parties such as the AfD, “My enemy’s enemy” isn’t an invitation. It is a warning. If these parties are given the opportunity to marginalise or eradicate their “enemy”, who is next in their crosshairs? I hope we never find out.



AIR

9

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

Five rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel on July 5, all of which were intercepted by Iron Dome. Israel struck Hamas targets in response. For the first time in a decade, rockets were also launched from the West Bank, though the IDF said they were primitive and posed no threat.

Multiple attempted and successful stabbings, shooting and car-ramming attacks targeting both Israeli security forces and civilians occurred on both sides of the Green Line, leading to the death of an IDF soldier and injuries to civilians and security personnel.



Armaments seized in Jenin (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Escalating IDF West Bank counter-terrorism raids culminated in “Operation House and Garden”, a large-scale raid into Jenin on July 3 and 4 that resulted in the deaths of 12 Palestinian combatants and the destruction of terrorist infrastructure (see p. 6). One Israeli soldier was killed.

In Israel’s north, the IDF thwarted at least two attempts to damage the security fence on the Lebanese border. It was also revealed Hezbollah fighters have occupied a small outpost in Israeli territory on Mount Dov since April (see p. 20).

PA MOVES INTO JENIN FOLLOWING ISRAELI OPERATION

On July 12, Palestinian Authority (PA) head Mahmoud Abbas visited the Jenin refugee camp, laying a wreath for “martyrs” killed during the aforementioned IDF operation targeting terrorists and their infrastructure. The PA President denounced the operation, but subsequently deployed his own forces into the area to regain control from the armed gangs. Analysts say Abbas fears the influence of Iran-backed groups in the area and aims to avoid a Gaza-like situation being created. However, on July 19, unnamed Palestinian officials stated that the PA did not plan to crack down on armed groups in Jenin, and, while it wouldn’t tolerate anarchy and lawlessness, also did not plan to enter the Jenin refugee camp, the main source of recent terrorism from Jenin.

IRAN BUILDING WEST BANK PRESENCE

On June 26, following meetings with the leaders of Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and Hamas in mid-June, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei tweeted that “the continually growing authority of resistance groups in the West Bank is the key to bringing the Zionist enemy to its knees.” A Palestinian security source stated that PIJ had established several armed cells in the West Bank in the previous 18 months and has become a dominant force in the northern West Bank largely due to financial aid from Iran.

Meanwhile, on June 27, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant announced that Israeli defence authorities had recently seized millions of dollars of cryptocurrency from Iran’s

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ (IRGC) Quds Force, in charge of supporting Iran’s terror proxies, and from Hezbollah.

PA REJECTS ISRAELI LIFELINE DEAL

On July 10, the PA rejected an offer by the Israeli cabinet to help prevent its collapse in exchange for stopping key anti-Israel policies. Israel offered to provide economic, tourist, and security measures to stabilise the PA if the latter agreed to halt activities against Israel in international forums, and end illegal construction in the West Bank, incitement against Israelis and payments to Palestinian terrorists or their families. The PA, despite its escalating financial troubles, refused the bailout offer and pledged to continue its anti-Israel efforts and the terrorist payments, even if it had little funds left.

Experts said that the PA’s precarious position is partly due to corruption, mismanagement of funds, American funding cutbacks and loss of support from Gulf Arab states.

ISRAELI-RUSSIAN KIDNAPPED IN IRAQ

It was recently revealed that Israeli academic Elizabeth Tsurkov, who also holds a Russian passport, had been kidnapped in Baghdad in March by Shi’ite militia Kataib Hezbollah – a terrorist group connected to Iran’s IRGC. Tsurkov was in Iraq doing fieldwork for her doctorate at Princeton University.

Arab media has claimed Tsurkov’s kidnapping was masterminded by Teheran to provide a hostage to exchange for the release of an Iranian in Israeli custody.

US INCREASES MIDDLE EAST MILITARY PRESENCE

The US Navy on July 7 repelled an attempt by Iranian boats to seize control of two oil tankers in international waters in the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian vessels backed away when an American missile ship was sent to the area.

In mid-July, in light of increasing aggressive Iranian (and Russian) activity in the region, the US deployed additional F-35 and F-16 fighter aircraft and a navy destroyer to the area. These forces are joining other military assets the US already has in the Gulf region to help halt Teheran's ongoing piracy against oil tankers.

IRANIAN HEADSCARF POLICE RESUME PATROLS

Iranian state media reported on July 16 that the regime's morality police were resuming controversial street patrols to enforce the compulsory dress code for women, including requiring them to cover their hair. The patrols had been discontinued after mass protests erupted ten months ago following the death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a young woman detained for allegedly wearing an "improper" hijab.

This new crackdown on headscarves comes amidst the Iranian re-

gime executing 354 people in the first six months of 2023, the largest rate of execution in eight years.

HERZOG VISITS WASHINGTON, NETANYAHU INVITED

Israeli President Isaac Herzog visited the United States to meet with American President Joe Biden at the White House on July 18 and to address a joint session of the US Congress in Washington DC on July 19 to mark 75 years of Israeli independence.

The day before President Herzog's arrival, a long-awaited invitation to hold a meeting in the US was extended by President Biden to Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu. Although no date has yet been set for his visit, the phone call between Biden and Netanyahu, described as "warm and long", helped ease tensions between the two leaders.

ISRAEL RECOGNISES MOROCCAN WESTERN SAHARA SOVEREIGNTY

On July 17, Israel announced it would recognise Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara, making it and the US the only countries recognising Morocco's 1975 annexation of

the disputed North African territory.

The US Trump Administration recognised Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara in 2020 in exchange for Morocco normalising relations with Israel.

On July 19, Moroccan King Mohammed VI invited Israeli PM Netanyahu to visit his country.

ISRAEL HELPED UAE THWART CYBERATTACKS

UAE cyber chief Muhammad al-Kuwaiti announced on June 27, during the Tel Aviv Cyber Week Conference, that Israel had recently helped stop a DDoS (distributed denial of service) cyberattack against his country. Israel also recently announced a joint platform with the UAE to combat ransomware hackers.

UK PASSES ANTI-BDS BILL

The UK Parliament passed a bill on July 3 banning public bodies, such as local councils, from boycotting countries not under national sanctions, including Israel. Michael Gove, the Communities Secretary, argued that the bill ensures UK foreign policy remains a government matter and safeguards minority communities, especially Jewish ones, from divisive campaigns and antisemitism.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

ARRESTED IRONY

Some react to criticism by trying to prove their critics wrong. Others respond with fact-free rage, denial and bravado. It seems pretty clear that the Palestinian Authority (PA) security forces fall into the latter camp, even when their own actions end up proving their critics to be 100% correct.

Responding to claims by a spokesman for the PA security services that there are no political arrests in the West Bank, local radio station reporter Akil Awawdeh

wrote on his Facebook page on July 13: "For God's sake. You should respect our minds more than that." The PA security services responded to his expression of disbelief toward their claim they don't carry out political arrests by arresting him that very same day – showing they can be nearly as efficient as they are hypocritical.

The PA has been regularly criticised by human rights groups for trying to stifle dissent by arresting people for criticising it on social media.

The Ramallah-based human rights group Lawyers for Justice says it has addressed more than 300 political arrests by the PA this year alone, with more than 80 between the start of May and mid-July.

The group says that, at the time of Awawdeh's arrest, there were 52 such political prisoners in PA jails.

Awawdeh was released four days after his arrest, possibly due to uproar about it. However, it wasn't his first brush with what passes for the law in the PA-controlled areas. Two years ago, he and several other journalists were severely beaten inside a police station for the heinous crime of covering a protest – a protest called to denounce the beating to death of Palestinian dissident Nizar Banat by PA security officers. Apparently, self-awareness and appreciation of irony are not prerequisites for employment with the PA security services.

COVER STORY

AGE OF “REASONABLENESS?”

IMPLICATIONS OF ISRAEL’S CONTROVERSIAL NEW LAW

David Makovsky

On July 24, the Israeli Knesset approved a highly controversial law that will empower the government to make policy decisions and appointments outside of judicial scrutiny. Passed by a 64-0 margin with the Opposition walking out of the final vote, the law removes the Supreme Court’s ability to use a “reasonableness” standard – a common-law principle that provided judicial oversight by comparing government actions to what a “reasonable” authority might do. Many consider this the first step in a far-ranging plan – as articulated by Justice Minister Yariv Levin – to further constrain the judiciary and effectively concentrate power in the executive branch.

Furore over the overhaul has dominated the Israeli political scene for months, spawning the largest grassroots opposition movement in the country’s history. The massive weekly demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of protesters have been defined by the idea that Israel’s democratic, Jewish character should not be altered without broad public consensus. The movement is also driven by the realisation that Israel does not have a constitution, but rather a set of Basic Laws which do not require a supermajority to be amended, as most constitutions in democratic nations do. Hence, many citizens are using the street to express what a plethora of polls have repeatedly shown – that the Government does not have majority public support for unilateral legislative actions of this sort.



Coalition lawmakers celebrate the passage of their Bill, while huge protests continue (Images: Twitter, Shutterstock)

THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL ANGLE

Since the current Government’s inception last December, various hard-right partners in Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s coalition have pressed him for this judicial overhaul in order to advance their goals (e.g., unrestricted West Bank settlement growth) or preserve their privileges (e.g., ultra-orthodox exemption from military conscription). His aides privately say he had no choice but to put together such a coalition because centrist parties would not join him in coalition amid his ongoing corruption trial. Yet opponents say he assembled this Government precisely to extricate himself from the trial, and some of his decisions seemed driven more by political

self-interest than necessity.

For example, no one forced him to replace the previous justice minister with Levin, an official who has devoted his professional life to seeking to ensure that the judiciary cannot be an effective check on executive power. Levin blunted most attempts at compromise on this issue over the past few months, fuelling perceptions that he was more in charge than Netanyahu. Perhaps this was why the Prime Minister defied his doctor’s advice to rest after having pacemaker surgery on July 23, appearing at the seminal vote in an apparent bid to dispel rumours about his health.

The pre-vote push for compromise had been led by figures such as Israeli President Isaac Herzog and His-

tadrut trade union chief Arnon Bar-David, who focused on diluting the bill and securing a commitment that further judicial changes would only happen after lengthy efforts to reach broad consensus. Their failure illustrates the total lack of trust between Coalition and Opposition leaders, whose rivalry has become even more bitter since Netanyahu reneged on a 2020 commitment to rotate the premiership with National Unity party head Benny Gantz. It also shows the difficulty they face in trying to sell compromise to their respective political bases, who have hardened their positions over months of protests and political strife.

Indeed, not a single member of Netanyahu's Coalition broke ranks by opposing the vote or abstaining, showing that his Government is both politically cohesive and aware of the steep personal penalty for dissenting in the present environment.

For example, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant publicly stated that the legislation should be more broad-based, but did not try to force action toward that end by threatening to resign.

Sources say he feared that if he insisted on this stance, Netanyahu would simply fire him again as he did in March, when Gallant called for a pause in the judicial overhaul – only this time there would be no reprieve spurred by public pressure.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Opposition will now cast its hopes on several possible developments. For one, it has lodged multiple appeals against the new law at the Supreme Court, potentially triggering a standoff over Israel's Basic Laws. If the Court disqualifies the new legislation, it would put law enforcement agencies into a quandary over who to listen to – the Court or the Government? When Mossad Director David Barnea was reportedly asked about such a standoff during an internal agency meeting held the morning of the vote, he stated that his agency would fall on the “right side of history” but did not elaborate on what exactly that meant.

Opposition members are also hoping that their success in polls will keep growing amid civil strife against the Government and ongoing economic deterioration (e.g., in foreign high-tech investment) due to the overhaul plan. In this sense, the fight over the judiciary's role will likely provide an organising principle for the next election. Gantz pledged that the new law will be reversed in the future.

Meanwhile, speculation has spread that Netanyahu will at some point either fire the current independent-minded Attorney-General Gali Baharav-Miara (who is an autonomous public servant not under government control in Israel) or split her duties so that he can appoint a solicitor-general more inclined to end the corruption case against him. Either move would spark massive public backlash – in fact, many Israelis already see the vote in apocalyptic

terms, as a severing of the social contract whereby their country remains anchored in Western liberal moorings and their prime minister remains attentive to the broader public's views.

NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Among the most immediate security issues to address are protests by military personnel who oppose the new law. In the days before the vote, more than 1,100 Israeli Air Force (IAF) personnel – half of them pilots – announced that they would refuse to show up for voluntary reserve duty if the measure passed. They were joined by more than 10,000 other members of the Israel Defence Forces reserves, including members of elite intelligence, cyber, and commando units. Some individuals have already acted on this threat, though their precise numbers are unclear. Will these boycotts spread further, perhaps even to active-duty personnel?

Such threats are especially impactful in the IAF. As officials have publicly indicated on multiple occasions, around 60-70% of Israeli airstrikes are conducted by reservists, and the IAF relies on these personnel more heavily than other branches do, especially pilots.

The IDF has indicated that effects on its readiness will be felt within weeks, while Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi wrote an open letter to troops warning that Israel “will not be able to exist as a country” if military cohesion is broken. Officials also worry that enemies such as Iran and Hezbollah will seize on Israel's current divisions as an opportunity to increase their attacks. Accordingly, Opposition leaders Gantz and Yair Lapid echoed Netanyahu in asking reservists to continue reporting for duty – at least until the Supreme Court has a chance to weigh in on the new law.

