



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*

months away or a few weeks away from amassing enough [higher-grade] enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon."

While debatable, it seems, then, that Iran has indeed technically crossed Netanyahu's 'red line,' as the country has to date manufactured

more uranium enriched to 20% (280 kg+) than is required to build a nuclear weapon (even though its current stockpile allegedly remains below the 250 kg threshold). Most importantly, as Yadlin noted, Iran has shortened the time required for it to reach "breakout" capacity to mere days, a significantly shorter timeframe than the "few months" or "few weeks" outlined by Netanyahu in September.

Iran is thus on the brink of achieving nuclear weapons capability, having reached the stage whereby it can decide at any moment to make a week-long dash towards a point of no return; an interval which is, 'red lines' aside, too close for comfort.

In his interview last October, Barak claimed that Iran had rolled back its nuclear progress by "eight to ten months," and stressed that Tehran would likely reach the "zone of immunity," depriving Israel of its military option, by the "spring or early summer." This prediction coincides with Yadlin's recent assertion that the Islamic republic could reach nuclear breakout capacity as early as June.

Likewise, Netanyahu stated in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly that Iran will have produced enough higher-grade enriched uranium for its first bomb "at most by next summer." This reality, Netanyahu said, precipitated his delineation of limits on Iran's nuclear program, as "red lines don't lead to war, red lines prevent war."

The evidence suggests that we'll soon find out if he's right.
(Israel Hayom May 23)

Commentary...

Has Iran Crossed Netanyahu's 'Red Line'? By Charles Bybelezer

Former Military Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. (res.) Amos Yadlin made headlines last month when he claimed that Tehran had crossed the 'red line' delineated by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly in September.

Yadlin has since explained that his assertion was founded on the widely held misperception that Iran had diverted to civilian purposes a significant portion of its uranium enriched to 20 percent. He clarified that while Iran had indeed converted some of this stockpile into nuclear fuel rods -- generally used in nuclear reactors to produce nuclear energy -- the majority was in fact made into oxidized uranium, or yellowcake, which can be readily transformed into fissile material.

"Within a week, [yellowcake] could be turned into nuclear material for a bomb," Yadlin is on record as saying.

To fully comprehend the significance of Yadlin's assertion, some context, while dense, is necessary.

In August 2012, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran had, since Tehran began refining uranium to this concentration in 2010, produced nearly 190 kilograms of uranium enriched to 20%. At the time, there was widespread speculation of an imminent Israeli attack on Iran; talk of which infuriated Netanyahu to such an extent that he accused the international media of perpetrating a "worldwide scandal" to "prevent Israel from independent action."

Weeks later, Netanyahu appeared before the U.N. General Assembly to delineate his 'red line' on Iran's nuclear progress, his now-infamous caricature of a bomb in hand.

One month later, then-Defense Minister Ehud Barak gave an interview to the British Telegraph in which he confirmed that Iran had delayed the "moment of truth" by converting approximately 40%, or 70 kilograms, of its 190 kg stockpile of higher-grade uranium to other forms, thereby leaving Tehran with 120 kg of the substance -- well below the 250 kg threshold required to build a nuclear bomb.

By February, however, the IAEA disclosed that Iran's total production of 20% enriched uranium had reached 280 kg, an addition of 90 kg in the preceding six months. Its stockpile stood, at that point, at 170 kg (up from 120 kg in August); meaning that another 40 kg had been diverted towards other purposes.

Overall, then, the IAEA extrapolated that Iran had converted to other forms some 110 kg (70 kg + 40 kg) of the 280 kg of higher-grade uranium it had produced since 2010.

Yadlin's "blockbuster" was to reveal that, contrary to popular belief, only 30 kg of this had been transformed into fuel rods, whereas 80 kg was turned into yellowcake, which, as Yadlin cautioned, can be converted expeditiously into bomb-grade material. He therefore concluded that Iran had crossed Netanyahu's red line, as the 80 kg of yellowcake in question, when added to Iran's stockpile (as of February) of 170 kg of 20% enriched uranium, meets the 250 kg threshold required to build a nuke.

While Yadlin ultimately backtracked somewhat from his affirmation -- saying that Iran had not yet "cross[ed] the red line in a clear manner," the question begs: Has Iran, in fact, exceeded Netanyahu's limit?

