



Commentary...

Another Anti-Religious Crusade is Upon Us

By Limor Samimian-Darash

The anti-religious stampede is in full force. Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman blew the barn doors open and the hatred is bursting through. But let us not be mistaken. What presently appears to be a preoccupation with the secular-religious rift and the supposed anxieties over the rise of a state ruled by Jewish law (Halachah) is merely another leftist strategy to conceal the fundamental political differences between the two blocs and to blur the positions on matters of state.

The Left has already tried everything it can to retake the government. It has invested resources in anti-Netanyahu propaganda, rallied people for "social" protests, and said it is not leftist at all but "centerist" (Blue and White). It has tried everything and failed. The public has seen this and has voted Right time and again.

Yet here we are again; the Left has come up with another reason for people to be afraid, a new existential threat. Just yesterday we were told to tremble in fear over the "end of democracy," the "fall of the rule of law," and the "destruction of the judicial system," and today we are already being told to fear the halachic state.

The facts, however, don't support that. Members of Blue and White, the Labor party and even Meretz have no problem sitting in the same government with the ultra-Orthodox parties. In actuality, Moshe Ya'alon and Benny Gantz have begun working toward it. The Left has always done this, eagerly, and when it didn't materialize it was because of haredi rejectionism (for example, Tzipi Livni's efforts to form a government after Ehud Olmert's resignation in 2008) – and not because the Left chose to exclude them from the coalition or their refusal to accept their various demands in exchange for joining.

Such was the case with Yitzhak Rabin's Labor government and Shas; with Ehud Barak's government with Shas; and Olmert's Kadima government. The deal on the table was obvious: The haredim would support these governments' dovish policies, and the Left in return would acquiesce to all their demands on religious, social and state-related matters. Case in point, it was the Olmert and Labor government, when Professor Yuli Tamir was education minister, that decided to annul core issue studies in the haredi sector and ratified the Nahari law, which allows the government to fund recognized but unofficial schools.

When all this was happening, however, the press was not inundating us with bombastic headlines and threats of a "Halachah state." Quite the opposite, there was a general appreciation of Shas for its contributions and flexibility on diplomatic matters.

Even the return of former Shas leader Aryeh Deri to the political arena, following his time in prison, was treated by the media with kid gloves, in the contemplation that Shas could again be used to tip the political scale in favor of the Left. Prior to the general election in 2013, then-President Shimon Peres said, "For the peace process to move forward, Shas really needs to be a part of the coalition."

But the current rhetoric of fear over a halachic state isn't a new phenomenon on the Left. It is essentially another evolution of haredi hatred, and this time, too, the anti-religious discourse is being used to camouflage the diplomatic dispute. This is a familiar tactic: Every recent left-wing government rose to power on the back of some civic-social wave or another, but in actuality, they focused on the Palestinian issue once in office.

We need to evoke the Gaza withdrawal period of 2005 to understand the hypocrisy. The Shinui party, which Lieberman is now poorly impersonating, won no less than 15 mandates in the 2003 election and joined second Ariel Sharon government with the aim of excluding the haredi parties. In actuality, the Sharon government leaned on Shinui's mandates not to foster an "anti-religious" revolution but, as usual, to push a diplomatic process that never would have occurred under a different constellation of parties: the Gaza disengagement.

Furthermore, even during the height of its political power Shinui agreed to transfer 290 million shekels (\$81 million) to the haredi parties, in exchange for 700 million shekels (\$190 million) for its own causes. Hence,

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let us not be mistaken, Lieberman and the Left won't change a thing when it comes to religion and state. The only thing we'll get is another "balance-shifting" party that will join the Left to bring us another disengagement. (Israel Hayom Jun 6)
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Pompeo's Justified Low Expectations for the Mideast Plan

By Ruthie Blum

In a private meeting on May 28 with the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo acknowledged that his administration's "deal of the century" between Israel and the Palestinians is "currently unexecutable."

No kidding.

