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ISRAEL NEWS

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Or at least that's what he wants the world to believe he's doing.

Surely, not even the most clueless and credulous observers of the Palestinians—and by that, I refer to the so-called “experts” about the Middle East in the

foreign-policy establishment and the mainstream press—could possibly fall for his act.

That's not just because Abbas has tried this gambit many times before. It's because even in the same statement in which he made his threat to implode the P.A.—thereby forcing Israel to directly administer the West Bank and to end all security cooperation with the Israelis—he included a caveat basically saying “never mind.”

Even in the same breath that the Palestinians threaten to blow up the region again, Abbas's mouthpieces conceded that the cooperation would continue. So would the kleptocratic rule of the West Bank on the part of Abbas's Fatah Party that passes for government in the realm of the P.A.

Why then does he even bother to repeat this tired routine?

Unfortunately, a lot of those “experts” are taking him seriously—or are at least pretending to—so as to gin up opposition to Israel's sovereignty plans. The notion that the P.A. will dissolve itself is reported as if it is realistic possibility in outlets like The New York Times and cited by Democrats such as their all-but-certain presidential nominee Joe Biden, who continues to falsely assert that Netanyahu is foreclosing even the theoretical possibility of peace.

Just as troubling, sources in the Trump State Department who are hoping to squelch “annexation” are also citing Abbas's threats. After failing to derail the president's decisions to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the American withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, which experts also opposed, some inside the government think this is an argument they can win.

But the issue here is more than Abbas's blatant insincerity and cheap theatrics. The P.A. leader won't make good on his threats because it's not in his interests to do so.

While Netanyahu is often lambasted for his desire to maintain the status quo in the conflict, which he wisely seeks to manage rather than solve, Abbas is desperate to keep things just the way they are.

Abbas won't or can't end the conflict, no matter how inviting Israeli offers of peace might be. Taking that kind of risk would be suicidal since the P.A. has inculcated Palestinians with the message that recognizing the legitimacy of Israel is treason to their national cause.

He also won't abdicate his autonomous rule over the West Bank because doing so would mean surrendering both power and money. It would also mean that Abbas and his family, in addition to subordinates that profit from their corrupt rule, would have to fend for themselves, just like the hapless Palestinians over which they maintain their despotic rule.

Even more important, Abbas's vows to end security cooperation with Israel are even less credible than his other histrionics.

Although Israel benefits from being able to coordinate with the P.A.'s various intelligence agencies, the real beneficiary of the scheme is Abbas. Without Israeli security to fend off both Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the P.A. leader's life would be in jeopardy. He needs Israel a lot more than Israel needs him.

But there's one more good reason to treat this subject with skeptical derision.

Far from having abided by the Oslo Accords that Abbas now threatens to abrogate, the Palestinians have made a mockery of them from the moment they were signed on the White House Lawn in September 1993.

Though the late Yitzhak Rabin made the argument for the peace process by saying that Arafat would fight Palestinian terror, he was tragically wrong. Arafat was never against terror; quite the contrary, he was inciting, planning and funding it. His successor Abbas carries on the tradition of paying for terrorism through the pensions and salaries the P.A. gives those who commit violence against Jews and Israelis with higher amounts going to those who shed the most blood.

That's why Israelis are so disillusioned with the sort of mindless talk about peace and a two-state solution that passes for informed comment on the situation by people like Biden and the op-ed writers at the Times.

The tragedy of the Palestinians is that they could have had peace and an independent state if their leaders been willing to give up the

Commentary...

Does the Term ‘Annexation’ Even Apply? By Dore Gold

It so happens that this year is the 100th anniversary of the San Remo Conference, where the victorious Allied powers from World War I divided the Ottoman Empire and proposed Mandates for the former territories of Ottoman Asia. The territory that was to become British Mandatory Palestine was designated as a future Jewish national home already then. British diplomacy in 1920 set the stage for not only the emergence of Israel in 1948, but also the entire system of Arab states.

