

THE OSLO ACCORDS AT 30



Why were the hopes they raised for
Israeli-Palestinian peace dashed?

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This *AIR* edition marks 30 years since the famous Rabin-Arafat handshake on the White House lawn, touching off the period of hope for peace defined by the Oslo Accords. Our cover story seeks to answer two questions: Why were those peace hopes dashed, and what can we learn from Oslo's failure about current and future Israeli-Palestinian relations? We bring you important insights into both those questions from four observers with very different perspectives: Veteran Israeli journalist Ehud Yaari, strategic thinker Dr Efraim Inbar, former *Jerusalem Post* editor Yaakov Katz, and Palestinian reformer Mohammed Dajani.

We have also just marked the third anniversary of the signing of the landmark Abraham Accords between Israel and four Arab states, as well as 50 years since the outbreak of the traumatic 1973 Yom Kippur War. This *AIR* features pieces discussing the implications of both these milestone events – from British-American academic Ed Husain and Israeli strategic analyst Dr Ehud Eilam, respectively.

Finally, don't miss US historian Tevi Troy's study of Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu's record of relations with the White House, Tzvi Fleischer on what lies behind PA President Mahmoud Abbas' recent antisemitic speech, and the tributes from AIJAC and others to our sorely missed late colleague Jeremy Jones, who passed away on Sept. 6.

We invite your feedback on any aspect of this edition at editorial@aijac.org.au.

Tzvi Fleischer

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Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin (left) with US President Bill Clinton and PLO leader Yasser Arafat at the White House, September 1993 (Image: Shutterstock)



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EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN****COLIN RUBENSTEIN****A YEAR OF HOPE OR DISASTER?**

In Jewish tradition, the High Holy Days period – from Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year (which this year fell on September 16-17), until Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement nine days later – is a season to reflect on the year that's been and contemplate the year that lies ahead.

This year's High Holy Days season provided additional reasons for such contemplation because it more or less corresponded with several highly significant anniversaries: 30 years since the signing of the Oslo Accords; 50 years since the outbreak of the traumatic Yom Kippur War; 22 years since the Sept. 11 terror attacks in the US; three years since the signing of the landmark Abraham Accords; and one year since the death of Mahsa Amini at the hands of Iran's morality police sparked months of massive anti-regime protests.

It's worth reviewing some of these events and what we have learned about them in the years since, beginning with Oslo.

On Sept. 13, 1993, the first agreement of the Oslo Accords was signed on the White House lawn, providing hope for a new era of peace, cooperation and opportunity for both Israelis and Palestinians. The Oslo Accords created the Palestinian Authority (PA), representing an opportunity for Palestinians to take control over their own lives and achieve self-government, and, eventually, self-determination, while minimising the security risk to Israel and hopefully leading to an end of the conflict.

As four insightful contributors explore in this edition, this dream became something of a nightmare, leading to some of the worst terrorist activities in Israel since its creation and little hope even today of any imminent breakthrough towards meaningful negotiations or eventual peace.

The history of that failure over the last 30 years is complex – but the underlying reason appears relatively simple.

In the aftermath of Oslo, I actually met PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and his senior colleagues at his compound in Ramallah in February 1998. While he struck conciliatory notes at times, Arafat also openly threatened that if negotiations failed he would tear up the peace accord and renew the Intifada. It was apparent Arafat was never really focussed on reconciliation or compromise – instead threatening violence if he didn't receive all he wanted.

And indeed only a few years after I met him, he launched the massive armed terror of the Second Intifada in late 2000. This was despite the fact – or possibly because of the fact – that he had been offered a Palestinian state in almost all the territory he ostensibly wanted at Camp David a few months previously.

Under his successor Mahmoud Abbas, the PA remains a corrupt and undemocratic entity which both incites and rewards terrorism against Israel and is both unwilling and unable to reach a genuine peace with Israel providing two states for two peoples. Indeed, the PA has been unwilling to even negotiate about peace for almost a decade and does not even control Gaza, dominated by Hamas.

Yet Israeli strategic analysts largely agree that the PA's continuation remains preferable to Israel resuming direct control over the Palestinian cities of the West Bank. And as Yaakov Katz argues in this edition, there appears to be no realistic alternative to continuing to pursue the eventual achievement of Oslo's vision of a negotiated two-state resolution.

Fortunately, another anniversary highlights a possible way forward toward this vision. On Sept. 15, 2020, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords at the White House, normalising their relations. Morocco soon followed (Israel's

fourth partner in the Accords, Sudan, has seen normalisation derailed by domestic instability.).

The boom in relations that has followed in the short space of three years since then – involving mass tourism, major economic exchanges and joint projects, significant military and security cooperation and warm people to people ties – would have seemed the stuff of fantasy even five years ago. Israel’s recent willingness to lead the way in providing aid to Morocco in the wake of the recent cataclysmic earthquake there underscores how routine and genuine these relationships have become.

Meanwhile, there are widespread reports of serious US-brokered attempts to also achieve normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia, arguably the most important of the Sunni Arab states. It would be hard to overstate the significance of such a development – if it happens.

The past three years strongly suggest that – contrary to the conventional wisdom that had asserted Israeli-Arab normalisation could only follow the creation of a Palestinian state – Palestinian statehood is made much more likely by first achieving normalisation. If Israel can develop a network of strong regional relationships, it has less to fear from a Palestinian state, as well as Arab partners it can trust to help develop that state as a stable and peaceful one while providing diplomatic legitimacy for Palestinian concessions.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians are increasingly having to accept that good relations between Israel and other Arab states is now the norm, giving them little reason to continue to stand out as the violent exception. It is notable that in contrast to their reaction to the original Abraham

Accords – painting those normalising with Israel as despicable traitors – Palestinian leaders today are instead quietly exploring what concessions a Saudi deal can bring them.

Of course, looming over any potentially positive hopes for the region remains the escalating threat from Iran. It is clear the huge, inspiring protests sparked by Mahsa Amini’s murder a year ago have failed to overcome the utter ruthlessness of the clerical regime, although the ruling Ayatollahs must today feel appreciably less secure than in the past.

The multi-year nuclear crisis with Iran also continues to worsen. The recent expulsions of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors by Iran, described by IAEA chief Rafael Grossi as an “unprecedented unilateral measure” should spur the world to recog-

nise that only massive, coordinated economic pressure, combined with credible threats of military action, has any hope of stopping Iran’s imminent completion of its drive to military nuclear capabilities. Such capabilities would turbo-charge Iran’s already very destabilising rogue actions – including piracy at sea, support for terrorism and Palestinian rejectionism, regional destabilisation, weapons proliferation and material support for Russia’s invasion of Ukraine – and jeopardise any hope for regional progress.

Learning the lessons of the Oslo and Abraham Accords anniversaries could make the Jewish year 5784, which has just begun, a pretty promising one for Israel and the region – especially if Saudi normalisation comes about and Israel’s deep internal divisions over proposed judicial reforms are replaced by a genuine search for consensus. But this scenario is only conceivable if the world’s management of the extremely dangerous Iranian threat significantly improves.

AIR

“WORD FOR WORD”

“I think that under your leadership, Mr. President, we can forge a historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia. And I think such a peace would go a long way first to advance the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict, achieve reconciliation between the Islamic world and the Jewish state, and advance a genuine peace between Israel and the Palestinians.”

Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu at his meeting with US President Joe Biden in New York on Sept. 20 (Times of Israel, Sept. 20).

“This measure... has been exercised by Iran in a manner that affects in a direct and severe way the ability of the IAEA to conduct effectively its inspections in Iran. I strongly condemn this disproportionate and unprecedented unilateral measure.”

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael

Grossi on Iran’s decision to expel many of the organisation’s nuclear inspectors (IAEA, Sept. 16).

“The speech maligned the Jewish people, distorted the Holocaust, and misrepresented the tragic exodus of Jews from Arab countries. I condemn these statements and urge an immediate apology.”

US Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism Deborah Lipstadt condemns an antisemitic speech PA President Mahmoud Abbas made on Aug. 25 (Times of Israel, Sept. 7).

“On the first anniversary of the incarceration that led to the tragic death of Mahsa Jina Amini, the Australian Government is imposing targeted financial sanctions and travel bans on four individuals and three entities responsible for the oppression of people in Iran, including women and girls.”

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong announces new sanctions on Iran (Minister for Foreign Affairs website, Sept. 13).





SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

WHY MAHMOUD ABBAS SAYS HORRIBLE, ANTISEMITIC THINGS

“Moderate” Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas was widely condemned last year for accusing Israel of committing “50 Holocausts” – while in Germany no less. Earlier, in 2018, he was widely condemned for saying in a speech, “Hatred against Jews was not because of their religion, it was because of their social profession... because of usury and banks.” He later apologised for both statements.

Yet he’s now not only basically repeated what he said in 2018 in a speech at a Fatah gathering on August 24, translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute, but taken things much further:

First, he doubled down on his insistence that antisemitism was really about the Jewish “social role” and “usury”, but this time explicitly said this was also the reason for the Holocaust:

They say that Hitler killed the Jews for being Jews, and that Europe hated the Jews because they were Jews. Not true. It was clearly explained that [the Europeans] fought [the Jews] because of their social role, and not their religion... Even Karl Marx said... the enmity was not directed at Judaism as a religion, but to Judaism for its social role... to do with usury, money, and so on and so forth. Even Hitler... said he fought the Jews because they were dealing with usury and money... We just want to make this point clear. This was not about Semitism and antisemitism.

Second, he insisted European Jews are not real Jews, but are descendants of a group of elites from the central Asian Khazar empire who converted to Judaism in the 8th or 9th century – a conspiracy theory long disproven by genetic studies. Also, since they are not “semites”, there can be no antisemitism against them:

European Jews are not Semites... The story began in 900 CE, in the Khazar Kingdom on the Caspian Sea... a Tatar kingdom that converted to Judaism... They are the forefathers of Ashkenazi Jews. So when we hear them talk about Semitism and antisemitism – the Ashkenazi Jews, at least, are not Semites.

Third, while Abbas admits Middle Eastern Jews who make up around half of Israelis really are Jews, he insisted they never wanted to come to Israel, but were forced to:

[Israeli leader David Ben Gurion] sent his people to Iraq, to kill, destroy, and plant explosives in synagogues, in order to force the Iraqi Jews to emigrate. This also happened in Egypt in 1956... and then in Morocco, and other countries. The Jews did not want to emigrate, but they were forced to do so, by means of pressure, coercion, and murder.



PA President Mahmoud appears to be doubling down on antisemitic comments because he regards them as essential to the Palestinian “narrative” (Image: Shutterstock)

Why did Abbas feel the need to say such things – some of which he had to apologise for previously, and which clearly damaged sympathy for the Palestinian cause?

To answer that, let’s start with the official PA reaction to Abbas’ comments and the international firestorm they provoked. There was no apology this time. Instead, Abbas’ spokesperson lashed out at those who criticised him, expressing “outrage at this frenzied campaign [against Abbas] for just quoting academic and historical quotations.”

Later, a group of international Palestinian intellectuals condemned Abbas’ remarks about the Holocaust as “morally and politically reprehensible” in an open letter. An official statement from Abbas’ Fatah party furiously denounced this letter as an expression of “political and intellectual terrorism,” saying the signatories had identified “themselves with an ongoing rabid campaign launched by extremists in Israel, America, and Europe,” and participated “in a conspiracy against the Palestinian cause.”

Part of this crazed reaction is likely just plain authoritarianism – how dare you disagree with the glorious leader! But there is also more to it. Since he keeps coming back to them, even after getting a substantial international backlash, Abbas clearly believes these points are essential to make for the “Palestinian cause”. And indeed, similar claims often appear in official PA media, or from PA-affiliated officials. Why?

Basically, since the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation under pan-Arab and Soviet anti-imperialist influences in the 1960s, the official Palestinian narrative has always gone well beyond the claim that all of Palestine is the property and heritage of the Arab Palestinian people, to which the Jews have no right. It also says that Zionist claims about their reason for coming to the land are actually a nefarious conspiracy. Zionists are usually depicted as having always been secretly serving the aims of global imperialism, not really seeking a Jewish national homeland, and driven wholly by criminal greed, racism and genocidal hate.

The Holocaust and the long history of global antisemitism are problems for this narrative, because they appear to

give Zionists a genuine and reasonable reason for wanting a Jewish homeland. So they need to be denied or dismissed.

Sometimes this has taken the form of Holocaust denial. Sometimes this takes the form of insisting that it was actually the Zionists who created the Holocaust together with the Nazis – a claim that Abbas himself made in his 1982 Masters thesis.

Now, the claim appears to be:

- Antisemitism is not a real thing because European Jews are not semites. (This is a stupid claim, because actually no one is a “semitic”. “Semitic” refers to a group of languages and “Antisemitism” is a term coined by a German Jew hater in the 19th century as a fancy “scientific” word for Jew hatred.)
- The Holocaust was not about hatred of Jews as such, so Jews don’t need a homeland in response.
- European Jews are not real Jews anyway and have no historical claim to the land. Meanwhile, Middle Eastern Jews never wanted or needed a homeland, but were tricked into moving to Israel by the imperialist, not really Jewish, Zionists.

Very convenient ways to shore up the Palestinian “narrative”, aren’t they? Apparently, Abbas and his circle believe that affirming these racist claims is essential to sustaining the Palestinian narrative’s insistence that the Jews have absolutely no genuine need for or claim to a homeland, while denying these claims makes one part of the nefarious imperialist/Zionist conspiracies against the Palestinians. This last belief appears especially clear in the wording of the crazed Fatah response to the Palestinian intellectuals.

AIR



Jonathan Spyer

US OUTREACH VS. IRANIAN AGGRESSION

The US Biden Administration has pursued a strategy of outreach to Iran – releasing frozen assets in exchange for hostages, trying to revive the Obama-era nuclear agreement. Iran and its regional allies, meanwhile, are getting more aggressive. On August 28, Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary-General of the Lebanese terror group Hezbollah, issued a direct threat to the US.

“The Americans control the oil fields east of the Euphrates, and they are the ones who prevent these fields from returning to the Syrian government,” he said. “The Syrian state and its allies are able to liberate the east of the Euphrates... But the east of the Euphrates is an area occupied by US forces, so the conflict there is a regional conflict and could lead to an international conflict... If the Americans want to fight, they’re welcome, and this is the real battle that will change everything.”

Mr. Nasrallah said this in an address marking 17 years since the Israel-Hezbollah war of 2006, which his Iran-backed movement considers a “divine victory”.

His sabre-rattling comes amid heightened tensions in the Syria-Lebanon-Israel triangle. Nine hundred US troops are deployed east of the Euphrates.

The Hezbollah leader’s threats to the US are in line with an idea making the rounds among Iran’s allies in the Levant. It is the “unity of the arenas” (*wahdat al saha’at* in Arabic), according to which the various battles between Iran’s allies and pro-Western forces in the region are parts of a single war. That includes Hezbollah’s domination of Lebanon, the Assad regime’s effort to expel the US from Syria, and terrorism against Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The concept deserves close attention. In Israel, such utterances are noted not only because of their rhetorical appeal, but also because they have direct consequences.

Several ominous events in recent months demonstrate what this concept means in practice.

In March, an operative carrying a claymore mine was dispatched from Hezbollah-controlled south Lebanon to central Israel. His mission clearly was to carry out a mass terror attack using a type of ordnance rarely seen in the Israel-West Bank arena. The operative was killed as he tried to return to Lebanon, after planting the mine. An Arab citizen of Israel was blinded when the mine exploded.

In the same month, a drone attack on a US position in Hasakah, Syria, killed a civilian American contractor and wounded five US service members.

In April, 34 rockets were fired at Israel from south Lebanon. Israeli authorities suggested that Hezbollah might not have been aware of the firing. This contention was fatuous. Nothing moves south of the Litani River without Hezbollah’s permission.

On Aug. 3, missiles were fired at a US position near Shaddadi, Syria.

Later that month, Israeli security forces intercepted a smuggling attempt from Jordan into the West Bank, close to Ashdot Yaacov in the Jordan Valley. The smugglers were carrying Iranian-made explosives, presumably destined for the newly emergent militia groups of the northern West Bank. Because of those organisations’ efforts, 2023 has seen the highest rates of Palestinian and Israeli fatalities since the end of the Second Intifada in 2004.