Although details of Washington's much-touted plan for a resolution of the conflict have yet to be revealed, the Palestinian Authority rejected it publicly even before it had begun. This was to be expected. Every previous agreement put forth or brokered by the United States, including those that involved serious Israeli territorial and other concessions, has resulted in greater, not less, Palestinian intransigence and violence towards neighboring Jews.

Indeed, the Fatah-led P.A. in Ramallah and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip both have made it crystal-clear that their goal is neither peace with Israel nor independent Palestinian statehood, but rather the destruction of the Jewish state. In fact, the latter is one of the few issues on which the two terrorist entities are in complete agreement. About all else, they are at each other's throats, literally and figuratively.

As if this weren't reason enough to doubt the feasibility of any plan requiring Palestinian cooperation, P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas has been open about his refusal even to consider what U.S. President Donald Trump's team has to offer.

In fact, on the very day that Pompeo was convening in New York with Jewish leaders—whom he told that he understands why "people think this is going to be a deal that only the Israelis could love"—Abbas was at a ceremony in Ramallah denouncing Trump's "deal of disgrace," which he said "will go to hell."

Abbas made this charming statement while reiterating that he would have nothing to do with the upcoming U.S.-sponsored economic conference in Bahrain, aimed at boosting P.A. resources and development. The June 25-26 conference, Abbas said, "will also go to hell ... because they are selling us illusions that will lead to nothing."

Abbas ought to know about "selling illusions" since he has been engaging in that particular endeavor with aplomb for decades. Yes, he has managed to manipulate the international community into pouring money into his corrupt regime, while persuading those holding the purse strings that all he longs for is a homeland for his people to call their own.

The one thing that he hadn't banked on, however, was an administration in Washington that not only would call his bluff, but hold him accountable for the misery of the people he pretends to represent and for the lack of peace with Israel.

Imagine his shock and chagrin at the way in which the powers-that-be in the White House and State Department have been behaving. You know, as true allies of the only democracy in the Middle East should: unabashedly acknowledging that Israel, a member of the West in spite of its geographical location, is superior to thugs who deny its right to exist and glorify martyrdom in the name of Allah.

To make matters even worse for the aging despot, the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel; vetoed a Security Council resolution denouncing the gesture; moved the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; backed Israel's actions against Hamas-spurred border violence; confirmed that it would cease funding the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) over its anti-Israel activities and perpetuation of a false refugee problem; closed the Palestine Liberation Organization mission in Washington; and recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

In response to the Jerusalem move, Abbas declared a "boycott" on team Trump. It was a comical move on the P.A. leader's part because all it elicited from Trump's Mideast advisers and envoys was a shrug. Oh, and repeated criticism on social media about the Palestinians' pro-terrorism

stance.

The moral clarity of the American administration, especially at a time when it is launching a peace initiative, is not merely commendable. It is downright courageous.

Anyone who still fears that such unapologetic support is a precursor to Trump's calling in his chips from Israel when the time comes to make a deal is misreading the landscape. Even Trump has lowered his expectations. Of the Palestinians, that is.

"If we can get a Mideast peace plan, that would be good," he said last week when asked about Pompeo's skepticism. "Most people think it can't be done. I think it probably can. But as I say often, we'll see what happens."

Sadly, we already know. (JNS Jun 4)

The Left has Worn Itself Out Hating Netanyahu

By Galit Distel Etebaryan

Efraim Shamir's miserable remarks hoping that Sara Netanyahu would die was vicious, but fit in well with the general way things are going. It seems that over the past decade, most of the Left's creative resources have been devoted to demonizing the prime minister and fleshing out their repertoire of curses for the Netanyahus.

I think about the Israeli Left and wonder, could it be that all its emotional and intellectual resources have been wasted on hating Netanyahu? What remains of the current Left's economic, social, or defense and security agenda?

