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ISRAEL NEWS

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Commentary...

Israel's Rafah Test Could Show Path to Toppling Hamas

By Meir Ben Shabbat

The debate over the fate of Hamas terrorists trapped in tunnel networks under IDF-controlled territory in Rafah may seem like a minor affair amid the constant flow of events, but its outcome could decisively shape how Israel's enemies and regional states assess whether the Jewish state is truly determined to dismantle its adversaries or can be appeased with superficial fixes.

Hamas's military wing made clear early this week that fighter surrender or weapons abandonment remain off the table. Mohammed Nazzal, a senior Hamas official abroad, rejected exile outside Gaza and urged mediators to intervene.

Turkey wasted no time seizing this as another diplomatic opportunity, with sources saying that it is "working to ensure safe passage for approximately 200 'Gazan civilians' trapped in Rafah tunnels"—as if 200 civilians simply got stuck in underground passages.

The deteriorating relationship between Ankara and Jerusalem, sparked by Turkish arrest warrants and Israel's response, combined with Israeli opposition to Turkish participation in Gaza's multinational force, no doubt featured in U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner's discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, though not as the central focus.

Washington's primary objective is to stabilize the ceasefire. Meeting this goal requires advancing to stage two of Trump's Gaza plan and generating implementation momentum. With everyone occupied by processes and mechanisms, reality on the ground will shift toward non-combat, enabling Trump to pursue his broader diplomatic ambitions.

From Israel's perspective, however, the ceasefire is not the end goal. Particularly not now, after recovering living hostages and most deceased remains. Eliminating enemy capabilities and removing weapons from the territory remain Israel's core objectives, which cannot be sacrificed to ceasefire demands or satisfied through cosmetic arrangements.

Furthermore, Israel's approach in Gaza will directly impact on the Hezbollah situation in Lebanon (and the reverse), leaving no room for creative half-measures that sound good but deliver nothing.

Even without this consideration, regional discourse is already showing such formulas emerging. Examples include attempts to limit disarmament definitions to offensive weapons only—excluding tunnels, personal arms, and other capabilities from discussion.

Another involves establishing an "administrative committee" for civilian Gaza governance, supposedly without Hamas participation, when the terror group already influences personnel selection and will clearly control such governance as the Strip's dominant force.

Returning to the besieged in Rafah, their number remains unclear. Media reports citing Israeli sources estimate 150 to 200. Foreign press mentioned lower figures, while Hamas websites state that the military wing withholds information due to sensitivity, describing them as "Qassam elite" facing high risk, while contending with medical supply shortages, electricity deficits, and the need to secure tunnels after extensive war damage."

Given these circumstances, Israel possesses every advantage to transform this incident into a powerful symbol of its commitment to dismantle Hamas. Time favors Israel here, and provided its forces can block attacks from the besieged or other directions, no rush exists. Regardless, this event's conclusion must be decisive—mass surrender, detention or terrorist deaths.

Images and publicity carry value. This is how regimes fall. Exile, as some mediators suggest, while not inherently rejected, should only be acceptable as a post-surrender, post-arrest step, never as a

replacement.

An Al-Resalah Hamas website editorial characterized the besieged issue as testing Hamas's capacity for post-war challenges: "It combines military, diplomatic, and humanitarian aspects and

conveys an important message to the Palestinian public and the world regarding Hamas's ability to protect its people and manage humanitarian crises, in an extremely complex environment and under international supervision."

This equally tests Israeli determination, providing further reason Israel cannot accept any solution Hamas would claim as an achievement. (JNS Nov 13)

Friends Don't Let Friends Embrace Antisemites

By Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

I still remember a slogan from a well-known public service announcement from my youth: "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." Simple yet profound, it captured the essence of true friendship: stepping in when someone else's choices could cause harm.

That slogan came to mind this week in a different context when "friendship" became the excuse and defense for standing by those who platform antisemites and disseminate hate.