The unity of the arenas also encompasses illicit commerce. The ordnance intercepted at Ashdot Yaacov almost certainly entered Jordan from Syria. It would have been moved along the same smuggling routes that Bashar al-Assad, Hezbollah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps use to traffic Captagon, the amphetamine-type stimulant that helps finance their campaigns.

There are more overt indications of growing coordination. On Sept. 1, Nasrallah entertained Palestinian ter-



rorist leaders in the underground Beirut bunker where he has dwelt since 2006. Ziad Nakhleh, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Secretary-General, was there. Appearing for Hamas was Saleh al-Aroui, who oversees that movement's efforts to light up the West Bank.

Gilad Erdan, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, suggested recently that his country is closer to military action against Hezbollah than at any time since the 2006 war. The US, meanwhile, continues its outreach to Teheran. Iran is waging a multifront military and political struggle – the “unity of the arenas.” Its enemies are divided. AIR

Dr. Jonathan Spyer is Director of Research at the Middle East Forum and Director of the Middle East Centre for Reporting and Analysis. He is author of Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars. (Routledge, 2017). © Wall Street Journal (wsj.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

PRINCIPLE ISSUES

Evidence abounds that the pursuit of power, especially over an extended period of time, will eventually require the sacrificing of principles if the goal is to be achieved. And so, if ever a signal was needed that the 25-year-old *reformasi* movement headed by Anwar Ibrahim is dead, the decision by Malaysian prosecutors on September 4 to withdraw corruption charges against Deputy Prime Minister and United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) party leader Ahmad Zahid Hamidi provides ample evidence.

Zahid faced an incredible 47 charges of criminal breach of trust, bribery and money laundering, which relate to the alleged misuse of millions of dollars at a charity he founded to fight poverty, and his trial had been underway for 77 days with 99 prosecution and 15 defence witnesses having testified. Yet, the Kuala Lumpur High Court accepted a prosecution request to grant Zahid a “discharge not amounting to an acquittal” after the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) chose not to continue pursuing the case.

Although the prosecution could yet decide to reinstate the charges, the key role Zahid plays in Anwar's governing coalition makes this an unlikely prospect. After last November's inconclusive general election, Anwar was forced to join hands with UMNO – the party he assailed for corruption for over two decades – in order to form a government and keep the conservative Perikatan Nasional (PN) coalition from office.

Amidst the public outcry, Anwar has strongly denied any involvement in the AGC's decision. “The AG had full

authority and he gave his reasons. It is the AG's decision, and I can't interfere,” he was quoted as saying.

It was too much for one of Anwar's coalition partners. The youth-oriented, multiracial Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA), which has only one seat in Parliament, announced its withdrawal from Anwar's Pakatan Harapan coalition, saying it would join the opposition as a “third force”, *BenarNews* reported.

“Who would have thought this so-called reform government that would end up dropping corruption charges for the sake of power? I will never allow Malaysia to normalise corruption,” MUDA's leader Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman said in a video posted on Facebook.

Whether MUDA eventually emerges as a third force remains to be seen. Founded in 2020, the party has so far struggled to challenge established parties and gain traction with young voters, especially to capitalise on the recent lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18. However, the party was founded only in 2020 and it is too soon to know whether it can capitalise upon progressive disaffection with Anwar's Government.

Despite MUDA's exit, Anwar's governing alliance retains its two-thirds parliamentary majority, but the party's departure could still affect the coalition's ability to pass constitutional amendments and other key reforms.

Still, it's hard to detect any appetite for *reformasi* in either the Government or the Opposition. A rally organised for Sept. 16 by the opposition PN's youth wing to protest the discontinuation of the case against Zahid fizzled out, with organisers alleged to be in breach of the UMNO-era Peaceful Assembly Act 2012.

However, Perikatan's elders can hardly be called reformers while being led by the 76-year-old Muhyiddin Yassin – who still faces charges of money laundering involving RM200 million (A\$66.2 million) in the theft of funds to combat COVID-19, after being acquitted in August of four charges of abusing his power to obtain RM232.5 million (A\$77 million) in bribes for his Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia. Their sole strategy is a transparently sectarian Malays-first agenda, which reaped success in the recent state elections forcing Anwar's Government to attempt to nullify this line of attack.

In the most recent example, the Government caved to hardliners by banning a locally made feature film about a Muslim girl who explores other religions' views on reincarnation after her mother dies, saying it runs “contrary to public interest.”

The indie film *Mentega Terbang* had upset Malay conservatives, who said it encouraged Muslims to desert their faith. It was released in 2021 for limited screenings, but its release on a streaming service in March led to virulent criticism, vandalism against property of the director and one of the actors, and both receiving death threats. The film had already been withdrawn from the streaming platform.

Naturally, the ban won the approval of the conservative NGO, Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (ISMA), which said the film's protagonist has critical questions about Islam's religious practices, and these are "underlying messages on liberal ideologies in religious practices."

AIR



Alex Benjamin

INCONVENIENT TRUTHS

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas' mask appears to have slipped. The serial Holocaust distorter (he wrote a thesis on this) made a controversial address to the Fatah Revolutionary Council in late August, as *AIR* readers are probably aware. Abbas' words are worth repeating: "They say that Hitler killed the Jews for being Jews, and that Europe hated the Jews because they were Jews. No. It was clearly explained that they fought them because of their social role and not their religion." Later, he specifies that the role of Jews he is referring to involves "usury, money and so on."

Abbas also resurrected the canard – long disproven by genetic research – that European Jews are not descended from the ancient Israelites, but from 8th century Khazar converts and thus are, in his words, "not semites".

Cue appropriate outrage in European capitals. Yet the EU had to accompany its strong condemnation with a comment that such remarks only "play into the hands of those who do not want a two-state solution, which President Abbas has repeatedly advocated for." (In other words: "Oh Mahmoud, you just made the mistake of giving those recalcitrant Israelis ammo against you!") Apparently, straightforward condemnation of a Palestinian leader is not possible.

More importantly, other than strong words, can we expect a freeze in funding for the PA which Abbas heads? A period in the political sin bin? Nope. Everybody, in every political capital in Europe, knows that Abbas is spreading antisemitism. Yet the cash will continue flowing into PA coffers regardless.

This amounts to rewarding hate. Yet no matter how many times this is pointed out, it is treated as an inconvenient truth and brushed under the carpet.

Meanwhile, the European External Action Service sent an internal working paper to all the Permanent Representations on the subject of the sanctions targeting the Russia regime. A number of Russian oligarchs are presumably mounting legal challenges against the sanctions, and this working paper is the EU response, citing individual justifications for listing each sanctions target.

As vice-chairman of the European Jewish Association, I was sent an email from a Belgian legal firm with

screen grabs of part of one such working paper, related to the Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, asking for my opinion.

The paper states:

"Like most oligarchs, Abramovich is part of the Jewish Russian minority, which, as a result of the latent anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and its exclusion from many public and security-related leadership functions, formed informal networks... Abramovich, as the main shareholder of Omsk Bacon, found nothing wrong from benefitting from the annual slaughter of 300,000 pigs. Yet he also followed Yeltsin's and later Putin's instructions to finance a Chadissic [sic] counter-organisation against the Russian Jewish Congress, which, founded by Gusinsky in 1996, had in their view become too powerful as an internationally well-connected lobby."

Abramovich's Jewish background, already mentioned needlessly, is slurred even further by calling into question his faith because of his business interests in pigs – and the document then talks about the power of an "*an internationally well-connected [Jewish] lobby*." All of this in an official European Union Working Paper – not some populist or xenophobic rag.

Now, hopefully it is as obvious to you as it is for me that this EU paper was tainted with antisemitism.

I replied to the lawyers to this effect, added that I don't defend Russian oligarchs, but that I would say the same thing if similar comments were made about any Jew. And I let the EU Special Envoy for Combatting Antisemitism – the genuinely excellent Katharina Von Schnurbein – know about the document.

In a private conversation with a dear friend in a senior EU position, I confided that if they are saying these things about Jews in official EU documents, I hate to think what they say about us verbally. Their answer was this: "it's an inconvenient truth, but a truth nonetheless, that the EU, as an international organisation, is not immune from anti-semitism. It's naïve to think otherwise, Alex."

Lastly, I was recently in Zagreb and visited the Jasenovac concentration camp – where the Nazi puppet state of Croatia murdered nearly 100,000 people during World War II – as part of preparations to bring a delegation of parliamentarians and ministers there in October. I can tell you that this camp feels like an exercise in perfunctory memory – a place that the modern state of Croatia wants to forget. That is why it is such an important place to visit.

It may be an inconvenient truth for today's Croatia that it was founded in part on murderous fascist foundations, but it remains a truth nonetheless. Similarly, it may be inconvenient to acknowledge that Abbas spreads antisemitism, or that antisemitic attitudes persist within the EU bureaucracy. Yet both are also true.

"It is a wise man that acknowledges the truth," Jewish sages taught. The EU could use some of that wisdom.

AIR

9

BEHIND THE NEWS

ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

No rockets were fired at Israel from Gaza from July 5 to late September, although another failed rocket launch from the West Bank was reported on Sept. 10, the eighth such effort from the area this year.

Throughout September, violent riots occurred along the Gaza-Israel border fence involving hundreds of Palestinians, some hurling explosive devices and grenades. Some Palestinian casualties occurred as a result.

Continued attempted and successful attacks, including shootings, stabblings and car rammings against Israeli civilians and security personnel in the West Bank and Jerusalem, resulted in some casualties. One IDF soldier was killed and a number of soldiers and civilians injured, in a car ramming attack at the Maccabim Crossing on Aug. 24. An explosive device that detonated at Tel Aviv's Hayarkon Park on Sept. 14 may also have been related to a terror plot.

IDF counterterrorism raids throughout the West Bank continued to round up dozens of terrorist suspects, and sometimes resulted in Palestinian casualties.

G20 PUSHES SAUDI-ISRAEL TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

At the G20 Summit meeting held in New Delhi on Sept. 9, world leaders announced plans to build a rail and shipping corridor linking India with the Middle East and Europe. The corridor would traverse India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Israel, with the aim of boosting political cooperation and economic growth, as well as trade, transport, energy resources and digital connectivity. No timeline has been set for the

completion of the corridor, although a working group is expected to present a plan in the next 60 days. Touted as an alternative to China's international "Belt and Road" infrastructure ambitions, the White House is reportedly seeking to tie this new infrastructure plan into its ongoing efforts to achieve an agreement to normalise relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

IRAN EXPELS IAEA INSPECTORS

Britain, France and Germany announced on Sept. 14 that, in response to Iran's "consistent and severe" JCPOA nuclear deal noncompliance, they would not be lifting the ballistic missile and nuclear sanctions on Iran which, under the terms of the 2015 deal, were slated to expire on Oct. 18.

Possibly in response to this announcement, Iran subsequently withdrew the visas from a number of experienced International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors, said by the agency to constitute "one-third of the core group of the Agency's most experienced inspectors" in Iran. Reports suggest the expelled inspectors were all or mostly German or French. IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi said in response, "I strongly condemn this disproportionate and unprecedented unilateral measure."

IAEA REPORT: IRAN STILL EDGING TOWARD NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The September 2023 reports by the IAEA indicate that Teheran continues to edge closer to obtaining nuclear weapons capabilities.

The reports show a slight slowing in the rate of uranium enrichment, but also that Iran's stock of highly enriched uranium has increased since

May, and that Teheran can currently produce enough weapons grade fissile material for one warhead within less than two weeks, and ten such devices in under four months.

In addition, IAEA supervision of Iran's nuclear activities remained very limited, with Teheran preventing the reinstallation of IAEA monitoring equipment and continuing to limit agency access to its atomic sites.

IRANIAN AIRFIELD IN LEBANON

On Sept. 11, Israel's Defence Minister Yoav Gallant revealed the existence of an Iranian airfield in southern Lebanon, in the Hezbollah-controlled area of the Qalaat Jabbour mountain, a mere 20 km from the border with Israel. According to Gallant, the Iranian flag openly flies over the airfield, which is designed to be used "for terror" against Israel. Analysts say that this airfield can be used by drones and is connected to underground tunnels used for weapons storage and shelters.

UNESCO DESIGNATES JERICHO A PALESTINIAN WORLD HERITAGE SITE

On Sept. 17, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee voted to designate ancient Jericho as a Palestinian World Heritage site. According to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition, Jericho marks the place where the Israelites entered the Promised Land after their Exodus from Egypt, and there is ample archaeological evidence of a historic Jewish presence in the city, including ancient synagogues.

Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said the nomination by the Palestinian Authority was "another sign

of the Palestinians' cynical use of UNESCO" and the "politicisation of the organisation."

ISRAELI EARTHQUAKE AID TO MOROCCO



Israeli aid workers in Morocco (Image: United Hatzalah)

The Israeli Government offered to send aid to Morocco within hours of the 6.8 magnitude earthquake that struck Morocco's south on Sep. 8, killing approximately 3000 people and impacting another 300,000.

An emergency relief mission comprised of IDF search and rescue troops and medical experts from the Magen David Adom rescue service, armed with medical supplies and equipment, was swiftly assembled and approved, landing just 24 hours after the earthquake struck. A second mission later set up a field hospital.

Multiple independent Israeli NGOs, including IsraAID, SmartAID, United Hatzalah and NATAN Worldwide Disaster Relief, also dispatched aid teams to assist Moroccans affected by the earthquake.

EMBASSIES OPEN

On Sept. 5, Papua New Guinea (PNG) inaugurated its embassy in Jerusalem, making it the fifth nation to do so. PNG Prime Minister James Marape emphasised religious and historical ties at the embassy opening, which he attended alongside Israeli PM Netanyahu. Marape also requested Israel open an Israeli embassy in Port Moresby, though there are reportedly no current plans to do so.

Meanwhile, on Sept. 4, Israel opened its first embassy in the Bah-

raini capital of Manama. Israel Foreign Minister Eli Cohen made his first trip to Bahrain for the occasion and met with Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdulatif Al Zayani.

LIBYA-ISRAEL MEETING LEADS TO CONTROVERSY

In mid-August, Israel's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen met in Rome with Najla Mangoush, his counterpart from one of Libya's two rival governments, to discuss possible cooperation and safeguarding the heritage of the Libyan Jewish community. When news of the meeting was about to be leaked to the press, Cohen issued a statement confirming it had happened.

Following protests about the engagement with Israel in Libya, Mangoush fled to Turkey and was fired by her Prime Minister, Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh. However, Arab media subsequently reported that

Dbeibeh himself had held secret talks in 2022 with David Barnea, head of Israel's Mossad, to iron out details of possible normalisation between the two countries.

ISRAEL'S "IRON BEAM" ALMOST READY

On Aug. 27, Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Chairman Yuval Steinitz announced that Israel will possess a partial system of laser-based defences against missiles, rockets and drones within a year, becoming the first country with this capability. He said he was also optimistic about achieving full protection within two years.

Israel's advanced laser air defence systems, sometimes termed "Iron Beam", are being developed through a collaboration between Israel's Defence Ministry's Directorate of Research and Development and Rafael Advanced Defence Systems.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

WE'RE BIGGER TERRORISTS THAN YOU!

When two organisations both present themselves on the world stage as leaders of their people, ready to govern that people in an independent state, and aspire to international recognition as such, one would expect they would want to distance themselves from heinous crimes as much as possible. For instance, crimes like the terrorist murder of innocent civilians.

Sadly, when it comes to the Palestinian groups Fatah and Hamas, the exact opposite is the case – to the extent that they'll even claim responsibility (or, as they see it, credit) for murders committed by the other, and mock each other for not killing more people.

On Aug. 21, Israeli kindergarten teacher and mother of three Batsheva Nagari was shot dead in front of her 12-year-old daughter in a drive-by murder. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, part of Palestinian Authority (PA) President

Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party, immediately claimed responsibility. However, it turned out a Hamas terrorist, Muhammad al-Shantir, was actually responsible.

Hamas responded by releasing a parody post attributed to the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, purporting to show the Brigades taking credit for shooting down the plane of Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin over Russia on Aug. 23.