CONSEQUENCES FOR BILATERAL US RELATIONS

Shortly after the law passed, the White House issued a statement calling the vote's slim passage and highly polarised setting “unfortunate”, reiterating US President Joe Biden's belief that such changes should only be done amid “broader consensus”. The US Administration has had to thread this political needle for months, with the President reiterating his “ironclad” commitment to Israel's security and his decades of love for the country while simultaneously expressing discomfort over many of the current Coalition's decisions. Biden believes that Israel's judiciary in its present form strengthens the country, while controversial legislation can only weaken it. The same difficulties underlie his decision not to invite Netanyahu back to the White House since the Prime Minister returned to power in December (Netanyahu announced in mid-July that a US visit of some sort was in the works, but the details were fuzzy, and any such plans may be affected by the Knesset vote).

To be sure, Biden has correctly and clearly indicated that bilateral security cooperation is “unshakeable” and therefore immune from policy differences between the two governments. Yet other issues may be affected by their current disagreement.

For instance, some believe the dispute could spur a tougher US approach on settlement expansion in the West Bank.

Elsewhere, Biden has apparently been pressing for a three-way breakthrough between the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Yet will he do so with the same energy if he believes Netanyahu – who desperately wants that deal – spurns his pleas for compromise on the judicial issue?

In the longer term, Washington is no doubt wondering whether the Knesset’s decision is an aberration tied to the current political environment or a turning point in Israeli democracy. The vibrancy of the decades-long bilateral relationship is substantially based on the fact that Americans and Israelis share core values, not just military and economic interests. Any perceived erosion in these values could gradually affect the broad political base that supports the close relationship.

AIR

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IDF NOW IN UNCHARTED TERRITORY

Yaakov Lappin

Following Israel’s coalition unilaterally passing into law on July 24 the so-called “reasonability bill”, part of its controversial judicial reform plan, Israel Defence Forces senior command is now in uncharted territory.

The IDF General Staff now must wait and see whether the large number of reservists who vowed prior to the bill’s passing that they would cease reporting for duty if it became law without a consensus make good on their threat.

On July 23, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi continued his rear-guard action against the phenomenon. In an official letter to all soldiers, he reaffirmed the need to discuss “the importance of readiness and cohesion dur-

AN AUSTRALIAN-ISRAELI’S PERSPECTIVE

Arsen Ostrovsky

What Israel is experiencing these difficult days is truly painful and heartbreaking to see.

Those protesting against the judicial reform in their tens of thousands every week and marching in the heat are overwhelmingly patriots. They love this country. They fought for this nation. They feel immense pain.

Those who seek reform are no less patriotic, and they believe in the justness of their cause.

Of course, there are some extremists on either side who seek to exploit the situation, to hold the country to ransom, and undermine the very core values and structures of our treasured democracy.

Few reasonable people will disagree that Israel urgently needs judicial reform. The two overriding questions are: the nature and extent of reform and the manner in which it is implemented.

I have actually never thought that Iran presented an existential threat to Israel (albeit not from lack of effort on its part). Our military knows very well how to deal with those who seek to do us harm and I continue to place absolute faith in them.

It is the internal division and the incendiary rhetoric that is unprecedented and threatening to rip us apart.

Our people have a history unlike any other, with no shortage of tragedies that have befallen us, both due to outside foes and our very own doing and disunity.

We need to accept that our brothers and sisters with whom we disagree, even passionately so, have legitimate views. We need to reach out to one another, not scream at each other from competing rallies.

The rhetoric on both sides needs to be toned down immediately.

Our leaders need to listen to their people with empathy and fair hearing. They need to put aside their egos, sit down and negotiate a compromise until there is a resolution.

There is still time to do the right thing.

Until that happens, we cannot commence the process of healing that we truly need, and the gaping wound that is ripping at our nation will only tear us further apart.

I made aliyah exactly 11 years ago out of a deep Zionist yearning. Throughout that time, there has been no shortage of challenges and tribulations, including multiple wars. But I have never regretted a day.

Now more than ever, I am still profoundly inspired by Israel’s story and will always continue unwaveringly to fight for the Jewish nation – both against foreign enemies and for what I believe within.

AIR

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ing times of dispute.”

Halevi warned in his letter that, “If we are not a strong, united military, if the best don’t serve in the IDF – we won’t be able to exist further as a country in the region. It is not too late to repair this. We must repair it, because there is no other way except through internal and external cohesion.”

Halevi told the IDF that “we worked to stay outside of the dispute, but in light of its intensity in Israeli society, we found ourselves inside of it, and the cohesion has been harmed. Our duty is to stop the cracks from spreading.”



IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Describing the divide over judicial reform as “legitimate”, Halevi said that one of the IDF’s roles was to defend the state and allow such disputes to occur “under safe conditions”.

Prior to the bill’s passing, a large gap existed between the number of warnings and letters issued by reservists and the number who actually stopped reporting for duty. The vast majority of reservists from all three branches continued to serve as normal despite the threats. Now, the IDF will be closely monitoring the situation to see whether this gap narrows, and if so how this will affect Israeli military readiness at a time when Hezbollah is testing Israel for weakness.

The inescapable conclusion is that the Israeli military faces in the coming months the greatest threat to its cohesion, and potentially the greatest threat to its combat-readiness, in its history.

On July 22, 10,000 IDF reservists declared that they would not report for duty if the Government passed the bill in its current form.

On July 21 1,142 Israeli Air Force reserve personnel signed a letter stating the same thing.

That letter included some 500 air crew members as well as command and control personnel, drone operators and special IAF units.

IAF reserve pilots are on active duty once a week to once every two weeks to maintain operational readiness, juggling reserve duty with their private-sector roles. If air crews or those serving in the IAF’s operational headquarters, including colonels and brigadier generals, refuse to report for duty, the IDF will lose their invaluable experience, and the IAF’s readiness will suffer.

The IAF can take disciplinary action against reservists who don’t report for duty, but cannot force a reserve pilot or headquarters staff member to fulfill their particular roles.

The coming weeks will prove critical in answering the question of whether Israeli military command is able to

keep the reserves in line or whether the situation will spin out of control, with dire potential consequences for Israeli security.

AIR

Yaakov Lappin is an Israel-based military affairs analyst, and the in-house analyst at the Miryam Institute, a research associate at the Alma Research and Education Centre, and a research associate at the Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University. © Jewish News Syndicate (JNS.org), reprinted by permission, all right reserved.

HOW PALESTINIANS VIEW ISRAEL’S JUDICIAL REFORM CRISIS

By Khaled Abu Toameh

Palestinian political activists and columnists are closely monitoring the controversy in Israel surrounding the judicial overhaul, but they are divided over its implications for both Israel and the Palestinians. They are also divided over the magnitude of the crisis between the US Administration and the Israeli Government.

While some Palestinians have expressed hope that the

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crisis would mark the beginning of the “collapse” of the “Zionist entity” and the “disintegration” of Israeli society and the IDF, others said they did not rule out the possibility that the Israeli Government would initiate a military confrontation with the Palestinians or the Lebanon-based Hezbollah terrorist group as part of an effort to reunite the Israeli public.

The Palestinian Authority, Hamas, and other major Palestinian factions have thus far avoided commenting directly on the crisis. But political analysts and columnists from across the Palestinian political spectrum have not hesitated to express their views.

It’s hard to ignore the tone of satisfaction in their statements over the deepening crisis, especially reports concerning the refusal of IDF reservists and pilots to serve or volunteer in protest of the judicial overhaul. Moreover, it’s hard to ignore the growing hope among Palestinian officials in Ramallah that the crisis would eventually topple the Israeli Government.

On social media, the hashtag “The [Zionist] Entity is Collapsing” has been trending almost since the beginning of the widespread protests in Israel. Several Palestinian and Arab social-media users predicted that the crisis would lead to the “collapse” of Israel, especially in light of the opposition of many IDF reservists and pilots to the judicial reform.

A Palestinian refugee living in Lebanon wrote in response to the deepening crisis: “We need to prepare our luggage to return to Palestine. The countdown for the destruction of the Zionist entity has begun. The Palestinians should be prepared to return to their homes.”

Talal Okal, a Palestinian columnist affiliated with the PA, said the Palestinians “are facing an historic opportunity” because of the presence of the “most right-wing” government in Israel.

The Israeli Government was currently focusing its efforts on “saving the head” of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption-related charges, he said.

Furthermore, the Israeli Government can’t find support in international areas, including the US, because of its policies and actions, Okal said. Since the beginning of the crisis in Israel, the Netanyahu Government has initiated rounds of fighting with the Palestinians as a means of distraction. Okal added;

“In general, with every round of aggression launched by the Israeli government, the issue of Israel’s ability to deter is eroded, and the prestige of the army, which they claim is invincible, declines as it stands helpless in front of a few resistance fighters in Jenin, its camp, and its villages.

“The internal crisis has escalated and is taking on dangerous dimensions that threaten the outbreak of a civil war. The gap between Israel and the United States is

increasing for many reasons that made Biden unusually reject Netanyahu’s invitation to the White House.

“The general internal and external scene of the fascist-racist occupation state is getting darker day after day, as the internal conditions are heading toward more societal and institutional disintegration, which reaches all state institutions, most importantly the army and the security and police agencies.... Without falling into the illusions of a radical change in US policy, which will not come in perspective, this situation constitutes a historic opportunity that the Palestinians do not have the right to waste.”

Columnist Akram Atallah commented on the judicial reform crisis by advising the Palestinians to learn from the Israeli experience.

Regardless of how the crisis ends, “the painful question for the Palestinians is what they see on the other side of the wall: democratic elections,” he said.

Noting that the Palestinians have not been able to hold general elections for the past two decades as a result of the power struggle between Hamas and the ruling Fatah faction headed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas, he asked: “Why don’t the Palestinians move in the face of the conflict that took place between the major Palestinian movements? For the Palestinians, elections did not take place, and the street did not move.”

“In Palestine, not only the judicial system was destroyed, but the entire social, political, economic, and national system, as well as the system of freedoms,” Atallah said. “Why do the Palestinians move against Israel instead of moving against their internal crisis that has destroyed all their institutions and daily life?”

The Palestinian daily newspaper *Al-Quds* warned in an editorial that Netanyahu, “who is a master of deception and politics, can unite all Jews against the Palestinians through a series of attacks and wars that are launched against them, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip.”

According to the east Jerusalem newspaper, which frequently reflects the views of the PA leadership, “When Netanyahu feels that the situation may get out of his hands, he resorts to aggression, whether against the Palestinians, southern Lebanon, Syria, or even Iran, with the aim of diverting attention from what is happening inside Israel and to unify the Jews in support of this aggression.”

Al-Quds advised the Palestinians and Arabs to be careful and pay attention to Netanyahu’s alleged efforts.

“As in the past, the occupying state will solve its crises and internal problems through wars and aggression that may be waged at any moment,” the editorial said.

AIR

Khaled Abu Toameh is an awarding-winning journalist and TV producer who covers Palestinian affairs for the Jerusalem Post. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

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Lawyers and Advisers

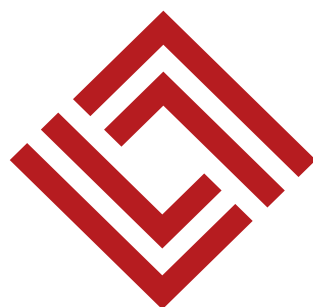
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“The Jews are behind it!”

Voice debate brings out voices of hate

Aviva Winton

“How do you spell ‘rigged referendum’ in Yiddish?”

This tweet, which happily garnered only a paltry 14 views, epitomises the offensive perspective of the extremists who have been spreading the message that the upcoming constitutional amendment referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament is an attempt by the Jewish community to undermine white Australia.

The tweet was in response to a June 30 Twitter post by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, in which he wrote: “I’m heartened that so many Jewish groups, along with such a broad spectrum of multicultural groups and faith groups, will campaign for Yes to constitutional recognition this year,” and featured a photo of him shaking hands with AIJAC National Chairman Mark Leibler. Leibler, of course, co-chaired the Expert Panel Referendum Council on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the Referendum Council that culminated in the release of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and is a leading advocate for a “Yes” vote.

As Australia prepares for the referendum scheduled for later this year, debates between the “Yes” and “No” camps are proliferating in the media and beyond. At the same time, extremist voices emanating mainly from far-right groups are similarly multiplying on social media, making racist claims that the Voice is a conspiracy concocted by Jews.

Employing an array of classical antisemitic tropes that have been in existence since ancient times but that they now dress in modern guise, the neo-Nazi Australia First Party and other far-right agitators have been tweeting and posting paranoid claims that Jews are behind a global power cabal acting in league with the United Nations and the World Economic Forum, amongst others, and that the Voice is part of this worldwide plot.

These include targeted attacks against some leading Jewish proponents of the Voice, especially Mark Leibler and Liberal MP Julian Leeser, the former Attorney-General and Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs, who they claim are the “masterminds” behind the Voice.