Tucker Carlson was one of highest-rated hosts in network news. His shift to independent media has only expanded his global reach and influence, with views for his individual episodes on X often in the tens or hundreds of millions. During that same shift, he has faced repeated accusations of spreading antisemitism, amplifying conspiracy theories, and promoting extremist views.

The controversy reached its peak when Carlson hosted Nick Fuentes, a far-right figure known mostly for extreme antisemitic rhetoric and Holocaust denial. While Carlson framed the interview as an attempt to understand Fuentes' perspective, it was hard to see it as anything other than giving legitimacy to hate speech and normalizing extremist ideology, particularly as Tucker failed to ask difficult questions, condemn deplorable comments, or challenge Fuentes or hold him accountable for his views.

While for the last couple of years, Carlson flirted with the line of anti-Israel bias and antisemitic beliefs, several recent comments, coupled with the Fuentes episode, have firmly and undeniably put him over the line and raised real questions. Was he always filled with this latent hate, or did his views and opinions change over time? Can he still be brought back, or is he hopeless and irredeemable?

Whatever the answers to those questions, it has become clear that it is time for those who align with him politically to call out and confront Carlson, and that is exactly what Ben Shapiro did last week on a special episode of his podcast. Using clips from Carlson and Fuentes themselves, Ben called Tucker an "intellectual coward" and an "ideological launderer," someone who softens "hideous ideas" and gives them wider audiences. He did not call for cancellation but instead issued a call for moral clarity and accountability, a line drawn that others had been hesitant to draw.

The episode drew over 36 million views on X, quickly becoming a flashpoint within the conservative world. With moral lines now unmistakably drawn, many praised Ben for his clarity and conviction, while others, especially those aligned with Tucker, Fuentes, and their ideological circle, reacted with hostility. His decision to speak out may appear straightforward and a low bar, but it demanded genuine courage. Speaking out against someone from his own side of the aisle comes with risks that are not theoretical, and challenging powerful figures and entrenched audiences comes at a cost: to one's safety, reputation, and professional influence alike. In an era when moral equivocation has become the easier path, we should be both proud and profoundly grateful that one of the most visible Jews in public life, a man whose yarmulke is as recognizable as his voice, is using his platform to articulate moral truth when so many others remain silent.

Ben didn't stop there. In the last few days, he has risked

relationships by confronting conservative colleagues and challenging them on their silence surrounding the Carlson-Fuentes episode. Megyn Kelly had Ben on her show to discuss these developments and when he confronted her on failing to speak out against people like Candace Owens, she defended herself by saying, “My position is it’s really none of my business,” and “I’m not mother of the internet.” When pushed on Carlson, Kelly defended her friendship and spoke about loyalty.

I don’t envy Megyn Kelly and others in the conservative world who have been caught between prominent, popular, and highly influential friends. They express that this isn’t their fight, they aren’t responsible to police everything that everyone says or monitor who they host. They argue that when it comes to friends, criticism and reproach should be shared privately, never in the public sphere.

This tension between loyalty and moral responsibility is not unique to public figures, though for them it is a different calculation and conclusion. The truth is we all face these issues in our private lives: friends who make ethical missteps or betray trust, loved ones who engage in harmful or criminal behavior. How far should friendship go? Does standing by someone implicitly condone their actions or associate us with their behaviors? Is silence a sign of loyalty, or a betrayal of our own values?

Certainly, there are differences between public figures and private friends. There are support roles for rabbis and professionals to play and that often differs from how individuals should navigate these complicated decisions.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos teaches: “Rav Yehoshua ben Perachia taught, make for yourself a rabbi, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person favorably.” The Rambam notes that it doesn’t say make for yourself a friend or befriend other people. It specifically says “acquire” because when it comes to friendship, one cannot be casual or complacent. We have to bring the same attention, critical thinking and seriousness in searching for a friend who will bring out our best and hold us accountable, that we bring to major acquisitions.