This history is pertinent to the debate that has emerged about Israel retaining parts of the West Bank this year in fulfillment of the Trump plan. It is commonly referred to as “annexation” and states have pointed out that they oppose the annexation of someone else's territory. The statute of the International Criminal Court in fact defines as one of the acts that constitutes the crime of aggression specifically as the annexation of the territory of another state.

So is it correct to label Israeli actions with respect to the West Bank “annexation?” Can you annex territory that has already been designated as yours?

Indeed, annexation resulting from aggression is unacceptable. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus was an act of aggression. The Russian invasion of Crimea was an act of aggression. Israel in the West Bank is an entirely different story.

In addition to the designation of these territories as part of the Jewish national home, one must remember that the West Bank was captured by Israel in a war of self-defense in 1967. That makes all the difference. The great British authority on international law, Sir Elihu Lauterpacht, drew a distinction between unlawful territorial change by an aggressor and lawful territorial change in response to an act of aggression.

It would be more correct not to use the term “annexation” but rather “the application of Israeli law to parts of the West Bank.”

The idea that the Jewish national home applied there was backed by much of the international community from San Remo onwards. Even Article 80 of the United Nations Charter established that national rights from the period of the League of Nations carried over to the newly established United Nations.

In 1920 British leadership under Prime Minister Lloyd George was pivotal in protecting Jewish national rights. Today, 100 years later, British leadership should follow that example.

Thus, the foundations of Jewish legal rights established through San Remo were preserved for the future.

(Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs / JNS May 19)

The Abbas Comedy and the Ongoing Palestinian Tragedy

By Jonathan S. Tobin

If you think you've seen this movie before, you're right.

Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas has declared that he is abrogating all agreements with Israel so many times it's a wonder that he could do so again with a straight face. Indeed, he started making these threats as soon as he succeeded PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and has never really stopped during the course of the 15 years of his four-year term as leader of the P.A.

The latest occasion for his usual theatrics is the possibility that Israel might extend sovereignty into parts of the West Bank, as envisioned by the Trump administration's “Peace to Prosperity” plan. Abbas didn't merely reject the Trump scheme, as he did several other even more generous Mideast plans in the past. He refused even to negotiate with the Trump administration.

The government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is looking to take advantage of Trump's promise that Israel could move on the Jewish settlements there if the Palestinians didn't join in the talks. So Abbas is attempting to blackmail the world into forcing Israel to back down by threatening to blow up the Middle East—or create enough chaos in the West Bank and elsewhere to make Netanyahu think twice about making good on his campaign promises.

illusion that Israel could one day be eliminated. Instead, they have chosen corruption, fantasies about the end of Israel and more comedic relief from Abbas. It's a poor bargain, but until Palestinians decide they want something better from their leaders, it's all they'll ever have. (JNS May 20)

Israel has Drawn a Line in the Sand By Yoav Limor

Cyber warfare is usually waged in secret. In a world where borders and geography are of no importance, the main challenge is to take action and cause damage without leaving tracks and risking reprisal. That is how all the players operate. The professionals are more successful, the amateurs, less so.

According to a report released in the United States on Tuesday, however, Israel, a super-professional, changed the rules. Not only did it attack, but it also made sure that everyone knew it had done so. Not by mistake, or through over-enthusiasm or on a whim; Israel did it intentionally, as a challenge, even crudely. It apparently happened after several discussions and consultations, and even the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet, which no one usually pays attention to, was looped in and approved the move.

The Washington Post report about an Israeli cyberattack on Iran's Shahid Rajaei Port was intended to send Tehran a clear message: watch out. We can assume that message was sent to decision-makers in Iran in this manner out of concern that the attack itself and its results might otherwise have been kept from them. They should know that the acts their satellites carry out can boomerang on Iran and cause massive damage.

The report was the peak of a series of events that began following an earlier report about an Iranian cyberattack on Israel's water infrastructure.

The Iranians might not have managed to do any serious damage, but they crossed a dangerous line: The attack could have been an attempt to add chemicals to Israel's water supply, or a biological attack. And given that this was vital civilian infrastructure, the attack could be seen as a declaration of war.