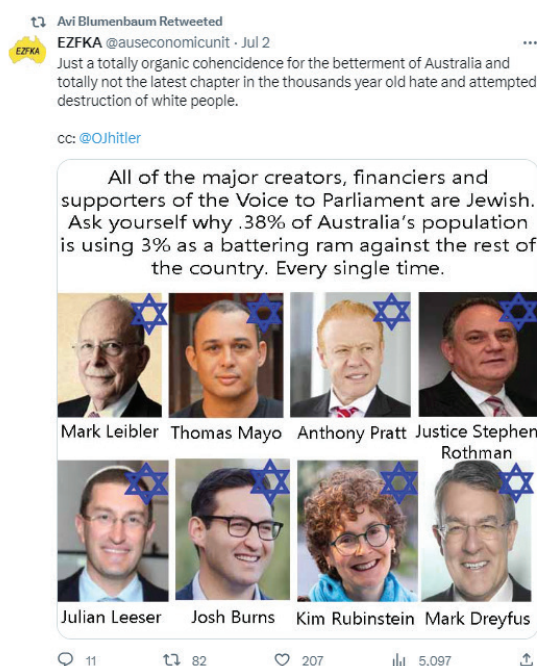
Most of the antisemitic tweets appeared in response to the aforementioned Twitter post by Albanese thanking Jewish groups who are supporting a “Yes” vote.

One post which was shared by multiple accounts stated, “All of the major creators, financiers and supporters of the Voice to Parliament are Jewish. Ask yourself why 0.38 per cent of Australia’s population is using three per

cent as a battering ram against the rest of the country.” The tweet then depicted eight people, seven who are members of the Jewish community plus indigenous activist Thomas Mayo who is claimed to have Jewish ancestry, with Stars of David above their faces.

Some other vile examples include:

- “Mark Leibler’s behind it all... Mark Leibler & his globalist lackeys in the Australian Greens are responsible for Thorpe. She’s their demoralisation agent designed to divide Oz for their UN global governance agenda.” (4,568 views, 35 retweets, 67 likes)
- “Why the F*** is this guy [Mark Leibler] leading the YES campaign? Seriously? What are we doooooing, Australia? He has close links to Mossad (Israel’s intelligence agency) This is extremely concerning.” (2,416 views, 47 likes, 13 retweets)
- “F*** White Australia Coalition” announces unanimous support for Voice to Parliament... The group,



One of the most widely shared antisemitic posts that have appeared as part of the Voice debate (Twitter screenshot)

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the brainchild of long-time anti-white campaigner @LeiblerMark, announced unequivocal support for rewriting Australia's constitution to destroy the nation-state, demoralise the populace and provide a platform for endless land grabs and rent extraction."

- dr. juice (@OJhitler Replying to @AlboMP "Of course Jews support it, this was their idea in the first place. That Jew you're shaking hands with (Mark Liebler) was the main architect of the Voice. Jewish Power in Australia is more secure if White Australia is weakened, and you are complicit in it. Treasonous." (32.4K views, 1,400 likes, 265 retweets)
- "Why do you want to Vote No to the Voice? Is it because of personal spite to Aboriginals? For me, I'm voting NO because the yes campaign is being led by Mark Leibler and because it's clearly a globalist corptocratic snowjob & UN land grab. And because it won't help Aboriginals." (33K views, 682 likes, 116 retweets)
- @auseconomicunit: "Just a totally organic cohencidence for the betterment of Australia and totally not the latest chapter in the thousands year old hate and attempted destruction of white people." cc: @OJhitler (5,097 views, 207 likes, 82 retweets)
- @barres1901: "Jewish people undermining and subverting western society – what a surprise" (27 views)
- @Cat207093 "Yes, because they too are in the business of undermining Australia's sovereignty." (242 views)

In response to this, Mark Leibler told the *Australian Jewish News (AJN)*, "This social media activity simply goes to show that antisemitism is alive and well in this country, and sits side by side with the persistent racism experienced by Indigenous Australians."

GREEDY CAPITALISTS AND "ROOTLESS COSMOPOLITANS"

Other antisemitic tropes that have surfaced during the Voice debate include accusing Jews of being exploitative capitalists motivated by greed and profit, usually at the expense of non-Jews:

- @Ashbiii: "Of course they will, they run the financial world and wouldn't miss ruining Australia for anything!" (147 views)
- @MentatGhost: "How much did it cost to bribe them?" (43 views)
- @Scum_boy0: "How much you paying them? Save Australia [A][U] Vote No" (35 views)
- @Driz000006: "How much [S] you give them Albo? #VoteNoAustralia" (29 views)
- @Dave91473661: "Funny that considering they have a hand in drafting the Uluru statement. You'd think the Jewish [sic] would understand that danger of special treatment based on race and beliefs. The only thing I can think of is that there's something in it for them, what did you promise them???" (155 views)

- "Well, considering the YES23 campaign is being headed up by a Zionist and tax avoidance expert – Mark Leibler – DECEPTION – is naturally how they swindle Australians into voting for this thing. You just cannot make this stuff up." (3,107 views, 104 likes)

Other tweets harnessed the antisemitic motif of Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans" who lack an allegiance to their country which they thus mercilessly exploit for their own profit. They are accused of caring only for themselves and Israel and of being incapable of altruism:

- "@leiblermark For who? Don't see it bothers us Aussies. But then, you're not one are you." (32 views)
- @AusFirstParty "The Voice is a Zionist Jew con." (33 views)
- "@GSahathevan @LindaBurneyMP @leiblermark Well the Voice and Heart are all Talmudic teachings aren't they?" (785 reach)
- @HelenGouna: "They will campaign yes because it doesn't affect their cultural or faith group. Try and do the same to them and let's see how far you get." (50 views)
- @sla73: "If the Zionist are onboard, then that's another good reason to #VoteNo" (14 views)
- @Augustus__J: "Okay but if I say that Jews are behind the voice, suddenly I'm an 'anti-semite', and guilty of 'hate speech'." (299 views)
- @StanleySau1: "Pity that these Jewish groups won't campaign for a stop to the putrid apartheid polices [sic] in Israel." (18 views)
- Ms_J3nnif3r: "Hey Albozo. Does this also mean they support recognition of and giving land back to the First Nations of Palestine. Or just when it involves other countries and you throw our tax dollars at them?" (98 views)
- @BobJohn96400345: ".and who caused the chasm @AlboMP – Your mob did. The political elite. The Khazarian mafia. You wealthy self entitled criminals. You did it! #VoiceToParliament #voteyes #VoteNo #sackthmall #wethepeople" (35 views)
- @GeorgeS21916881 "WTF? Doesn't this bloke read newspapers? Israeli settlers attacking Palestinians on West Bank." (44 views)
- @szekowskii: "While we are talking about diversity, let's all go research the Jewish law book the TALMUD Than [sic] you will understand who's behind it all." (25 views)
- @MarkerMagic8: "As a man who has had a Jewish girlfriend for many years, and dealt with Jews and Australian Jewish families, I can tell you that they're the most racist, one-eyed and prejudiced people I've ever known. What they say about non-Jews is absolutely despicable. Why? Because they believe they're god's chosen people. Why? Because they personally wrote all of the scriptures that say that. What they choose to believe, is

that circular, that culturally incestuous, that racist, and that dodgy. And make no mistake, they think Australian Aboriginals are the lowest of the low, of ‘Goyim’ sub-humans. The very opposite of a ‘Chosen People’. But they do like to play the political and media PR game to shape-shift away from how racist their whole cultural construct is.” (124 views)

- @DavidMa79715896: “That picture will assure another 6 million Australians vote NO.” (6 views)

Far-right websites *The Occidental Observer* and *XYZ* have also published a series titled, “Jewish Architect of the voice Exposed,” by Brenton Sanderson, who in the past has contributed articles to the Holocaust denial website The Adelaide Institute. In his five-part series, Sanderson fixates on the role of “jewish [sic] ethnic lobby groups and in particular Mark Leibler in pushing ‘diversity’ and mass immigration on an Australia that never asked for it... Furthermore, while XYZ News has focused on the role of Marxists, political aborigines and international institutions in foisting ‘the voice’ referendum upon us, it is important to understand the motives of jewish [sic] ethnic lobbyists who are fellow architects of the so-called ‘voice to parliament’.”

It’s only towards the end of Part Five of the supposed exposé that Sanderson reveals the so-called “motives” of the Jews supposedly behind the Voice. Speaking generically about mass Muslim and non-white immigration to Europe and beyond, Sanderson says it’s all a Jewish attempt to undermine white nation-states while Jews themselves have the ability to flee to what he incorrectly claims is a culturally homogenous homeland – Israel: “As a result of Jewish activism, millions of White people are also increasingly fearful of their or their children’s future. Unlike Jews, however, they don’t have the option of fleeing to the relative safety of an ethnostate.”

As AIJAC Executive Director Colin Rubenstein told the *AJN*: “It appears that whenever there is a controversy, antisemites also use such opportunities to spread their contemptible hatred.” This certainly seems to be the case in Australia’s current national debate over the impending Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum.

PART OF A GLOBAL TREND

Conspiratorial antisemitism – the highly irrational narrative that Jews are all-powerful and are the cause of all the ills that befall the world – has an extensive history spanning thousands of years in various iterations. Claims that Jews are behind the Voice campaign to serve their own nefarious purposes is just another version of this antisemitic trope of Jew as puppet master – which sadly is not only alive and well but has recently been on the rise.

Other recent manifestations, amplified by the extensive reach of social media, include an explosion in online claims blaming Jews for unleashing the COVID-19 pandemic on

the world, or claiming COVID vaccines were a Jewish plot.

Moreover, last year American rapper Kanye West (who now calls himself “Ye”) took to social media to issue a series of antisemitic rants which, however unintelligible, had the unfortunate impact of reaching an audience, mostly youthful, numbering in the tens of millions. Worryingly, his claims were defended or echoed by some other celebrity figures.

In Australia last year, young Aussie Rules footballer Harry Sheezel, the first Jewish player in the AFL in over 20 years, faced a torrent of antisemitic abuse on social media following an article that was published online in which he expressed his aim to be a role model for the Jewish community, ESPN reported.

The *Jewish Chronicle* recorded comments made about Sheezel online including: “A Jew actually doing physical exercise? Fake news,” and “Does he have enough gas in the tank?” – a disgusting reference to the Nazi policy of gassing Jews in the Holocaust.

As Dr Rubenstein wrote in an op-ed in the *Australian* in December 2022, “Experts say it’s not so much that the oldest hatred is back. Rather, it simply never left, but today those who harbour anti-Semitic beliefs are becoming much less inhibited in shamelessly expressing and acting on them. We’re seeing this in popular culture.”

The Voice debate has sparked the latest manifestations of this worrying trend. It may not be extremely widespread, but it is nonetheless a poison in Australian society that can have murderous real-world effects – as numerous attacks on Jewish institutions overseas amply demonstrate. This antisemitism must be acknowledged, documented, monitored and confronted, even as the country continues to debate the case for and against the Voice.

AIR

HEZBOLLAH’S PROVOCATIONS ON ISRAEL’S BORDER

Ron Ben-Yishai

The recent series of provocations along the Lebanon border by Hezbollah do not solely stem from the loss of deterrence resulting from the political and social turmoil in Israel. Hezbollah as an organisation and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, tend to interpret Israel’s recent behaviour as weakness, and therefore they have recently escalated their provocations, apparently aiming to exacerbate the Israeli public’s lack of trust in the incumbent Government. All of this is, of course, encouraged and coordinated with the Iranians.

However, the establishment of Hezbollah's "outpost" within Israeli territory several months ago, as well as other provocations initiated by Hezbollah along the Lebanon border, also likely serve some military purposes.

According to Israeli assessments, Nasrallah, driven by internal Lebanese considerations, sees an opportunity amidst the political deadlock and the ongoing economic crisis in that country. He aims to improve his position within the Lebanese arena by engaging in a few days of confrontation with the Israeli army (IDF).

Israel, on the other hand, has different considerations and has no interest in helping grant Nasrallah his desire for a brief military clash. However, a senior defence official told *Yediot* that "his time will come, and not in the distant future."

In addition, Nasrallah's goal is to undermine and disrupt Israel's ongoing project to build a much-enhanced barrier along the Lebanon border that would prevent or at least hinder and slow down the infiltration of Hezbollah's special forces into Israeli territory during a future major confrontation.

On multiple occasions, Hezbollah and Nasrallah have already publicly declared their intention to send units of Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force into Israeli territory with the aim of seizing villages along the border, IDF positions and major intersections on Israel's northern highway.

Hezbollah plans to occupy some of these villages to capture prisoners of war – civilians and soldiers – and to hold them as leverage to achieve a psychological victory. The Radwan Force, numbering around 8,000 personnel, will additionally attempt to seize intersections and IDF positions to prevent reinforcements from reaching the villages, and also inflict losses on IDF soldiers.

Nasrallah has explicitly stated this plan, and disseminated a map showing how he intends to infiltrate Israeli territory through six cross-border axes of attack – from Metula in the east to Rosh Hanikra along the coast

Radwan Force fighters recently positioned themselves near the border under the guise of "forest rangers", without concealing the fact that some of these "forest rangers" were armed. The Radwan Force also conducted a large-scale exercise in May to simulate this attack plan.



Israel's new enhanced border barrier (top) thwarts Hezbollah's plans, so the terror group is using a tent camp at Har Dov (bottom) to try to get leverage to stop the barrier's construction (Images: IDF Spokesperson's Unit)

ISRAEL'S BORDER BARRIER AND NASRALLAH'S CONCERNS

What Nasrallah does not disclose, and Hezbollah does not admit, is that the Israeli military's border barrier engineering project greatly worries them.