Let's start with security. In the election, the center-Left Blue and White party was headed by a candidate who included a counter in one of his campaign videos. The numbers, which constantly went up, were counting the number of Arabs killed in Gaza during Operation Protective Edge. I don't remember any right-wing candidate who boasted about the number of casualties the other side sustained as an achievement – and certainly not in a campaign video. A month ago, that same Left was also pressing Netanyahu to launch a full-scale war in Gaza, while calling the Qatari funds that Netanyahu agreed to transfer to Gaza "protection money" and ignoring the wretched humanitarian situation that afflicted most Gazans ahead of the Ramadan holy month. Then Avigdor Lieberman showed up. "The war minister," as they used to call him fearfully, until he took a stand against Netanyahu and miraculously became a viable, desirable candidate for them in the upcoming election. Is that how the "peace camp," whose people preach co-existence unity among the people, works?

Let's look at the social side of things. A demographic breakdown of the last election left no room for doubt: the Israeli Left lives in the socioeconomically strongest, most in-demand cities. Anyone who examines left-wing responses on social media will spot an interesting trend: many people on the Left admit that they live in very good financial circumstances, but take care to express concern for the old lady in a hallway hospital bed; the rate of unemployment (which is at an all-time low, by the way); and pity for residents of the periphery whose lives have, of course, been ruined because of Netanyahu. Their concern for the "vulnerable" is touching, but every time that one of these "vulnerable" people from the periphery describes the notable improvement to their quality of life that resulted from Netanyahu's socioeconomic policies, the empathy dries up and the "vulnerable" person instantly becomes part of the "blind herd" or just a baboon. After the election, empathy turned to denunciation, which included hopes that the "vulnerable" would die from Gaza rockets. Is that how the "social camp," which is so concerned about the weaker sectors that are supposedly being trampled by the Netanyahu government, conducts itself?

The most interesting picture becomes clear when we review the economy. Socialist democracy doesn't really exist in Israel. The Left likes to brag about its socialist conscience, but a shiny capitalist SUV is parked in a private space next to their private homes. Netanyahu's "piggish capitalism" is doing well by them, and all the rest is nothing more than a worn-out pose with nothing true behind it.

All the Israeli Left has now is a chaotic pile of agenda items that often contradict each other, and a stockpile of curses for the Netanyahu family. Lots and lots of curses. Devoting so much hatred to the prime minister has used up all the Left's intellectual resources, and made it into the unattractive camp it is today. (Israel Hayom Jun 6)

The Damage is Done By Dr. Haim Shine

Yisrael Beytenu party chief Avigdor Lieberman's postelection ploy will go down in history as one man's attempt to distort Israeli democracy. As a result of this move, Lieberman has lent a hand to the few individuals at the State Attorney's Office who, in order to bring down Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, are willing to break with precedent to redefine various felonies to suit their agenda. This type of legal trial balloon is a serious infringement on democracy and the will of the voters.

The results of the election for state comptroller are proof that, had Lieberman fulfilled his promise to his voters, it would have been possible to establish a strong and stable right-wing coalition that would ensure

territorial integrity and the unity of Jerusalem, along with immense economic prosperity, for years to come. Yisrael Beytenu members quickly understood the vast damage the move caused their party and took care to video their vote.

The coming election campaign will be more difficult than its predecessor. Led by the Blue and White party, members of the Left feel that by moving up the election and working with Lieberman, they could improve their showing. We got a preview of what is coming in the remarks from politicians and commentators. Israel's new comptroller, Matanyahu Engelman, has not entered the role, yet they are already trying to convince the public he is a pliable lackey, a tool in the struggle for the rule of law. Because Engelman is not a judge, he is unable to make appropriate decisions, they say. But when the opposition proposed Giora Rom as their candidate for the position, no one voiced any concerns over his not being a judge. Had Rom been appointed comptroller, every single left-wing spokesperson would have praised his appointment.

Another issue that presents a challenge in the upcoming election is the uproar over United Right MK Bezael Smotrich's unnecessary call for Israel to be governed according to Jewish law. It has been a while since I saw Lieberman and Blue and White party leader Yair Lapid with such wide grins on their faces. It is very important for right-wing spokespersons to allow wisdom to win. Smugness can cause real damage, as Smotrich has just shown.