Perhaps with the choice of that word, our rabbis also intended another subtle message about friendship. K’nei, acquire also has the same root as l’sakein, to repair. Real friends reproach and seek to repair one another. Real friendship is not loving someone so much that you let anything they do slide. It is caring so much that you are willing to confront and call out when you are concerned your friend has lost his way.

Perhaps it is time for a modern update to my childhood PSA: “Friends don’t let friends embrace antisemites.” Antisemitism, like any form of hate, clouds judgment, endangers others, and corrodes the soul. Standing by those who embrace it is not friendship, it is enabling. Moral courage, even at the cost of discomfort or confrontation, is the highest expression of care.

Friendship, loyalty, and ethics intersect in complex ways, but one thing is clear: love and loyalty do not absolve hate. True friends hold each other accountable and protect the moral health of their community and of their movement.

(Rabbi EframGoldberg.org Nov 11)

Spare Us the Friendship Defense By Abe Greenwald

“I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend,” said Thomas Jefferson. A good maxim, if you ask me. Most politically involved Americans these days don’t live by it, which is a shame.

But there’s a perverse version of Jefferson’s credo echoing on the right at the moment, and it should be called out. The claim of friendship is being offered up as a defense of indifference to depravity. Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts has talked about his or Heritage’s friendship with Tucker Carlson in every statement he’s made about the latter’s sugary interview of Nick Fuentes. He called him a “close friend” of Heritage in his initial defense of Carlson and has not stopped referencing his personal friendship with him even as he tries to clean up the mess. Megyn Kelly, too, likes to go on about her friendship with Carlson and the importance of standing by friends. There’s a whole circle of pundits and influencers who excuse or dismiss hateful people with the friendship defense.

People can disagree with me all they like, but here goes: If you remain close friends with someone who promotes racist or anti-

Semitic ideas to pursue evil ends, you’re a bad person. This isn’t about politics because bigotry isn’t fundamentally about politics. It’s about what’s in someone’s heart, which should be the deciding factor in choosing friends.

And it’s not guilt by association. Those who use the friendship defense love to note that their friendship doesn’t require them to agree with everything that their friend believes. The problem isn’t that the friendship automatically means you also have malevolent intentions (although you might). It’s that you even could stay friends with someone who spreads evil. That says everything one needs to know about you.

Sometimes ending a friendship is the result of a decision. You determine that you’re giving more than you’re getting or that the other person has hurt you in some irreparable way. But other times, you end a friendship because your soul will not permit you to do otherwise. There’s no weighing of costs and benefits, no fine calculating of the other person’s faults. There’s merely an innate response to the genuinely monstrous: repulsion.

I know this because I was once getting to be friends with a guy when I learned he was a (prominent) white nationalist. Turns out he was one of those Nazi types who have a creepy admiration for Jews based on a lunatic reading of Jewish particularism and Zionism. Anyway, strange as it sounds, he bore me no personal ill will. But the instant I found out who he really was, he became my enemy.

That’s hardly a boast of personal integrity because, as I say, it was in no way a matter of decision-making. There was no thought process at all. It was as involuntary as spitting out rotten food. And the truth is, the instinct to reject contaminated people can be just as lifesaving. (Commentary.org Nov 7)

The Unflinching Reality Facing Jewish Opponents of Zionism

By Ben Cohen

If you’ve ever wondered in your darker moments what life would be like for the small minority of Jews who would remain in the Land of Israel after (heaven forbid) the destruction of the State of Israel, I’d strongly recommend watching this video from the Syrian-Canadian activist Laith Marouf. Once you’ve seen it, you may be tempted, as I was, to send him a note of appreciation for his refreshing clarity.