This project, which combines high steel fencing, wall segments and advanced warning and surveillance systems, has the potential to foil Hezbollah's attack plans entirely. It includes very tall artificial obstacles that Hezbollah would have to climb over, wasting precious time if it intends to charge Israeli villages or positions. During this time, the IDF can prepare defences and initiate counteroffensives.

The border barrier engineering project is nearing comple-

tion, and it is evident that this greatly concerns the Hezbollah leadership. Its attack plans into Israeli territory already suffered a significant blow with the IDF's Operation Northern Shield in 2018-19, which exposed the six cross-border tunnels Hezbollah had secretly dug with the aim of infiltrating Israeli territory.

The border barrier engineering project will substantially impede not only underground attacks but also surface attacks by the Radwan Force, which had planned on utilising the complex terrain and deep valleys of the northern border region to covertly reach its targets inside Israeli territory.

Therefore, Nasrallah is attempting to undermine and disrupt the completion of the enhanced border fence through provocations that mainly involve damaging the steel fence – alongside diplomatic coercion.

The establishment of Hezbollah military posts within

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Israeli territory in the Har Dov region has been revealed as an attempt to pressure Israel into altering the course of the fence in the area of the village of Ghajar, which lies astride the border line, with parts of it in Israeli territory and others in territory that was Syrian before the capture of the Golan Heights in 1967.

Nasrallah claims that half of the village is located in Lebanese territory and he is seeking to prevent the construction of the barrier fence on the outskirts of the village, which extend into Lebanese territory, claiming that the actual construction takes place within Lebanese territory.

POSTS IN EXCHANGE FOR BARRIER?

What are Hezbollah's true intentions in Ghajar? At least twice, Hezbollah has attempted to send its forces into Israeli territory through Ghajar. The previous attempts were foiled, but Ghajar and the Israeli villages adjacent to the barrier remain vulnerable points that Hezbollah intends to target with its Radwan Force.

Nasrallah recently exposed his intentions through American mediator Amos Hochstein with a "compromise plan" in which Israel would shift the course of the barrier in the Ghajar area, and in return, Hezbollah would dismantle the "tent encampment" it constructed at Har Dov.

This offer is essentially blackmail, as Nasrallah recognises Israel's concern about another confrontation with Hezbollah, dating back to several years ago, when the Israeli army did not harm his men when they attempted to infiltrate an IDF outpost on Har Dov.

To counter Hezbollah's provocations, it was recently revealed the IDF has integrated non-lethal means, similar to stun grenades, into the border barrier for the first time.

Anyone who seeks to sabotage the barrier, as Hezbollah operatives frequently do, will suffer injuries, but will not be killed. That is precisely what happened on the afternoon on July 12, when Hezbollah operatives staged a demonstration in the Zar'it area, disguised as innocent civilians protesting against the construction works on the barrier – all of which is taking place within Israeli territory.

It should be noted in this context that so-called "innocent civilian protests" are a longstanding tactic employed by Hezbollah. They were previously used to undermine the security buffer zone established by the IDF and South Lebanon Army in southern Lebanon in 2000.

Hezbollah continues to employ civilian protests and rioting to this day as part of its military tactics.

Until recently, the IDF has refrained from using force against these provocations, primarily due to the mutual deterrence situation that has existed between Israel and Lebanon over recent years. According to this deterrence equation, as formulated by Nasrallah, any Lebanese casualty would be answered by several days of fighting where Hezbollah exacts a price from Israel through missile and

rocket fire toward northern communities and anti-tank missiles toward IDF forces along the northern border.

The State of Israel and the IDF have tacitly accepted Nasrallah's rules of the game, and the recent provocations are also part of this phenomenon. However, this time they serve a military purpose, and the IDF will almost certainly not allow Hezbollah to benefit from Israeli restraint for much longer.

AIR

Ron Ben-Yishai is a veteran Israeli military reporter and National Security correspondent for the Israeli daily newspaper Yediot Ahronot and Israeli TV's Channel 1. © Yediot Ahronot, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved. Translated from the Hebrew by AIJAC staff.

BAKU TO THE FUTURE?

Amotz Asa-El

When the Soviet Union suddenly dissolved in 1991, the West responded by unanimously extending full and immediate diplomatic recognition to the 15 republics that had emerged from the ruins of the vanished empire.

That included Israel, as one country on the Western side of the transition, and Azerbaijan as one of the new republics on the opposite side. Jerusalem recognised the Caucasian republic on Christmas Day, 1991. However, unlike the rest of the West, whose concerns at that time focused mainly on remaking the international system's broader arrangements, Israel was particularly focused on retrieving the Jews of the former Eastern Bloc.

Part of those efforts included the creation of a route for direct flights between Baku and Tel Aviv. This actually happened a full half-a-year before Azerbaijan's formal independence, through a deal between its Soviet-era government and the Jewish state.

It was the beginning of an improbable and elaborate relationship that, 32 years on, constitutes Israel's strongest alliance anywhere across the Muslim world.

Baku's role ended up being relatively marginal to the process of bringing nearly 1 million former Soviet Jews to Israel between 1989 and 2004 – most boarded direct flights from Russia and Ukraine.

Yet the Baku-Tel Aviv flights laid the foundations for a commercial arrangement that was begging to happen: Israel had no oil, and Azerbaijan had vast petroleum fields in the Caspian Sea, and along its shores. Moreover, the distance between the two countries is short, about the distance between Melbourne and Brisbane. Israel's previous Middle Eastern oil supply had come from Iran, but this

had ended abruptly in 1979 with the Islamic Revolution, forcing Israel to seek energy from distant, and thus costly, alternative suppliers, such as Mexico and Venezuela.

During the Cold War, Azerbaijani supply and Israeli demand could not meet – but the new world order post-1991 made their encounter possible, not only because capitalism had suddenly become the international consensus, but because Azerbaijan sorely needed cash. Azerbaijani oil thus began reaching Israel, and Baku has been a steady, major supplier of Israeli energy ever since.

Israel does not publish figures concerning its oil imports, but experts believe Azerbaijan is its largest supplier, averaging around 40% of the Jewish state's crude imports annually. Traffic on this axis has been so lively that, in 2006, Israel's then-infra-structure minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer attended the inauguration of the Azeri-Georgian-Turkish pipeline which has since brought Azerbaijani petroleum to fuel millions of Israel cars.

The energy relationship paved the way for commercial traffic in the opposite direction. Israeli firms built Azerbaijan's telephone system and Israeli consultants were hired to upgrade Azerbaijani agriculture.

However, the main traffic would be in the military sphere.

It was this aspect of the relationship that was most on show when Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant made a very high-profile visit to Baku on July 13-14, meeting President Ilham Aliyev, Defence Minister Zakir Hasanov and other senior defence officials. The defence and security relationship between Baku and Jerusalem is already long, broad and deep, and looks set to get even more intensive and extensive, reflecting both countries' growing concerns about the behaviour of Azerbaijan's neighbour, Iran, and its proxies.

In 1991, compelled to build an army, an air force and a navy pretty much from scratch, Azerbaijan sorely needed both hardware and know-how – which Israel happily offered. Preliminary deals were struck quickly, and multi-billion-dollar purchases of Israeli defence products followed over subsequent years.

Israeli arms deals are not officially reported, but one particularly sizeable deal with Azerbaijan – US\$1.6 billion (A\$2.35b) worth of drones, missile interceptors and anti-missile systems – was confirmed by Israeli officials in 2012 in response to an *Associated Press* report.

Another deal, whereby Israel Shipyards built 14 coast-

guard and assault vessels for Azerbaijan's navy over the past decade, was reported by the website *Israel Defense* this July.

In 2016, while hosting Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in Baku, President Ilham Aliyev said publicly that his country had signed US\$5 billion (A\$7.35b) worth of arms deals with Israel. The deals reportedly range from sub-machine guns and artillery barrels to radars and avionics.

In early 2022, during a visit to Baku, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen confirmed reports that Israel Air Industries will supply Azerbaijan with two satellites. The deal is reportedly worth US\$120 million (A\$176.53m).

Some of this vibrant activity involves the presence of Israeli experts in Azerbaijan, most notably on the naval

vessels which were built in Azerbaijan under Israeli supervision.

Overall, these deals reflect a unique geographic position and strategic predicament that both sets Azerbaijan apart from other post-Soviet republics, and drives its special relations with Israel.



Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant with his Azerbaijani counterpart Zakir Hasanov in Baku (Image: Embassy of Israel, Azerbaijan)

Straddling a 700-kilometre coastline along the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan is wedged between Russia and

Iran, two historic powers which have, over the centuries, taken turns dominating the multi-ethnic Caucasus region, where Azeris are the single largest nationality. Suspicion of both Moscow and Teheran is therefore both a foundation of the Azeri worldview and a pillar of Baku's foreign policy.

Moscow's shadow thickened in 2008, when the Russian army attacked Azerbaijan's northwestern neighbor Georgia and occupied about a fifth of its land – land which it holds to this day.

The Iranian threat stems from a mixture of ideological and ethnic differences. Most Azeris are Shi'ite Muslims,



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but they are generally secular and see their Shi'ite neighbour's fundamentalism as a menace.

While they have a common religious history, the two societies are racially unrelated – Iranians are primarily Persian while Azeris are a Turkic people. Azerbaijan's secularist and Western outlook was made plain following its independence, when it chose to adopt the Latin script rather than the Persian-Arabic or Cyrillic alternatives.

Moreover, an estimated one-quarter of Iranians are ethnic Azeris, constituting the country's largest minority, and most are concentrated in northern Iran, and are thus contiguous with Azerbaijan. Although Iranian Azeris have never actively challenged the regime, the ayatollahs fear some kind of a future link-up between the two.

A statement last November by Azerbaijan's President concerning the Azeri minority in Iran, asserting that "their security, their rights and well-being are of the utmost importance to us," and vowing "we will continue to do everything to help the Azerbaijanis who have found themselves cut off from our state," only exacerbated Iranian fears.

Iran is also suspicious of Azerbaijan due to its alliance with Turkey, which is ethnically and linguistically close to the Azeris, and has backed Azerbaijan throughout its ongoing three-decade conflict with Armenia. The prospect of a Turkic belt stretching from Istanbul to Central Asia is a major nightmare for Iran.

This, in brief, is the context in which Iran has taken sides against Azerbaijan in its ongoing territorial and ethnic conflict with its neighbour to the west, Armenia. Last year, responding to a Turkish-Azeri plan to establish a transport corridor that would bypass Armenian checkpoints, Iran opened a consulate in the southern Armenian town of Kapan, sparking Azeri protests.

From Israel's point of view, the Iranian aspect of Azerbaijan's situation has turned a vibrant trade partnership into a major strategic asset.

Azerbaijan has reportedly allowed Israel to use its territory for clandestine activity inside Iran, and potentially to use its airbases in case of a military confrontation between the Jewish state and Iran. Considering that Teheran is more than 1,500 kilometres away from Tel Aviv, Azerbaijan's

proximity to Iran would be invaluable in the event of a military clash between Israel and Iran.

Over the years, the Azeris have become increasingly open about their special relationship with Israel – so much so that this past March, Baku opened an embassy in Tel Aviv, something it had previously avoided out of fear of a hostile response from parts of the Muslim world, most importantly, Iran. An Iranian rebuke of Baku indeed resulted, but Azerbaijan's Government didn't care.

The relationship is a success story in many ways, yet Israel's ties with Azerbaijan carry a price tag, and it's hefty.

First, the authoritarian government in Baku has been accused of broad human rights violations repeatedly over recent years. One Israeli critic, blogger Alexander Lapshin, was arrested in 2016 in Belarus, at Azerbaijan's request, after writing critically about the regime following a visit to Azerbaijan. Lapshin was indeed extradited back to Azerbaijan, sentenced and jailed before receiving a presidential pardon the following year.

Secondly, the alliance with Baku comes at the expense of Israel's relationship with Armenia, especially after Israeli-supplied drones played a role in fighting last year that ended with an Armenian defeat.

Israel has stopped short of taking a diplomatic side in the Azerbaijan-Armenia territorial dispute, but the deployment of Israeli hardware against Armenian troops has angered Armenians. Then again, as Iranian allies, the Armenians recognise that they are flying in the face of Israel's interests, just as Israel's relationship with Baku is negatively affecting Armenia's interests.

It's been this way for centuries in the Caucasus, where myriad tribes and nations wrestled and traded with each other, while exploiting the rivalries of the surrounding powers to manoeuvre against their local enemies. For better and worse, Israel has found itself part of that long-standing Caucasian struggle.

AIR

WORLD COURT MUST SAVE ITSELF FROM POLITICISATION

Greg Rose

The United Nations General Assembly ("UNGA"), on December 30, 2022, adopted resolution 77/247 titled "Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem". In this resolution, the UNGA requested the International Court of Justice ("ICJ") provide an Advisory Opinion on the following questions:



(a) *What are the legal consequences arising from the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, from its prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures?*

(b) *How do the policies and practices of Israel referred to in paragraph ... (a) above affect the legal status of the occupation, and what are the legal consequences that arise for all States and the United Nations from this status?*

The UNGA Request was adopted with 87 votes in favour (of the 193 Member States). This was despite 26 votes against it, 53 abstentions and 27 nations absent from the vote.

It thus was not supported by a majority of UN Member States. In short, it was supported by those states (predominantly members of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation) seeking to advance the Palestinian legal narrative, but not by the greater number of states concerned with creating a more balanced approach.