Hamas may have still been annoyed about a statement put out by Fatah in October 2022 claiming to have carried out 7,200 attacks against Israelis, while tweaking Hamas for supposedly having done nothing.

On Sept. 5, Fatah took its proud association with terror even further, bragging that 23 terrorists killed while attacking Israelis were members of the PA security forces in a poster it released, titled "Martyrs of the Palestinian Security Forces" (Translations from Palestinian Media Watch).

It's a good thing Fatah is Israel's partner for peace. Imagine how bloodthirsty it would be if it was Israel's enemy!

COVER STORY

OSLO AT 30

AN INSIDER'S VIEW ON WHAT WENT WRONG

Ehud Yaari

The main dilemma faced by Israel in its pursuit of coexistence with the Palestinians has been whether to seek a deal with the “resistance” – then the PLO but Hamas today – or to instead reach out to the local Palestinian population that has grown accustomed to dealing with Israel for the past 56 years.

Invariably, all Israeli leaders up to now have refused to bet on the Palestinians living next to us. Honest disclosure: my entire career has been spent in the no man’s land between Israelis and Palestinians. As a supporter of the two-state vision, I have always felt that the road not taken (*Ed Note, meaning a focus on the local Palestinian population*) offered better prospects of success.

As a young junior assistant at then-Defence Minister Moshe Dayan’s office in the aftermath of the Six Day War, I was a witness to a still unpublicised and short-lived initiative undertaken by a handful of Mossad operatives to explore the prospects of promoting the establishment of a Palestinian state, sponsored by Israel. Numerous conversations with local leaders, along with some businessmen and academics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, yielded an impression that Israel could prudently try to press forward in this direction, even as all the Arab states were bound by the Khartoum Summit’s rejection of negotiations for peace.

Few Palestinian activists were loudly in favour of this idea pursued by the Mossad, although Yasser Arafat – who sneaked into the West Bank under different pseudonyms – was striving to build a Fatah-led armed underground to wage a “Popular Liberation War”.

Yet by April 1968, Dayan decided to drop the experiment. He did not have confidence in the local leadership’s

ability to face the opposition of both the radical Palestinian factions and President Nasser of Egypt.

Thus, the first opportunity to strike a partnership deal with our neighbours was not even tested. What followed was an ever-increasing pace of Jewish settlements and waves of terror attacks.

The second window of opportunity opened in the wake of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt (1979). Ministerial delegations from both governments held talks with active US mediation through August 1982 aiming at establishing “Self-Rule” (often defined as “autonomy”) for the Palestinians. Cairo quietly kept the PLO informed, although Arafat had rejected the Camp David Accords

(1978) that had outlined the concept.

After the suspension of these efforts, no attempt was made to fully analyse this process, and the protocols and draft proposals were never published. Even so, I covered these negotiations closely for my TV network, shuttling between Alexandria and Herzliya, and had a number of off-the-record discussions with Egyptian President Sadat and his team as well as

with the Israeli participants.

I was convinced then – as I am now – that an agreement initially bypassing the PLO could have been within reach, allowing the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to gradually assume the administration of these territories. Yet Israeli Prime Minister Begin, who introduced this concept, was not truly interested in implementing this solution, and the Egyptians did not exercise real pressure to move forward.

Prior to his assassination in October 1981, Sadat told me privately: “Israel has chosen the Palestinians outside over those next to it.” Dr. Boutros-Ghali, the Egyptian

“I was convinced then – as I am now – that an agreement initially bypassing the PLO could have been within reach, allowing the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to gradually assume the administration of these territories”

former UN Secretary-General, likewise said to me: “You are voting for Arafat!” That was the end of the “Self-Rule” option.

The outbreak of the First Intifada in December 1987 offered a different path. Within days of the eruption of a massive uprising that took the PLO completely by surprise, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza had formed a “unified command” comprising of all political factions to guide the strikes, demonstrations, and “Days of Rage” by circulating leaflets. Members of the different incarnations of the “unified command”, who were regularly rounded up by Israeli security, kept some contact with the PLO headquarters in faraway Tunis, but ran the operation on their own.

As a journalist then spending much of my time in the field after writing the first book on Fatah, then Defence Minister and later Prime Minister Rabin used to frequently invite me to review the rapid chain of events then unfolding. My advice to the beloved statesman was always the same: let’s talk to the “unified command” – both those behind bars and those who are free. Let them handle relations with Arafat and check whether the outline of a new arrangement is possible.

By August 1, 1989, the Washington Institute had published my paper “Toward Israeli-Palestinian Disengagement,” which encapsulated the recommendations I had been suggesting to Rabin. Yet Rabin remained sceptical about the freedom of manoeuvre of the local leadership. He would not adopt my prescription from that period: “The initiative would involve Israel’s administrative disengagement from the territories following a series of narrow agreements with local Palestinian bodies. Institutional disengagement would end a situation in which the weakened Israeli Civil Administration and the PLO-affiliated Unified Command’s shadow administration coexisted in the midst of confrontation. If elections do not take place, this process would bestow control over aspects of autonomy upon those Palestinians who would win elections were they held. Some of the burden of occupation would be removed, Israeli-Palestinian friction would hopefully be reduced and a new channel for negotiations would be opened.”

Arafat was, of course, bent on preventing any progress towards this course. After the left-leaning *Haaretz* published a lengthy interview with me about these ideas, he sent messages reprimanding me and instructed his envoys in Cairo to sit with me and deliver his objections. The message was blunt: no deal without the PLO!

Those meetings and many later ones with Arafat and his lieutenants were held in secret and never reported, since in those days my TV network forbade any contact with

PLO-affiliated officials.

By August 1993, a very reliable source told me that Rabin was going to accept a “Gaza-Jericho Deal” with the PLO. I did not believe Rabin would allow Arafat to enter the territories. Together with my close friend, the late Ze’ev Schiff, we rushed to see the Prime Minister arguing that – as I had just written in a *Jerusalem Report* – “PLO? Not Now, Not Never.”

Rabin neither denied nor confirmed the deal, shifting the conversation instead to other hot button issues. The result was that I went, as planned, to Washington DC to cover the next round of Israeli-Palestinian talks ignited by the Madrid Peace Conference. For the first time, Rabin had agreed that Faisal al-Husseini, the most prominent east Jerusalem leader, join in. I was not aware of the fact that across the Atlantic, the Oslo deal was about to happen.



Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin: It became clear Arafat’s priority was getting a foothold in “Palestine”, but that he would never consider long-term compromise (Image: GPO/ Flickr)

Once the news of the agreement broke, few details were released. So – startled as I was – I began calling my PLO contacts in Tunis. Mahmoud Abbas told me right away that the seven brigades of Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Army would be deployed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the first phase. In other words, Arafat was invited right from the start to impose full and exclusive control over the local Palestinian population.

He was granted the armed forces, generous funding by international donors, and a free ticket to bring with him PLO’s culture of terror campaigns, corruption, and devotion to the “liberation of Palestine”. Old friends from the Palestinian territories were calling me hoping to hear this would not be the case. Yet it was!

Arafat and his entourage were allowed to enter Israel in July 1994. When his convoy arrived from Egypt at the Rafah crossing, the Israelis quickly discovered that he was trying to smuggle in three major terrorists whom Rabin had instructed him not to bring without further consulta-

tion. In fact, Arafat was sitting on top of one of them – Jihad Amarin – in the back seat of his black Mercedes. The second fellow was hiding in the boot and the third in the next car. Arafat claimed it was “misunderstanding”. This moment was the real inauguration of the implementation of Oslo.

On Sept. 13, before the signing ceremony of the Accords at the White House, I had an exclusive live interview with Arafat at his hotel. After years of monitoring him, exposing his true name and biography, he sounded too cautious and too vague about his vision for me to be confident in his intentions. At that time, I was broadcasting on the only TV channel in Israel, covering the White House Lawn signing ceremony and speeches. I was vehemently criticised the next day by the Israeli media and by family and friends alike for being “sour” in my coverage. An hour later, after an Oval Office interview, President Clinton asked me why I was so sceptical. My answer was that I had not heard from Arafat what I had heard years before from Sadat: “No more war, no more bloodshed!”

It was clear to me then and remains so: Arafat signed the Oslo Accords to gain a foothold into Palestine. He had never considered a long-term compromise, giving up the so-called Right of Return or divorcing the PLO from “armed struggle”. For him, it was no more than an armistice for a limited period.

By 1995, he had signalled to Hamas – according to its top leaders – that they could resume suicide bombings. He

made sure his security agencies did not attempt to crush these terrorist attacks. Instead, they would arrest suspects and quickly release them through a “revolving door” model.

The Palestinian National Authority established under the terms of Oslo came to be entirely dominated by the PLO returnees. None of the members of the unified command were nominated to senior positions. In fact, almost all of them retired from politics, and a significant number left the country to live abroad.



Before his assassination, Rabin decided to give Arafat a “bend or break” ultimatum regarding the terror attacks the PA was allowing (Image: Shutterstock)

By the summer of 1995, Rabin had reached the conclusion that Arafat was cheating. He told Dr. Henry Kissinger – as the legendary former Secretary of State disclosed to me later in New York – that he intended to opt for a “reassessment” of the Oslo process.

Rabin shared his disappointment with a handful of close security advisers, confiding in them that he was going to serve Arafat with “a bend or break” ultimatum: curb the terror attacks or Israel will review its commitment to Oslo. They advised him to wait until after the first Palestinian general elections on Jan. 25, 1996.

The meeting between the two leaders was scheduled but never took place – on Nov. 4, 1995, Rabin was assassinated in Tel Aviv. His successor, Shimon Peres, was keen on maintaining the Oslo process as it was.

Since then, all efforts to revive Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, reduce the volume of violence – which peaked during the Arafat-inspired Second Intifada (2000-2005) – and build the PA into an effective vehicle for diplomatic engagement and the provision of economic and social services have ended in failure. The PA lost Gaza to Hamas in 2006 and is currently losing its control in several parts of the West Bank. It has become extremely unpopular amongst Palestinians and mainly operates as a patronage system employing an ever-expanding public sector.

Now, the preservation of the PA as a potential partner for peace with Israel in the future requires an ambitious reform – replacing the PLO old guard, who still maintain

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control over the PA, with true representatives of the local population. The international donor community and the Gulf states, with Israeli support under a different governing coalition, can exercise influence to bring new figures to leadership positions. These figures can in turn prepare the West Bank for whatever type of statehood with limited sovereignty may hopefully emerge from a potential fresh dialogue with Israel.

Of course, such an endeavour will prove pointless as long as far-right wingers seeking West Bank annexation remain an important part of the Israeli government.

The Oslo Accords should not be discarded but corrected to serve as the foundation of a reinvigorated political platform. An overhaul of the security organs is imperative, as are investments in infrastructure. The divisions of the West Bank into areas A, B, and C should be revised, and the Paris Protocol on the economic aspects deserves an update.

As Rabin came to realise that the PLO was not the best interlocutor, so should we now: the PLO has degenerated since Oslo and lost its potency. There are strong – though mostly silent – forces within Palestinian society eager to serve their nation, who are disenchanted with “armed struggle” and for whom cooperation with Israel is their preferred course. The Israeli Government would do better to give them a chance and a helping hand. AIR

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THE LESSONS OF OSLO'S FAILURE

Efraim Inbar

Failures can be costly but instructive. The Oslo Accords assumed that a fundamental change had taken place in the attitude of the Palestinian National Movement toward the State of Israel. Nevertheless, to this day, recognition of the State of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people has not been granted.

Moreover, Palestinians continue to use violence against Israel. Indeed, according to public opinion polls among the Palestinians, the use of force against Jews receives considerable support. Even if part of the Palestinian population is tired of the conflict and wants peace and prosperity, the

price of the continuous confrontation with Israel has not discouraged Palestinian groups animated by the concept of violent resistance – *Muqawama* – to the ‘Zionist entity’.

In accordance with the Oslo Accords, Israel transferred territories to the exclusive control of the Palestinians, hoping the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) would become a good neighbour and prevent terrorism. That did not happen, and the PA is having difficulties functioning as a state.

The defining characteristic of a state is the monopoly over the use of force. The Ramallah-based government lost control of the Gaza Strip to a rival armed militia, Hamas, in 2007. The PA recently lost control of the northern West Bank, and the refugee camps have become strongholds of armed organisations that do not obey the PA.

The inability to maintain a monopoly over the use of force characterises many Arab entities. Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen are countries in name only because the central government lacks the power to control armed groups. That does not bode well for the region's prevailing political culture and the possibility of reaching stable, peaceful relations with our neighbours.

Unfortunately, Israel lives in a region where peace between countries does not prevail, and using force is an alternative that comes to mind for resolving conflicts between neighbours. In contrast to zones of peace (North America, for example), the use of force in the Middle East is an acceptable policy for political entities.

Israel must internalise that it will have to live by its sword for a long time.

Its security needs require military control of the entire territory of the Land of Israel – from the River Jordan to



The PA has been unable or unwilling to monopolise the use of force, hence it is not able to act as a functioning state (Image: Isranet)

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The lesson of Oslo is that management of the conflict is the best Israel can do for now, according to Inbar, and a strong IDF thus remains essential (Image: Isranet)

the Mediterranean Sea. That means Israel will continue to monitor the area where many Palestinians live. Israel has no choice but to explain to itself and the world that the Palestinians are hostile to Israel and that Palestinian groups act violently against the Jewish State.

Moreover, the Palestinian political system cannot prevent terrorism against Israel even if it wants to. If there is no change in the Palestinian education system, which teaches antisemitic and anti-Israeli content, if the PA continues to pay terrorists, and as long as its media persists in broadcasting despicable antisemitic messages – there will be no peace. And “occupation” will continue to characterise relations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Today, there is a national consensus in Israel that the 30-year attempt to resolve the conflict with the Palestinians has failed – and the shared understanding is that a resolution to the 150-year-old conflict will remain elusive. The Israeli policy of managing the dispute is the default of the Oslo process.

This insight has also gradually permeated the international community. Conflict management requires reducing friction with the Palestinians by cautious use of military

power and selective settlement (only in places of security importance, such as around Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley). Only such a settlement policy can gain international understanding of Israel’s control of the West Bank.

While the Palestinian issue has not been resolved, it is clear today that this conflict is not the “key” to stability in the Middle East. Unfortunately, it is ridden with many disputes, and a myriad of socio-economic problems in which the Jews have no part.

Furthermore, the Palestinian issue does not prevent Arab countries from maintaining public diplomatic relations and mutually beneficial relations with Israel. In 1979, Egypt defied the widespread assumption that the Palestinians had veto power over improving ties with Israel. The Abraham Accords of 2020 underscored this lesson.

However, Israel should not fall under the illusion that its acceptance in ever-growing circles in the Arab world is a one-way process. The Palestinian issue still reverberates in the corridors of government and the classrooms of educational institutions in the Arab world. Under certain circumstances, Israel could find itself isolated and threatened by Arab countries again. Therefore, Israel needs to continue investing in a strong IDF, which is the guarantee for the security of the country and its citizens.

It is a pity that the learning process required the shedding of Israeli blood. At first, the terrorists’ victims were called by Oslo supporters “victims of peace”. Over time, it was recognised that the casualties resulted from Palestinian terrorism motivated by visceral hatred of the Jewish state. Abundant Jewish blood was needed to shed away a beautiful but unrealistic dream. Apparently, nations learn slowly. AIR

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OSLO DID NOT SUCCEED, BUT WHAT’S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Yaakov Katz

The summer of 1993 was a mix of hope and anxiety. Not just for Israel as a nation, but for me as well. Just a few months earlier, our parents had gathered my older brother and me in their bedroom to announce that we would be moving to Israel for the year.

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It was naturally exciting. We had been to Israel the previous summer to celebrate my bar mitzvah as well as the year before for my brother's. To us, Israel was a country of tourist attractions, beaches, the Ben-Yehuda open-street mall in Jerusalem, and endless kosher food. Starting a new high school in a foreign language was the part that created the anxiety.

“Netanyahu knew like all of his predecessors – there is no real alternative to a separation from the Palestinians. The fact is that the framework he embraced has remained the same since September 1993 – two states for two peoples”

Yasser Arafat.

