



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer and HMOs shows that just two weeks after receiving the first dose, the number of infected decreased by 60 percent. Within three one can surely expect to see a significant decrease in the number of

Commentary...

Farewell to a Great Jewish Patriot By Benjamin Netanyahu

I feel deep sorrow at the passing of a wonderful friend, and wonderful person—the late Sheldon Adelson.

With a broken heart, in the name of my wife, Sara, on my own behalf and in the name of many people in Israel and the world, we send our heartfelt condolences to Miri and the family. Many of the Jewish people, in Israel and the rest of the world, share in the heavy loss.

It is difficult to describe what Sheldon did for the Jewish people and for Israel. Sheldon was one of the biggest donors in the history of the Jewish people. He gave to Zionism, to the settlements and to the State of Israel. He made enormous financial contributions to many institutions—to medical and scientific research, to higher education, to Ariel University, to Taglit-Birthright, and to his immense projects in every field. With his wife, Miri, he gave generously to many enterprises that save lives and brought Israel renown throughout the world. Sheldon was a huge Jewish patriot. He worked to strengthen Israel, bolster its standing in the United States and strengthen ties between the Jewish people in Israel and the Diaspora.

Sheldon grew up poor, in a Boston suburb, and became one of the biggest entrepreneurs and philanthropists in the world. He did so through his keen intelligence, his honest thinking, his powerful personality and his courage. Sheldon could face down anything and did what he believed. And what he believed in, more than anything else, was the promise of the Jewish people and their state.

Sheldon truly loved America—America, which gave him every opportunity he could dream of. He wanted everyone in the world to have those opportunities and that freedom.

I have to say that I've met many wonderful people in my life, but this giant, a personality like Sheldon, comes along once in a generation. We will forever remember Sheldon and his enormous contribution to the Jewish people and the state of Israel. His influence will remain with us for generations to come.

May his memory be a blessing. (Israel Hayom Jan 13)

Israel will Lead the World Back to Normalcy By Arnon Afek

We hear the term “coronavirus mutation” more and more often lately, and it makes one wonder how such mutations might affect the rate of infection and the effectiveness of the vaccines.

Viruses change their genetic material as a way to “deal” with the body's immune response, whether natural or due to vaccination. These changes are referred to as “mutations.”

Some mutations kill a virus, while others enhance its ability to cause disease and evade the immune response. More than 2,000 mutations of the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been identified so far.

The so-called British strain of virus contains 17 genetic changes which give the mutation a 70 percent higher infection capability. This is the reason behind England's spike in infection rate, and is most likely also the reason why cases have skyrocketed in Israel.

Nonetheless, the British strain does not cause a more severe disease, and both Pfizer and Moderna have found that their vaccines are effective against it.

As for the South African strain, the assumption is that these vaccines provide at least a partial protection against it, but more research is needed on the subject.

The great advantage of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines is their ability to speedily adapt to any mutation or genetic change and create an immunization that leads to an optimal immune response.

Israel's vaccination campaign continues to break world records. Within the first three weeks of the operation, more than 20 percent of the population received the first of two required doses of Pfizer's BioNTech vaccine. The rate of vaccination among Israelis over the age of 60 is a whopping 73 percent.

Within four weeks after the second dose of the vaccine, the immunity rate is as high as 95 percent, and the five percent that do get infected will experience only mild symptoms. Preliminary data from

patients in critical condition.

In the meantime, we must do our very best to follow the lockdown rules, in hopes that this will be Israel's last lockdown. Now, even more than ever, we must do everything in our power to prevent the increase in the number of patients in critical condition and on ventilators. Failure to do so will impair hospitals' ability to provide care to coronavirus and other patients.

Still, there's reason for optimism: The Israeli government has increased its efforts and signed an agreement with Pfizer to receive additional vaccines which will make it possible to vaccinate the entire population.

Israel's ability to collect information and monitor the vaccinations, while protecting the identity of recipients, convinced Pfizer to provide it with additional vaccines. As a result, it is currently on track to be the first country in the world to vaccinate its entire population.