This is the second time the UNGA has requested the ICJ advise it on the consequences of the “illegality” of Israeli actions. The first was in 2003, concerning the separation barrier built to protect Israel from terrorist attacks during the Second Palestinian Intifada. The ICJ complied in 2004, issuing a finding that Israel had no right of self-defence and delivering a fulsome condemnation of the separation barrier (*Construction of a Wall (Advisory Opinion)*, 2004, ICJ Reports). That 2004 precedent provided encouragement for the current request for an Advisory Opinion.

Since then, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has been granted observer state status at the UN. President of the Palestinian Authority and Chairman of the PLO, Mahmoud Abbas, stated in 2011:

“Palestine’s admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the International Court of Justice.”

He has made good on this lawfare strategy in multiple fora, of which the ICJ is merely one.

While the UNGA Request to the ICJ purports to advance international law, in fact it manipulates it by undermining fundamental rules of international law. Rather than promoting UN Charter values, the rendering of an opinion

by the ICJ on the questions posed will likely diminish the status of both the Court and of international law and damage the possibility of peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

13 REASONS WHY THE COURT SHOULD NOT RENDER AN ADVISORY OPINION

There are many reasons why the Court should not give an Advisory Opinion on this matter. Simply put: the ICJ has no jurisdiction and, even if it had, then it should still use its legal discretion not to render the advice requested of it. This piece does not address the specific substantive questions that have been put before the Court, which

would require extensive additional analysis.

First, the ICJ must be certain that it has jurisdiction to give advice in accordance with the UN Charter, the Court’s Statute and its own rules. It is increasingly unusual for the ICJ to find that it has no jurisdiction but, nevertheless, there are four reasons why the ICJ has no jurisdiction here:

1. the subject matter is a dispute involving Israel, which has never consented to the Court’s jurisdiction over that dispute;
2. bona fide negotiation for peace is a precondition to ICJ jurisdiction in a dispute;
3. the legal matters referred to in the Request are currently the subject of UN Security Council deliberations; and
4. the legal question is distinct from other circumstances where the ICJ gave Advisory Opinions.

Second, there are nine reasons why ICJ should also decline to give an opinion, as a matter of its judicial discretion:

1. assertions of fact in the UNGA Request cannot be relied upon;
2. the ICJ lacks independent investigatory capabilities with which to establish findings of fact upon which to base findings of law;
3. there are no legal safeguards to protect the interests of the non-participating party;
4. the request for an Advisory Opinion circumvents legally binding agreements;
5. the request for an Advisory Opinion instrumentalises the Court as a political tool;
6. the opinion sought is not a legal question, but a political one;
7. the UNGA and Security Council have already expressed legal opinions on these issues;



The ICJ courtroom at The Hague (Image: UN Photo/ICJ-CIJ/Frank van Beek)

8. assertions of law in the UNGA's Request cannot be relied upon;
9. an Advisory Opinion premised on the terms of the UNGA Request would undermine peace negotiations and thus run counter to the objectives of the UN Charter.

There are too many reasons to deal with them all in the space available, so this analysis will consider two issues relating to jurisdiction and two concerning discretion.

TWO REASONS WHY THE ICJ HAS NO JURISDICTION

The request contained in the UNGA Request asks the Court to address an issue that is in dispute with Israel. An Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the alleged infringements of international law would go to the very core of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and require the Court to settle law in relation to the whole conflict.

In addition, the procedures for an Advisory Opinion are inappropriate in these disputed circumstances because they do not provide the safeguards that necessarily apply to adversarial proceedings, despite the obviously contentious nature of the dispute that UNGA is requesting the Court consider. Thus, there is no opportunity to appoint ad hoc judges of the nationalities of the parties, nor to appoint counsel, nor to cross-examine evidence. Furthermore, the injustice of lack of safeguards is exacerbated by the terms of the Request, which presume without contest a web of legal violations that are prejudgments of both the facts and of the law.

Lack of jurisdiction: No Israeli consent to dispute settlement

There is no voluntary consent by Israel to submit the dispute to the Court for judicial settlement. Use of the Advisory Opinion procedure in such a case would circumvent and erode the principle enshrined in Article 36 of the Court's statute, which is that contentious cases can only be brought before the Court with the consent of the parties concerned.

As the Court has previously observed:

"In certain circumstances... the lack of consent of an interested State may render the giving of an Advisory Opinion incompatible with the Court's judicial character. An instance of this would be when the circumstances disclose that to give a reply would have the effect of circumventing the principle that a State is not obliged to allow its disputes to be submitted to judicial settlement without its consent." (*Western Sahara, ICJ Reports 1975*).

It is important to stress that this Request concerning the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is very different from that concerning the separation barrier in 2003. In that case, the Court was asked to opine on the legal consequences of a specific, confined action, namely Israel's erection of a security barrier. That case dealt only with a part of the greater

whole, as stressed by the Court. In the 2023 UNGA Request, the Court is now being asked to give its views across the broad range of issues relating to political and armed conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Moreover, the delivery of an Advisory Opinion would establish a dangerous precedent. The Court might just as easily be asked to opine on the self-determination via statehood of peoples such as the Basque, Kanak, Kashmiri, Kurdish, Papuan, Taiwanese, Tibetan, Xinjian or 100 other peoples.

Lack of jurisdiction: The dispute is currently under UN Security Council deliberation

The legal matters referred to in the Request are not questions which the General Assembly can legitimately ask the Court to answer. The Security Council is already considering these matters, and it is for the Security Council, not the General Assembly, to seek the Court's advice. The UN Charter in Article 12 protects the role of the Security Council and restricts the power of the General Assembly to make recommendations on the same matters under Security Council consideration. In Resolution 2334 of 2016, the Security Council reached conclusions on certain factual and legal matters. Is the Court now going to second-guess the Council? Will the Security Council be bound by the advice given to the General Assembly on questions which it has not approved?

TWO REASONS WHY THE ICJ SHOULD USE ITS DISCRETION TO DECLINE

The ICJ is not obliged to render an opinion on every question posed to it. In its Kosovo Advisory Opinion (2010), the ICJ observed that its discretion whether to respond to a request for an Advisory Opinion exists "so as to protect the integrity of the Court's judicial function and its nature as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations."

Discretion to decline: Circumvention of legally binding agreements.

The Peace Process established at the UN-endorsed Madrid conference in 1991 led to partial resolution of the conflict between Israel and Jordan concerning the West Bank, and to a series of agreements negotiated and entered into between Israel and the PLO. The PLO under Chairman Arafat negotiated and signed the "Oslo Accords" between 1993 and 1997 on behalf of all Palestinians, and thus committed to a political process for resolving the conflict. The parties agreed not to take action outside the framework of negotiations. The UNGA Request for an Advisory Opinion is a legal manoeuvre that circumvents the Oslo Accords.

The Oslo Accords are binding and entail ongoing legal rights and obligations. The UNGA endorsed the Oslo

Accords as the basis for a negotiated political process in Resolution ES-10114 of Dec. 8, 2003, and the Accords were deposited with the UN Secretariat. The ICJ endorsed the importance of the Oslo Accords in 2004.

The ongoing binding nature and relevance of the Oslo Accords were recently confirmed by the Palestinian Authority. At the invitation of Egypt, on March 19, 2023, Jordanian, Israeli, Palestinian and US political and security senior officials met in Sharm El Sheikh. Israel and the Palestinian Authority reaffirmed, their “unwavering commitment to all previous agreements between them.”

The Court should decline to circumvent the internationally endorsed binding legal framework established to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Discretion to decline: Turning the Court into a political instrument

The UNGA Request makes factual and legal assertions that are misleading or false. If the ICJ were to incorporate these assertions, its Advisory Opinion would be based on false information. The false allegations include: violations of the Palestinian right to self-determination, Israeli annexation throughout the West Bank, and existence of a defined area of sovereign Palestinian national territory.

For example, the Court is presumed to agree with the assertion of “ongoing violation by Israel” of “the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.” There is no doubt that the Palestinian people have a right to self-determination, but it cannot be simply assumed that Israel is violating it:

The application of a right to self-determination requires the will of the peoples concerned to be established. This condition has not been satisfied, as a result of the failure of Palestinian leaders to hold elections for the last 16 years.

Contrary to unsubstantiated frequent assumptions, reliable opinion polls show that an overwhelming majority of Arabs in east Jerusalem prefer a continuation of Israeli rule.

Self-determination is a relative right, that must be respected together with other rights, including the rights of the Jewish people to self-determination and security.

The Request also alleges “discriminatory legislation and measures” by Israel in a vague and prejudicial way, implying the differing laws that apply inside Israel compared to the West Bank amount to racial discrimination. Yet to apply Israeli domestic law to the West Bank would amount to *de facto* annexation. And under laws of armed conflict, *ius ad bellum*, the presence of Israel in the West Bank is legitimate, as affirmed in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 2334 (2016).

The Request also refers to “annexation” in the context of the West Bank – but the only territory that has been annexed is east Jerusalem.

CONCLUSION: DAMAGING TO THE GLOBAL LEGAL RULES AND INTERNATIONAL COURTS

Perhaps the gravest harm that would be caused by the International Court of Justice delivering of an Advisory Opinion in response to the UNGA Request would be caused by its encouraging and supporting the misuse of international law in defiance of its intended proper purposes. An Advisory Opinion adhering to the UNGA Request would undermine the principle of honouring legal agreements, erode the principle of consent to dispute resolution, compromise the judicial function, and obstruct peaceful settlement of disputes. The ICJ would be unable to secure reliable evidence and would thus undermine its own professional reputation. It would also render the conflict more intractable. In the long term, it would undermine respect for the integrity of international law and institutions.

To protect the UN Charter key value of peaceful settlement of disputes and to preserve the integrity and apolitical role of the Court, it would be a sensible exercise of judicial discretion not to give the requested Advisory Opinion. The ICJ can and should protect itself from being used as a political tool.

AIR

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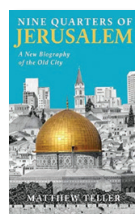
THE BIBLIO FILE

Half a City

Nine Quarters of Jerusalem: A New Biography of the Old City

by **Matthew Teller**

London: Profile Books, 2022. 390 pp., A\$27.99



Dvir Dimant

Cities have various aspects to their character: history, culture, traditions, style, and personality. This is all the more so in the case of Jerusalem, which is rich in historical influences, religious beliefs, and personal aspirations. It is soaked in a variety of smells, tastes, and sights.

In *Nine Quarters*, journalist Matthew Teller presents all these, but through a unique perspective: the people of Jerusalem. The author displays an impressive ability to see, hear, and feel them, and he uses them to illustrate the city's essential history, politics, and spirituality. This creates a book about history, but one that is unusual in humanising its subject and describing its heroes, the local Jerusalemites. *Nine Quarters* provides a multi-sensory experience of meeting Jerusalem, even if one has never visited it: the personal stories, the smells of the marketplace, the people's stares.

Unfortunately, this colourful, deep, and sensitive experience is reserved only for some of the people of Jerusalem: The Palestinian Arabs, with their own identity and their specific narrative. Here and there, the full, humanising description of them is enriched by addition of the many tourists who visit the city.

Sadly, the Jewish narrative is presented as invasive, destructive, and

foreign. Indeed, the personal and cultural perspective of Jerusalem's Jews has almost no representation. When it does appear, it is presented at best in a laconic and superficial manner or, at worst, in a negative one.

Two thousand years of Jewish yearning for Jerusalem hardly merits mention. Jewish festivals, crowds gathered for holiday prayers, prayers for forgiveness in Elul, tears shed at the Western Wall – they do not even have the right to exist.

The mysterious and magical world of the Old Yishuv, the great personalities who once roamed the streets of the Jewish Quarter, and still do, do

not receive the same attentive and tender approach. The Temple Mount activists, who wish to say a prayer, even a silent one, at their holiest site, at the closest possible spot to where their Holy Temple once stood, are condemned as radical provocateurs, with no attempt to present the complexity of the issue or the many facets and mutual sensitivities present at the world's holiest site.

In this way, Teller made two mistakes. First, he produced a one-sided analysis of a multi-faceted topic, thus presenting the reader with a partial picture and experience. But more than that, he, of all people, who claims to be telling the tale of the people of Jerusalem beyond the history, the politics, and all the other major issues, should be expected to know how to be sensitive and attentive to people rather than to his own personal preferences.

Nine Quarters is about the people of Jerusalem, but only half of them. AIR

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Jewish traditions and festivals in Jerusalem's Old City are either ignored or even treated as illegitimate in Matthew Teller's book (Image: Isranet)



“Anti-Zionism” and “Antizionism”

The anti-Jewish worldview behind anti-Israel obsessions

David Hirsh

Antisemitism replaces the infinite diversity of Jewish men and women with a single “the Jews”, which it imagines acts as a unified, hidden and evil force in the world. Antizionism, when it loses sight of the Jews who actually exist, and of the Israel that they actually built, does something similar. It refuses to see Israel in its complexity – contradictory, flawed and majestic – and it misses the overwhelming majority of Jews for whom Israel is, in one way or another, a part of their Jewish identity.

Instead, antizionism draws its own grotesque caricature of Zionism as a single, monstrous, universal evil, and it constructs a whole worldview, or ideology, in relation to that demonic fantasy of Jewish nationhood.