The immediate response, that was attributed to Israel, came in the form of an attack on Iran's most important piece of civilian infrastructure: the country's newest port, one of its most important points of entry and exit.

For two days, the port's computers were offline, leading to massive delays in shipping and passenger traffic, as well as cargo loading and unloading.

The Iranians probably suspected that it was an Israeli attack, but the report on Tuesday, which included satellite images that had been provided to the paper, might have been designed to clear up any remaining ambiguity. Israel drew a line in the sand: civilian infrastructure is off-limits. If Iran tries such an attack again, Israel will do the same, and more powerfully.

It was no coincidence that The Washington Post was chosen as a platform for the message. It is one of the most important newspapers in the world, highly credible, and it has a far reach.

The message was primarily directed at Tehran, but the report was also aimed at officials in Washington. The exposure of the fact that the attack on Israel had used American servers was an attempt to paint Iran as an entity that flouts all laws and norms, even going so far as to target civilian infrastructure, which is supposed to be off-limits, and justify the U.S. administration keeping up its tough policy on Iran.

But this latest event should also be examined from other angles. Israel should ask itself questions about how secure its vital infrastructure is. Water infrastructure is supposed to be secured at the highest level, according to instructions from Israel's Shin Bet security agency and the Israel National Cyber Directorate. It's doubtful that every piece of infrastructure (electricity, water, oil, hospitals, banks, etc.) can be hermetically protected, but the attack was a wake-up call that at the very least should be thoroughly evaluated, especially since Iran demonstrated that it is more capable than it used to be.

That Iran opted to attack infrastructure that is clearly civilian should also be proved. Is this a new Iranian tactic that comes as a response to Israel's ongoing strikes against the Quds Force in Syria, or a separate line of attack designed to open up a new front against Israel?

Israel and Iran have been waging a cyber war for some time now. Thus far, the best-known action attributed to Israel (and the United States) in this war is the taking down of Iran's uranium-enrichment centrifuges at the start of the previous decade. Various reports have also attributed a series of other, lower-level, cyberattacks to Israel and the United States.

Now it appears that both sides have taken things up a notch. If until now attacks attributed to Israel and Iran took aim at military and defense targets, the open transition to the civil front takes things to a much more volatile point. Therefore, we can see Tuesday's report as the moment the first cyber war officially began. (JNS May 20)

King Abdullah's Empty Threats By Caroline Glick

Should Jordan's King Abdullah have veto power over Israel's plan to apply its sovereign laws to its cities, towns and villages in Judea and Samaria and to the Jordan Valley, in accordance with the Trump peace plan? Monday morning, senior leaders of Israel's Blue and White Party began making noises to that effect.

In an interview with Germany's Der Spiegel last Friday, King Abdullah threatened, "If Israel really annexes the West Bank in July, it would lead to a massive conflict with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan."

News updates Monday morning reported that "senior officials" from Blue and White were working to condition Israel's implementation of the sovereignty plan on securing prior approval from Jordan.

Later Monday morning, during the ceremony at the Foreign Ministry marking the arrival of incoming Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, Ashkenazi said that Israel will implement the Trump peace plan "in dialogue with our neighbors, [and while] preserving of the peace treaties and the State of Israel's strategic interests."

Taken together with the morning news updates, Ashkenazi's remarks raised the prospect that he and his partner, Defense Minister and vice prime minister Benny Gantz see Abdullah's threat as a justification for abandoning their support for the sovereignty plan. It bears recalling that during the negotiations leading up to the formation of the unity government between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Likud and Gantz and Blue and White, Netanyahu made Blue and White's support for the sovereignty plan his only substantive condition for signing the deal.

Abdullah, of course, will never approve the sovereignty plan, so giving him a veto means shelving the plan. This raises the question of whether there is any reason to give the head of the Hashemite clan that sort of power. Can he cause Israel harm so grave that it should abandon the sovereignty plan to appease him?

The Der Spiegel reporters asked Abdullah if he would suspend Jordan's peace treaty with Israel in retaliation for an Israeli decision to apply its sovereignty to the areas.