Furthermore, Israel will be able to pay it forward by sharing its experience and knowledge of the vaccination campaign with the world.

Thanks to the public health system, the health funds and the hospitals, the technological and logistical capabilities and most importantly, the mobilization and dedication of the medical staff, vaccinating the entire population is possible.

I believe Israel will lead the world back to normal. We are so close to the finish line.

May we celebrate Passover with our families and friends this year, and may we remember that we can overcome any virus if we stand together. (Israel Hayom Jan 14)

The writer serves as deputy director of Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer and is a member of the team that advises Israel's national coronavirus project coordinator.

As Regional Alliances Shift, Israel Must Tread Lightly

By Dan Schueftan

When it comes to tensions between the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, which of these two allies should Israel support? There's tremendous importance and great benefit to Israel's recent normalization of ties with the Arab world, but it also raises several previously unknown dilemmas.

Now that the Arab world is no longer against Israel in principle, we need to learn to navigate the tensions among Israel's various Arab allies.

Shakespeare's famous line, “Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows,” has been adapted to describe strange partnerships in the political arena, as “politics makes strange bedfellows.”

This is how Israel and Egypt came to collaborate in the 1960s, when they found a common enemy, the radicals who tried to drag Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser into a confrontation with Israel over Jordanian waters.

In this new era, the political arena is more complex and its participants are greater in number.

Israel's number one ally in the region is Egypt and its president, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The 1979 Egypt-Israel peace treaty shifted the balance of power in the region to Israel's benefit. El-Sisi saved Egypt, the Middle East and Israel from the threat of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was dragging the region into radicalism, war and bloodshed.

Last year's most important alliance was that of Israel with the UAE. It signaled that the normalization of ties with Saudi Arabia is possible, and promises economic and security collaboration, as well as cooperation in the fight against radicals in the region.

The UAE elite is presenting for the first time the format of complete legitimization of the Jewish state. Egypt might be more significant, but the UAE brings added value to the region and to Washington.

Egypt, the UAE and Israel belong to the same regional camp.

All three are aware of Iran's regional hegemony aspirations, fight the Muslim Brotherhood, fear Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan's attempt to impose his rule in the eastern Mediterranean basin, oppose the Libyan government—which supports the Turkish dictator—and support Lebanese rebel General Khalifa Haftar.

Israel, Egypt and the UAE all rely on the United States, but there are substantial differences between the three.

While Egypt is mainly concerned with the Muslim Brotherhood, and Turkish and Libyan threats to its western border, the UAE and Saudi Arabia worry about Iran and its proxies.

While Egypt sees Ethiopian activity on the Nile as an existential threat, the UAE is examining the southern arena in the Red Sea, in the broader context of dealing with the Houthis there and in Yemen.

In all these matters there's tension and competition: the UAE, often with Saudi backing, is much less rigid when it comes to the Qatari supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and the government of Libyan President Fayez al-Sarraj.

The depth of the ties between Israel and the United States is also a cause for concern in Cairo. Egypt praised the Abraham Accords, but Emirati Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed and the United States did not need El-Sisi to establish this normalization; the bilateral ties bypass Cairo.

The incoming administration of U.S. President-elect Joe Biden is expected to pressure el-Sisi on human-rights violations, and Egypt's previous status as Israel's sole ally in the area will no longer protect it.

It is unlikely that Egypt will lose its status as the largest and most unified Arab state, but it is gravely dependant on economic aid, unlike its competitors in the Persian Gulf.

This dependence is always mentioned when discussing Egypt's importance in the region. But this importance is fading away right in front of Egypt's eyes.

Israel has to acknowledge these sensitivities and navigate the tensions carefully. It is important to use new opportunities, but we can't abandon valuable allies in the process. (Israel Hayom Jan 14)

Israeli Land is being Stolen in Broad Daylight By Matan Peleg

Israel's security establishment is alive and kicking. It has destroyed missile-production facilities in Syria and Iraq, assassinated nuclear scientists, demolished dozens of terror tunnels and thwarted thousands of terrorist attacks.