In his speech to the U.N. General Assembly, Netanyahu specifically stated that "a red line must be drawn, first and foremost, in one vital part of [Iran's] program -- on Iran's efforts to enrich uranium." Netanyahu reasoned that "the only way that you can credibly prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon is to prevent Iran from amassing enough enriched uranium for a bomb," since Tehran could covertly produce other components of a nuclear weapon with relative ease and without the knowledge of the international community.

Netanyahu thus asserted that "a red line should be drawn before Iran completes the second stage of nuclear enrichment [to 20%] necessary to make a bomb." Specifically, "before Iran gets to a point where it's a few

Qatar's Two-Faced Israel Policy By Yaakov Ahimeir

Just recently, the Qatari prime minister stood in Washington, D.C. and declared that the Arab world is ready for land swaps between the Palestinians and Israel when a peace deal is reached. Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani made the declaration while flanked by foreign ministers from Arab countries.

His words have been praised to high heaven by opinion makers. He has become the darling of MKs from Israel's opposition parties, who view this declaration as an unprecedented historical step.

This is the public face of Qatar. But behind the scenes, in tandem with these declarations on territory swaps and border adjustments, Qatar is waging a campaign against Canada, whose Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Foreign Minister John Baird are exceptionally friendly toward Israel.

The diplomatic duo of Harper and Baird are the most pro-Israel there is. Both publicly express their support for Israel, and they don't hide their positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But in the eyes of the Arab League, this Canadian position is unacceptable and must be eliminated. Qatar has been given the job of spearheading the Arab League's revenge campaign against Canada.

Qatar is trying to exact punishment for this "Israel-Canadian conspiracy" by requesting that the headquarters of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) be moved to Doha. At present, the headquarters are seated in Montreal. In this way, Canada will pay for the "sin" of its supporting Israel.

This is no small matter. ICAO, a specialized agency of the United Nations, has enormous international clout because it sets the routes for international civil aviation. If Qatar's ruse is successful, the transfer of the headquarters to Doha will do much to detract from Canada's international prestige. Qatar's efforts are unrelenting and at present it is busy recruiting the necessary 115 votes in the U.N. General Assembly for the move to Doha.

Qatar is furious over another matter as well. Not long ago, Canada's foreign minister met with Justice Minister Tzipi Livni in her office, which as everyone knows is located in east Jerusalem. In other words, it is on the other side of the Green Line. Minister Livni's Canadian guest did not make an effort to excuse the visit to critics, nor did he apologize for the location of his meeting with Livni.

The vengeance campaign that Qatar is conducting against Canada has

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already set off. Canada's influential Globe and Mail newspaper, which has devoted detailed reporting to Qatar's moves, claims that the emirate is hinting to other countries that if they dare show signs of support for Israel, there will be a punishment campaign against them just like the one being waged against Canada. Fortunately, the U.S. is taking Canada's side.

There is a lesson to be learned from this international diplomatic incident. It's always wise and a good idea to give credit where credit is due. To praise and glorify Qatar, but only on the condition that it does not conduct a two-faced policy toward Israel: on the one hand making declarations concerning land swaps and on the other punishing countries like Canada whose leaders are not ashamed of their friendship with Israel.

Harper has already clarified that even if he has to pay a political price, he will not shy away from his government's policies toward Israel. This uncompromising stance certainly makes him worthy of an honorary doctorate from Tel Aviv University, which should await the day when he arrives in Israel and can don the academic regalia of the institution. (Israel Hayom May 19)

Thanks to Kuperwasser al-Dura Report, Truth is on its Way

By Philippe Karsenty

For over 10 years, I've been fighting, along with many friends, to get out the truth about the al-Dura blood libel.

For many years, the strongest argument of our opponents has been the silence of the State of Israel when my efforts were sometimes undermined by Israeli diplomats. So getting the support of Israeli public diplomacy was an important objective.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu received Moshe Ya'alon's and Yossi Kuperwasser's report, which confirms my accusation against French public TV.

It's a milestone on the way to the truth.

Yesterday, a French court of appeals was expected to release its verdict on another episode of my defamation trial against France 2, but the verdict was postponed, for the second time. It is now due to be given on June 26.

My victory in that case could be an important step forward, but nothing is certain.

Five years ago, after I won the appellate court trial, France 2 denied the report was a hoax and appealed to the French Supreme Court on technicalities. Last year, they won and the verdict was annulled. The highest French court said we didn't have the right to look at France 2's raw footage to decide if I was right or wrong to accuse them of having staged their news report.