It gave a feeling like something new was happening. There were new diplomatic relations for Israel, visits by the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister to new Muslim countries and a significant boost to Israel's economy.

Alongside the hope though were the almost immediate terrorist attacks. In the Spring were the first suicide attacks in Afula and Hadera, and, soon after, instead of remembering the images from the Rose Garden, I started calculating which bus to take to school in the morning, since one of my options – Line 18 – kept getting hit by Hamas bombers.

There is a lot that can be written today – 30 years later – about the Oslo Accords, whether they were misguided, an example of political naïveté or the right vision, but it misses the main point. Anyhow, there are countless articles and columns that are trying to do exactly that. Why bother with one more?

In the ultimate test, the Oslo Accords were a failure. They claimed to be the beginning of a process that would lead to peace and they failed to achieve that goal. In addition, and no less severe, they brought about a terror wave the likes of which Israel had never seen and with which it continues to grapple today, in places like the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank.

Instead, what remains the biggest question after the last 30 years is – if not Oslo, then what? In today's Israeli Government, there are people who called Rabin and Shimon

Barely knowing a word of Hebrew did not make the transition easy, but what was clear even to a new immigrant like myself was the sense of optimism that appeared to blossom in the country that September with the signing of the Oslo Accords. Still today, I remember watching the leaders of my now two homes – Bill Clinton and Yitzhak Rabin – standing at the White House embracing a man I knew much less about back then,

Peres the “Oslo criminals” and believed that they should have been tried for their crimes of allowing the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. They believe that if the Palestinians will not leave the West Bank, then they should be allowed to stay but never with independence, never with sovereignty, and always as second-class residents of this land. Even if Israel were to annex the territory as these senior ministers want, they would not grant the Palestinians citizenship.

What they fail to realise is that the process that began in 1993 has been continued by every government since, including by the so-called leader of the Right, Binyamin Netanyahu, who in his first term in office in the late 90s, and then again when he returned to lead the country in 2009, signed agreements, released prisoners and enacted policies all with the aim of pursuing the Oslo model – a two-state solution.

We can argue about whether Netanyahu did so sincerely or as diplomatic subterfuge, but to sign the Hebron Agreement, to freeze settlement construction for almost a year, and to release hundreds of prisoners just to fool the world would be a bit disingenuous. What it really all symbolised was what Netanyahu knew like all of his predecessors – there is no real alternative to a separation from the Palestinians. The fact is that the framework he embraced has remained the same since September 1993 – two states for two peoples.



Netanyahu, with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and PA President Mahmoud Abbas in 2010: Despite his scepticism, even Netanyahu pursued the Oslo model (Image: Isranet)

This vision – whether right or wrong – has been the only one presented over the years by consecutive Israeli governments. Even when Naftali Bennett, a known opponent of the two-state solution, became prime minister in 2021, he did not push another agenda. On the one hand, he knew that it would not fly in the diverse government that he had established. On the other hand, he did not really have another plan to present. His plan, which he had rolled out in 2012 and called the “Stability Plan,” is basi-

cally a two-state solution without calling the Palestinian entity a state. Again, the same basic idea.

And the real question we should be asking 30 years after that ceremony in Washington, is what does the anti-Oslo camp offer? What is their vision for how Israel thrives in this land without occupying other people and without slipping toward an apartheid state if it were to annex territory without granting citizenship?

Since the end of December, Israel has been ruled by a government that describes itself as “fully right-wing” and it is the most right-wing government that has ever governed in the country’s 75 years. But even this Government has no real plan to offer.

It simply promulgates a culture of populism without a real ideology. Instead, its members push simple and catchy slogans.

If Israel wants to, it has the votes in the Knesset today to annex all of the West Bank or even just the Jordan Valley. So why doesn’t it? If it also wants, it can decide to go back to the Oslo process and work toward greater separation from our Palestinian neighbours.

Whatever happens, it is not up to the person who sits in the Oval Office or to the men and women who will soon gather in the halls of the United Nations. It is a decision for Israelis to make.

While it is easy to vilify the attempt that was made 30 years ago, here is the question that no one in this Government has yet really answered – what is the viable alternative?

AIR

Yaakov Katz is immediate past editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Post. © Jerusalem Post (www.jpost.com), all rights reserved, reprinted by permission.

OSLO’S FAILURE: A PALESTINIAN PERSPECTIVE

Mohammed Dajani

The 1991 Madrid Peace Conference brought a glimmer of hope that soon faded away. But that hope was revived in September 1993 when the Declaration of Principles was signed with a handshake between two historic enemies – PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In 1994, the peacemakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of the weight of this moment.

I remember vividly the first time I heard the word Oslo in connection with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. I was

teaching at the Applied Science University in Amman, Jordan, when the news of the Oslo Agreement became public. Among Palestinians, the news was received with mixed feelings. Though it squashed their dream of liberating Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, it was a dream come true that Palestinians would eventually have a state called Palestine.

The September 1993 Declaration of Principles and the agreements and protocols derived therefrom – namely, the Oslo Accords – ushered in a historical peace process that the 1978 Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement had started. It showed that people, governments, and the international community desired viable peace.

And indeed, the Oslo Accords accomplished much. They opened the door for diplomacy and dialogue. In her book *The Vocabulary of Peace* (1995), Shulamith Hareven maintains that the Oslo Accords brought an essential change: “From now on, it is not automatically Jew against Arab and Arab against Jew; it is the Jews and Arabs who support peace, and Jews and Arabs both who oppose it...”

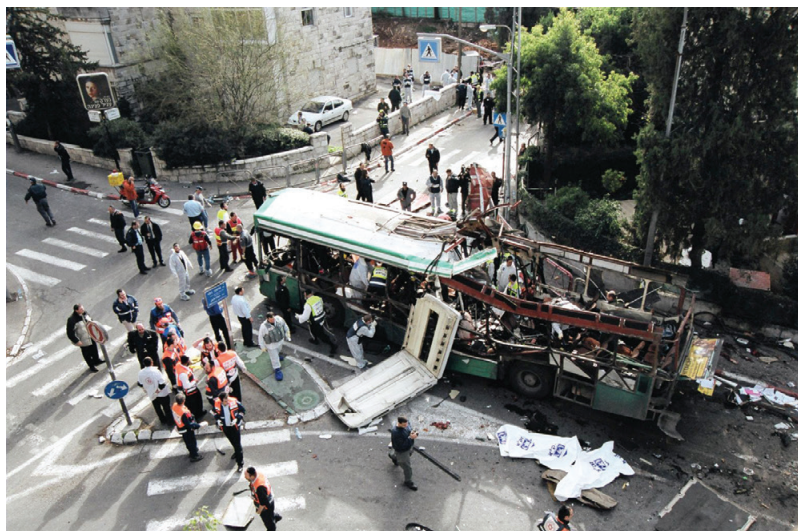
The Oslo Accords brought another essential change: from now on, it is not Palestinians against Israelis and Israelis against Palestinians, but it is the maximalist Palestinians and Israelis who believe in one state from the river to sea excluding the other, and the moderate Israelis and Palestinians, who support sharing the land in a two-state solution or a confederacy.

Yet from its early days, the Oslo peace process lurched from one crisis to another, with no light at the end of the tunnel. Thus, life became a mixture of desperation and hope. When waves of violence and terrorism rose, people became distraught with despair; when they subsided, they became hopeful.

Palestinian extremists immediately began waging war against the Oslo Accords to derail the peace train. The agreement stipulated to start with Palestinian self-governance in Jericho and the Gaza Strip. In response, extremists waged a nasty campaign saying, “Jericho first and Last.” The momentum of the Oslo peace process managed to overcome the scepticism that developed from this campaign. The return of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to Gaza and his election in 1996 as PA president strengthened the peace process.



“Arafat came to feel that the Oslo Accords failed to fulfill his political ambitions of becoming the Saladin of this era. Thus, he shifted back to being a disrupter of peace...” (Image: Isranet)



Hamas' suicide bombing campaign in the mid-1990s, which targeted buses especially, severely undermined the Israeli peace camp (Image: Isranet)

Nevertheless, the momentum of Oslo led only to limited results. In evaluating why this was the case, three components help explain its trajectory: the leaders, the people, and the hidden powers within the system. Israeli and Palestinian leaders, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, both came from a military background, and yet they ignited the Oslo peace process. Regrettably, the assassination of Rabin by a Jewish fanatic in 1995 dealt a serious blow to the Oslo peace process and erased from the political scene a solid pillar of the Oslo Accords and a staunch supporter of peace, leaving the other partner alone to become increasingly divorced from the process.

For his part, Yasser Arafat had adopted an odd Chinese-style military suit for the four decades prior to Oslo. He did not shelve this suit after Oslo, and could not shift, as Nelson Mandela did, from his role as a freedom fighter to becoming a suave diplomat.

Under pressure from Palestinian extremists, Arafat came to feel that the Oslo Accords failed to fulfill his political ambitions of becoming the Saladin of this era. Thus, he shifted back to being a disrupter of peace rather than a peacemaker. In this way, the Oslo Accords lost both of their chief architects, weakening their ability to translate vision into reality.

On the popular level, both the Palestinians and the Israelis were seated in the audience watching the play. Both wanted peace but could not play an active role in achieving it. With the eruption of violence by extremists, fear filled the air and trust was its first victim, paralysing what could have been a popular movement to realise the goals of the accords.

The Hamas suicide bombing campaign against Israeli civilians severely undermined the Israeli peace camp, shifting some moderate Israeli voters to vote for the extremist parties. Right-wing extremist Israeli parties took control

of the Israeli government and were determined to bring to a halt the Oslo peace process train. On the Palestinian side, the status quo seemed to favour that those in power remain in power, disenfranchising those who sought a brighter future.

There are still signs that the Oslo Accords have left an impact. In August 2020, the Oslo Accords eased the way for the signing of the Abraham Accords, bringing to the peace process four new Arab states in addition to Egypt, Jordan, and the Palestinian Authority.

And as we look back at the legacy of the accords, it is not the Oslo Accords that failed us, but Israelis and Palestinians who failed Oslo.

How can we advance peace when none of the Arab universities has a centre for teaching the thought, practice, and study of peace? When most of the publications focus on conflict rather than peace-building? When the educational curriculum teaches hatred, enmity, and death rather than celebrating life, moderation, and reconciliation? When terrorists and extremists are celebrated and peacemakers and moderates are labelled traitors? We need to change our mindset and culture to achieve peace.

The Oslo Accords set the foundations for peace, but it is up to both peoples to achieve it. The way ahead is diplomatic dialogue, normalisation, and non-violence to end the occupation and achieve justice. The Oslo Accords brought a fresh peace initiative full of hope to end the protracted conflict, but unfortunately, extremists derailed the train. Now, it is up to the moderates to get the train back on track.

There are the good and bad, peace lovers and war-mongers, the extremists and moderates on both sides of the wall. When moderates unite, flowers of peace will blossom.

AIR

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The Abraham Accords at three

Israeli-Arab normalisation remains a fount of hope

Ed Husain

Mid-September marked the painful remembrance of the terrorist attacks on the US of September 11, 2001. Yet, the week also shares the anniversary of the most powerful intellectual and diplomatic rebuke to the al-Qaeda worldview. Osama bin Laden attacked America for its role in the Middle East and desperately tried to whip up hatred between Westerners, Jews, Muslims, and Arabs. His death in 2011 did not end his message. Yet the Abraham Accords, signed on Sept. 15, 2020, have changed the lives of millions. And they have the potential to positively alter the Middle East and the wider world.

I am writing these lines as I shuttle between Jerusalem and Arab capitals. The Accords helped establish direct flights between Israel, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), some above Saudi airspace. In the airport lounges of Dubai, I watch ordinary Iranians and Israelis, supposedly sworn enemies, talking about their families and businesses. Trade volumes are increasing annually between Arab nations and Israel from US\$590 million in 2019 to US\$3.4 billion last year and will burgeon significantly. With 200 weekly flights between Tel Aviv, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, more than a million Israelis have visited the UAE. Air traffic has increased between Israel and Morocco, Jordan, and Turkey.

Second, since 1947, Israelis have lived behind an iron curtain with little contact with their Arab and Muslim neighbours. Most Israelis, only encountering Palestinians at checkpoints, viewed Arabs with suspicion. Now, as one Israeli general explained to me, “We Israelis are wearing new glasses and seeing Arabs and Muslims as partners in peace.”

In the security of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Israelis visit mosques and malls, beaches and golf courses, kosher restaurants, and even a synagogue beside churches and mosques. In Jerusalem, Israelis are stabbed, and they dare not enter Gaza. In the Arabian Gulf, Israelis and Arabs dance at weddings, invest in businesses, and change school curricula to educate for a better future. As the Accords declare: “We seek tolerance and respect for every person

in order to make this world a place where all can enjoy a life of dignity and hope, no matter their race, faith or ethnicity.”

Change takes time and leadership. What the Accords have started must continue and, in the long run, will increase the popularity of peace in Arab countries. Persuading 350 million Arabs will be a more complex challenge than 10 million Israelis, but the work has begun and requires American and regional support.

Third, where the UAE has led, Saudi Arabia will likely follow, and now there is a serious and sustained negotiation led by the United States to make peace between Mecca and Jerusalem, Islam and Judaism, Israel and Saudi Arabia. That such a diplomatic and civilisational breakthrough is even on the negotiation table is a significant advance from the days when Osama bin Laden wrongly claimed to represent



Transformative: The Abraham Accords signing ceremony at the White House on Sept. 15, 2020 (Image: Shutterstock)

Saudi interests. Bin Laden sought to expel American and Israeli interests from the Middle East. The Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, seeks treaty-level American security guarantees and advanced weapons systems to protect Saudi Arabia from radicals inside and outside his country. These are the corridors opened by the Abraham Accords.

Fourth, the Accords suspended Israeli annexations of disputed territories until 2024 and kept alive Palestinian dreams of a future state. That “normalisation, not annexation” model is now on the table for Saudi Arabia to secure a longer term of no expansion. Palestinian leaders from the West Bank have been meeting in Riyadh and Amman to open a new stage of respect and dignity for their people.

Still, the challenge for those of us who support Jewish-Muslim coexistence is to deepen further the noble aim expressed in the Accords: “We believe that the best way to address challenges is through cooperation and dialogue and that developing friendly relations among States advances the interests of lasting peace in the Middle East and around

the world.” In a future Palestinian state, we should imagine the presence of Jewish citizens. After all, Israel has a 20% Arab population.

Fifth, for years since 9/11, Israelis and Westerners would point fingers at Arabs and Muslims and say, “Where is a real peace with Israel if you are moderate and peaceful people?” Our silence was revealing.

The Abraham Accords have ended that question and allowed Muslims and Arabs to hold their heads high. But such confidence in coexistence remains fragile. Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Pakistan, Yemen, and others should end unwarranted hostility with the world’s only Jewish state. If we pursue our peaceful pathway, in time, they will join the circle of peace, too. But it won’t be free of challenges.

The Iranian Government is watching its plans for an anti-American region crumble, and it will increase its funding and terror activities to destabilise Arab governments, American interests, and Israel. Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and others across the Middle East are busy working to disrupt a Middle East aligned with America. Russia and China linger beside the Iranian clerics. But the threats to stability come from within our own side, too.

As China seeks to peel away Western allies, Washington must not repeat the mistake of naively promoting nation-building in Gaza, Iraq, or Egypt, where the outcome of elections is the successful mass organisation of radical Islamist parties who rarely govern in a democratic – never mind liberal – fashion. Solidifying the Abraham Accords and their vision of pluralism, progress, and peace means US diplomacy must beckon more nations under the roof of a civilisational grouping that shelters our allies and partners.

Building infrastructure from Dubai to Saudi Arabia to Israel to the Mediterranean, as announced at the G20 Summit in early September, is a testament to what is possible. Similarly, the UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia have all requested deeper and greater American security arrangements. The US and Bahrain signed a security and economic pact last month that showed others what is on the table for allies of America. The Abraham Accords provide the foundations for that military, economic, intellectual, and policy framework for a grand partnership between America, Israel, and 52 Arab and Muslim nations.