It is therefore no surprise that the Palestinians have learned that in order to conquer Israeli territory, it is better not to go about it through armed resistance, but through "silent" land seizures.

Former Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad can attest to this, as he is the mastermind behind the large-scale European government-funded building across Area C in Judea and Samaria—land that is under Israeli control according to the Oslo Accords.

The watchdog organization Regavim revealed that in 2018 alone, the "Fayyad Plan" seized nearly 80,000 dunams of land in Area C, an area that spans a mere four million dunams in total.

In addition to illegal construction, another effective method used by Israel's enemies to conquer state land is simply to plant trees; not one or two, but millions. Think of it as an initiative of the Jewish National Fund, only one that works against the State of Israel.

While we are all focused on COVID-19 and the political situation in Israel, a Jordanian NGO named APN—The Arab Group for the Protection of Nature—is working under the radar to "liberate Palestine from the river to the sea" (their words) by planting millions of trees in Israeli territory.

Employing this "green resistance" (again, their words), the APN's Million Tree Campaign has planted nearly 2.5 million trees over the past two decades in Israeli territory, with a focus on Judea and Samaria. According to its website, APN has cultivated 126,307 dunams of land from 2001 to 2019.

The reason this is such an effective tool has to do with the antiquated Ottoman-era law governing Judea and Samaria, which allows for someone to claim ownership over state land if he has cultivated the land in question for several consecutive years. And APN is fully aware of this.

In addition to working hand in hand with the P.A., APN is funded by the Kingdom of Jordan, foreign foundations based in Kuwait, the Islamic Relief Worldwide organization, Turkish "human rights" organizations and others. The Jordanian government isn't merely unaware of APN's activities; it knowingly encourages the NGO's efforts to seize Israeli land. In Aug. 2020, Jordanian Minister of State for Media Affairs Amjad Adaileh issued an official letter thanking APN for its efforts.

It's also important to note that the plantings are not arbitrary. The organization publicly states that it chooses the spots for planting in

order to curb "Jewish settlements expansion" and to combat "the danger of nationalizing land by the occupation."

In the past few months alone, the organization has boasted planting thousands of trees in dozens of locations across Judea and Samaria, including near Jerusalem, Hebron, Ariel and throughout the Jordan Valley.

APN also documents its plantings, which can often be seen on its website or social media page, to use as evidence in its efforts to claim ownership of the land.

Earlier this month, Israeli Minister of Community Affairs Tzachi Hanegbi announced that the government will be allocating 21,000,000 shekels (approximately \$67 million) in 2021 to establish vehicle and drone patrols aimed at combating this phenomenon of illegal land seizures.

While this is a very welcomed initiative, there is still much more work that needs to be done. If Israel's security establishment doesn't start diverting more resources and manpower to combating these illegal land grabs, one day we will wake up to find that our land has been stolen—without a single shot having been fired. (JNS Jan 14)
The writer is the CEO of Im Tirtzu.

B'Tselem and the Israel 'Apartheid' Myth By Gidon Ben-zvi

News organizations have given prominent coverage to a report published by the organization B'Tselem, which claims that Israel is no longer a democracy but an "apartheid regime" devoted to cementing the supremacy of Jews over Palestinians.

By uncritically portraying this group as a leading proponent of human rights, the media has effectively facilitated the hijacking of the word apartheid by anti-Israel activists, whose goal is to foster doubt about the legitimacy of the Jewish state.

Besides the emotional response that apartheid evokes, it is also a clearly defined crime against humanity under international law. Not a single country other than South Africa has ever been charged by the international community with imposing apartheid on its people.

None of the world's worst human rights violators have been placed in this docket:

By subjecting Israel to a double standard, B'Tselem and, in turn, the media have blurred the fine line between legitimate criticism of Israeli policies and antisemitism.