He responded, "I don't want to make threats and create a loggerheads atmosphere, but we are considering all options."

In plain English, that means that he is absolutely not considering suspending the peace deal. He's bloviating. And he has good reason to both keep the peace deal and to blivate.

Abdullah will not cancel his kingdom's peace deal with Israel because the treaty guarantees the survival of his regime. Israel provides Jordan with an economic lifeline by supplying it with water and gas. The United States, for its part, protects and sustains Abdullah and his kingdom by stationing U.S. forces in the kingdom and by providing Jordan with \$1.8 billion in economic assistance annually.

If Jordan abrogated the peace deal, Israeli water and gas transfers would obviously cease. And since Israel's sovereignty plan will be undertaken in the framework of the U.S. peace plan, it is hard to imagine that U.S. support for the kingdom would be unchanged in the event that Jordan abrogated its peace deal in retaliation for Israel's move.

All this is not to say that Israel's relations with Jordan are stable. Anti-Semitism is almost universal in Jordan, and support for the peace with Israel is non-existent. The Hashemite monarchy itself is deeply unpopular.

It is possible that one day, with his back to the wall, Abdullah will abrogate the treaty. It is equally possible that one day he will be overthrown and that the successor regime will abrogate the peace treaty with Israel.

Facing this state of affairs, Israel's proper response is not to set aside the sovereignty plan, which among other things secures Israel's long border with Jordan by applying Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley. The proper response to Jordan's enormous hostility—a state of affairs that existed long before the sovereignty plan and the Trump plan were conceived—is to draw up detailed contingency plans for the day after the Hashemites are overthrown or the peace treaty is abrogated.

In his remarks at the Foreign Ministry, Ashkenazi rightly praised

U.S.-Israel relations. "The United States is Israel's closest ally and the State of Israel's most important friend," he said.

During his visit with President Donald Trump in the White House in January, according to a senior American official, Gantz committed himself to implementing the Trump peace plan, including the sovereignty plan.

To preserve U.S.-Israel relations, Ashkenazi and Gantz need to uphold that commitment. Failure to do so is liable to undermine Israel's credibility as a stable ally among administration leaders and other friends of Israel in Washington.

Ashkenazi acknowledged that through his peace plan, President Trump "presents us with a historic opportunity to shape Israel's future and its borders."

Israel mustn't permit King Abdullah and his empty threats to stand in its way to seizing that opportunity now. (JNS May 19)

Stuck Between Washington and Brussels By Eyal Zisser

After eradicating the coronavirus that ravaged the countries of Europe and mending the deep rifts within its ranks, the European Union has circled back to focus on its favorite pet issue: Israel.

The new Israeli government, which was barely assembled and hasn't even published a plan of action yet, is already facing E.U. threats of punitive action, including economic sanctions and even the suspension of diplomatic ties if Israel dares follow through with its intention to apply Israeli law in parts of Judea and Samaria.

The bureaucrats at E.U. headquarters in Brussels can't actually drag Europe into a war on Israel, which has close ties with many countries on the continent, such as Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and others. These countries all harbor animosity for the European Union, which failed in the moment of truth and left them, each on their own, to contend with the quarantines, deaths and economic crises caused by the coronavirus. But several leading European countries, chief among them France, Belgium, Spain and Ireland, are determined to spearhead an anti-Israel initiative and have threatened to enact punitive measures even if the majority of E.U. countries don't join them.

Disagreements between friends are legitimate, but when it comes to Israel-Europe relations, or to be more precise, Israel's relations with several specific E.U. countries, this isn't the case. The European Union doesn't care about the Palestinians whatsoever. Its concern for international law, which it says Israel is violating, also isn't a top priority. After all, the European Union is indifferent to the Turkish occupation of Cyprus, and Brussels doesn't typically care about Tibet or Western Sahara either.

Israel, however, is always seen as an attractive target to flagellate, for the purpose of winning Arab and Muslim brownie points. Beyond that, the European Union still abides by its decades-long fixation whereby the Palestinian issue is the key to solving all of the Middle East's ills. And while the Europeans don't care much about the levels of poverty and distress throughout the Middle East, they are worried about the waves of immigration flooding their continent due to unrest and instability in the Arab world, and are convinced that reprimanding Israel will help them turn the tide.