THE HYPHEN: ANTI-SEMITISM AND ANTISEMITISM

Bear with me – this stuff about hyphens is not as pretentious or arcane as it sounds.

We write “antisemitism” rather than “anti-Semitism” because there is no “Semitism” out there in the world that antisemites oppose.

The thing they oppose is their own invention. They oppose the antisemitic notion of “the Jews”. Actual Jewish people are diverse – they have different appearances, skin colours, beliefs and religious practices; they



Zionism, the quest for Jewish national self-determination, is being painted as a single, monstrous, universal evil in many quarters (Image: Shutterstock)

speak different languages and they are at home in different nations and classes. Antisemitism imagines Jews as being all the same, it sees any Jew as part of the same menacing conspiracy, it makes every Jew into a tentacle of one monster.

For example, the notion that the Jews control Hollywood assumes that all Jews in the movie business act in a collective, secret and malevolent, Jewish interest. They don’t, they each do their own thing.

The term “anti-Semitism” was

invented by an antisemite to name his own worldview. We now write it without the hyphen to emphasise that antisemitism is an ideology, a way of understanding the world that is based on fantasy, rather than a critique of something that exists. Antisemitism imagines “the Jews” as the key to history, insisting that if you don’t understand the Jews then you cannot understand how the world really works. But this notion of “the Jews” is something different from the actual diversity of Jewish men and women, although this does not stop them targeting the latter in the hope of overcoming the former.

THE HYPHEN: ANTI-ZIONISM AND ANTIZIONISM

By contrast with “Semitism”, there is a Zionism that exists in the world and an anti-Zionism, which was a critique of it. Really there are many

Zionisms and many anti-Zionisms. But there is also an “antizionism”, without a hyphen, which invents a “single” Zionism of pure, powerful, evil, in a way that is analogous to antisemitism’s invention of “the Jew”. This antizionism is a boundless ideology or worldview. Its concern is not confined to the prospect of Jews organising politically in their own defence or to the fate of

Palestinian Arabs. The threat of this “Zionism”, which is conjured in the antizionist imagination, is universal. Antizionism imagines Israel as being central to, or symbolic of, every political or ideological corruption, cruelty or injustice on the planet. For antizionism, Zionism stands between humanity and progressive change and it threatens us all.

The way Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the former “supreme leader” of Iran, used the concept of Zionism made this clear. Referring to Jerusalem by its Arabic name, Al Quds,



Khomeini declared: “The Quds Day is a universal day. It is not an exclusive day for Quds itself. It is a day for the oppressed to rise and stand up against the arrogant.” The day is marked annually with an antisemitic demonstration in Teheran, as well as similarly themed events in the centre of many free cities.

Steven Salaita, an antizionist academic, uses the term “Zionism” in the classically antizionist sense:

“Zionism is part and parcel of unilateral administrative power. It lends itself to top-down decision-making, to suppression of anti-neoliberal activism, to restrictions on speech, to colonial governance, to corporatization and counterrevolution—in other words, Zionism behaves in universities precisely as it does in various geopolitical systems.”

Making the distinction between anti-Zionism, as a response to Zionism, and antizionism, as an anti-Jewish way of understanding the world, helps us to think clearly about the politics that come with the relentless focus on Israel that we see around us on the left.

ZIONISM

The 20th century reinforced the lesson that history had taught many people in the 19th: that guaranteeing individual rights requires national self-determination. Nation states were formed in Europe in the image of modern France, which was constructed, institutionally and emotionally, by the French Revolution. Later, it was often national movements across the world that resisted colonial

rule. Nations also struggled to regain self-determination against 20th century totalitarian occupation.

Today, it feels natural to Ukrainians to defend themselves collectively under the yellow and blue flag and it feels natural to Vladimir Putin to

the inauthentic, Nazi, pro-imperialist, ersatz nations as a single, “racially” identical, threat.

In the late 19th century, Theodor Herzl proposed that Jews should address the problem of living in antisemitic hostile environments by



Zionist pioneers in Mandatory Palestine c. 1920s (Image: Shutterstock)

delegitimise Ukrainian statehood. Russian propaganda says that Ukraine is not an authentic nation, that it is invented by imperialism and that it is inherently Nazi. It deploys the antizionist discourse against Ukraine that the Soviet Union originally codified against Israel.

Some antizionists have long said that Zionists are not really Jews at all, but Khazars, a semi-nomadic Turkic people. Some of them have recently claimed that Ukrainians are also Khazars, most notably its Zionist President, Volodymyr Zelensky. They have thus found a way of portraying both of

re-constituting their ancient national sovereignty, in a modern way, in Israel. Herzl had been part of the crowd that gathered to watch the public, antisemitic humiliation in Paris of the Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus. He was aware of the pogroms’ gathering threat in the East.

Since defeat in Roman times and the destruction of the Second Temple, some Jews always stayed in, or close to, Jerusalem (“Zion” in Hebrew scriptures), but many were dispersed all around the world, in the diaspora. Herzl called his programme for return, “Zionism”.

Some Zionist pioneers had already settled in Israel by the time the Nazis ruled Europe. Tel Aviv, founded in 1909, was growing as a predominantly Jewish city under the British Mandate. Jews had been returning to Jerusalem, and to other places too. Many lived in the kibbutzim, utopian socialist communities where the land and the means of production were

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owned in common and the gendered division of labour would be abolished.

The key critique of Zionism at this time was that it was utopian. Zionism, it was said, had identified no social mechanism by which Jews would uproot themselves from their homes to move to Palestine.

Antisemitism was familiar, but not many yet feared an antisemitism capable of sweeping Europe, the Middle East and Russia clean of Jews. A Zionist, went the old joke, was a Jew who donated money to a second Jew so that a third Jew could go and live in Palestine. As late as 1940, Leon Trotsky's judgement was that, with the British becoming more interested in "winning the sympathy of the Arabs," migration into Palestine might turn out to be a "bloody trap" for Jews.

Most Jews were not serious about going to Israel until staying where they lived became terrifying. The foundation of the State of Israel was as much a result of the profound changes visited upon Jewish life as it existed in the middle of the 20th century as it was a result of the dreams of Herzl and the other men whose names now appear on the street furniture in every Israeli town. Israel was created by huge and murderous material factors as much as it was by an idea.

As the threat of the Holocaust approached, Palestine was one of the few places where Jews might find refuge. And, for the undead Jews of Europe, who limped away after the defeat of Nazism, it was one of the places where they could go; if they were not first interned in Cyprus on their way there by the British Empire. Many Jews expelled from their homes around the Middle East subsequently found refuge in Israel, and, later still, many Russian Jews, whose Jewishness had been suppressed by the Soviet Union, found their way there too.

Before the Second World War, there had been significant Jewish and Arab migration into Palestine. As well as cooperation and economic growth

involving both communities, there had also been conflict between them. In November 1947, the UN voted to divide the territory of Mandate Palestine to allow the foundation of the State of Israel. Israel accepted this compromise, but the Arab League did not. Instead, within hours of Israel declaring its independence in May 1948, it invaded and attempted to destroy the newly born state, but the Arab armies were pushed back.

Over the next few years, hundreds of thousands of Jews were pushed out of the ethnically or religiously defined 'Arab' and 'Islamic' states of the Middle East and many found refuge, or a new home, in Israel. Israel defeated two further attempts by the Arab League to destroy it in 1967 and 1973. Land that had been occupied by Jordan and Egypt after 1948 was then occupied by Israel in 1967. Some of it was returned to Egypt after the 1978 Camp David Accords and some was ceded, it turned out, to Hamas, in 2005.

After 1948, Arabs who lived in Israel, about 20% of the population, were recognised as full citizens while others who had been pushed out, or who had fled the fighting, were not allowed back. Since 1967, Israel has retained control of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, where many Arabs lived, and it protects and enables the settler movement there.

In the 1990s, at Camp David in 2000 and in 2008 Israel offered to bring the settlers home and to cede Gaza and the West Bank to a new Palestinian state, but those offers were not accepted by Palestinian leaders.

"ANTI-ZIONISM"

"Anti-Zionists" were Jews who argued against the idea of Zionism. Some opposed it on the basis of universalistic socialism, others favoured

Bundism, a cultural and political reconstitution of Judaism and Jewish self-defence, where they already lived. Religious anti-Zionism opposed the secularisation of the mystical yearning for Israel into a worldly politics. Many Jews aspired either to assimilation where they lived or to migration to western Europe or America.

Zionism also attracted Jews across the Middle East, and, there too, there were other Jews who opposed it. Debates raged, but they were never settled in the realm of ideas.

In Europe, they were settled by the Holocaust. Jews were murdered irrespective of their politics and aspirations.

Anti-Zionism, with the hyphen, a critique of the idea of Zionism, was ended as a practical movement by the

"If antizionism is a worldview that defines itself in relation to a demonic, fictional, Zionist other, then even a little bit of it is too much"

Holocaust and by the creation of the State of Israel. Some Jews later began to use vocabulary of anti-Zionism again, and many other people around the world assimilated that vocabulary to themselves, but the movement to destroy

an Israeli nation state that now existed was, in content, quite different from the pre-Holocaust critiques of the idea of Zionism.

Arguing about how Jews should respond to antisemitism was one thing; hoping to delegitimise a nation state that existed, and working for its destruction, was another. Who was utopian now? Anti-Zionism said that it just wanted a single territorial state in the whole of Mandate Palestine, that would be secular and democratic. But how could that come about?

Most Israelis are descended from families so powerless that they had been ethnically cleansed from their homes. Their human rights were ignored when they didn't have the power to enforce them; and they discovered that nobody else would enforce them either. They had also

experienced three attempts by Arab nationalist armies to destroy Israel, stopped only by Israeli self-defence. So how would anti-Zionism persuade Israelis to dismantle their state and to dissolve themselves into a national community in which Palestinians might be the majority? The answer is that if anti-Zionism depended on persuading Israelis, then it was a passive and a long-term aim that had nothing to say about what should happen now.

In reality, the only way to dissolve Israel into a larger state would be without the consent of Israelis – in other words, by conquest. Conquest has been unsuccessful, and it is inconceivable that it would lead to either a democratic or a secular state. If anti-Zionists find a way to rewind the film of history to a time before Israel existed, perhaps they could rewind a little further, to before Jews were suffocated by communism, expelled as not belonging to the rest of the Middle East, and fed into a pan-European factory system of murder.

“ANTIZIONISM”

Counterintuitively, antizionism is as old as anti-Zionism, and it may be older still. If anti-Zionism was a legitimate, rational, critical engagement with Zionism, there was always also antizionism: an irrational, phobic, response to even the earliest sparks of Jewish political self-organisation.

When does criticism of Israel cross the line into antisemitism? If antizionism is a worldview that defines itself in relation to a demonic, fictional, Zionist other, then even a little bit of it is too much. But if it is a critical, measured, rational engagement with Israeli policy and culture, then it would not cross a line into antisemitism, no matter how much of it there was.

Is too much criticism of British PM Rishi Sunak racist? Is too much criticism of former British PM Liz Truss sexist? No, it depends on the type, not the volume, of the criticism.

It depends on what is said, and

how it is said; it depends on what unsaid messages or dog-whistles are allowed, or designed, to slip between the words. It depends on the emotional register of the discourse.

That is not to say that it is always easy to distinguish between criticism and antisemitism. There is certainly legitimate disagreement about what is antisemitic, or racist or sexist, and what is not.

It is true that it sometimes looks like an issue of quantity. Take, for example, the manner in which the number of UN resolutions denouncing Israel outstrips all of those denouncing the actual serious human rights abusers put together. The ferocity of rhetoric denouncing Israel is, in some spheres of life, much greater. But, first, read what the resolutions say and analyse the content of the denunciations as well as the amount: there is something else going on

And, second, we need to make sense of the ostensibly quantitative component. Criticism is hotter; it is more abundant; it is disproportionate; it is more emotional; it is more self-certain. Taken together, and in the complexity of real-world context, this is not just more, it is indicative of something different going on: maybe antisemitic motivation, whether conscious or not; maybe antisemitic effect of the normalisation of this kind of disproportionality; maybe a reluctance even to think about antisemitism.

THE LIVINGSTONE FORMULATION

It is easier to know what's what when we know which side we ought to be on.

We all know that racism and sexism are disgraceful because in our liberal, left, democratic or scholarly political communities, there is strong consensus on these issues.

By contrast, a divide over what is antisemitic cuts across those political communities. There are antisemites within liberal, left, democratic and

scholarly communities but they are unaware of it and they angrily deny it. They think that the people who denounce them for antisemitism are making it up because they are the supporters of racism and apartheid, who want to hide the truth.



Former London mayor Ken Livingstone
(Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Indeed, it is quite a reliable indicator of a problem when you see people who only denounce the antisemitism in the political communities that they already despise. To only recognise it “over there”, is to fail to recognise, and to whitewash it, “over here”. First clean your own movement; only then, accuse the other side of having a problem.

Back in 2006, the then-mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, was rightly challenged for some antisemitic remarks he had made, although they were relatively trivial. They had nothing to do with Israel. His response was interesting: “For far too long the accusation of antisemitism has been used against anyone who is critical of the policies of the Israeli government, as I have been.”

It was a means of justifying his refusal to even engage, by means of an *ad hominem* counter-attack, which claimed that those who brought up the issue of antisemitism were doing so in bad faith, knowing that it was not true.