B'Tselem's troubling history of blatant anti-Israel activities has been glossed over. Indeed, the organization was instrumental in pressuring the United Nations to investigate Israel's conduct following the 2009 Gaza War (Operation Cast Lead) that was initiated by the Hamas terrorist group.

The result was the one-sided, and subsequently debunked, so-called Goldstone Report. B'Tselem is mentioned 56 times in the document, which was widely used to legitimize extreme biases and mainstream libels against Israel.

Later, expressing regrets over the report he helped compile, Richard Goldstone, who is of South African heritage and has an extensive legal background, said, "In Israel, there is no apartheid. Nothing there comes close to the definition of apartheid."

Seemingly, B'Tselem's past efforts to single out Israel for condemnation would be crucial for news outlets to note. Instead, the Associated Press had this to say (opine?):

That a respected Israeli organization is adopting a term long seen as taboo even by many critics of Israel points to a broader shift in the debate as its half-century occupation of war-won lands drags on and hopes for a two-state solution fade.

And while B'Tselem is described merely as a left-wing organization, it is actually a member of the Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), a Paris-based association of global NGOs that is active in worldwide Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns.

The FIDH has pushed for the European Union to adopt guidelines preventing the labeling of West Bank products as "Made in Israel," and lobbied for the UN Human Rights Council to establish a commission of inquiry into Israel's actions during the 2014 Gaza War, which was also started by Hamas.

Previously, B'Tselem for the most part limited its criticism to Israeli policies that apply to Palestinians living beyond the pre-1967 borders (i.e. the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and the eastern part of Jerusalem). Now, the organization appears to have ventured into new territory: claiming that Zionism — namely, the right of Jewish people to self-determination — has produced an apartheid regime, even within what is regarded as Israel proper:

Israel is not a democracy that has a temporary occupation

attached to it; it is one regime from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and we must look at the full picture and see it for what it is: apartheid.

Yet, facts are stubborn things, and in Israel, unlike the past situation in South Africa, national law guarantees equal rights for all.

And while the situation in the West Bank is more complex, Israel has on multiple occasions offered the Palestinians generous peace deals to end the prevailing status quo. Indeed, every Israeli prime minister since Yitzhak Rabin over a quarter century ago has publicly accepted in principle the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, only to be rebuffed by Ramallah.

Whereas the ultimate fate of the West Bank is a matter of robust debate even amongst Israelis, what is certain is that the media has spread an outright falsehood by suggesting that Israel is an apartheid state. Arab-Israeli citizens have the same freedom of movement and speech as their Jewish counterparts; receive an education and health care; are able to vote; and can work in whatever professions they choose. They also serve throughout the government, in the Knesset, and on the Supreme Court.

But the news coverage of B'Tselem and its latest report paints a distorted picture. As a result, opponents of the Jewish state can more readily discharge a loaded word that is not only totally inaccurate, but also used as ammunition by those who want to see Israel eradicated.

And the media is seemingly all-too-eager to jump on the bandwagon. (Honest Reporting Jan 14)

Will Impeachment and Censorship Defend Jews against Anti-Semitism? By Jonathan S. Tobin

With the U.S. House of Representatives poised to pass new articles of impeachment against President Donald Trump, the debate about the proper response to his role in last week's disgraceful and bloody Capitol riot has now moved to the next stage.

Some supporters of the president are sticking with him, despite his egging on protesters to march on the Capitol to pressure Congress to prevent the certification of the votes of the Electoral College, where they stormed into the shrine of democracy, and his failure to unequivocally condemn it as it was happening. His outrageous call to Georgia's secretary of state a few days before the riot urging him to effectively falsify that state's vote is also in question. Other Republicans believe that the president must be held accountable for his conduct and will support impeachment both because they feel it is the right thing to do and a necessary response to misconduct. They may also hope that it will make it easier for their party to be freed from the grip of Trump and his supporters in the future.

Still, even many of those who concede that the case for impeachment and conviction is strong, believe that pursuing it now—with only days left in Trump's term—is unwise and may do more harm than good in terms of the effort to heal the nation's wounds.