It appears, however, that there's another inherent motive for this European obsession with Israel: The Europeans flog Israel, but their aim is to hurt U.S. President Donald Trump, who many Europeans view as an adversary. It is a symptom of deeply rooted anti-American sentiment, which combines jealousy with a touch of condescension, toward a president who represents such a successful antithesis to the "old continent."

The close-knit alliance between the United States and Israel undoubtedly adds to Israel's clout and opens up numerous paths for Israel across the globe. Not in Europe. After all, in the eyes of the Europeans, the increasingly intimate bond shared by Washington and Jerusalem is something akin to original sin. Hence the arrows being launched from Europe at Israel—instead of at Washington—in the hope that the White House feels the sting along with the Israeli government.

This, therefore, is a profound European undercurrent that even an arrangement with the Palestinians isn't likely to reverse. Israel's relations with these European countries will inevitably return to normal, as there are enough mature leaders in Europe—for example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel—who are attentive to Israel and its problems and are cognizant of Europe's own interests in maintaining ties with it. But we can assume that the bureaucrats in Brussels, supported by several European countries, will wait for the next opportunity to kick Israel. (JNS May 19)

'I am not a Jew with Trembling Knees' By Steve Frank

On July 1, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to announce plans to extend Israeli sovereignty over portions of the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) containing the vast majority of Israeli settlements. This territory comprises 30 percent of the West Bank. The remaining land, where most Palestinians reside, will be reserved for an independent Palestinian state under the Trump peace plan should the Palestinian people and its leadership choose to live in peace side-by-side next to the Jewish state.

Although Israeli's anticipated action is consistent with the U.S. government's most recent peace proposal and has already received the green light from the administration, it has been greeted in other quarters with criticism ranging from outrage to outright threats. In a recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, Daniel Pipes, president of the Middle East Forum, ominously warns that any such "annexation" would "damage Israel's relations with the Trump administration, the Democrats, Europeans and Arab leaders, as well as destabilize the region, radicalize the Israeli left, and harm the Zionist goal of a Jewish State."

During the recent Democratic primary season, several leading presidential candidates threatened to use U.S. aid to Israel as financial "leverage" to ward off any such action by Jerusalem. The presumptive Democratic nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, has denounced Israel's plan as likely to undermine the long defunct "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel's proposed action in the West Bank is lawful, pragmatic, and designed to break the peace process deadlock as even the director of Pipes's own Middle East Forum has effectively argued. Pipes's hysterical and speculative fears, spread by *The New York Times*, have been met with swift rebuttal (see here and here). Pipes's view stems from the deep-rooted but misguided galut (diaspora or exile) mentality that if only Jews do not upset the goyim, they will be left in peace. Such a delusional belief should have been buried in the Holocaust, and it is disturbing to see it raised again by a distinguished Jewish commentator.

The Jewish claim to Judea and Samaria goes back at least 3,000 years and is supported by literary, historical and archaeological evidence. In 1967, the State of Israel legally acquired territory in Judea and Samaria in a defensive war after being attacked by Jordan, which had itself been illegally occupying the land for the past 20 years. Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria are lawful and consistent with international law, as the U.S. government recently underscored.

The present Israeli plan will extend sovereignty only to present Jewish settlements and will in no way interfere with Arab cities or the vast majority of Arab residents, who will continue to be governed by the Palestinian Authority as agreed under the 1995 Oslo Accords. The plan does not prevent the granting of Israeli citizenship to the limited number of Arabs who will fall within the domain of Israeli sovereignty.

Nor does the plan foreclose the possibility of an independent Palestinian state in the remaining 70 percent of the West Bank where the vast majority of Palestinians reside, should they choose to pursue peace. Having rejected proposals to create just such a state on at least six occasions over the last century, the Israeli action will strongly convey the message to Palestinians that rejectionism has its consequences.