We were presented with proof that the Right has the ability to self-destruct years ago. We have already seen how dangerous this can be for Israeli society in its entirety. The miserable 1993 Oslo Accords transformed the Left into a religion without an ideology, while the Right was revealed as an ideology with no religion.

There are groups on the Right who are unwilling to submit, and others who in the name of vanity and arrogance sow division and cause the bloc to lose a massive amount of votes. In the election, the Right lost six Knesset seats because of this division.

If the Right hopes to avoid the fate of a beached whale, it must put an end to the multiplicity of political parties and interests. It must present a united front in a campaign for the character of the state, its vision and its path. There are times when it is appropriate to put one ego's aside and join together to preserve territorial integrity and the unity of Jerusalem ahead of the tests that lay ahead.

As the Prophet Isaiah said, "Hark, thy watchmen! They lift up the voice, together do they sing; for they shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion (Isaiah 52:8). The success of the return to Zion depends on our ability to speak in one voice. If not now, when? And if not us, then who? (Israel Hayom Jun 4)

Islamic Waqf Inaugurates New Mosque at the Temple Mount's Mercy Gate

By Naomi Kahn

Although Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced back in February that he had instructed authorities to prevent the opening of a new mosque at the Temple Mount's Gate of Mercy, the Islamic Waqf has continued construction work at a feverish pace, causing irreparable damage to the ancient structure.

Israeli nongovernmental organization Regavim petitioned the High Court of Justice on the eve of Jerusalem Day, renewing its earlier call to prevent the opening of the mosque. Regavim submitted an urgent request to the court for a temporary injunction that would close the structure, in an attempt to restore the status quo at the site. The petition, based on documentation of the waqf's recent activities at the site, proves beyond a doubt that the waqf has taken steps to permanently turn a historic structure at the Gate of Mercy into a mosque, carrying out construction work that has irreparably damaged the ancient building, in flagrant violation of Netanyahu's instructions to enforce the closure of the building.

Regavim's first petition was submitted in March, but Supreme Court Justice Menachem Mazuz allowed the government and the waqf 90 days to respond – all the time the waqf needed to transform the site into a Muslim-only compound.

The defense establishment identified radical Islamist activity at the site, orchestrated by Hamas operatives, and the government requested a court order to shut down the site, which was duly issued by the Jerusalem Magistrates' Court. The waqf ignored the court order and continued its construction project – in broad daylight and in flagrant disregard for the law.

In light of the ongoing construction work and the government's failure to enforce the closure order issued at its own request, Regavim petitioned the High Court of Justice to shorten the 90-day period granted to the state and the waqf to respond to the earlier petition. In its response to this petition, the government argued that the relevant authorities "are taking steps to regulate an overall approach for dealing with the Gate of Mercy compound; there is, therefore, no need for a temporary injunction to be issued at this stage."

Not surprisingly, Justice Mazuz rejected Regavim's request for a temporary closure order; even less surprisingly, despite the government's claim that it was tending to the matter, the waqf continued to carry out

illegal construction work on the Mercy Gate structure, installing ceiling fans, lighting, furniture, and room dividers – permanent changes that have harmed the ancient structure, all without any oversight of the Israel Antiquities Authority as required by law.

The exclusive use by Muslim worshippers of this building turns it de facto into a mosque, which creates a security threat of the highest order – one that security experts warned against in no uncertain terms. This was precisely the scenario the government foresaw when it asked for (and received) the Magistrates' Court's closure order.

Netanyahu declared at the end of February that "Israel has not given its consent to opening the mosque on the Temple Mount." A statement released by the Prime Minister's Office at the time declared that Netanyahu had given instructions "to enforce the court order without compromise and to ensure that the site remains closed," but in practice, it appears that the work that is turning the site into a mosque has passed the point of no return.