These are difficult questions, and regardless of their partisan affiliations, honorable people can come to different conclusions about them.

But is impeachment an issue on which the safety of the Jewish community depends?

You can make that argument about any political issue since, as Americans, just about any subject for debate will, in one way or another, impact the lives of Jewish citizens, as well as reflect our values and beliefs. There are many organizations whose purpose it is to advocate on subjects that are primarily secular rather than more parochial Jewish concerns. At the same time, for those organizations whose job is to defend specific Jewish interests, involvement in partisan politics is a perilous and often destructive temptation. Whether it is a question of seeking support for Jewish communal needs, Israel or the fight against anti-Semitism, it remains imperative that those who claim to speak in the name of the community avoid taking stands that will confuse Jewish interests with those of their secular political allies.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the Anti-Defamation League has not only forgotten this principle but seems to think they no longer even have to pretend to be anything but a Democratic Party auxiliary group.

That became clear early on during Trump's term when, under the leadership of Jonathan Greenblatt—a former staffer in the Clinton and Obama administrations—the ADL began to adopt a tone of open hostility to the president. Greenblatt unceasingly sought to connect Trump's stands on immigration and other issues, as well as his intemperate rhetoric with extremist hate groups and white supremacists, despite there being no real evidence for their indictment

of him. He blamed a series of bomb threats at Jewish community centers across America on Trump and never apologized when it turned out that they were the work of a disturbed Israeli teenager. And when a white-supremacist gunman attacked a Pittsburgh synagogue, murdering 11 Jewish worshippers, Greenblatt all but argued that Trump had caused the crime even though the extremist responsible opposed the president because of his support for Israel.

Further throwing caution to the winds, Greenblatt tweeted his opposition to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court within seconds of the announcement, no matter that there was no discernible Jewish issue at play, let alone one involving the ADL's brief on anti-Semitism.

So it's hardly surprising that Greenblatt has already declared ADL's support for impeaching Trump a second time.

That's a position a lot of Americans—and, no doubt, the majority of American Jews—agree with, and not all of them are partisan Democrats like Greenblatt. But the question here is: What in the world is a group whose purpose is to monitor and advocate against anti-Semitism doing involving itself in the debate about impeachment?

It's true that there were a lot of open anti-Semites among the misguided crowd that assembled near the White House Ellipse to cheer the president's claims of election fraud. Their presence was even more obvious in the ranks of the mob that assaulted the Capitol. But there were Jews and others who had nothing to do with anti-Semitic hate among the president's supporters who gathered to applaud him that day. And some were even among those who joined the attack on Congress.

As a rule of thumb, the mere presence of anti-Semites and hate groups doesn't necessarily turn a protest or riot into a Jewish issue. If it did, then the ADL would have joined those in the Jewish world who opposed the "mostly peaceful" Black Lives Matter protests last summer because some of the organizing groups involved were guilty of Jew-hatred. The ADL was opposed to tying the entire BLM movement to the anti-Semitism of some of its leaders, like former Women's March president Tamika Mallory, who was the driving force behind the agitation over the police shooting of Breonna Taylor.

So let's not pretend that ADL is supporting impeachment because of anti-Semitism. It is doing so because it has long since decided that opposing Trump has become its priority.

If that weren't bad enough, Greenblatt has gone all-in on support for Internet censorship, supporting not just shutting down the accounts of neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers, but also the efforts of social-media oligarchs to shutter Parler—a site created in order to provide a safe place for free speech for conservatives. While some anti-Semites might have used Parler, ADL is effectively supporting the monopoly of Twitter, which continues to allow left-wing and Islamist anti-Semites free reign on their platform. In effect, ADL has put itself firmly on the side of Big Tech control of national discourse, a more ominous and effective threat to democracy than the futile violence of the Capitol rioters.

Why has it gone down this road?