AIR

Ed Husain is the Director of the N7 Initiative, a partnership between the Jeffrey M. Talpins Foundation and the Atlantic Council. Husain is also a professor at Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, and a former adviser to British PM Tony Blair. He is the author of three books including, most recently, Among the Mosques: A Journey Across Muslim Britain (Bloomsbury, 2021). © The National Interest (nationalinterest.org), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

FROM 1973 TO ISRAEL’S NEXT WAR

Ehud Eilam

This October, Israel will mark 50 years since the 1973 war, fought primarily with Egypt and Syria. That war, known as the Yom Kippur War, because it was launched on Judaism’s holiest day, had an enormous impact on Israel. It is still remembered there as a traumatic event, given Israel was caught by surprise at the start of the war, the IDF’s military setbacks and the high human cost of the war.

Today, the IDF is focused on preparing for a possible war with its current foes, mostly Hezbollah and Hamas – both non-state actors while the 1973 war was fought against Arab states. The different types of enemies lead to clear differences – along with some similarities – between the challenges the IDF faced in 1973 and those it is facing today.



Israeli tanks in the Sinai Desert, 1973 (Image: Public domain)

Among the IDF’s challenges in 1973 which are still relevant today: maintaining relations with the United States; the need to be able fight on more than one front at the same time; taking into account the regional balance of power; suppressing enemy fire such as anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles; the threat of an invasion into Israeli civilian areas; and the crucial importance of the support and motivation of Israeli society as a whole.

The 1973 war was a major test of US-Israeli relations. Israel required US support on both the political and military levels. Most notably, Israel urgently needed US material aid during that war, in light of the massive aid from the Soviet Union that was going to the Arab side. Since then, Israel and the US have continued to develop their relationship, and US military aid to Israel has continued to grow. The same military and political backing from the US would again be essential for Israel in a future conflict.

Current ongoing tensions between Jerusalem and Washington, due to disagreements over the Palestinian issue, US negotiations with Iran and the internal political crisis in Israel, could undermine US assistance to Israel, especially politically, if a new war breaks out. Washington might also seek to shape Israeli policy in return for its support. Israel will be forced to consider its response to any such US request, while taking into account the level of dependency on US assistance and support during such a war.

In the 1973 war, Israel had two main fronts – the Golan Heights and the Sinai Desert (there was another very minor front, vis-a-vis Lebanon). In a future war, Israel is likely to again face enemies on more than one front. In a worst-case scenario, Israel might have to fight on as many as five such fronts: Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and inside Israel. Missiles and drones might also be fired at Israel from distant states such as Iraq, Yemen and Iran.

“In a future war, Israel is likely to again face enemies on more than one front. In a worst-case scenario, Israel might have to fight on as many as five such fronts: Lebanon, Syria, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and inside Israel”

actors (NSA) – but none are comparable to a large national military. The most powerful NSA Israel currently faces is Hezbollah, which has up to 60,000 fighters. The IDF, therefore, may be dealing with a much smaller number of enemy troops than in the 1973 showdown. It should also be noted that in 1973, around three million Jews were living in Israel. Today there are more than seven million Jewish Israelis, allowing the IDF to mobilise many more troops than in 1973, while some non-Jewish Israelis also serve in the IDF. Moreover, due to major improvements in military

In the 1973 war, Israel faced several Arab militaries, mostly those of Egypt and Syria, which also received support from other Arab states, the most important of which was Iraq. The Egyptian military alone had 800,000 troops. In a new conflict, Israel is likely to have to fight several non-state

technology, the IDF can complete many of its missions with fewer soldiers than in 1973.

The IDF has large amounts of aircraft, tanks, artillery etc. while NSAs don't have comparable weapons systems, unlike the Arab militaries in 1973. However, Hezbollah and the other NSAs have mortars, rockets and missiles that could inflict heavy military and civilian casualties, cause substantial damage to infrastructure and property, destroy weapons systems and disrupt operations. Protection of Israeli armoured vehicles has improved significantly since



Israel today relies upon its Air Force to a greater degree than ever before (Image: Shutterstock)

1973, but so too has the effectiveness of anti-tank missiles such as those known to be in the hands of some enemy NSAs. As in 1973, suppressing anti-tank missile fire would be a complicated task, dependent on tactical constraints, terrain, military circumstances, and the tactical steps taken by both sides. Some old-fashioned measures from 1973, such as using smoke to obscure troops from enemy view, would likely be helpful in Israel's next war.

In the 1973 war, Israel's Air Force (IAF) faced major difficulties in confronting the dense and highly effective air defence systems deployed especially by Egypt. The IAF lost more than 100 aircraft – a huge cost. There is also disagreement about how much the IAF was able to assist the ground forces in 1973, given the dangers posed to planes by these Arab anti-aircraft systems.



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Current Arab NSAs don't have powerful air defences. Hezbollah does have some effective anti-aircraft missiles such as the SA-17. These systems may be able to shoot down a few Israeli jets, which could be marketed as a propaganda achievement for Hezbollah. Yet, all in all, it would not stop or suppress IAF operations and supremacy. This is a major advantage for the IDF, because today the IAF plays a larger role in the army's tactical plans and strategic doctrine than it played in 1973.

In fact, today's IDF relies heavily on the IAF. Before the 1973 war, Israel invested heavily in the IAF, yet the ground forces, and especially the IDF's armoured units, were also quite powerful. Over the last decade, the IDF has focused more on the IAF and, to some degree, the infantry, at the expense of armour. The rationale is that large scale and accurate air bombardment, together with infantry operations to hold territory, could replace the massive armour attacks that were central to IDF operations in 1973. This is a calculated risk, because if the IAF fails to meet IDF expectations, the army might struggle to carry out major ground offensives.

Yet the IAF could potentially be crippled if its airfields were to come under heavy attack, or be partly neutralised by waves of missiles, rockets and drones. There are also some weather conditions in which the IAF is less effective.

In addition to the current iterations of the IDF's long-standing challenges, there is also a new problem which was not relevant in 1973. The deep political crisis in Israel with respect to controversial proposed judicial reforms has led to protests, including by reserve IAF officers, which might ultimately undermine the airforce's capabilities. For the moment however, the IAF is very strong, and can inflict devastating blows on Israel's enemies.

In 1973, Arab militaries managed to penetrate into Israeli-held territory but only in areas which were not officially part of Israel proper at the time – the Golan Heights and Sinai. In the Golan Heights, the Syrian military managed to penetrate quite deeply, but in a few days, it was pushed out, and the IDF then seized more land in Syria, which was later returned. The Egyptian military retook only a tiny part of the Sinai Peninsula, and neither the Syr-

ian nor the Egyptian armies ever got close to Israel's major population centres.

In a future war, Hamas and Hezbollah are likely to seek to send their elite fighters on ground raids inside Israel. To counter such a scenario, Israel has been building obstacles along the border with Lebanon that would help delay any such attacks. Some raiders might nonetheless penetrate Israel, harm Israelis, and cause damage – but are not expected to be able to hold on to territory. It would be only a matter of time before all of them were killed, captured or driven out of Israel. Nevertheless, Israel must be prepared to try to prevent and contain such attacks to the greatest extent possible.

In the 1973 war, the Israeli home front was quite safe. The Arab militaries made a few failed attempts to strike targets deep inside Israel, without much effect. By contrast, Hezbollah has 150,000 rockets and missiles that can potentially hit every spot in Israel, including the Tel Aviv area, Israel's biggest population centre. Hamas' arsenal is much smaller, but can also strike a large part of Israel.



Israel's current sophisticated missile defences – such as this Arrow battery – are required to counter new threats to the Israeli heartland that did not exist in 1973 (Image: Irsanet)

To counter this threat, Israel has developed sophisticated missile defences. One part of these, the short-range Iron Dome system, has proven itself in battle hundreds of times over the past few years. Other systems which target longer-range missiles, the Arrow and David's Sling, have so far seen very little actual combat use. Furthermore, against Hamas, Israel's missile defence systems can do quite well, but Hezbollah's large stockpile of rockets and missiles is likely to be able to overwhelm Israeli defences, meaning a considerable number may be able to penetrate and hit Israeli sites.

If that happens, it would be very costly for Israel, and would also likely have a significant impact on war-related decision-making. If Israel's civilian population were to take heavy casualties, this would likely bring fierce Israeli retribution.

In the 1973 war, Israel lost around 2,500 soldiers. In the next war, the cost will probably be much less. Never-

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theless, Israel has become much more sensitive to casualties since 1973.

Another difference could potentially be in motivation. Many IDF soldiers, as in the 1973 war, will of course be willing to risk their lives if war again breaks out. However, if the ongoing political crisis in Israel worsens, this could undermine the motivation of some soldiers, particularly among the reservists. Given the current divisions and lack of trust in Israeli politics, some opponents might argue the government of the day could have prevented the war, or even accuse it of starting the conflict for political reasons. If some reservists come to believe this, their lack of motivation could severely impact the IDF's performance. It is vital Israelis work to prevent any such problem.

All in all, Israel's next war might well be highly demanding, especially if its enemies include Hezbollah. Yet, based on lessons from past wars, including the 1973 war, the IDF and Israel's political leadership should know how to anticipate and avoid critical mistakes that could cost Israel dearly.

AIR

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IRAN HOSTAGE DEAL HAS NUCLEAR IMPLICATIONS

Reuel Marc Gerecht & Ray Takeyh

It's now official: The Biden Administration has concluded a hostage-exchange deal with Iran in which the US got back five Americans and Iran received five Iranian (or Iranian-American) citizens held in the US. Most crucially, the clerical regime also gets access to US\$6 billion in hard currency held in South Korean banks, transferred to Qatar.

Washington says the unfrozen funds can be used only for humanitarian purposes; Teheran says the cash will be unrestricted. If Qatar – which isn't known for being a rigorous fiduciary – is overseeing Iran's use of this sanctions relief, Teheran's take on the transactions will surely be closer to the truth. And Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi made clear in a recent NBC News interview that the Islamic Republic views the unfrozen funds as illegally seized and may be allocated as the Government sees fit.

Although the Iranian theocracy has repeatedly used hostage-taking against the United States (the embassy takedown after the revolution in 1979 and the Iran-Contra affair during the 1980s have so far been the most politically consequential), this may be the first time American aspirations have little to do with what was actually traded. Even for those who don't see hostage-taking as addictive, US\$1.2 billion per hostage is a lot of money. The White House clearly hopes that this deal is a prelude to a new nuclear "understanding" in which the clerical regime would voluntarily restrict uranium enrichment to something less than bomb-grade in exchange for more sanctions relief.

Unfortunately for US President Joe Biden, the Iranian theocracy separates kidnapping and ransom from the nuclear issue.

The White House has stubbornly persisted in its diplomatic outreach to the Islamic Republic even after it became clear that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had no interest in reviving Barack Obama's 2015 nuclear accord. A sensible question lies behind the Administration's diplomacy: Why hasn't the clerical regime already gone nuclear? It's a hopeful question based on the undeniable fact that Iran is virtually a nuclear threshold state. It has a sizeable stockpile of highly enriched uranium, functioning advanced centrifuges in underground sites, and engineers who've probably mastered an atomic trigger.

To confront or provoke Iran now could lead it to quickly construct an atomic device. Maintaining the status quo, where Washington doesn't try to choke off Teheran's sanctions evasion in Asia or loudly threaten military action, is, for the White House, a success. The regional and global effect of the mullahs getting the bomb would probably be much larger than when North Korea successfully defied Washington in 2006. Better to pay off the clerical regime than publicly accept Iran's nuclearisation – especially before US elections in 2024.

Given the Administration's mindset and its ardent aversion to another Middle Eastern war, Biden likely doesn't see that his actions increase the odds of an Iranian nuke, and sooner rather than later. The two most likely non-technical reasons why the Islamic Republic hasn't yet tested an atomic weapon – fear of American power and a constant concern about internal Iranian leaks from within its nuclear program, which could provoke a US strike – are undermined by any new "understanding".

Any agreement that leaves Iran enriching uranium to 20% and above (which can quickly be enhanced with ever-improving cascades of advanced centrifuges) and releases billions in hard currency for this "concession", reveals an America without red lines. Is Khamenei less or more scared of American resolve after goosing us for US\$6 billion? The Supreme Leader, who lives to humiliate the United States, hasn't stopped the indirect talks with Washington for a reason.

No US administration, not even a sincerely progressive one, wants to see itself as weak. Americans are adept at recasting globe-rattling defeats into a positive reordering of priorities. When avoiding military conflict is the ultimate objective, appeasement takes on its own unrelenting logic.

And the White House has already effectively decoupled non-proliferation from the use of force. Getting extorted, either over hostages or an A-bomb, is better than war. The Administration (correctly) has little faith in sanctions as an anti-nuclear deterrent. And sober minds in the foreign policy establishment don't envision domestic discontent overwhelming the Islamist regime. The US intelligence community, whose proclamations Khamenei at times brandishes, insists that the regime is durable.

So the Administration needs more transactions with Teheran to keep appeasement a viable option (appeasement has often been used by small states against stronger ones; it may be uniquely American that this equation has now been reversed).

Moderate Democrats may well keep their distance from the Administration's entreaties. With Obama's nuclear deal, which transferred billions to Teheran when the Islamic Republic was abetting the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Syrian Sunni Muslims, most Democrats could turn their eyes toward non-proliferation and blame the Russians for the bloodletting. This is harder to do

today, when the Russian-Iranian alliance is far stronger and Iranian drones are killing Ukrainian Christians. The Islamic Republic is in a proxy war against the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the one alliance that makes Democratic hearts go pitter-patter.

Releasing funds for "humanitarian purposes" may not provide much cover. The theocracy, which poisoned young girls across Iran to get their parents to keep them away from street protests, isn't acutely tuned to the commonweal.

With Obama's accord, some administration officials sincerely believed that they could reform the Islamic Republic through engagement. Do Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan really think this today? Does Biden think he can keep Khamenei, who has driven the nuclear program forward at enormous cost since the early 1990s, content with cash? Odds are good the President is just making this up as he goes along, hoping that the cleric prefers extortion to a nuclear test, at least before November 2024. AIR

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former Iranian-targets officer in the Central Intelligence Agency, is a resident scholar at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. ©The Dispatch (www.thedispatch.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.

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Unique monument for the “People of the Book”

Israel’s stunning new national library

Amotz Asa-Ei

The Zionist movement was yet to be born when a Jewish scholar called on the Jewish people to establish a library in Jerusalem that would “loom as a beacon” and contain “all of our nation’s books” as well as “manuscripts from all corners of the earth,” thus collectively creating “a treasure for future generations.”

It was 1872 when a Hebrew periodical in Jerusalem published this call – initially leading to the establishment of a modest library of several thousand books. By 1895, with its collection exceeding 10,000 titles, this institution was calling itself “The General Library of the Children of Israel.”

Now home to some four million books, besides thousands of newspapers, and a very large number of periodicals, manuscripts, recordings, computerised files and personal archives, that modest library’s successor – the National Library of Israel – is set to move into a sumptuous new building. The new national library will almost certainly become an Israeli landmark, a symbol for the Jewish people and an international attraction.

In practically all its aspects – location, architecture, financing and function – the new library marks a radical departure from its past. At the same time, it will seek to defy the pessimists who question the future of all libraries in the digital age.

Tucked between the Israel Museum and the Knesset, the new building’s visibility marks a huge contrast with the previous building’s location – which was deep within the Hebrew University’s natural sciences campus at Givat Ram, invisible from any outer road.

The new building’s unique location, even before considering its extraordinary architecture, promises to make it one of Jerusalem’s most familiar landmarks – both because of its two esteemed neighbours, and because its façade will straddle a major lighttrail line.

Architecturally, the building will be counted among Israel’s most monumental structures, alongside the Supreme Court building, the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial and the Tower of David Museum.

Coated by white limestone quarried in the Negev Desert, the building’s five underground storeys and six visible levels are topped with a sunken white roof that looks rather like a half-pipe at a skate park. At its centre, a vast, glass-coated elliptic-shaped opening funnels a pillar of sunlight into the structure, creating a virtual axis around which its whole interior revolves.