"It is impossible to overstate the massive damage that has been done to the rule of law in this case: Lawbreakers do whatever they please at a holy site that is of indescribable religious and archaeological significance, in violation of a court order," said Yakhin Zik, director of operations at Regavim. "Without a temporary injunction, the illegal seizure of the compound and the illegal construction work will continue. The bottom line is that on Prime Minister Netanyahu's watch, Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem is being trampled." (JNS Jun 3)

Will a Secular Surge Spark a Revolution in Israeli Politics?

By Jonathan S. Tobin

In an interview with The New York Times published this week, new Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Muhammad Shtayyeh warned Israel that it might experience "a very hot summer." The point of this statement was not about another heat wave coming to scorch the Middle East, but the possibility that the leaders of the P.A. were considering trying to influence Israel and the United States to alter their policies by threatening unrest and violence.

That's the last thing the Palestinians need from their West Bank government. But since neither America nor Israel will budge from their justified insistence that the P.A. stop subsidizing terror in the form of salaries and pensions granted to imprisoned or deceased terrorists and their families, there is a real possibility of a confrontation in the territories, where things could definitely get hot.

If that's the way it plays out, then that's also bad news for those Israeli politicians who are betting their political lives that conflict with the Palestinians is about to drop off the radar screen of the voting public.

That was, in essence, the conceit of Avigdor Lieberman's reasoning when he refused to join Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition. Lieberman's insistence that Netanyahu force the ultra-Orthodox parties to accept a meaningless but symbolic law about drafting more religious men into the Israel Defense Forces had little to do with actually reducing the number of yeshivah students receiving exemptions. Still, the result was that Israel is going to a second election in five months in September. Lieberman is hoping that he can successfully pose as the champion of secular Jews against the ultra-Orthodox and gain more Knesset seats for his Yisrael Beiteinu Party.

Lieberman says that he isn't opposed to a "right-wing government," but does oppose a halachic government or one in which the haredi parties would, as they have in many respects, imposed their will, as well as Jewish religious law, on the secular and traditional majority.

Lieberman isn't the only one making this bet.

The leaders of the Blue and White Party, which tied Likud for the most seats won in the April election yet lacked the support to form a majority, seem also to be interested in capitalizing on a situation in which Netanyahu is linked to the ultra-Orthodox. The emphasis in the party's campaign would then shift from an effort to prove to the voters that it has the military credentials to govern in the form of a chorus line of former top IDF generals on their ticket, including leader Benny Gantz. Instead, it may move back to the secularism of Yair Lapid, whose Yesh Atid Party merged with the generals' factions in order to create Blue and White.

What they are hoping for isn't merely a momentary advantage, but a sea change in Israeli politics in which security issues will no longer be the priority for most voters.

Is that possible?

The story is told of Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky being asked by a supporter about whether his Revisionist movement—the forerunner of today's Likud Party—would oppose religious coercion by the Orthodox in the pre-state Jewish community in what is now Israel. Jabotinsky was secular but respectful of Judaism. His response though was that the battle over such issues would have to wait until the Jewish state was created and then secured. "First, we must get a state," he is alleged to have said. "Then you can have a war with the rabbis."

Has that moment arrived?

The Jewish state is more secure than it has ever been. Israel is a regional military superpower and possessed of a prosperous First World "Startup Nation" economy. Much of the Arab world is eager for better

relations with Israel and to use it as an ally against Iran. The Palestinians are still the prisoners of a mindset that causes them to refuse to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state, no matter where its borders are drawn. But they are also more isolated than ever.

That's why Lieberman and Gantz think that the era in which the Israel politics is dominated by those who can point to the foolishness of the parties of the left in imposing the Oslo peace process on the country is over. The parties of the left—the once dominant Labor and Meretz—remain marginalized. However, if Netanyahu calling Blue and White and even the heretofore very right-wing Lieberman "leftists" no longer resonates with voters who care more about putting the Orthodox in their place, then perhaps the Likud and Netanyahu's decade-long stranglehold on power really is about to end.

Lieberman and Gantz believe that the secular majority's resentment of the Orthodox—both in terms of dodging the military draft and the dead hand of religious coercion on society—will dominate the conversation, giving them the "war on the rabbis" that Jabotinsky predicted would follow once the state was secured against Arab foes by the "Iron Wall" he said must be built to defend it.