There is no need for an extended defense of Israel's proposed plan of action. One can trust the Israelis to act in their best national interest, as citizens of any other country do. As for the dire warnings and threats by opinion writers, editorialists, NGOs, presidential hopefuls and others who make a good living off of disparaging any action by the State of Israel, perhaps the best response is the one former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin made to then-Sen. Joseph Biden in 1982.

At the time, Biden was chastising Begin during a Senate hearing over Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank, harshly threatening to cut off economic aid to the Jewish state if it did not immediately cease its settlement activities. Begin forcefully replied to Biden in words equally applicable today:

"Don't threaten us with cutting off your aid. It will not work. I am not a Jew with trembling knees. I am a proud Jew with 3,700 years of civilized history. Nobody came to our aid when we were dying in the gas chambers and ovens. Nobody came to our aid when we were striving to create our country. We paid for it. We fought for it. We died for it. We will stand by our principles. We will defend them. And, when necessary, we will die for them again, with or without your aid."

Or to put it in even starker terms, as Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, famously quipped: "It does not matter what the goyim say, it only matters what the Jews do." (JNS May 17)

'Bloat' is the Least of the New Israeli Government's Problems

By Ruthie Blum

Public criticism of the new Israeli government has focused on how "bloated" it is. Prior to and since the swearing-in on Sunday of the coalition's 34 ministers, every headline in the print and broadcast media was and has been highlighting its unprecedented size.

In addition, each disgruntled analyst has bemoaned the exorbitant cost of maintaining dozens of ministries, many of which were concocted to satisfy the demands of coalition partners and party members fearing relegation to the backbenches of the Knesset. The main outcry over the high price of assuaging egos in this fashion is that more than 1 million citizens are newly unemployed, with businesses imploding all over the place, as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns.

It's a valid argument, to be sure. But as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pointed out in his speech during the four-hour plenary session that preceded the swearing-in ceremony, "If we had gone into a fourth election, the additional cost would have amounted to NIS 2 billion (approximately \$567 million). The additional cost of a unity government [was roughly] NIS 85 million (\$24 million) a year, infinitely lower than the cost of additional elections."

Furthermore, following three rounds of legislative elections in a little more than a year—on April 9, 2019, Sept. 17, 2019 and March 2, 2020—the public had grown weary of going to the polls. Particularly since an end to the political deadlock was nowhere in sight, while the coronavirus was beginning to spread. In fact, a mere three weeks after the third round, the entire Jewish state was in virtual or literal quarantine. At that point, Israelis couldn't have cared less about politics. We were too busy buying toilet paper and debating the merits of surgical masks.

The announcement on April 20 that Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz had struck a deal, therefore, came as a relief to the majority of the population. The general attitude was that we have to get the ravaged economy back up and running again, even if that means settling for a less-than-ideal government in Jerusalem.

Only left- and right-wing ideologues were truly unhappy. They would have preferred another round of elections to having their representatives in the Knesset compromise on crucial issues in order to be part of a mish-mosh coalition.

Sadly, their misgivings already appear to be on the mark.

The statements made by three new ministers on Monday, upon receiving the proverbial keys to the offices from their immediate predecessors, illustrate that Israel's 35th government is in for a very bumpy ride.

Let's start with the words of Gabi Ashkenazi, the Blue and White member of Knesset who replaced Israel Katz as minister of foreign affairs. (Katz is now finance minister.)

After referring to U.S. President Donald Trump's Mideast peace plan as a "historic opportunity," Ashkenazi revealed his party's reservations to the part of the "deal of the century" that involves Israel extending sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and parts of Judea and Samaria. He did this through euphemism.

Jerusalem, he said, would have to act "responsibly, with full coordination with the United States and maintaining all of the state of Israel's peace agreements and strategic interests," especially with Egypt and Jordan.

What he meant was clear to anyone familiar with Blue and White's stance: that Arab consent, international community backing and Palestinian statehood are required in order for Israel to move ahead with Netanyahu's intention to "extend Israel's law over regions that are the cradle of the Jewish people," as early as July.