Not all of the blame is the result of having a partisan hack as its CEO. Its major donors and board seem to be just as uninterested in the ADL sticking to its job of impartially opposing anti-Semitism and supporting the Jewish state as Greenblatt. If not, they might have tempered some of their anti-Trump zeal because of the fact that he was the most pro-Israel president ever to sit in the White House. In this most hyper-partisan moment in memory, ADL's leadership is betting its future on the proposition that being a liberal political organization is safer and more popular than doing the important job for which it was created.

That's a shame, because unlike a lot of national Jewish groups, ADL still has an actual purpose and possessed a uniquely respected brand that was nurtured under Greenblatt's predecessors. But by aligning itself so closely with the Democratic Party and left-wing partners like veteran race-baiter Al Sharpton—whose incendiary anti-Semitic rhetoric helped incite the Crown Heights riots in 1991—it is rightly no longer viewed as a nonpartisan organization that can be trusted as an impartial authority when defining Jew-hatred.

So while there is nothing intrinsically wrong about supporting impeachment at this juncture, having a Jewish group whose purpose is fighting anti-Semitism embrace that cause is a dereliction of duty that in a saner time might have doomed it to irrelevance. American Jews still need the ADL. Sadly, the ADL doesn't seem to think it needs to stick to defending Jewish interests. (JNS Jan 12)

Trump's Lasting Legacy will be the Abraham Accords

By Alex Traiman

Mainstream media and pundits from across the political spectrum have been quick to assert that the violent riot on the U.S. Capitol building on Jan. 6 has permanently tarnished the Trump presidency.

It remains to be seen what Trump's historical legacy will actually be as a turbulent 2020 seems to be carrying over into a turbulent 2021, in which the stability of America's democratic foundations will be put to the test.

Yet for all the global and domestic chaos last year, one major geopolitical accomplishment stands out above all others: The Abraham Accords.

The normalization agreements signed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan—with the tacit approval of Saudi Arabia—are seminal events that outgoing Israeli Ambassador to the United States Ron Dermer, who helped negotiate the accords called, “the beginning of the end of the Israeli-Arab conflict.”

Israel's growing strength

The accords came about for several reasons. First is the continuously growing economic, diplomatic and military strength of the State of Israel. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel has emerged as a regional superpower with a burgeoning economy, superior military intelligence and cyber security, powerful air force and advanced missile-defense systems.

While Arab states continuously conspired to defeat the Jewish state in the early decades since Israel declared independence in 1948, it is clear to all in the region that Israel is here to stay. The Jewish state has proven that it will do whatever it takes at any time to defend its existence and guarantee its survival.

Similarly, as an advanced technological power, Israel continues to develop solutions to the world's most pressing concerns, including medical and pharmaceutical research and development, the ability to desalinate seawater for drinking, and creating clean and efficient forms of energy, including solar power.

Ongoing Palestinian intransigence

Second, the Palestinians have done little to advance their own cause since the signing of the now-defunct Oslo Accords of the early 1990s. While Israel developed into a regional power, Palestinians have squandered billions of dollars in foreign aid, eschewed economic partnerships with Israel and funded a corrupt kleptocracy led by Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas, who is now in year 17 of a four-year term.

Gulf states increasingly began to recognize that pouring more funds into the Palestinian cause was a bad investment, especially compared to the growing lure of Israeli commerce and technology.

America's radical left and radical Islam

The third reason is that Gulf states recognized that under Democratic Party leadership, the United States was no longer a trusted broker of peace in the region. Former President Barack Obama's rapid abandonment in 2011 of former American and Israeli ally, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and subsequent support for Mubarak's Muslim Brotherhood replacement Mohammed Morsi sent a chilling message throughout the region that alliances with the United States were by no means permanent. Obama's professed respect for Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, another of the region's most malign actors, sent a similar message.

Obama's regional moves proved what had already been feared for decades—that America's radical left sought to strengthen alliances with radical Islamic forces.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the Trump administration was to sever that unholy alliance.

The Obama doctrine was on full display when America entered the ill-fated 2015 Iran nuclear deal—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA. The flushing of Iran with \$150 billion, including billions of dollars delivered in hard cash, put the entire region on notice. Iran was essentially rewarded for its relentless pursuit of regional hegemony, funding and arming terror proxies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, and simultaneously pursuing the development of illicit nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. Gulf states quickly recognized that new regional alliances were necessary to counterbalance Iran's malign influence.