Upon entering the building’s spacious lobby, visitors’ eyes will be drawn upwards toward the pillar of sunlight, which is surrounded by five circular levels of book stacks and reading spaces designed to seat 600 readers.

Underground, a fleet of robots will be busily retrieving books and sending them upon request to readers upstairs, much the way Amazon manages the warehouses from which it ships online orders across the world.

In this functional regard, the library will be but a logical extension of what it was previously, a research centre and workspace designated for, and mostly used by, scholars, academics and students – as befits the home of the personal papers of towering intellectuals like physicist Albert Einstein, historian Gershom Sholem and novelists Franz Kafka and S.Y. Agnon.



Destined to be an iconic landmark: The new National Library of Israel (Images: Herzog & De Meuron/ National Library of Israel/ Twitter)

However, the new library seeks to break out from its previous academic focus, a goal it makes plain even through its exterior.

Unlike virtually all other Israeli public buildings, the new library is surrounded by no walls or fences. It



is instead encompassed by an elegant garden with pleasant sitting areas, while the façade overlooks a promenade abutting the glass walls that invitingly expose the building's lobby and ground floor.

Though obviously well-secured through other means, the building's landscaping is designed to invite the entire varied population of the outer world into the library, free of charge.

The effort to create an outgoing atmosphere is not just visual. Unlike the older library's physical and mental distance from the wider public, the new library intends to be a popular cultural centre featuring major public events – including exhibitions, some of them permanent, as well as films, concerts, lectures, symposia and conferences.

A modern auditorium, which can be expanded into the building's garden, has been built to accommodate such events. A visitors' centre and a restaurant will also give the building the feel of a big museum.

In a sense, the library will become just that, displaying literary treasures it previously kept hidden away from public view – including the Aleppo Codex's 1,100-year-old Torah scroll; some of 12th century Jewish philosopher Maimonides' writings in his own handwriting; the first printed Talmud; the writings of theologian A.I. Kook; and the original, handwritten lines of Naomi Shemer's fabled song "Jerusalem of Gold".

Unlike Yad Vashem, which shows how the Jews were murdered, the new library will show what the Jews have created. Moreover, unlike the Israel Museum's neighbouring Shrine of the Book, which displays ancient Jewish texts from the Land of Israel, the library will showcase the Jewish people's vast and varied creations in myriad lands over 3,000 years.

As befits such an undertaking, the new library is, effectively, a joint venture between the Jewish people and the Jewish state.

The National Library started off as an enterprise of B'nai Brith, one of the first international Jewish organisations. However, after the Hebrew University's establishment, it became part of its campus on Mount Scopus, a jewel in the crown of that university, occupying its main and most handsome building.

Following the 1948 War of Independence, the Mount Scopus campus became inaccessible, forcing the library to move to the western part of the city, where it was ultimately housed in a large, boxy and undistinguished building. Meanwhile, the Knesset passed a special law that obliged all publishers to deposit two copies of any book or periodical published in the Jewish state at the library.

Despite this prestigious role, the library gradually became a liability for the Hebrew University, creating deficits the university's budget was not designed to cover. Eventually, the university and the Government decided to transform the National Library into an independent nonprofit and to reinvent it by moving it into a new building – in which the state will be the majority shareholder and the university will be one of several minority shareholders.

The Israeli taxpayer paid only 15% of the cost of the new library's construction, which eventually cost a total of NIS 845 million (A\$344 million). The rest of the funding came from the Rothschild Foundation, along with individual donors, including Australia's Robert and Ruth Magid, who have funded a hall in the library to be named after the late Australian statesman Dr. H.V. Evatt. As Australia's Minister of External Affairs, Evatt chaired the UN's Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, and skilfully shepherded the 1947 partition plan through the UN. Then, as General Assembly President, he successfully pursued Israel's 1949 admission to the UN.

The financial formula for the library's construction thus follows the

model for the Knesset campus and the Supreme Court, both also financed mostly by the Rothschild Foundation, thus becoming powerful symbols of the Jewish Diaspora's active role in building the Jewish state.

Having said this, the new library will potentially carry universal meaning as well as Jewish symbolic import.

For example, the library holds one of the world's largest and most precious collections of Islamic and other Middle Eastern manuscripts – including a Quran more than 1,000-years-old, which will be part of the building's permanent exhibits.

The library's possession, in addition to the Einstein and Kafka papers, of Sir Isaac Newton's non-scientific works, as well as the papers of internationally renowned writers like literary great Stephan Zweig and philosopher Martin Buber, will lend the National Library international relevance.

Yet the most emphatically universal message lies in the library's statement about the status of the book in the current digital day and age.

The inauguration of the library at a time when bookstores worldwide are disappearing and major book publishers are struggling, raises the shadow of Lord Parkinson's pointed remark in the 1950s that the British Colonial Office was expanding even as the empire was disappearing.

Time will tell whether this parallel is valid, but the men and women responsible for the National Library of Israel clearly disagree. Though it is engaging in a massive effort to digitise its texts, the library's builders and executives believe it will swarm with scholars, students and visitors, and, in due course, will loom as proof that the book, arguably the lynchpin of the Jewish past, is also a key to the future. And not just of the Jewish people, but of the human race as a whole.

AIR

The new National Library of Israel building in Jerusalem is scheduled to open in October 2023.



Bibi's Seven Presidents

Netanyahu's history of managing US-Israel relations

Tevi Troy

Binyamin Netanyahu was elected the prime minister of Israel for a sixth time in November 2022 – and by the time the Jewish New Year rolled around in September 2023, he had yet to meet with Joe Biden, notwithstanding the US President's repeated invocation of their many decades of friendship during his own 2020 campaign [Ed Note: Biden and Netanyahu subsequently held a meeting in New York on Sept. 20]. This presidential snub prompted breathless speculation from journalists, diplomats, Israel supporters, and foes of the ideological makeup of the new Netanyahu-led Government.

It would have been surprising only if Biden hadn't kept Bibi at an arm's distance. His Administration was predisposed to look sceptically at the new Netanyahu Government. Even a previous Bibi premiership had earned Bibi a talking-to from Biden. According to Netanyahu's memoir, *My Story*, Biden had warned him in 2021 that "this is not Scoop Jackson's Democratic Party" – by which the President seems to have meant that the party Biden now leads is far less friendly to Israel than it was back in the 1970s when the pro-Israel Jackson was its leading foreign-policy light.

Of course, Netanyahu needed no such education from Biden. He has been studying, befriending, and clashing with American presidents over a political career that began in the early 1980s. He has manoeuvred in a

challenging political environment in Washington across five decades. His method is not just to build personal relationships but to use the force of argument to make the case for his point of view. As he describes the formula in his memoir:

"Influence governments through public opinion, influence public opinion by appealing to justice, influence leaders by appealing to interests." He learned this from his father, Benzion Netanyahu, who in turn learned it from the Zionist intellectual Ze'ev Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky believed that making one's case forcefully and persistently in a democratic society is the best way to bring about preferred policy outcomes. Bibi Netanyahu turned the idea into a reality.

After his brother Yonatan was killed in Israel's legendary rescue of its hostages from hijackers in Entebbe in 1976, Bibi created the Yonatan Institute to alert the world to the

challenges of terrorism. He organised two conferences on the problem of international terrorism, both attended by thinkers and world leaders. To the first, in Jerusalem in 1979, he invited former CIA head and presidential hopeful George H.W. Bush. Netanyahu's father had suggested he invite Ronald Reagan as well, but Netanyahu refused, unwisely dismissing Reagan as "an actor". Benzion Netanyahu pushed back, saying, "He's a man of conviction. Invite him." The son did not listen and later regretted it.

By the time of the next conference, in Washington in 1984, Netanyahu had absorbed the lesson. He was by this point working as a diplomat in the Israeli Embassy in Washington but helped organise matters behind the scenes. He invited multiple officials

"Jabotinsky believed that making one's case forcefully and persistently in a democratic society is the best way to bring about preferred policy outcomes. Bibi Netanyahu turned the idea into a reality"

from Reagan's Administration – among them Secretary of State George Shultz and Counsellor Edwin Meese. Netanyahu had missed his opportunity in 1979 to develop a personal relationship with Reagan, but he kept at it and worked to see that his ideas about the need to hold state sponsors of

terror accountable for their actions influenced the thinking and actions of Reagan and key members of his Administration.

During the George H.W. Bush Administration, Netanyahu was a rising Israeli political star, but he came crosswise of a White House that was less friendly to his country's interests. His persistence was viewed as



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obnoxious, and then-White House aide Robert Gates actually asked his boss, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, to ban Netanyahu from the White House grounds. Netanyahu did not do much better at the State Department. James Baker, who was both Secretary of State and President Bush's best friend, also banned him from Foggy Bottom [the State Department headquarters in Washington].

While the State Department ban officially stemmed from Netanyahu's comment that American foreign policy in the Middle East was "based on lies and distortions," it was really the result of disagreements on policy. President Bush had pressed Israeli officials not to retaliate against Iraqi Scud missile strikes during the first Gulf War. Netanyahu had disagreed and said Israel should maintain its ability to strike back. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, under heavy pressure, sided with Bush and agreed not to retaliate.

After the war, the Administration convened a conference in Madrid designed to impose a "land for peace" plan on Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians in the wake of the American victory over Saddam Hussein. Netanyahu attended, unhappily, and – again, publicly – objected to the proceedings. Netanyahu also made clear his disgust with the Bush Administration's threat to withhold loan guarantees to Israel if Israel continued to build in disputed areas on the West Bank. This last issue caused an uproar, and in the 1992 election, Bush saw a precipitous drop in his Jewish support, gaining only 11% – down from the 35% he had received in 1988.

During the Clinton Administration, Netanyahu rose to Prime Minister after winning a 1996 election to replace acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres following the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. To say that Clinton and company were disappointed at the result is an understatement. Clinton actively tried to have Netanyahu defeated in the election,

but, he later admitted, "I tried to do it in a way that didn't overtly involve me." Clinton hadn't fooled anyone. When Netanyahu next came to the White House, Clinton remembered that Netanyahu "wanted me to know that he knew I wasn't for him and he beat us anyway."

Clinton recalled of the episode that Netanyahu "was being very Bibi." But Clinton had also learned a lesson, recognising that Bibi was now the leader of the country: "If I wanted to support the peace I had to find a way to work with him." Clinton recognised that he'd been outmanoeuvred: "I wasn't so much angry as just bemused by the brashness with which he played his hand. But that's who he is. He did a very good job of it."

Despite Clinton's appreciation of



Clinton appreciated Netanyahu's political skills, but the two were divided over some key policy issues, leading to a tense relationship (Image: Shutterstock)

Netanyahu's political abilities, the two remained on different sides of key issues and continued to have a tense relationship. When Clinton did not like how Netanyahu spoke at a joint appearance in 1996, he fumed to aides, "Who's the f-ing leader of the free world?"

Netanyahu acknowledged in his memoir that he could have handled things better, saying that he "may have overreacted in my tone to the White House campaign of political pressure that preceded and accompanied the visit." In 1999, Clinton supported Netanyahu challenger Ehud Barak – less surreptitiously this time – and Barak ended Netanyahu's first run as prime minister.

Clinton had his problems with Netanyahu, but he also recognised Bibi's

skills. In 2019, he said of Netanyahu, "You should never underestimate him, he's highly intelligent, he understands his electorate... [Bibi is] smart and able and he knows how to hit people where they're tender."

Since Netanyahu was out of the prime minister's office, his interactions with the next president, George W. Bush, were relatively minimal. He still had an impact, though. In Bush's 2000 campaign, Bush criticised the Clinton Administration for interfering in Israeli politics by helping Barak against Netanyahu. Bush's critique of Clinton signalled to pro-Israel voters that Bush would be more supportive of Israel than either Clinton or his father had been, and he was.

Netanyahu also knew how to get the Bush Administration to reverse course. In April 2002, Bush demanded that Israel withdraw its troops engaged in Jenin and Nablus operations to stop the terrorist bombings of the Second Intifada. With Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's blessing, Netanyahu flew to Washington and spoke to a bipartisan group of senators. "I am concerned that the imperative of defeating terror everywhere is being ignored when the main engine of Palestinian terror is allowed to remain intact," he told them.

Netanyahu's words packed a punch in a Washington still focused on responding to 9/11 terror attacks. The Bush Administration returned to its statements that Israel should be allowed to defend itself, which took the pressure off and gave Israel room to manoeuvre. Once again, Netanyahu had used the Jabotinsky method of developing public pressure to help lead to a desired policy outcome.

Netanyahu and his approach received the most severe push-back from the Administration of Barack Obama. Upon their first meeting, Netanyahu recalled disliking Obama's "tendency to view the world through an anti-colonialist prism," but he was impressed with

“Obama’s intellect and charisma” and felt that they could work together.

Netanyahu’s initial optimism was not borne out. In their first meeting, Obama threatened Netanyahu, saying, “You know, people often read me wrong, but I come from Chicago. I know how to deal with tough rivals.” He then made a throat-slitting motion with his hand, something that Netanyahu said “deeply shocked me because it was so opposed to his restrained character.” According to Netanyahu, “the message was clear and it was meant to strike fear in me.”

In 2010, Netanyahu fumed when he felt that Obama deliberately had Netanyahu and his team cool their heels inside the White House while the President ate his dinner. Worse, Netanyahu felt that Obama had left Netanyahu with “an assignment”, since he had spoken to the Israeli delegation “like we were employees in his business, or students in his class, not representatives of a sovereign state.”

At the same time, Netanyahu alienated Obama by appearing to lecture him on national television in the Oval Office. Bibi’s approach was consistent with the tactic he had learned from his father and Jabotinsky – using a joint appearance with the President to make a public case for his policy prescriptions.

Obama implicitly acknowledged the power of Netanyahu’s approach in his own memoir: “The noise generated by Netanyahu had the intended effect of gobbling up our time, putting us on the defensive and reminding me that normal policy differences with an Israeli prime minister – even one who presided over a fragile coalition government – exacted a domestic political cost that simply didn’t exist when I dealt with the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, or any of our other closest allies.”

Despite the tension, there were successes for Netanyahu in the Obama years, including the signing in September 2016 of a ten-year, US\$38 billion arms agreement. And for all of

Obama’s bluster and the harsh statements he directed at Israel through his secretary of state and his vice-president, Israel managed to get through the Obama years without having to sign any ruinous deals that jeopardised its security.



Obama appeared to deliberately set out to distance himself from Netanyahu in their meetings – Netanyahu then angered Obama by making a speech to Congress opposing Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran (Images: GPO/ Isranet)

There was one major setback, though. Netanyahu’s 2015 speech against Obama’s Iran deal before a joint session of Congress irked many Democrats, who felt that Netanyahu was showing up Obama. Netanyahu’s memoir shows that he was aware of the risk of alienating Democratic allies, but he thought: “If I don’t take

a stand on a nuclear deal that could threaten Israel’s survival... what the hell am I doing here? That clinched it.”

The price was high. Many Democratic allies are still angry with Netanyahu for having given the speech. Even Obama’s vice president recognised how hostile the Obama Administration had been as a whole to Israel and to Netanyahu. At one point, Joe Biden said to Bibi, “You don’t have too many friends here, buddy. I’m the one friend you do have. So call me when you need to.”

The two men did have something resembling a personal friendship. In 1999, Biden was the sole American politician to write Netanyahu a letter after he lost his premiership for the first time. In 2014, Netanyahu and his wife hosted Biden for dinner when Biden visited Israel to attend Ariel Sharon’s funeral. As Netanyahu wrote of the visit, “Biden, always the gentleman, sent [Bibi’s wife] Sara a bouquet of flowers and a thoughtful note the next day.” Biden also has spoken of giving a photo to Netanyahu with the inscription, “Bibi, I don’t agree with a damn thing you say, but I love you.”

There were no such friendly gestures between the Obamas and the Netanyahus. Obama even kicked Netanyahu on his way out the door, orchestrating an anti-Israel resolution in the UN demanding that Israel “immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory” and calling

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Israeli establishments in “Palestinian territory” a “flagrant violation” under international law. The measure served little purpose beyond revenge. The Administration’s feeble protestations that the US had not been responsible for it fooled no one, least of all Netanyahu, who told the press that “we have no doubt that the Obama Administration initiated it, stood behind it, coordinated on the wording and demanded that it be passed.”