Then there's Avi Nissenkorn, the new justice minister. Nissenkorn, former secretary general of the Histadrut labor union, replaced Amir Ohana, who is now minister of public security. While Ohana spent his tenure fighting against the judicial activism and intervention in legislative affairs, Nissenkorn took advantage of his inauguration address to announce that he would be the judges' defender and champion—their protective "wall."

Labor Party chairman Amir Peretz, the new economy minister—replacing the Likud Party's Eli Cohen, now intelligence minister—is another figure whose politics are antithetical to those of Netanyahu.

His inaugural speech was an ode to socialism.

"The strength of those who held extreme economic stances that led

to piggish capitalism in earlier governments is smaller in this coalition, and this gives us a bigger chance to advance humane economics," he declared proudly.

Views on sovereignty, court interventionism and the free market are what separate the right from the left in Israel. Though the former garnered far more votes at the ballot box—three times in a row—the latter is now in charge of the ministries that handle those very matters.

Whether Netanyahu is going to be able to proceed with any policy that conflicts with his coalition partners' political positions remains to be seen. But it is a concern that makes the problem of "bloating" pale in comparison. (JNS May 19)

Battling the Jewish State's 'BDS-from-Within' Phenomenon

By Matan Peleg

Several weeks ago, Germany's anti-Semitism commissioner, Felix Klein, made headlines for canceling the participation of prominent intellectual Professor Achille Mbembe at the popular Ruhrtriennale arts and music festival.

Mbembe, originally from Cameroon, is a star among Israel-haters around the world. He is not only a supporter of the BDS movement, but maintains that Israel is an apartheid state that is worse than the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

Once the pro-Israel Free Democratic Party caught wind of Mbembe's appearance at the festival, its members penned a letter to the director of the festival asserting that hosting Mbembe violates law of North Rhine-Westphalia—where the event was set to take place—whose parliament passed legislation barring public funds from supporting BDS.

The letter reached Klein, who decided to ban Mbembe from participating in the festival, which was ultimately canceled due to coronavirus concerns.

Only that wasn't the end of the story.

On April 30, 37 Jewish academics, including 29 Israelis—22 of whom are affiliated with Israeli universities—sent a letter to German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Federal Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer demanding that Klein be fired for his decision to ban Mbembe. The letter defends Mbembe, despite his support for BDS and his ongoing accusations that Israel is committing crimes against humanity.

In other words, nine professors from Tel Aviv University, eight from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, three from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and two additional "geniuses"—one from the Weizmann Institute of Science and another from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design—all came together in order to teach Germans that BDS is not really anti-Semitic. And not merely teach them, but try to get the government-appointed commissioner against anti-Semitism ousted because his opinion differs from theirs.

Mazal tov! Israeli academia's thought police has turned itself into Interpol.

Unfortunately, this is not an unusual occurrence; these BDS-loving Israeli professors are far from being alone.

Earlier this month, for instance, seven Israeli professors—along with former members of Knesset Colette Avital, Zehava Galon and Mossi Raz, former Jewish Agency chairman and former Knesset speaker Avraham Burg—published an open letter urging Ireland to pass a bill that would criminalize economic support for and trade with Israeli companies located in Judea and Samaria, eastern Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. If passed into law, this "Occupied Territories Bill" would not be some insignificant piece of non-binding legislation. On the contrary, its violators would face fines up to 250,000 euros and up to five years in prison.

As if that weren't bad enough, these radical Israelis didn't publish their letter in some obscure website or on social media, but in *The Irish Times*, one of Ireland's most prominent newspapers. It's unbelievable how far this madness can go.

Despite the fact that Israel upholds human and civil rights more than the vast majority of the world's countries, it still suffers from internal subversion and more boycott attempts than any other country in the world.

The motive for this madness might not be clear, but the solution couldn't be clearer.

The Israeli government must begin to enact laws that will impose harsher punishments against Israelis who promote BDS.

Iran and Hezbollah aren't the only threats to the future of the state of Israel. They are in good company with the "BDS-from-within" promoters. (JNS May 18)