Kafka was back! If I lose, you can be sure Israel demonizers and France 2 will use the verdict to slander Israel, and me, even if I lose on technicalities.

Almost 13 years after the broadcasting of the Dura hoax, Israel is still trying to recover its good name, and this should be a reason to worry for the State of Israel and its citizens. Thirteen years and so many lives lost because of Israel's silence, because of Israel's incapacity to understand global anti-Semitism is fed by Israel's reluctance to defend its point of view.

During all these years, I've been undermined by Israelis; ambassadors, politicians, journalists and by a prominent American Jewish organization which preferred to keep access to the French politicians over fighting for the truth. Nevertheless, I was confident because the truth has always been on my side.

Now that the State of Israel has taken the official decision to fight for its good name, it is important to encourage it to continue and to analyze how this huge PR failure has been allowed to go on for so long.

This Kuperwasser investigation committee has been important and productive. I strongly recommend that the State of Israel establish another investigative committee to determine the problems which led to this situation.

One day or another, Israel will face another lie, another blood libel or other false accusations during military operations. Israel was not prepared for this war, and Israel lost.

Since the creation of the State of Israel, Arabs, with the complicity of some Western countries, have tried to destroy this tiny nation by open warfare. They failed.

Then they tried terrorism. In the end, that also failed. So, they turned to media war – and here, unfortunately, they succeeded.

The result is that now, the wars Israel wins on the ground, while respecting international laws and treaties, are lost on the media battlefield, and then in the diplomatic arena.

The official Israeli report, which was issued on Sunday, shows a turning point in the Israeli authorities' state of mind: they decided to fight for their good name. This is good news, and will be effective only if they are able to analyze their mistakes and draw conclusions in order not to repeat past mistakes.

As in every previous war, Israel has no choice but to win. It's a question of survival, and I'm sure Israel will succeed. (Jerusalem Post May 22)

Deciphering Delegitimization By Martin Sherman

How is it that after all the wrenching concessions it has made, Israel is far more reviled today than during the rigid "rejectionism" of Yitzhak Shamir? I believe we have to talk to each other and to listen to each other. I think bilateral engagement... is the only way. But confidence, trust, is not existing. – Jibril Rajoub, Fatah Central Committee, at the annual conference of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, April 23.

We the Palestinians are the enemies of Israel. There is no going back to negotiations. Listen. We as yet don't have a nuke, but I swear that if we had a nuke, we'd have used it this very morning. – Jibril Rajoub, on the Lebanese-based TV station Al Mayadeen, April 30

I have been sitting in front of my computer screen with waves of despair and disbelief flowing over me, unable to write a sentence for hours.

As I meander through cyberspace, each proposal I encounter for resolving the Palestinian issue seems more detached from reality, more devoid of reason, more desperate, more delusional and more depressing than the one before.

It would be one thing if these outlandish schemes were being promoted solely by Israel's external adversaries. But what I find bewildering and debilitating is that these demonstrably unworkable proposals are being energetically pursued and promoted by influential Israelis themselves.

Almost inconceivably, policy prescriptions that not many years ago would have been condemned as almost treasonous, are being enthusiastically embraced and ardently advanced by individuals and organizations, deep within the mainstream Israeli establishment. Time after time, we see one public figure after another succumb to the pernicious pressures of political correctness and endorse political paradigms they had previously denounced as too dangerous to be adopted.

Failure, no matter how dramatic, disastrous or devastating, seems to have little effect. Regardless of results, reality or reason, they cling stubbornly to evermore radical variants of the same concept of political appeasement and territorial abandonment, which although repeatedly disproven, is somehow never discredited, and certainly, never discarded.

When negotiated withdrawal failed to bring peace, unilateral withdrawal was adopted. When that failed to bring the desired results, unrequited unilateral withdrawal – i.e. withdrawal for withdrawal's sake – is now being touted as an objective in itself.

It seems that no matter how heinous the deeds, or obnoxious the declarations, on the Palestinian side, this will never disqualify anyone to be welcomed as an honored interlocutor in the discourse on Israeli concessions.

The only criterion for invitation seems to be that there should be someone else who has perpetrated deeds more heinous, or made declarations more obnoxious.

Thus for example, less than a year ago, Jibril Rajoub, who also heads the Palestine Olympic Committee, commended the president of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge, for not permitting a minute of silence at the 2012 London Olympics to commemorate the murder of Israeli sportsmen at the 1972 Munich Games (Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, July 25, 2012).