Netanyahu was pleased to still be in office when Obama departed. Obama’s successor, Donald Trump, and Netanyahu had had a friendly relationship before Trump’s presidency – Trump recorded a video endorsing Netanyahu in 2013 – and Israeli officials were welcome and frequent guests in the Trump White House. The close relations bore fruit:



Netanyahu and Trump had a long-standing relationship before the latter became President, which paid off in numerous White House visits and positive policy changes (Image: GPO/ Isranet)

The Trump Administration pulled out of Obama’s Iran deal, moved the US Embassy to Jerusalem, recognised Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and helped bring about the Abraham Accords peace agreements with four Muslim countries. These were all major achievements for Netanyahu. Perhaps more important, Trump’s moves vindicated two long-standing arguments Netanyahu had been making for decades. First, that the West’s fear of the “Arab Street” and the regional instability it would cause was overstated. And second, that there were pathways to peace that did not rely on an agreement with the recalcitrant Palestinians.

After the 2020 election, Netanyahu called Biden to congratulate him on winning the election. It was the right thing to do, as Biden was about to become president and would not have forgiven Bibi if he hadn’t done so. But with Trump leading the polls for the 2024 Republican nomination and a weak Biden vulnerable in the upcoming election, Netanyahu is in a difficult position going into the next cycle. Both the President and his former-president challenger may seek some kind of loyalty test from Netanyahu next year. Trump was so angry when Netanyahu called Biden that he later said, “I haven’t spoken to him since. F--- him.”

As for Biden, he has said multiple times that he “loves” Netanyahu, even if they disagree on policy. Biden is more favourably disposed to Israel than Obama, and he also seems to recognise that Netanyahu is a canny political operator and a survivor who has returned again and again upon being counted out.

At the same time, Biden and his Administration have been persistently negative toward the new Government, with Biden offering typically inarticulate criticism: “I think it’s a mistake to think that, as some members of his cabinet – and this is one of the most extreme members of cabinets that I have seen.” He has been obstinate in not issuing an invitation for Netanyahu to visit Washington, a short-sighted stance Biden later abandoned with the vague promise of a meeting once the Administration learned that Netanyahu had planned to go to China to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

As Netanyahu deals with another censorious administration, the history of his previous interactions with six other American presidents can provide insight into how things may proceed. Netanyahu cannot count on getting the kind of policy support that he got from the Trump Administration. But he does have his own extensive experience to help guide him through the thickets of current

American policy. He has cards to play even now.

First, there is his sense of the larger picture, which he derives from reading what he calls “my guide, history books.” Regardless of short-term disagreements, he believes that the US and Israel are on the same side in a larger struggle of free nations against tyrannies. The second card he has to play is patience. He saw the opportunity for the Abraham Accords but waited until he got the right American partner.

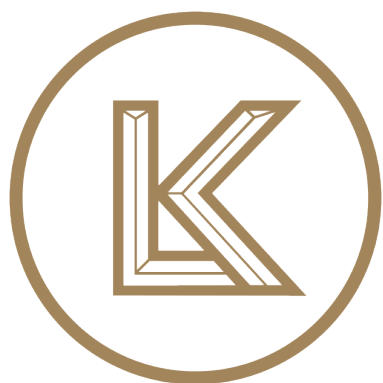
As he put it in an interview with the *Washington Examiner*’s Seth Mandel: “It took me a while to persuade President Trump. Couldn’t persuade President Obama or President Clinton, with whom I worked.”

The third card is his willingness to take his case directly to the American public in a variety of media, even when the American president and he disagree. This strategy may be less effective in Democratic administrations as the left becomes more hostile to Israel, but it still can work with the broad swath of the American public, which supports Israel on the whole.

Most important, Netanyahu knows that dealing with a hostile American administration, Democratic or Republican, is a complex game and one he has occasionally played poorly – or has simply been dealt a very bad hand, as was the case with the hostility toward his country shown by both the elder Bush and Obama. That said, his approach across these seven presidents has led to remarkable successes and demonstrates just how nimble and creative a leader he can be. AIR

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NOTED AND QUOTED

THE MONTH IN MEDIA

CAPITALISM

Media reporting of Papua New Guinea (PNG) opening an embassy in the Israeli capital of Jerusalem focused on claims Port Moresby was lured to open it there via chequebook diplomacy and the lobbying of evangelical groups.

On *ABC Radio* “Pacific Beat” (Aug. 30), political scientist Steven Ratuva said, “evangelical movements in the Pacific [are] mushrooming” and because these Christian groups believe the Jewish state is at the “centre of the second coming of Christ,” “one of the winners... is Israel.”

Professor Ratuva also asserted Israel has adopted the playbook of China and Taiwan in using “chequebook diplomacy” to cultivate successful relations with Pacific leaders.

On Sept. 6, ABC Middle East correspondent Allyson Horn filed multiple reports on the embassy opening, which included quotes from far-left former Israeli diplomat Alon Liel, who expressed outrage that Israel is reportedly paying for the embassy’s initial running costs.

An *AAP* report on the *Canberra Times* website (Sept. 1) quoted an unnamed Israeli official saying PNG’s embassy “would have 200 square metres of floor space and could expect a discount of about 70 per cent on municipal property tax as part of a standing policy meant to draw embassies and corporations to Jerusalem... An assessment of a property of comparable size in the same building suggests PNG will pay a monthly rent of about \$US20,000 (\$A30,904).”

Both the *AAP* and Horn reports suggested that PNG’s decision to open an embassy in Jerusalem would negatively impact Palestinian aspirations for a future Palestinian state with its capital in east Jerusalem.

This is doubtful. PNG’s embassy is located in west Jerusalem, which is not only recognised as sovereign Israeli territory, but will remain part of Israel if and when a Palestinian state emerges, as everyone knows. Moreover, it is difficult to see how an embassy located anywhere in Jerusalem precludes the Palestinian goal of having a future capital in the eastern part of the city.

MOVING VIOLATIONS

Some media reports continued to imply terror attacks against Israelis are a result of counterterrorism operations in Palestinian cities rather than the consequences of Palestinian Authority and Hamas incitement and offering of financial rewards to Palestinians who attack Jewish targets.

An *AP* report in the *Guardian Australia* (Sept. 1) regarding a Palestinian terrorist who drove a truck into a group of pedestrians concluded by saying, “Palestinian assaults against Israelis have risen alongside Israel’s intensification of arrest raids in the West Bank since last spring.”

Meanwhile, an *AFP* report in the *Guardian Australia* (Sept. 11) said “violence... has surged since early last year. At least 227 Palestinians have been killed so far this year in violent confrontations. The bloodshed has also seen 32 Israelis, a Ukrainian and an Italian killed over the same period, according to an AFP tally based on official sources on both sides. They include, on the Palestinian side, combatants as well as civilians and, on the Israeli side, three members of the Arab minority.” The report omitted the fact that nearly all the Israeli victims were civilians.

RECOGNISE THIS?

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’ antisemitic rant alleging that Hitler killed the Jews “only because they dealt with usury and money,” was cited by the *Australian* (Sept. 11), which argued it “should be a wake-up call to anyone who is sufficiently deluded to believe it would be a good idea for Australia to formally recognise a non-existent Palestinian state.”

The paper chided world leaders who have “lionised” Abbas as “epitomis[ing] all that is worthy about Palestinian aspirations for statehood... as he seeks – and all too often gets – the formal diplomatic recognition that has been sought from countries like Australia.”

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE INDICATORS

On *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” (Sept. 12), the Australian-born former US Middle East envoy Martin Indyk said the sight of hundreds of thousands of Israelis protesting for 35 weeks against the Netanyahu Government’s controversial judicial reform agenda showed democracy remains strong in Israel.

Agreeing with ABC host Patricia Karvelas’ assessment that this is “one of the most extremist governments in Israeli history”, Indyk explained that Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu “was unable to [form] the normal coalition of centre and right-wing parties.” Instead, he “forged an alliance between the ultra-Orthodox and the ultra-nationalist religious parties” which has “made him hostage to the extremists that he’s brought into his Government.”

He dismissed suggestions that Israel is “an apartheid state within its

‘67 borders where Arabs have the right to vote and under the law to be treated as equal citizens.”

However, he said, even though Palestinians on the West Bank have “their own self-government... the situation in the West Bank approaches an apartheid like system” where “settlers... enjoy rights as Israeli citizens, and Palestinians don’t enjoy rights at all.”

The solution, he said, is “to find a way to end the occupation” but conceded that Palestinian terrorism makes that difficult.

Indyk knows full well that under the rules of belligerent occupation, Israel is legally obligated to apply a military justice system to the West Bank. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians are under the rule of either Hamas in Gaza or the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, neither of which are noted for respecting basic human rights.

On Sept. 8, *Guardian Australia* correspondent Chris McGreal said, “successive Israeli governments have fought back against accusations of apartheid by characterising them as antisemitic out of concern the charge will fuel a boycott movement or open the way to prosecutions under international laws against apartheid.”

Israeli governments have opposed the apartheid accusations because they are a slur used to delegitimise Israel’s existence and falsely blame the Jewish state for the lack of a Palestinian state’s existence, when it is Palestinian leaders who have consistently rejected all plans to create one.

IRAN LATE?

On *SBS Radio* “World News” (Sept. 13), Foreign Minister Penny Wong defended the Albanese Government against accusations that Australia lags behind other countries in sanctioning Iran for its appalling human rights record.

Senator Wong said, “This Govern-

ment... has taken stronger action than any Australian government ever has... In fact... this is the fourth tranche. We’ve also worked with the international community to remove Iran from the Committee for the Status for Women at the United Nations. Australia co-sponsored a resolution of the Human Rights Committee establishing an independent inquiry, and... I have written to states and territories, asking them to cease... engag[ing] with Iranian entities.”

Asked why Australia opposes listing Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation, Senator Wong said, “we don’t believe that is the most strategic approach... [our] approach... [is]... to continue to utilise our sanctions framework and multilateral forums to ensure that pressure is put on Iran.”

Meanwhile, an article on the ABC website by inhouse reporters Nasim Khadem and Olivia Ralph (Sept. 16) quoted Iranian-American activist Nazanin Boniadi criticising Australia’s failure to designate the IRGC as a terror group as “send[ing] the wrong message.” Australian academic Kylie Moore-Gilbert – who was imprisoned as a hostage by Iran on trumped up spying charges for more than 800 days – was quoted saying that if Australia could list “Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza as terror groups,” then the Government’s refusal to list the IRGC “is a bit of a cop out.”

On Sept. 10, a report on *Channel Nine*’s “60 Minutes” included Minister for Home Affairs Clare O’Neil acknowledging Iranian foreign agents are boldly stalking and harassing Australian citizens that the regime perceives as a threat to its interests.

BACKROOM DEALS

Amid growing prospects for a Saudi-Israeli peace deal, a *Wall Street Journal* analysis in the *Australian*

(Aug. 31) noted that the Palestinian Authority is working with Riyadh to extract concessions from Israel – in contrast to its response in 2020 when it accused Abraham Accord signatories Bahrain and the UAE of treason.

An unnamed Palestinian quoted in the article explained that “It’s much easier to bypass the Palestinians when you call the Saudis backstabbers... It’s more difficult when you co-operate.”

MILLER TIME

Speaking to *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” (Sept. 6), former US State Department Middle East negotiator Aaron David Miller cautioned the Biden Administration “to be very careful about the price that we’re prepared to pay for” normalisation between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

A deal would reward Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu, he said, who is not only “on trial” but is “acquiescing in efforts by ministers within his Government to undermine Israeli democracy and pursue policies on the West Bank that will be tantamount to annexing it in all but name.”

Miller was also highly critical of Saudi rulers, who “[are] serial human rights abusers far too close to the Chinese... even for this Administration’s liking.”

Moreover, they are making exorbitant demands, he said, including “an ironclad... commitment [that] if... attacked... the US [will]... come to the... defence of the kingdom... I think that kind of commitment is a bridge way too far. The Saudis don’t have a security problem with respect to a land invasion... presumably by Iran, which I think is highly unlikely. They’re vulnerable with respect to... missiles. And there I think the United States can certainly... thicken its defence cooperation.”

MORE THAN JUST SYMBOLIC

In the *Herald Sun* (Aug. 29), Rabbi Gabi Kaltmann called the passage of legislation in Victoria banning displays of the Nazi salute a “win for a more tolerant and inclusive society for so many who feel the horrors of Nazism personally.”

Rabbi Kaltmann explained that “In 2023, outside of an educational setting, there is no reason for using a Nazi salute other than to spread hate and anti-Semitism.”

Writing in the *Spectator Australia* (Sept. 2), Kel Richards lamented the results of a recent survey showing that “64 percent of Jewish students

say they’ve experienced antisemitism on Australian university campuses and that most of the hate is coming from the progressive side of politics, including the left-wing of the Labor party.”

On July 23, *Age* education reporter Nicole Precel wrote of the antisemitism she experienced while studying at school in Melbourne 20 years ago.

“At school I had coins tossed at my feet, in the anticipation that as a Jew I’d stingily pick them up and pocket them. I was careful whom I told about my real identity – to certain people I classed Shabbat as ‘Friday night dinner’. I’d pretend I had plans on Satur-

day mornings instead of disclosing the real reason: that I was actually going to synagogue to prepare for my Bat Mitzvah. This as a 12-year-old girl,” Precel wrote.

AN UNFUNNY THING HAPPENED...

On Aug. 25, *Nine Newspapers’* “Lunch with” columnist Caitlin Fitzsimmons profiled visiting British Jewish comedian David Baddiel, author of *Jews Don’t Count* and *The God Desire*.

The main topic of discussion was the prevalence of antisemitism on the left. Baddiel said, “Progressives have



IN PARLIAMENT

Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** (ALP, Grayndler) Jewish New Year message – Sept. 14 – “I’m delighted to send Australian Jewish communities my best wishes for a happy, sweet and successful new year... The long and important Jewish presence in Australia is a story that lifts us all up with pride in our diversity. The quiet reflection, prayers, time with friends and family, and symbolic meals provide lessons for all Australians about the importance of community and forgiveness.”

Opposition Leader **Peter Dutton** (Lib., Dickson) Jewish New Year message – Sept. 14 – “On behalf of the Coalition, I extend my warmest wishes to Australia’s 100,000-strong Jewish community as you welcome the New Year... In a world where people of the Jewish faith continue to contend with discrimination and adversity, I offer my support as an enduring friend of Israel and pledge to stand with you in the mutual and noble endeavour of seeking a brighter future for all Jewish people.”

Senator **Raff Ciccone** (ALP, Vic.) – Sept. 14 – “With one in five Jewish students staying away from university campuses to avoid antisemitism, it is incumbent on our universities to act and do more... Seventy-six per cent of respondents to the survey said they would be more confident in the university complaints system and procedures if they adopted a definition of antisemitism... that would be a very good place to start. I stand in solidarity with the Jewish community and the students against the scourge of antisemitism in this country, particularly at our universities. I call on parliamentarians to do the same thing.”

Senator **Dean Smith** (Lib., WA) – Sept. 12 – “Senators and members should be alarmed when the Australian Union of Jewish Students finds it necessary to come to our national parliament to talk about the terrible and unacceptable experiences

of Jewish students on university campuses across Australia... In a free and vibrant country like ours it’s beholden on all of us, every group of us and every multicultural community, to stand up against antisemitism.”

Josh Burns (ALP, Macnamara) – Sept. 11 – “I... speak about the Australian Jewish University Experience Survey... and the results of the survey are truly shocking. The results showed more than 50 per cent of Jewish university students hide their identity on campus, that 64 per cent have experienced some form of antisemitism on campus... These results are alarming. No student should have to go to university fearful for their identity. We need to do something about it so we have a better future for these students.”

Michelle Ananda-Rajah (ALP, Higgins) – Sept. 4 – “With university still split on whether to adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, it is no surprise that reporting of antisemitic abuse on campus remains so low. The process is onerous, and university responses are consistently poor. When Jewish students avoid self-disclosure due to fear, it only compounds the problem.”