Most political people know how to deal with the sexist who responds

that the feminist hates men. They know too how to challenge the racist who responds that the liberal is trying to silence his criticism of affirmative action, or of ‘cultural Marxism’, or whatever it might be. But antisemitism cuts across the left and the right and there is no such consensus. The antizionist, accused of antisemitism, counter-accuses Jews and their allies of trying to delegitimise criticism of Israel or of “weaponising” antisemitism against decent people who support the Palestinians.

They accuse the person who raises the issue of antisemitism of “Zionism”. They do not mean by this the diverse ways in which Israel is part of the Jewish identity of most Jews; they mean the homogenous, disgraceful Zionism of the antizionist imagination, which means “racist”, “supporter of apartheid”, “supporter of colonialism” and “dishonest and bad person.”

When Zionism is denounced in these terms, Jews are generally well aware that the denunciation points the finger at them, and not just at the abstract Zionists of the antizionist imagination. The accusation of Zionism deports most Jews from the “community of the good” and it makes them politically homeless.

Most antisemitisms in history have allowed clemency for exceptional “good Jews” and this one does too. Jews who affirm, in the terms offered by antizionism, that Israel is an apartheid state, must be dismantled, and that accusations of antisemitism are part of a mendacious Zionist conspiracy, may be given leave to remain, for the moment, in the community of the good.

The accusation that Jews who say they have experienced antisemitism on the left do so because they are enemies of the left is a clear violation of the “Macpherson Principle”. This is the principle that says that people who report experiencing racism should be taken seriously.

The Livingstone Formulation creates an assumption that unless

Jews disavow Israel and whitewash antisemitism, they should be assumed to be enemies of the left and of the Palestinians. The accusation against such Jews is that they pose as members of the union or of the party, but that really they are only pretending, in the hope of creating opportunities to weaken those institutions.

The Livingstone Formulation does not say that Jews are sometimes oversensitive and that sometimes they get it wrong. Instead, it says that they make it up in the hope of silencing criticism of Israel.

The report of Britain’s Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) on Labour Party antisemitism, released in 2020, specified the following as a type of antisemitic conduct that amounted to “unlawful harassment” of Jews:

Suggesting that complaints of antisemitism are fake or smears. This conduct may target Jewish members as deliberately making up antisemitism complaints to undermine the Labour Party, and ignores legitimate and genuine complaints of antisemitism in the Party.

The Macpherson Principle does not say that every accusation of racism must be true, it simply requires they should be heard and investigated on the assumption that they were made in good faith. The EHRC report recognised that the Livingstone Formulation was regularly used against Jews in

the UK Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn (2015-2020) and it observed that its effect was to accuse Jews of disloyalty. Offering exceptional status of belonging to the tiny minority of Jews who are willing to repeat the demonising phrases of antizionism does not address the problem.

It is still common to hear people affiliated with British Labour say that the new leadership of the party, the right, the Blairites, the Tories, or whatever name is given to people deported from the community of the good, weaponise or fake antisemitism as a smear against Corbyn, the left and the Palestinians. References to antisemitism in the party as a “scam” are common.

But it must be remembered that there was an overwhelming consensus amongst UK Jews that it was real. The effect of this denial is to paint that consensus as being somehow dishonest, racist and hostile to the left. A culture that positions Jews in that way, that teaches that view of Jews to its children, is an antisemitic culture. AIR

David Hirsh is senior lecturer in sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London, and academic director and CEO of the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism. The above is republished from a UK Labour Friends of Israel briefing paper. © David Hirsh, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

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NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS

Media coverage regarding the 12 Palestinians killed during Israel's two-day Jenin operation, dubbed "House and Garden", varied widely on whether they were civilians or members of terror organisations. In fact, of course, all 12 were armed terrorists.

On *ABC Radio National* "Breakfast" (July 4), Palestinian Red Crescent Society spokesperson Nebal Fazarkh claimed, "According to the Palestinian health, the latest number of injuries is around seven murders in Jenin and more than around 100 injuries... Our staff has evacuated more than 500 families from the Jenin refugee camp. Everyone is targeted. I can say most of the victims are civilians."

The next day on "Breakfast", former aide to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, Aviv Bushinsky, insisted that "as far as we know and as the report that we received here in Israel, that there are no civilian casualties." Bushinsky said if it turned out that there were civilian fatalities, it was "due to the terrorists that are... locating themselves specifically in this area where the mosques are, where the hospitals are, where the schools are."

On *ABC News Radio* (July 5), former IDF spokesperson Jonathan Conricus rejected claims the IDF had blocked ambulances and medical personnel from treating "wounded civilian Palestinians". He explained that terrorists "are using Palestinian civilians, their homes, mosques, hospitals and schools as their launch pad for operations against Israelis. And that is unfortunately where Israel has to go in and defend itself."

OVER THE HEDGE

ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn's report on *News Radio* (July 4) said that "at least eight Palestinians have been killed. It's unclear if any are civilians."

On "AM" (July 5), Horn said "at least 11 Palestinians have now been killed, including several militants". Her report on "AM" the next day, said "of the 12 Palestinians killed, many were militants."

Meanwhile, on *SBS TV* "World News" (July 4), the newsreader said ten Palestinians were killed with "Palestinian militant groups say[ing] five of the dead are fighters, but it is not clear if the others were combatants or civilians." The next day, the *SBS TV* "World News" bulletin claimed, "those killed include 12 Palestinians, five described as gunmen."

On July 5 the *Hobart Mercury* simply stated that "Israeli armed forces have killed nine Palestinians," while the *West Australian* reported "the two-day Palestinian death toll rose to 10."

COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

The *Australian* (July 11) published UK *Times* correspondent Catherine Philp's report alleging that Israel shot dead unarmed 16-year-old Palestinian boy Abdulrahman Hasan Ahmad Hardan during "House and Garden", while attempting to discredit claims Hardan was a Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fighter.

Philp, who has a history of anti-Israel social media posts, reported that "video has emerged of the moment an unarmed 16-year-old Palestinian boy was shot dead by a sniper during the Jenin military operation... demolishing Israel's claims that only combatants were killed."

The report alleged that "Militant groups such as the relatively new Jenin Brigades, Islamic Jihad and the armed wing of Fatah have little compunction about claiming non-combatants" and, Philp wrote, "his family... were adamant: Abdulrahman... did not belong to any armed group."

Philp also stated that "when Islamic Jihad posted photographs of its claimed martyrs, Abdulrahman was the only one not pictured with a firearm."

However, the pro-Israel media organisation CAMERA has exposed the fact PIJ referred to Hardan as a "Jihad warrior", which they only do for legitimate members, and "the official Telegram channel of PIJ shows Abdulrahman was NOT the only one of the eight fighters pictured without a firearm." In fact, five of the eight terrorist "martyrs" pictured were shown unarmed!

Following a complaint by CAMERA, the *Times* deleted the claim he was the only one unarmed in the photos.

CLEAR AIR

ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn's live cross to *ABC TV* "The World" featured a rare moment of clarity regarding Israel's Jenin operation (July 4).

In contrast to perceptions that Palestinian residents of the Jenin refugee camp fled in terror as Israel's operation began, Horn explained that residents were given advance notice.

"[They] were sent text messages by Israel overnight saying you need to leave and get out of your homes to evacuate because they were planning to continue with this military incursion. So, we saw hundreds of people physically leaving their homes, leaving

behind all of their possessions and taking refuge in a different part of Jenin,” Horn said.

Horn said Israel claims it is “ripping up the roads... they say, to look for explosive devices, to look for roadside bombs,” but then conceded that IEDs are “something that we have seen used in the recent weeks” – a reference to an incident on June 20 when two Israeli armoured vehicles were damaged by IEDs in Jenin.

RISKY BUSINESS

ABC Radio “Nightlife” (July 6) ran a long interview with NGO Monitor’s Professor Gerald Steinberg, who ex-

plained Israel’s rationale for the Jenin operation.

Steinberg stressed that “there were no civilian deaths... in Jenin,” and that the terrorists “had stored huge amounts of explosives and weapons like Kalashnikovs and M16s” in mosques.

He emphasised that contrary to claims, “in reality, there was very little damage... we might have a few more years of relatively lower levels of attacks and hopefully maybe a new generation, some other people within the Palestinian society will say we need to look for a different way of dealing with Israel other than terrorism and rejectionism.”

Palestinian terrorism is not a response to the occupation of the West Bank, he said, but “a continuation of the war since 1948” when Israel was created, something which “the Palestinians have never really accepted.”

It is the absence of democracy and political freedom within Palestinian society that compels “younger people in their late teens and early 20s... to emulate what has been Palestinian practice for, again, for many generations and take up arms,” he explained.

Acknowledging that some Israelis do oppose a Palestinian state, he maintained that “most public opinion polls show that if there was a Palestinian partner that you could rely on to



IN PARLIAMENT

The following exchange occurred in the Senate on June 21.

Greens Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs Senator **Jordon Steele-John** (WA) – “Israel’s government is the most far right and extremist in the nation’s history. Two of its most senior ministers, Ministers Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, are proud and open racists and bigots... When will the foreign minister issue a boycott of any Australian government representative meeting with these two individuals?”

Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator **Penny Wong** (ALP, SA) – “The first point... given the question goes to Israel, is to express that we are obviously deeply saddened by the murder of four Israeli citizens in a terror attack overnight. We condemn this act and make the point that terrorism and violence against civilians can never be justified, and we urgently call upon all parties to exercise restraint... The fact that we engage with a country does not mean we agree with every statement made by an officeholder... We will continue to engage with members of the Israeli government as is appropriate and necessary, and we intend to judge the government on the policies it pursues and to make our views known when we need to. Australia has been and is a friend of Israel, and that means we can also indicate our view on matters on which we disagree.”

Senator **Steele-John** – “Speaking of the policies pursued by the state of Israel—these individuals are members of a government which is enacting a system of race-based oppression and domination towards Palestinians. There is a name for such a system, Minister: apartheid... When will the Australian government recognise the reality of Israel’s system of apartheid?”

Senator **Wong** – “I would also urge all parties now not to use sensitive issues to play domestic political games. This is a very difficult issue...”

Senator **Steele-John** – “The racism and oppression that Palestinians are subjected to every day, the system of race-based separation, dispossession and discrimination, and the system of Israeli apartheid must be recognised for the crime against humanity that it is. It’s a crime against humanity which requires an immediate international community led response.”

The following debate was in the NSW Legislative Council on June 28.

Anthony D’Adam (ALP) – “I move: (1) That this House notes that:

(a) the seventy-fifth anniversary of Al-Nakbah commemoration event was held on Saturday 3 June 2023, at the Australian Palestinian Club, Guildford...

“(2) That this House recognises the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to live in peace and security within their own State, as part of a two State solution.

“For Palestinians, the Nakbah did not end in 1948; it is an ongoing occurrence and the everyday reality for the Palestinian people. Millions of Palestinians remain under illegal occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip... There is an unrelenting drive to supplant the Palestinian people from their land... the Palestinians have no army. They have no capacity to resist.”

Chris Rath (Lib.) – “I move... In paragraph (2), omit all words after “Palestinian people” and insert instead “to co-exist in peace and security alongside the State of Israel, as part of a two-State solution; and supports both States living side by side within recognised, secure borders.”

Abigail Boyd (Greens) – “The Palestinian people have thousands of years of connection to the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The formal dispossession of their land by the State of Israel following years of atrocities like massacres, bombings, looting, land confiscation and razing of Palestinian towns by Zionist militia is an atrocity that continues to be felt to this day.”

The amendment and the motion as amended were agreed to.

provide peace and stability, 70% of Israelis would agree to a territorial compromise.”

Israel cannot risk leaving the West Bank if it simply mirrors the result of its 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, which saw the territory “turned into a giant terror base. And that’s what [Hamas] want to do in Jenin,” he added.

A MILITANT RESPONSE

On *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” (July 6), UN Special Rapporteur for the Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese – who has become notorious for both antisemitic claims and justifying Palestinian terrorism – refused to say whether Palestinian militants killed by Israel were terrorists or the facilities Israel hit were legitimate targets.

Albanese said, “It’s very it’s very hard to say that those involved... have never committed any, anything, any act that might constitute an offence under international law.”

Instead, Albanese preferred to refer to terrorism against Israelis as “Palestinian resistance against... an unlawful occupation. The right to resist is a flip side of the right to self-determination, which is clearly violated by Israeli occupation.”

Asked to explain her office issuing a statement calling the operation a “war crime”, Albanese asserted that “bombing civilian infrastructure, um, as I said, the launch of tear gas against a hospital, hampering access to medical personnel, trying to evacuate the wounded, uh, is constitutes a war crime under international law. Why to destroy the entire camp? 80% of the homes have been damaged. And so there has been an attack which is disproportionate in nature, even if it’s justified by an arrest operation that Israel wanted to carry out. Why to bomb this camp?” Needless to say, the claim that Israel “destroyed” the Jenin refugee camp – or even “damaged” 80% of it – is baseless.

GUILTY AS CHARGED

On *ABC Radio* “Evenings” (July 13), Francesca Albanese was interviewed again and said, “the proof” Israel had committed war crimes was so “overwhelming” that “in the... very first hours of the attack... we felt obliged to denounce what was going on like a prima facie war crime warrant.”