The fact that Rajoub declared that such commemoration of the cold-blooded killing of Jewish sportsmen, solely because they were Jewish, would be an act of "racism" apparently was not considered an impediment to including him in the high-profile program of the INSS to discuss "creative ideas" to deal with the Palestinian problem.

Barely a week later, the affable Rajoub gave full vent to his "creativity" on the recently established Al-Mayadeen TV channel, when he indicated that his preferred solution to the conflict would be the nuclear annihilation of the Jewish state. And just to eliminate any doubt that this might have been a slip of the tongue, two days later, Jibril posted the interview on his Facebook page – indicating that he felt little regret at the judeocidal views he had articulated. Quite the opposite.

It seems that in his assessment, they might boost his popularity with the Palestinian public.

One cannot help wondering whether his INSS hosts felt a ting of sheepish embarrassment on learning of the public proclamation of the pungent predilections of the man to whom they had provided their prestigious podium. After all, it is virtually inconceivable that any "right-wing" Israeli, expressing views even remotely as acrimonious as those of Rajoub, would be invited to grace their conference.

Perhaps they would do well to heed Rajoub's recommendation that

“we have to listen to each other.”

But what has all this got to do with the title of this essay, “Deciphering delegitimization”? In a word, everything – or almost everything.

Of course, in the prevailing politically correct perception, what has led to the accelerating deterioration of the country’s international image – which last week gathered reinforced momentum with the decision of the world-renowned physicist Stephen Hawking to boycott Nobel Peace laureate and Oslo-cum-New-Middle-East visionary, Shimon Peres – is the alleged Israeli intransigence in denying Palestinians statehood.

In reality, quite the reverse is true. By desperately adhering to a paradigm that is inherently unworkable, the two-state advocates have not only made Israel appear insincere and conniving, but have sown the seeds for the very delegitimization the two state approach was supposed to obviate.

By endorsing a seemingly unending succession of concessions, by displaying seemingly unlimited tolerance for the unmasked malevolence and mendacity of the Palestinians, they have undermined, rather than underpinned, Israel’s international credibility.

For it is difficult – if not impossible – for the average individual to grasp the seemingly unbounded benevolent lenience toward an openly obdurate adversary, if one believed that there was any validity or moral merit to one’s own case.

Tenacious two-staters would do well to take to heart G.K. Chesterton’s acerbic counsel: “Do not be so open-minded that your brains fall out.”

So what lessons can – and must – be learned from the perverse Hawking-Peres fiasco? It illustrates that continued pursuit of the two-state approach is either obsessive or obtuse. Neither precedent nor plausibility auger well for its prospects of success. As policy, it flies in the face of both empirical fact and political prudence.

Its advocates must be forced to confront the trenchant question: How is it that after all the wrenching concessions Israel has made over the last two decades, it is far more reviled today than during the rigid “rejectionism” of Yitzhak Shamir? This is not a question that should be flippantly dismissed as irrelevant. For experience has shown that continual concessions have proved disastrously counterproductive, while escalating Palestinian intransigence has paid handsome dividends.

Worse, by embracing the two-state approach, Israel has, in effect, made a mockery of its own diplomatic endeavor. After all, how can one be expected to be taken seriously when what was once resolutely rejected as an unacceptable risk to national security is now being portrayed as the sine qua non for national survival?

Clearly, within the context of conventional wisdom and the discourse it generates, the contention that Israel’s acceptance of the legitimacy of Palestinian national claims has laid the foundations for the international assault on its own legitimacy seems, at best, counter-intuitive. However, the logic behind it is unassailable and the conclusion to be drawn from it inexorable: Once the legitimacy of a Palestinian state is conceded, the delegitimization of Israel is inevitable.

The chain of reasoning is clear and compelling – almost algorithmic: • If the Palestinian narrative which portrays the Palestinians as an authentic national entity is acknowledged as legitimate, then all the aspirations, such as achieving Palestinian statehood, that arise from that narrative are legitimate. Accordingly, any policy that precludes the achievement of those aspirations will be perceived as illegitimate.