Senator **Fatima Payman** (ALP, WA) – Sept. 12 – “We should not accept that Palestinian families in the West Bank live under military occupation or that children are prosecuted in military courts without fundamental trial rights and protection... I’m proud that this government recognises the rights of both Palestine and Israel to exist as two states with secure and recognised borders.”

James Stevens (Lib., Sturt) – Sept. 4 – “Frankly, [antisemitism] is where the hard left and the hard right basically fuse together, and the hard left have some pretty appalling views when it comes to antisemitism and the state of Israel... Antisemitism has always been seen as one of the most significant attributes of hard right-wing extremism and anywhere in our society where we see it we should always... call it out.”

a blind spot about anti-Semitism – they don’t recognise it as racism, or they downgrade it compared with other racism in the belief that Jewish people are white, rich and powerful.” Fitzsimmons reported Baddiel is frustrated when progressives respond to Jews highlighting instances of antisemitism, by saying “but what about Israel (or Palestine)?”

She wrote that Baddiel told her that, being British, he “feels no more connection to Israel than any other foreign country, and says he should not have to answer for its politics.”

On *Sky News* “Outsiders” (Sept. 17), Israeli writer, actor and activist Noa Tishby explained that millennia-old “tropes” associated with antisemitism are now deployed against Israel by “the extreme left”.

Tishby explained “you basically take everything that they say about Israel, so vilification, demonisation, calling Israel a bloodthirsty country. That’s literally a trope that we’ve been hearing for 1,500 years. So, the Jews are bloodthirsty people. They’re killing little children. They’re killing Palestinian children... And to some extent, they’re using Israel as an excuse for antisemitism.”

CITIZEN WATCH

Commentator Gerard Henderson’s Media Watch Dog column (Sept. 17) took on the Jewish and anti-Zionist British actor Miriam Margolyes for telling *ABC Radio National* “Breakfast” (Sept. 13) that “nobody likes Jews” in Australia.

Henderson countered that “sure, there is a degree of anti-Semitism in Australia – but far less than in some similar societies. Moreover, the Jewish Australian population – which currently stands at only 100,000 – has been remarkably successful. For example, Josh Frydenberg was treasurer in the previous Coalition government and Mark Dreyfus is attorney-general in the current Labor government... Which raises the question – if Ms

Margolyes believes Australia is so... replete with anti-Semitism, why did she choose to take up Australian citizenship?”

TERRORVISION

An Al Jazeera sourced video ‘report’ (Sept. 1) hosted on the websites of News Corp newspapers about a 14-year-old Palestinian terrorist who was shot dead while carrying out a stabbing attack at a light rail station in Jerusalem amounted to little more than one-sided, emotive anti-Israel propaganda and incitement.

The item was given the provocative headline of “Israeli settlers cheer after police shoot dead unarmed teenager at Jerusalem rail station.”

The script asserted that, “This is the moment Israeli bystanders cheer the killing of a 14-year-old who was shot dead by police at a light rail station in Jerusalem. Authorities say Khaled Samer al-Za’neen had tried to stab a settler. The Palestinian news agency Wafa says settlers had assaulted the teenager. Video shows the wounded boy on the ground. Witnesses say he was unarmed when he was shot at close range and authorities refused to allow medics to treat him as he bled to death.”

Practically none of this was true, as an *AFP* report – appropriately headlined “Teenage attacker shot dead after Jerusalem stabbing: police” – elsewhere on News Corp websites showed.

The *AFP* report stated that, “A border police officer who was travelling in a tram saw the attack as it happened and took action, the police said. He ‘promptly disembarked from the train and fired’, hitting the suspect, they said.”

The injured man was 25 and had been stabbed in the back, the article noted.

Al Jazeera’s claim the terrorist was assaulted on the train by “settlers” was not reported by any credible media outlet. Likewise, the claim that al-

Za’neen was shot dead in cold blood is belied by all the available evidence. The characterisation of all Jews at the station as “settlers” is also Al Jazeera’s blatant attempt to portray them as illegitimate.

On Aug. 29, News Corp websites ran another Al Jazeera propaganda video report about a small group of protesters in San Francisco accusing Google of enabling Israeli apartheid. The report simply amplified their claims without including any counter-voicing voices.

MANSOUR IN THE MIDDLE

An *SBS TV* “News in Arabic” (Sept. 1) report of a series of Palestinian terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, included footage of remarks by Israeli Arab Ra’am party leader Mansour Abbas criticising the Israeli Government.

Mansour said, “People here are shouting at this negligent and ineffective government. It is also a message to the Arab community as a whole that violence and crime have emerged, and we cannot live with it nor surrender to it.”

Unfortunately, this was highly misleading – Abbas’ commentary had nothing to do with Palestinian terror attacks against Israel. It was made at a demonstration in Haifa on Aug. 31 to protest the increasing criminal violence and murder within the Arab sector in Israel, and the inability of Israeli police to stop it.

A “News in Arabic” report (Sept. 6) of a talk by former Foreign Minister Bob Carr at a pro-Palestinian symposium held at Sydney University’s Great Hall failed to provide any balance to his stridently anti-Israel remarks. It did note that some symposium participants walked out in protest at Carr’s comments that Australia does not support anti-Israel violence, which he said was self-defeating because “any attack on bus stations in Israel will lead to a strong [military] response.”

TRIBUTES TO JEREMY JONES, AM

Chris Minns – Premier of New South Wales

His was a lifetime of extraordinary commitment to interfaith relations, community harmony, and service. Jeremy's infectious enthusiasm and optimism, and his principled determination, were an inspiration to so many. His efforts have had a tangible and lasting impact on community cohesion in NSW, Australia, and globally.

Mark Dreyfus – Federal Attorney-General

Jeremy devoted his life to the Australian Jewish community, and to fighting antisemitism and racism, most notably in the landmark Racial Discrimination Act case against a notorious Holocaust denier. Jeremy was dedicated to inter-communal harmony...

Josh Burns – Federal Member for Macnamara

Jeremy Jones was a true mensch. He was always courteous, knowledgeable and acted only with the Jewish Community's best interest at heart... Jeremy led our community with distinction and we owe him much gratitude for his decades of service.

Julian Leaser – Federal Member for Berowra

Jeremy Jones was a lion of our community... Throughout his life he stood up for our community, stood up for the State of Israel and stood against antisemitism and racism in all its forms... He was widely respected across the political spectrum and his loss will be keenly felt.

Dr Mike Kelly – former Federal Minister

I feel like I have lost a member of my own family. Jeremy has been such a close friend over so many years and a truly valuable and committed warrior in the key battles for Israel and enhancing the health of our own society. He... leaves a legacy of inspiration and obligation for us to fill the void he leaves.

Senator Deborah O'Neill – Federal Senator for NSW

Jeremy Jones AM [was] a righteous man who was a faithful servant to his Jewish community here in Australia for more than four decades... He dedicated much of his work to promoting interfaith dialogue and was a renowned expert on antisemitism... We have lost a titan of the community.

The Hon. Penny Sharpe – Leader of the NSW Government in the



Legislative Council and Minister for the Environment and Climate Change

He was genuinely interested in the people he met, the thoughts they had and how they could contribute with him to making New South Wales a better place for all of us to live. He was a strong fighter against racism and particularly antisemitism... Vale, Jeremy Jones.

The Hon. Daniel Mookhey – NSW Treasurer

I pay tribute to Jeremy Jones, AM... a leading light of the Australian-Jewish community and a driving force for tolerance and multiculturalism... He was at the forefront of the battle to expose and combat antisemitism, racial hatred and bigotry. He was notably a genuine supporter of Indigenous Australians.

Philip Dalidakis – former Victorian Minister

Sometimes the Yiddish word 'mensch' gets overused or used for people who don't really deserve it. Hearing the sad news of Jeremy Jones passing, made me immediately remember him as a mensch above all else.

The Hon. Natalie Ward – Deputy Leader of the NSW Liberal Party

Jeremy dedicated his whole life to the Jewish community, promoting interfaith dialogue and fighting against antisemitism and racism... People of Australia and New South Wales mourn the loss of someone who was a thought leader, who exercised great work and who took great strides towards peace in our harmonious multicultural community.

The Hon. Scott Farlow – NSW State Opposition frontbencher

Jeremy... was somebody known throughout broader society, not just the Jewish community, as somebody who brought people together. He was a true humanitarian... I will always remember Jeremy in his Indigenous kippah. That was the symbol of Jeremy in many ways...

Peter Wertheim – co-CEO Executive Council of Australian Jewry

For more than four decades, Jeremy was a faithful servant of the Australian Jewish community... There is hardly any area of Jewish communal life that did not benefit in some way from his expertise and dedication... He leaves a legacy that will serve as an example to the next generation of Jewish communal activists.

Jeremy Leibler – President, Zionist Federation of Australia

The Zionist Federation of Australia leadership and staff joins the entire Australian Jewish community in mourning the untimely death of Jeremy Jones, a committed and passionate Australian Jewish leader... His warmth, his desire to connect, and his passion for his country, his community and for Israel will long be remembered....

David Ossip – President, NSW Jewish Board of Deputies

For close to four decades... Jeremy distinguished himself as a leader of unique standing through his tireless efforts to build bridges with other faith and multicultural communities and his unceasing efforts to confront all forms of racism and discrimination.

The Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS)

Our hearts are broken to hear of the passing of Jeremy Jones... Jeremy was an active AUJS member and throughout his life as a community leader he remained a mentor for AUJS students. First and foremost for many current and former AUJS members, he was a friend. At our Annual General Meeting today we passed a motion recognising Jeremy as [an] honorary life member.

Gareth Narunsky – National Editor, Australian Jewish News

Much has been said in these pages about the man Jeremy Jones was: a passionate advocate and communal leader, an intellectual, a mensch.

Jeremy was also one of those rare people that made time for, and forged a unique connection with, everyone. His quick wit endeared him to all... The world is a far poorer place on account of him no longer being in it.

Rabbi Shua Solomon – Bondi Mizrahi Synagogue

Jeremy was dedicated to bringing peace and harmony to his fellow humans. An unassuming and gentle man, of rare intelligence, he went out of his way to share his knowledge and talent, widely impacting the Jewish community and many other faiths and peoples. He will be sorely missed by so many.

Most Rev. Anthony Fisher – Archbishop of Sydney

May the many good works that Jeremy did in his life be an example to us all and gain him an eternal reward. Please be assured of my continuing prayers for all who grieve him.

Michael McKenna – Bishop of Bathurst and Chair, Bishops' Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious Dialogue

We will remember his warmth and friendship and the great passion he always gave to the dialogue between our Jewish and Catholic leaders. He will be greatly missed and we hope you will all be comforted at this difficult time with the wonderful legacy he bequeaths to both Jewish-

Christian relations and, more widely, to interreligious dialogue in Australia.

Amir Maimon – Ambassador of the State of Israel to Australia

He was an intelligent, eloquent and courageous advocate for the Jewish community, but also for justice, fairness and compassion for all... He devoted his life to forging friendships, building bridges, and creating understanding between people – the work of a true ambassador.

Michael Kolokossian – Executive Director, Armenian National Committee of Australia

Mr Jones was a remarkable individual whose tireless dedication to promoting tolerance, understanding, and human rights left an indelible mark on the world. His work in combating anti-Semitism and advocating for social justice has touched countless lives and inspired many future generations, including those from the Armenian community.

Nur Munir – Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Indonesia, University of Indonesia

Much and immeasurable knowledge he had imparted... Laughing, cross cultural encounters, noble teachings, and... more.... the world of interfaith living peacefully is deeply indebted [to] Jeremy's noble works, as he devoted most of his life on it... I am expressing my heartfelt thanks to Jeremy Jones for everything he imparted on me, a good life example.

American Jewish Committee (AJC)

The American Jewish Committee mourns the death of our AIJAC partner, Jeremy Jones... Jeremy was a giant on behalf of the Jewish people in combating antisemitism, supporting the State of Israel, and expanding our circle of friends through inter-religious and intergroup relations. Above all, Jeremy was a mensch.

William Daroff – CEO, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organisations.

So very saddened by the passing of Jeremy Jones, superstar leader of the Australian Jewish community, mensch extraordinaire, and dear friend. Jeremy's legacy will live on through his cross-cultural engagement with communities across the globe.

Muslim Jewish Conference

Life is mostly accumulated through decisions. Each and every day. Some of us, decide to spend the time they have in service of others... Our society runs, completely depending on them. Our lives run, completely depending on people like Jeremy Jones, to decide, to be there every single day, in service of others. Thank you Jeremy. Because of you. We are. We can be. We are heartbroken to see such a warrior for good in this world, such a bright star, leave us so early.

THE LAST WORD

Colin Rubenstein



JEREMY JONES: IN MEMORIAM

The Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC) is utterly devastated by the passing of our widely admired and respected colleague Jeremy Jones AM on September 6, after an extended illness which he fought with great courage.

There has been an outpouring of sorrow and disbelief around the world at Jeremy's untimely passing – from Federal and State Parliaments and leaders, from the US, UK, Israel, and Indonesia, from religious leaders, the Federal Police and many more. There has been a flood of amazing tributes applauding his remarkable qualities, personal and professional (see pp. 38-39) – and they are all true.

Jeremy has been an essential and irreplaceable part of AIJAC for some three-and-a-half decades, and a leading light of the Australian Jewish community for even longer.

He was our community's one-man intelligence agency, who knew almost every person of importance in Australian politics, religious communities, the media and other areas of public life. His interfaith work, and personal warmth, also won him hundreds of friends, admirers and colleagues around the world.

He was the founding head of AIJAC's Sydney office in the late 1980s – and steered that office with distinction and determination up until his passing. AIJAC is proud to have also helped facilitate Jeremy's ability over those years to assume numerous other public service roles across the wider Jewish community, multi-faith and multicultural Australia, in our national public life, and especially in the international arena – to the benefit of everyone who had the pleasure of working with him.

Among other things, he served for many years as Vice-President of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ), the peak representative body of the Australian Jewish community, before being elected ECAJ President between 2001 and 2004.

He was at the forefront in exposing and fighting antisemitism, racial hatred and bigotry in all its forms. He was also the

community's main chronicler of statistics on antisemitism for more than two decades, and a main voice formulating policy responses to it. As an Australian delegate to the In-

ternational Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), he was one of the group of experts who helped formulate IHRA's now widely used working definition of antisemitism. He was also the plaintiff in two landmark court cases which established that antisemitism was covered by Australia's *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and that

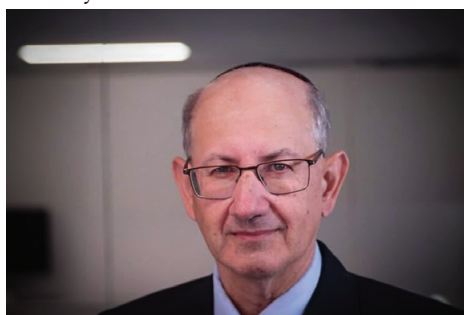
Holocaust denial was a violation of that Act.

Jeremy attended the infamous UN Durban "Anti-racism" Conference in 2001 as a member of the Australian government delegation. He was witness to the vicious anti-Israel behaviour and outcome of that gathering, which have percolated through so many UN bodies ever since, including its Human Rights Council, UNESCO and so on. He understood the challenge, alerted us all to it and fought it vigorously with determination ever since.

He was always measured, thoughtful and constructive in negotiating these vexed issues and more broadly in promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation – areas in which he played a leading role, both in Australia and globally, throughout his life. His promotion of Jewish-Muslim dialogue also led to Jeremy playing a unique role in Indonesia, where he spoke widely to Muslim groups about Judaism and was able to bring many groups of Muslim religious, academic and media leaders on AIJAC study visit programs to Israel.

Jeremy always brought an extraordinary level of knowledge and insight about Judaism, public life in Australia, philosophy and morality, and human nature into his work. He also had a personal warmth, a kindness for those in need, an eagerness to teach and debate, and a wicked wit, all of which will be profoundly missed by everyone who worked with or knew him.

We are proud at AIJAC of the immense legacy of service to the Australian Jewish community, to Australian society, and globally, that Jeremy leaves behind. It is a legacy built up through decades of hard work, dedication, integrity and inspirational leadership, which will continue to have a positive impact for many years to come.



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AIR