The problem with that formulation is that the Palestinians may not agree to simply look on quietly while Israelis sort out their domestic disputes. Instead, frustrated by their isolation and still besotted with an ideology of violence and committed to their fantasy of the Jewish state's destruction, they may strike out and remind Israelis that war and peace issues are still the most important ones.

Whether it is Hamas or Hezbollah rockets, or a new intifada aimed at derailing U.S. President Donald Trump's peace initiative, the Palestinians still have it within their power to focus Israelis on security. Their violence and rejectionism have won Netanyahu the last four straight elections, and there is good reason to think they could give him a fifth consecutive victory if Shtayyeh's prediction of a hot summer is correct. If so, those anticipating the inevitable conflict between the religious and the secular for control of Israeli society will have to keep waiting. (JNS Jun 5)

Palestinian Stabs Israelis, and Here Come the Excuses

By Stephen M. Flatow

In what crazy, upside-down world does a Palestinian Arab randomly stab Jews in Jerusalem, get shot dead by Israeli policeman and then become the focus of an Associated Press article with a headline about Israelis killing Palestinians?

In our crazy, upside-down world, that's where.

The latest craziness began when the terrorist was strolling through the Old City of Jerusalem on Friday morning when he happened to see a Jewish man. So, the Arab stabbed the Jew. The stabber then went a little further along, until he spotted a Jewish child walking along. So, he ran up and stabbed the child in the back.

You can already imagine Excuse #1 bubbling up in the fertile minds of the rationalizers and justifiers: The Old City is "occupied Arab East Jerusalem"... meaning that the Jewish victims actually were "settlers"... which makes them "legitimate targets" for "resistance."

Resistance to what? Why, to the existence of Jews, of course.

Israeli policemen approached the terrorist. He was literally caught with the bloody knife in his hand. Instead of surrendering, he ran, which is why the police shot him. It's about as black-and-white a case as one can imagine. Yet, incredibly, the Associated Press characterized him as "an alleged Palestinian attacker."

It seems that as far as the AP is concerned, when it comes to Palestinian terrorists, they're always "alleged" and never "terrorists." Isn't that curious?

The would-be murderer turned out to be 19 years old. Get ready for Excuse #2. Technically, the terrorist was a teenager. And the word "teenager" can be morphed into "child." Which brings us to a pending congressional resolution about "Palestinian children."

The bill in question, H.R. 4391, was authored by an extremist congresswoman from Minnesota named Betty McCollum. It's called the "Promoting Human Rights by Ending Israeli Military Detention of Palestinian Children Act." It calls for slashing U.S. aid to Israel as punishment for arresting "Palestinian children."

According to McCollum, it is immoral and illegitimate for Israel to ever detain a "Palestinian child." Even if the "child" was caught trying to stone, stab or shoot Jews to death. Children must never be detained! I guess that includes the "child" with the bloody knife in Jerusalem on Friday.

When McCollum introduced the bill last year, it attracted 30 co-sponsors, all Democrats. One was Massachusetts Congressman Seth Moulton, who is now a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination. It will be interesting to see if Moulton again signs on to the re-introduced McCollum resolution.

Elsewhere on Friday, another Palestinian Arab tried to cross into Israel by infiltrating the security perimeter near Bethlehem. When he refused to halt and desist, Israeli soldiers shot him.

Now the folks at the AP had their headline: "2 Palestinians Killed by

Israelis in Separate Events.” They took a story about a Palestinian Arab terrorist attack and a potential second attack, and turned it into a story about trigger-happy Israelis murdering Palestinians.

And here comes Excuse #3. Why would a Palestinian Arab be trying to penetrate the security perimeter, instead of just applying for a permit to enter Israel? The AP found a way to excuse this obviously suspicious behavior: “Younger Palestinian men must request an entry permit from the military, which are [sic] hard to obtain.”

Oh well, that’s different, then. If it’s “hard” to obtain a permit to enter somebody else’s country, then certainly you have a right to break into that country. Or so the AP apparently wants its readers to believe.