- So, if the legitimacy of a Palestinian state is accepted, then any measures incompatible with its viability are illegitimate. However – in the absence of wildly optimistic, and hence irresponsibly unrealistic, “best-case” assumptions – any policy that is designed to secure Israel’s minimal security requirements, will preclude the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.
- Consequently, any endeavor to realistically provide Israel with minimal security will be perceived as illegitimate. Accordingly, by accepting the admissibility of a Palestinian state, one necessarily admits the inadmissibility of measures required to ensure Israeli security.
- Conversely, measures required to ensure Israeli security necessarily negate the viability of a Palestinian state.
- The inevitable conclusion must therefore be that for Israel to secure conditions that adequately address its minimal security requirements, the Palestinian narrative, and the aspirations that flow from it, must be delegitimized.

I have little doubt that committed two-staters will dismiss this reasoned argument with haughty derision.

However, I would urge them to follow Jibril Rajoub’s advice and to listen to what the Palestinians are saying. In particular, I would refer them to “The Myth of Defensible Borders” by Omar Dajani and Ezzedine Fishere, which appeared in the January 2011 edition of *Foreign Affairs*.

The authors – an adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team and an adviser to the-then Egyptian foreign minister, respectively, write, not without significant justification: “A policy of defensible borders would...

perpetuate the current sources of Palestinian insecurity, further delegitimizing an agreement in the public’s eyes. Israel would retain the discretion to impose arbitrary and crippling constraints on the movement of people and goods...For these reasons, Palestinians are likely to regard defensible borders as little more than occupation by another name.”

See what I mean about “defensible borders...delegitimizing an agreement” on a Palestinian state?

Moreover, recent post-Osloian events in the Mideast – a triumphant Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, an ever-ascendant Islamist influence in Jordan, and the specter of a jihadist Syria – are hardly likely to reduce Israeli threat-perception. In turn, this is likely to increase the incompatibility between a viable Palestinian state and minimal requirements for a secure Israel, thus widening even more the perceived “legitimacy” gap.

Future historians will surely be baffled as to why such a manifestly disastrous, disproven concept came to be embraced by so many prominent, allegedly well-informed pundits, politicians, and policy-makers.

They will be particularly perplexed as to why the two-state solution was so enthusiastically endorsed not only by those who had a vested interest in feigning support for it, but by those who had a vested interest in exposing it as the duplicitous subterfuge it is. They will be mystified as to why – despite the fact that it proved devastating for both Arabs and Jews – it became the hallmark of progressive enlightenment.

For by pursuing the “vision” (read “fantasy”) of two states, allegedly pro-Israel twostaters will not only fail to reap the intended benefits this policy is purported to yield, but will precipitate outcomes highly deleterious to Israel – indeed, the very outcomes the two-state policy was supposed to prevent.

One is left to wonder what more has to occur until realization dawns that the “two-state” notion is merely a facilitating link in the “two-stage” strategy.

For the notion of a secure Israel to regain legitimacy, the notion of a Palestinian state must be discredited and removed from the discourse as a possible means of resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict.

This, of course, is easier said than done.

Rolling back the decades of distortion, deception and delusion that have become entrenched in the collective international consciousness will be a Herculean task. But the immensity of the task cannot diminish the imperative of its implementation.

It will require the effort – both intellectual and financial – at least comparable to that invested in the “Iron Dome” project. For without wishing to belittle the threat of Palestinian rockets, who can deny that the threat of international delegitimization of Israel is a far greater strategic menace than primitive projectiles that carry barely 20 kg. of explosives.

One can only hope that the nation will produce leaders equal to the task – with the necessary political will, intellectual depth and ideological commitment, hitherto undisplayed by recent incumbents, both past and present. (Jerusalem Psot May 17)

The Arab League’s New Peace Proposal By Zalman Shoval

In their meeting in Washington, the representatives of the Arab League presented US Secretary of State John Kerry with a “modified” version of the 2002 Arab Peace Plan, proposing, for the first time, land swaps with Israel.

Israeli politicians on the Left, including a government minister from Finance Minister Yair Lapid’s hodge-podge Yesh Atid party, enthused over the supposedly “dramatic” and “historic” turnaround, while General (ret.) Ami Ayalon, former head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) and later the author of one of many earth-bound peace-projects, even referred in a Haaretz op-ed to the original Arab plan as “Israel’s most important victory in the ongoing struggle for Israel’s survival as a Jewish democratic state.”

It is none of the above. Talk is cheap, but even a perfunctory examination of the document termed the “Arab Peace Initiative” which the Arab League adopted on March 28, 2002, at its meeting in Beirut shows that in effect it was no more than a list of take-it-or-leave-it demands requiring Israel to commit itself in advance to, among other things, “full withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967, including the Syrian Golan Heights”; east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state; and the so-called “right of return” of Arab refugees (though couched in somewhat different, supposedly more moderate, language, viz. that it was “to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194”).