Albanese repeated her claim that Israel deliberately targeted “water lines, sewage... hospitals” and seemed to dismiss Israeli statements that the operation was intended to target Palestinian militant organisations and their associated infrastructure, while seeming to question whether the 12 Palestinians who were killed were even “militants”.

Technical difficulties meant the interview was cut short, but it resumed on July 17. On her return, Albanese conceded Palestinian militants were in the camp but attributed it to the fact that Jenin “has historically been this place of resistance, this place where people do not surrender to their fate.”

Albanese again asserted that 80% of the camp was damaged or destroyed. She also implied that the majority of Palestinians detained by Israel are arrested on false pretences, and that the Oslo Accords were never intended to result in an independent Palestinian state.

BOUL GAMES

On *ABC Radio National* “Drive” (July 5), Albanese’s UN colleague Adam Bouloukos, Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the West Bank, was more circumspect in his claims.

Bouloukos agreed “there are armed actors in the West Bank” but qualified this by saying, “this is an area under occupation, illegal occupation, and has been for decades... of course, that there are armed actors... our job in UNRWA is to provide services to a refugee population, those that have

been pushed out in 1948. So, the discussion about the legality and who’s labelled what is really not for me to comment on.”

Except the refugees who lost their homes in 1948 and are still alive probably number only in the tens of thousands, if that.

To his credit, Bouloukos said that “the water mains were destroyed in an Israeli effort with kind of bulldozers and heavy equipment to rip up the streets looking for unexploded ordnance.”

He also repeated the claim that Israeli forces shot at and tear gassed the hospital in Jenin.

On *ABC TV* “7pm News” Victoria (July 5), Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn explained the reality behind the bogus hospital claim made by people like Bouloukos and Albanese: “outside a hospital in Jenin, angry Palestinians gathered. Some threw stones at the army who responded with tear gas.”

NOUR -ALOGICAL

During and after the Jenin operation, former Palestinian Authority (PA) spokesperson Nour Odeh made regular appearances on ABC Radio.

However, Odeh’s past employment by the PA was not always disclosed.

On *ABC News Radio* (July 4), Odeh was introduced as “a Ramallah-based political analyst and commentator.”

Interestingly, Odeh admitted that Israel was targeting Palestinian fighters, saying, “from a Palestinian perspective the attack is targeting Palestinian activists who are involved in armed attacks against Israeli settlers inside the West Bank... the fact [is] that these fighters are there.”

On *ABC Radio* “Evenings” (July 13), Odeh denied that she directly worked for the PA, claiming that she was an “independent consultant”. In any case, her talking points were indistinguishable from PA propaganda.

RADIO-ACTIVE

On community radio station 3CR (July 11), pro-Palestinian lobbyist Noura Mansour said the operation was “the essence of the Zionist project as a settler colonial project that aims to exterminate or empty and remove the indigenous population to make way for settlements.”

Mansour claimed that “over 5000 Palestinian families have been made refugees for the second time.”

In fact, it was 500 families that were temporarily displaced – and most were able to return home after the conclusion of Israel’s two-day operation.

BOTH SIDES NOW

SBS TV “World News” showed it is possible to present both Israeli and Palestinian perspectives on settlements and let the audience make up their own minds.

An *SBS TV* “World News” (June 20) report noting that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is “deeply alarmed by the Israeli Government’s decision to speed up the construction of settlements in the West Bank” included the important qualification, “many countries deem the West Bank to be occupied territory, while Israel considers it to be disputed.”

On June 22, 24 and 27 the program again was careful to ensure the different perspectives were heard.

A report on *SBS TV* “World News” (July 1) noting Australia, Britain and Canada had criticised an Israeli announcement that 5700 units will be built in West Bank settlements, included a statement from the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, saying, “it is critical to understand that a Jewish civilian presence in the disputed territories has never been the cause of the conflict. It is a symptom of it. This conflict will endure until the Palestinians can come to terms with Israel’s legitimacy and permanence.”

SBS reporter Gareth Boreham

added, “settlement expansion is one of the most contentious issues in the region. Many countries deem the West Bank to be occupied territory, while Israel considers it to be disputed territory.”

RECOGNISING REALITY

In the *Canberra Times* (June 26), the Zionist Federation of Australia’s Bren Carlill castigated Labor Party members pushing for the Albanese Government to recognise a non-existent state of Palestine.

Dr Carlill wrote that too many proponents of recognition are “skim[ming] over the difficulties.”

These include “the fact that control of Gaza and the West Bank has been split between two Palestinian factions for almost 20 years, so one would have to determine which Palestine one is recognising.”

He also noted that the argument that “recognition would improve the Palestinian mismatch [in power versus Israel] in negotiations is very weak” because “Palestinians have always felt comfortable saying no to things they don’t like at the negotiating table.”

The main reason to deny recognition is the basic reality that Palestinian leaders have consistently refused all offers of a state made to them dating back to the 1930s and “premature recognition... rewards bad behaviour,” he said.

Two days later, the paper ran an article by Izzat Abdulhadi, the Palestinian Authority’s representative in Australia, demanding immediate recognition of a Palestinian state, which included easily disproved assertions aimed at discrediting the genuine and credible offers Israel has made over the years to create a Palestinian state.

Writing in the *Courier Mail* (July 6), AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein also pointed out that recognition would undermine the peace process by encouraging “rejectionist behaviour” by Palestinian leaders.

ON THE LOW DOWN

ABC Radio gave anti-Israel activist Antony Loewenstein repeated opportunities to promote his new book *The Palestine Laboratory*, which claims that Israel exports to oppressive regimes hi-tech surveillance products that have first been tested on Palestinians.

Much of what Loewenstein said was wild supposition – he freely admitted he doesn’t really know what spyware is being used for – combined with extreme loathing for Israel.

On *ABC Radio Sydney* “Evenings” (June 16), Loewenstein said, “what I guess particularly concerns me about this issue is not just that we have no clue really about how it’s being used or where or by whom, but that the genesis of this tool is essentially an Israeli company... the people behind it have spent years and years and years in the Israeli military... perfecting the art of occupation of Palestinians.”

Loewenstein nonchalantly claimed that politicians and journalists have been wary of investigating and questioning Israel’s exports to repressive regimes “because people are scared of being accused of antisemitism simply for raising these legitimate questions around human rights and how Israel is massively breaching those rights in Palestine.”

On *ABC Radio* “Drive” (June 22), Loewenstein claimed Israel uses tech products like Pegasus which lets governments hack into mobile phones as “a diplomatic tool” to establish relations with countries like the “UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain” which use it to “repress their own people... what I show in the book is that the occupation has become exported. So, when Israel talks about being, as I said, a self-described democracy, there are countless people around the world and of course, including Palestinians within those borders, that have felt what that means in a practical sense. And it’s brutal.”

MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

BACK IN THE LYONS DEN

The ABC's global affairs editor John Lyons, a former Middle East correspondent who has written two tendentious books blaming Israel for the fact no Palestinian state exists and slamming in conspiratorial terms Israel's supporters in Australia, demonstrated the wisdom in the old adage that it is "better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt."

On the ABC's television news station, *ABC News* (June 22), Lyons blamed terror attacks by Palestinians against Israelis and settler attacks against Palestinians on Israel's occupation of the West Bank. He questioned claims that the settlements on the West Bank provide Israel with "a buffer against the Arab world," arguing, "if it's dangerous, if you need it for security, why would you move 700,000 [Israelis] into a dangerous area?" In the early 1960s and 1970s, Israel very much needed a land buffer, given that at its narrowest the country was only 15 km wide.

Lyons said Palestinians no longer see the US as an honest broker and suggested "in my view, someone like Emmanuel Macron is perhaps the only hope."

Interviewed on *ABC News* (July 4) during Israel's two-day military operation against terrorist cells in Jenin, Lyons claimed that ten Israelis were killed in terror attacks in 2022, as opposed to 146 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces. In fact, 24 Israelis were murdered in terror attacks last year.

Moreover, most Palestinians who died were terrorists or engaged in fighting Israeli forces or in violent protests, whereas most Israelis killed were civilians.

He compared Israel's occupation of the West Bank with France's rule over Algeria and Syrian rule in Lebanon. These comparisons are wrong for so many reasons – including for example, the simple fact that the West Bank came under Israeli control during the 1967 war only after Jordan started firing on west Jerusalem. Moreover, rejected Israeli peace offers to create a Palestinian state involved offering withdrawal from the equivalent of 100% of the West Bank or something very close.

Later that day, Lyons was interviewed on *ABC Radio "PM"*, where he absurdly said of the Jenin operation that "this is sort of the worst now because we haven't seen, that I can remember, the picture of Israeli jets in-

volved in any strikes on Palestinian villages, on refugee camps." That's probably because Israel did not actually deploy any jets offensively in the Jenin operation, but instead used helicopter gunships and armoured drones.

He called Jenin a place where "the Israeli army and intelligence has never really been able to get a transparency... a place that houses a lot of the most militant...

Palestinian groups."

In fact, the former claim is incorrect, as Israel-based analyst Michael Friedson explained on *ABC News* "The World" (July 6), saying Israel security services "feel that there was heavy intelligence

work" which allowed them to understand the details of what was happening in Jenin and locate "these massive arms caches that were being created, arms manufacturing being created."

On July 5, Lyons was back on *ABC News* to discuss the end of the operation and news that a Palestinian terrorist drove into a group of pedestrians in Tel Aviv. According to Lyons, "this is the history of this conflict... retaliation for retaliation, tit for tat." Of course, what he didn't explain was that the Palestinian Authority incites Palestinians to carry out terror attacks against Israelis and provides generous financial rewards for doing so.

Furthermore, as AIJAC's Jamie Hyams pointed out in an article for the *Australian's* website (July 18), the terrorists in Jenin "are all funded, armed and directed by Iran, as part of its strategy to encircle Israel. Iran encourages the terror groups to embed themselves among civilians, in the hope that any resultant civilian casualties will aid its diplomatic campaign against Israel."

On July 25, Lyons was interviewed on *ABC TV* "News at Noon" to discuss the Knesset's passing of a bill that would prevent Israel's Supreme Court applying a reasonableness test to administrative decisions.

His comments came disturbingly close to accusing pro-Israel Jewish organisations and individuals in Australia of dual loyalty. According to Lyons, "a lot of the supporters of Israel in Australia, including the Israeli lobby here in Australia, which is very powerful, sort of made the case to me that whatever problems we had as a country, we are proud of our Supreme Court." The country of Australian Israel-supporters is, of course, Australia – except apparently in John Lyons' head.

THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

A BAD “STATE” OF AFFAIRS

The Australian Labor Party currently risks transforming itself into the type of political party that could never lead this country again.

Despite the huge amount of effort that was made to secure enough seats to win government, it would appear not enough effort has been put into making the party membership understand that being in government is a serious business.

I have been at ALP branch meetings where the most ridiculous proposals were put forward, often by very well-meaning and sincere people who simply did not have enough knowledge of the matters they were agitated about.

There appeared to be a higher-than-average number of believers in conspiracy theories in the Party, along with quite a high number of people who would orchestrate conspiracies if they served their political agenda.

Serving as secretary of one of the State Party’s policy committees, I dealt with correspondence from not just Party members but even parliamentarians which exhibited prejudices and fantasies that had no place in any form of serious political discourse.

There were plenty of intelligent, decent, committed people from the left to the right of the Party and, although the factions were subtribes, there was affiliation to the larger tribe, the Party.

Within the Party there were also people across the factions who were into serious policy development – alongside others who were into empty virtue signalling.

I write this in the wake of various Labor Party forums, branches and conferences calling for the recognition of a State of Palestine.

It is important to note that the resolutions do not say that a Palestinian State is something they believe should be established, but act as if one already exists.

Yet there is no current political entity which has the legal elements of statehood and wishes to be called Palestine.

There is the three-quarters of the land of the British Mandatory Palestine which is ruled by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but this is not the “Palestinian State” under discussion. There is Gaza, controlled by the terror group Hamas. The Palestinian Authority only has autonomy in the cities of the West Bank, but has increasingly been losing control even of many of those.

Displaying sometimes wilful ignorance of the history of that region, the call is for Australia to ignore the realities on the ground and support an imaginary authoritarian

autocracy based on the cease-fire lines dating from when Israel survived the Arab attempt to violently prevent its birth in 1948.

This preference for bullying rhetoric over genuine consideration of how one can actually bring into effect the purported aspiration of a two-state resolution for Israelis and Palestinians has the nasty odour of the death throes of the British Labour Party under hard-leftist Jeremy Corbyn.

I have known Anthony Albanese since he was at university and do not believe for one moment that he

is like Corbyn. Foreign Minister Penny Wong, from the left side of the ALP like the PM, is a serious person, who understands that recognition of the non-existent “State of Palestine” goes against Australia’s consistent support for the parties involved to bring about a resolution through negotiations.

Both these political leaders also know that there is a broad Western democratic consensus that there is not yet a State of Palestine to recognise.

Many of the countries which recognise this imaginary political entity did so during the Cold War, making a gesture which was always harmful to the interests of any Palestinians who genuinely want a peaceful future.

Leaders of the Labor Left have made it clear that they know that they have the numbers to declare day is night and black is white, or any other fantasy.

All Australians must hope that the ALP does not start a descent into destructive anti-realism, and rejects outright calls for recognition of a non-existent state.



Foreign Minister Penny Wong, shown with AJAC National Chairman Mark Leibler, is a serious person who understands the importance of serious policy development instead of virtue signalling



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