The AP interviewed the infiltrator’s father, one Louai Ghaith. It’s odd how they couldn’t manage to find and interview any of the stabbing victims’ relatives. Or friends. Or neighbors. Or any other Jew in the Old City of Jerusalem. I guess they were all busy.

The father insisted that his son was just “going to fulfill his religious duty; he was going to worship” at the Al-Aqsa mosque. What a coincidence—a knife-wielding man entered Jerusalem on a permit to pray at Al-Aqsa. Maybe the Israelis do have a reason to carefully scrutinize and restrict the foreign citizens who they allow to enter their capital city, after all. (JNS Jun 3)

Finally, a Ray of Light from Gaza By Hillel Frisch

It has been painful and frustrating to watching Israel dissipate the deterrence achieved in Gaza over three major rounds of conflict (especially in 2014).

After three-and-a-half years of quiet, Hamas and Islamic Jihad launched four massive missile strikes in the wake of Israel’s erroneous decision to tolerate the “Campaign of Return” that began at the end of March 2018. To make matters worse, Israel has allowed itself to succumb to an extortion racket.

Any good strategy is based on maximizing your side’s relative advantage. Israel’s advantage over Hamas and its allies is clear: It possesses devastating, precise firepower and—compared to Gaza, at least—strategic depth.

However accurate Hamas’s missiles may be, they cannot compete with the accuracy of the Israel Air Force. Hamas is increasingly succeeding at overwhelming the Iron Dome air-defense system with multiple launches, but even at their most effective these missiles can only cause partial damage to buildings. Citizens who take refuge in shelters usually come out physically unharmed.

By contrast, Israel’s guided missiles can hit bad guys on motorcycles and, when necessary, pulverize buildings completely.

The punishment the IAF metes out takes place in a space of 140 square miles. Hamas and its allies strike, with lesser precision, at an area twice to eight times that size.

In the three rounds of heavy fighting, the number of IAF sorties equaled the number of missile strikes from Gaza. The difference lies in the accuracy—almost 100 percent for Israel, less than 1 percent for Hamas—and in the fact that Israeli munitions can use much higher payloads.

Factoring in Gaza’s small area, the difference in payload accuracy and the difference in payload size, in any conflict between Gaza and Israel, the damage done in Gaza is thousands of times greater.

In the most recent (minor) round of fighting, Hamas boasted of Israelis’ psychological suffering. The truth is that the psychological suffered of the Gaza population is far greater.

These differences explain why Hamas and Islamic Jihad launch fewer missiles after each massive round, and why after the third and most punishing Israel achieved three-and-a-half years of quiet. The grandchildren of Hamas leaders, like Israeli children, suffer tremendously from these rounds of fighting; it can hardly be otherwise considering what they have grown up with.

However, temporarily at least, Israel’s strategy is to play to the other side’s advantage. This is not new. The early Zionist pioneers were succumbing to extortion long before their presence was perceived by the local Arab elite as a threat.

To add insult to injury, the Israeli military establishment (and increasingly Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Likud leaders) justifies this extortion model on the basis of averting a “humanitarian” crisis.

To be sure, there is no way of extending humanitarian aid to the Gaza population behind Hamas’s back. Yet no Orwellian claims can negate the simple fact that any concession on importing dual-use materials into Gaza increases the capabilities of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and therefore increases the pain they can inflict on Israel. The last bout clearly demonstrated this fact.

Allowing aid into Gaza means increased revenues for Hamas, and imports of dual-use materials increase Hamas’s firepower. In 2014, it took 300 missiles to kill one Israeli. In the recent bout, it took 180.

The moment Qatari dollars reach Gaza, Hamas can more easily pay for its regular assaults against the fence and punish the Israeli population living alongside it.

So where is the glimmer of light?

Hamas’s “return” riots at the border fence have completely failed to galvanize West Bank Palestinians to strike either Israel or the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas hoped the riots would erase the effects of its takeover of Gaza in 2007, which divided a previously united Palestinian population.