There are those who mistakenly or deliberately interpret this paragraph as if it were subject to Israeli agreement, but as Professor Asher Susser, a senior researcher at the Moshe Dayan Center, explained at the time, “right of return” was the only Arab interpretation of said UN resolution. Needless to say, the “initiative” didn’t include any reference to

recognizing Israel as a Jewish state. There also was a thinly disguised threat: if Israel did not accept the Arab terms, “steadfastness and struggle” – i.e. violence and terror – would continue.

The US has usually preferred to see the half-full glass rather than the half-empty one with regard to the “Arab Initiative,” though former secretary of state Hillary Clinton was prescient enough to declare “that the Arabs must, through words and deeds, show that the spirit of the peace initiative can begin to govern attitudes towards Israel now.” “Now” was exactly four years ago, and it hasn’t happened yet.

But might not the Arab League now agreeing to land swaps be interpreted as a step in the right direction? Though Secretary Kerry seems to see it that way (stating that his efforts to move the peace process forward were “bolstered” by it), this is hardly so.

Future political historians will probably be frustrated when they attempt to unravel how the idea of “land swaps” between Israel and the Palestinians ever achieved traction. After all, this wasn’t what UN Security Council Resolution 242 had said about Israel’s future borders, the intention never having been that Israel should return to the vulnerable pre- ’67 cease-fire line.

Indeed, it had specifically called for “secure and recognized boundaries free from threats and acts of force.” The UK’s Lord Caradon (Hugh M. Foot), the Resolution’s co-author, later specified that “it would have been wrong to demand that Israel return to its positions of 4 June 1967.” In other words, the purpose of 242 was to make Israeli withdrawals from territories it had occupied in exercising its right to self-defense contingent on secure borders, not subject to territorial tic-tac-toe games.

But beyond that, as Arthur Goldberg, the US ambassador to the UN at the time of the Resolution’s adoption and its other co-author, has said: “it is clear that Israel exercised the right of self-defense in the 1967 war,” as indeed it did by all precepts of international law. Enemies of Israel often have a tendency to disingenuously mix up cause and effect, so the approaching 46th anniversary of the Six Day War gives us an opportunity to put things in order. On the morning of June 5, 1967, the Jordanian Arab Legion artillery began to shell west Jerusalem and Jordanian soldiers occupied Government House, which served as the UN observers headquarters. King Hussein, fooled by false Egyptian reports of victory in Sinai, cynically decided to join the supposedly victorious side, and put his army under Egyptian command.

Jordanian forces shelled Jewish villages along the road from the coastal plain to Jerusalem, even threatening Ben-Gurion airport. Tel Aviv and its environs, as well as Israel’s northern regions were also shelled, the attackers using long-range “Long Tom” guns, and bombing other parts of the country from the air.

Only after fierce fighting and many Israeli casualties were the Jordanian forces driven back.

It was an unprovoked, naked act of aggression against the State of Israel, in spite of the fact that Israel’s then-defense minister Moshe Dayan, de-facto supreme commander during the Six Day War, had at first ordered IDF units to act only defensively. One may, therefore, be justified in asking why Israel should now be required to compensate the aggressor with land? (There is no evidence that the Palestinians in 1967, being part and parcel of Jordan, even retrospectively distanced themselves from the aggression perpetrated by Jordan).

To cite a perhaps extreme analogy, Germany after World War II lost a great deal of territory to the victim of its aggression, Poland. Was Poland asked to swap part of its own land with Germany? Still, taking all of this, including the potential downsides into consideration, the very fact that the Arab League has now taken the dust sheets off its erstwhile “initiative” may perhaps be seen as a positive in the light of the new realities in the Middle East – the so-called “Arab Spring” on the one hand, and the growing threat of a rapidly nuclearizing Iran on the other.

Both of these developments could potentially lead (and perhaps already have led) toward a strategic reassessment by the more moderate Arab regimes as to their relations with Israel and their own role in bringing about a settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Thus, their plan, provided it is rewritten as an open-ended peace proposal to be discussed by the parties without prior conditions, replacing its former ultimatory pretensions, could eventually have been of some practical benefit – were it not for Palestinian intransigence.