It was Netanyahu's bold opposition to the JCPOA and Iran's movements across the region that demonstrated that Israel was capable of taking its own national security and regional security seriously, despite the misguided efforts of the Obama administration. This opposition included a highly controversial but now prescient address to a joint session of Congress in 2015, as well as a full-throttled

campaign of attacks on Iranian military installments and personnel—some from the air, others on the ground and yet others covert. The most high-profile episode proved to be the confiscation of an archive of nuclear plans from a secure military location in Tehran and its airlift to Israel in 2018, which Netanyahu soon made public to the world.

New approach to the Middle East

While Biden supporters, Republican elites and mainstream media are now quick to call everything that Trump laid his hands on an outright disaster, his administration's approach to the Middle East was innovative, refreshing and will ultimately stand the test of time.

Led by the efforts of presidential senior adviser Jared Kushner, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, special envoys Jason Greenblatt and Avi Berkowitz, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, the Trump administration worked to change longheld paradigms in the region. The approach was straightforward: hold malign actors responsible by withholding aid and denying economic opportunities, reward those who pursued and advanced peace, and apply the forces of a free market to forge economic alliances between countries with similar challenges and interests.

After laying the groundwork during the first three years of the Trump presidency, the results in 2020 were monumental, culminating with the signing of four separate accords in rapid succession between former longtime enemies of the Jewish state.

Unlike many of the other accomplishments of the Trump administration, which may now be reversed by an incoming Biden administration, the new alliances are likely to be permanent. Furthermore, Trump has indicated that as many as 10 countries were considering similar accords. Future signings remain likely.

Back into the JCPOA

President-elect Joe Biden has quickly filled his incoming diplomatic and security establishment with the authors and negotiators of the original Iran nuclear deal, including incoming Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, CIA director William Burns and newly created Special Envoy for Climate Change John Kerry, who joins Biden's National Security Council.

Meanwhile, Iran continues its illicit nuclear-weapons program at full speed, recently announcing that it will cross the threshold of 20 percent enriched uranium, putting it on a fast track towards the amounts required for a nuclear payload.

The entire region is now on notice. The same distrust of the Obama administration by Middle East nations now genuinely seeking peaceful coexistence is likely to only grow in the months ahead. And the rapid accomplishments of the Abraham Accords, including billions of dollars in new commercial enterprise, demonstrate an alternative path forward.

Bracing for Biden

Israel benefited to a great degree by the policies of the Trump administration. During his four-year tenure, America recognized Israeli sovereignty in its capital city of Jerusalem and over the strategic Golan Heights. Trump delivered on the nearly unanimous bipartisan legislation, passed originally in 1995 to move the American embassy to Jerusalem. And America recognized that suburban Jewish housing in Judea and Samaria are not causes for conflict in a region filled with terror supporters.

Israel now braces for an incoming administration that may seek to punish Trump allies, re-enter the JCPOA, restore the standing of the Palestinian Authority, and allow the United Nations and the International Criminal Court to pass resolutions aimed at harming the standing of the Jewish state. Yet just as Netanyahu successfully parlayed the original Iran nuclear deal into Israel's most stunning diplomatic accomplishments in decades, Israel is now in much stronger position to face the challenges looming on the horizon.

Israel's left-leaning media, which campaigns relentlessly against the Jewish state's longest-serving prime minister, now seeks to heap Netanyahu's unparalleled legacy with the murky legacy of his close American ally. Yet Netanyahu will likely be judged favorably for working closely with the American president to improve Israel's standing over territories it has long controlled, and across the greater Middle East.

And regardless of how Trump's domestic and foreign-policy record will be portrayed into the future, his administration's policies towards Israel and the greater Middle East may well withstand the tests of history. Israel, as well as UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have much to be grateful for. (JNS Jan 12)