The failure of the recent riots commemorating the nakba (the “catastrophe” of the creation of the State of Israel) to do either—West Bank Palestinians did not demonstrate against either Israel or the P.A.—suggests that Hamas remains tarnished by the sin of having divided the Palestinian people and weakened the cause.

Furthermore, extorting Israel also carries a cost for Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The aim of both movements is to “liberate” Palestine. Trading truces for money and increasingly substituting defensive language—“if Israel strikes, we will hit harder”—for the rhetoric of “liberating Palestine from the river to the sea” gives the sense that Hamas is taking the path of Fatah, the movement it denigrates and claims to have succeeded.

There’s always hope that Netanyahu will go back to the right strategy of hitting hard and massively to bring Hamas to end the option of violence, as the Arab states and Fatah did before it. (JNS Jun 2)

Is the World Jewish Congress Trying to Compete with the New Israel Fund? By Eldad Beck

“Eighty-four percent of the Arab public that comes to playing fields in Israel has personally experienced or witnessed racist and discriminatory treatment on the field.”

This statement was not taken from an anti-Israel propaganda leaflet produced by the Palestinian Authority or one of the many “human-rights organizations” diligently working to foster an image of Israel as a racist, apartheid state. No, this was the headline of a statement by the World Jewish Congress on the findings of a survey on “the phenomenon of racism and discrimination” on Israeli sports fields.

The survey was released ahead of a conference on racism and anti-Semitism in sports that the WJC is set to host in Israel on Tuesday. This conference, which is to be attended by a delegation of representatives of sports teams from around the world, is the initiative of the Israel Export Institute and the Israeli Finance Ministry.

And so, instead of focusing on anti-Semitism, which is very common among soccer clubs around the world, it seems an effort is being made to shine a spotlight on “racism in Israeli soccer.” After all, if the Jews also turn into primitive, hate-filled racists when they attend soccer matches in their home country, then this must just be an irreparable part of human nature.

I do not doubt that there are soccer fans in Israel who engage in racist acts. Racism exists in Israeli society, as we have seen on the soccer fields and in stadiums. Nevertheless, this over-the-top WJC headline raises many questions as to its credibility and seriousness. It also raises the possibility the headline was aimed at nothing more than creating fake news to attract media attention.

What percentage of Arab Israelis attend games in Israel, and how frequently? What exactly constitutes “racist and discriminatory treatment”? Does a security check, for example, fit the bill? Given the tendency of nationalist Arab activists to exaggerate the magnitude of racism directed at them in order to slander Israel, is there any way to verify the finding selected to promote the survey? Did Arab participants in the survey also report experiences of anti-Jewish racism, as in the kind of anti-Semitism Arab sports fans may have directed against Jews under the guise of “expressions of the national struggle”?

The survey also notes that among those who attend sports events, some 45 percent have experienced racism or discrimination or witnessed the phenomenon. Among the general public, 44 percent believe authorities are not doing enough to contend with the phenomenon. Twenty-six percent of the public believe racism and discrimination are more prevalent at sporting events than elsewhere in Israeli society.

The WJC is at the forefront of the fight against anti-Semitism and the efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel. Its heads should have known better than to promote the survey with such a headline, one that would necessarily be enthusiastically reported by Israel’s critics.

As WJC President Ronald S. Lauder himself stated, “Unfortunately, as we see in the survey, the State of Israel is no exception and racism and discrimination are also on the rise there.”

The release of such a statement shows a real lack of judgment and an effort at cheap populism, but also a desire to curry favor with Israel’s critics on the liberal left.

Is it unclear to the WJC’s many experts why an unfounded and unwelcome comparison between the complex situation in Israel—the result of a nationalist confrontation between two segments of the population—and the depraved anti-Semitism that dominates the soccer clubs and playing fields across the Arab Muslim world and Europe, including in the national leagues, was an irresponsible move? If the WJC has fallen this far, what should we expect the left-wing New Israel Fund to do? (Israel Hayom Jun 3)