Though the Fatah Central Committee half-heartedly accepted the Arab League’s latest proposal, the Palestinian Authority immediately reiterated its preconditions to holding talks with Israel, i.e. Israel accepting in advance the ’67 armistice line as the future border, stopping all construction across the “Green Line,” including in Jerusalem, and releasing Palestinian terrorists from prison.

The only purpose of the Palestinian tactic is to avoid meaningful negotiations in which both sides, not just Israel, would have to make compromises and concessions.

As long as PA President Mahmoud Abbas and his group hold to this

position, no peace effort will have the slightest chance of getting off the ground.

Nor have the prospects of peace been enhanced by the announcement that, with Salam Fayyad safely out of the way, Fatah has concluded an agreement with the terrorist organization Hamas, which denies Israel’s very right to exist, to establish within three months a Palestinian unity government. (Jerusalem Post May 20)

The author is a former ambassador to the US.

Tax Shekels Poorly Spent By Ruthie Blum

Last week, when thousands of Israelis protested against the 2013-2014 state budget, all they could do was shout out the usual socialist hokum about redistributing the wealth of the rich. In this respect, they are completely clueless. But they are right about one thing: The ever increasing tax burden on the middle class is unfair and curbs economic growth.

One of many complaints that could be heard from the disgruntled demonstrators -- huge numbers of whom voted for Finance Minister Yair Lapid in the first place -- is the amount of money the government spends to maintain the settlements.

Here's some news for my fellow citizens, whose financial condition will never improve if they keep blaming the wrong people and policies for their plight: Aside from the gargantuan monopolies in Israel, which are controlled just as much by the labor unions as they are by the “tycoons,” public waste needs curtailment. Examples of outrageous expenditures abound, which make Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s request for a double bed on his flight to China pale in comparison.

Take the Masa Israel Journey program, for instance. Established in 2004 with the approval of then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Masa (“journey” in Hebrew) is aimed at connecting young Diaspora Jews with Israel. Similar in that sense to Taglit-Birthright, the program that preceded it by several years, Masa offers free trips, grants and scholarships to participants who identify themselves as Jewish. The idea behind both is that Jews who have an “Israel experience” are more likely to feel tied to their roots. Another thing the two programs have in common is funding from the Israeli government. But, while Taglit-Birthright subsists mainly on private donations, receiving only a small portion from the Israeli government, Masa gets half of its tens of millions of dollars annually from the Israeli government and the other half from the Jewish Agency.

If members of the Israeli middle class had been paying attention to this year’s closing ceremony of Masa on Monday afternoon at the International Convention Center in Jerusalem, they would have gained insight into where good chunks of their hard-earned, heavily taxed shekels have been so generously invested.

During the address of keynote speaker Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett, 30 Masa participants began to shout, “Diaspora Jews say, ‘End the occupation;’ Diaspora Jews say, ‘No to annexation.’” Meanwhile, they and others distributed flyers to the audience, accusing Bennett of opposing a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The group responsible for turning the party into an anti-Israeli government political rally calls itself “All That’s Left: Anti-Occupation Collective.” Joining forces with them were members of the socialist-Zionist youth movement Hashomer Hatzair.

According to a blog post about the event, written by prominent “All That’s Left” member Joshua Leifer in the Times of Israel, “Outside, hundreds of Masa participants flowed out of the auditorium and engaged in conversations with the demonstrators. The dialogue following the action led to frank and open discussions that aren’t being held enough in Diaspora Jewish communities. The action was a success because the young Jewish activists were able to disrupt Bennett’s speech and engage with Masa participants in critical discussion ... The ideology that motivates Bennett’s political party, the Jewish Home [Habayit Hayehudi], is a dangerous merger of racism, militarism and colonialism ... The young Jews who interrupted Bennett’s speech demonstrated that his policy proposals and political positions fundamentally contradict Diaspora Jews’ belief in equality, democracy and a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The normalization of Bennett’s extremist discourse in the context of a Masa event was so deeply problematic that the young Masa participants considered it unacceptable.”

Oh, dear. We were so busy financing their Israel experience that we failed to make it -- or our elected leaders -- acceptable to them.

There is nothing new about Jews criticizing Israel. Nor is it novel for the Left to misrepresent the political positions of those to the right of them. But why do our tax shekels have to pay for something we already receive, in abundance at home and abroad, for free?

This is the kind of question that should be heard at social protests in Tel Aviv and plastered on posters of Netanyahu and Lapid in Jerusalem. But, of course, it never will be. (Israel Hayom May 21)