I should make clear from the outset that Marouf is an antisemite and all-around bad guy. The son of a Syrian diplomat who served the hated, and now ousted, regime of Bashar Assad, Marouf was a regular guest on Iranian and Russian TV channels during the Syrian civil war, justifying the massacres perpetrated by Assad across the country, including among the thousands of Palestinians who reside there. After becoming a Canadian citizen in 2020, despite this atrocious record, Marouf received hundreds of thousands of dollars in government grants for an “anti-racism” project he initiated. He also established the pro-Hezbollah “Free Palestine TV” platform in Beirut. Earlier this year, he was arrested and then released by the Lebanese authorities when he was discovered in a restricted zone on the border between Lebanon and Israel.

Let there be no doubt, then, that this naturalized Canadian citizen wants to see Hamas and its allies eliminate Israel and kill as many Jews, whom he calls “loud-mouthed bags of human feces,” as soon as possible. So why, then, listen to anything he has to say?

Simply because, in this case, he gives an honest account of how Jewish anti-Zionists are perceived by the pro-Hamas movement and, therefore, what their role should be.

“You will never see me on the same platform as a Jewish person,” states Marouf at the outset. Why? Not because he dislikes Jews (he says), but because doing so amplifies the notion that “the viewer needs to hear a Jew say it before they will believe a Palestinian.”

He then goes on to emphasize that the only acceptable role for a Jewish anti-Zionist is to stand meekly and obediently “behind” Palestinians, rather than getting out in front of them. “And you know what?” he continued, warming to his theme. “They shouldn’t be beside us. They should be behind us. The only thing I want to hear from a Jewish anti-Zionist is parroting (my emphasis) what Palestinians say. A Jewish anti-Zionist shouldn’t have an opinion about Palestine that is in any form contradicting the Palestinian

position.” The only time that a Jewish anti-Zionist might be permitted more room for maneuver is when “he is confronting his own Zionist community.”

Clearly, Marouf is not expecting much, given his evident contempt for Jewish anti-Zionists. In his view, they have failed to take the risk where it mattered—with their bodies and their lives, in direct conflict with Israel—comparing them unfavorably with those Germans who did exactly that, he believes, when it came to the Nazi regime. “Do you know any Jew on this whole planet who risked their lives to save a Palestinian?” he asked rhetorically. “People are starting to associate Judaism with Zionism not because of us, but because of the inaction of Jews that claim they are anti-Zionist.”

Such a message is little short of humiliating for the motley crew of anti-Zionists of Jewish origin—Peter Beinart, Max Blumenthal, Abbie Stein, Alon Mizrahi, the “International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network,” among others—whose ravings from the safety of their living rooms continue to disfigure the public debate on the Middle East. It’s humiliating because it places them in the same camp as the vast majority of Jews who remain Zionists, when they have tried so hard to distance themselves from this community as stridently and as hatefully as possible. It’s humiliating because it tells them that, since they are Jews, they cannot be trusted and must therefore have every word they utter scripted by a Palestinian ideological commissar.

Marouf’s speech is further confirmation that Jewish anti-Zionists (or “antizionists,” as I call them) have, as I wrote last year, increasingly outlived their usefulness. The overwhelming majority of the pro-Hamas movement is composed of non-Jews. Many, if not most, of them are Millennials or Gen Z’ers whose embrace of the Palestinian cause is very recent. They have made that solidarity an integral component of their personal and social, as well as political, identities. Partly because of the distance in time, they are, whether on the left or the right, less bothered than preceding generations by accusations of antisemitism or a sense of duty to respect the memory of the Holocaust.

Most of all, they are tired of the Jewish anti-Zionist “not in my name” shtick. They are in this game to express solidarity with the Palestinians, not engage in endless debates about Jewish identity or the fissures among Jews when it comes to Israel. For this crowd, the only good Jewish anti-Zionist is the one who drops the word “Jewish” from the descriptor.

I would like to believe that among the supporters of Jewish Voice for Peace and similar groups, there are those discomfited by Marouf’s instruction to Jewish anti-Zionists to simply “parrot” the Palestinian line. I would like to think that they have enough pride in themselves and in their Jewish identity to recognize an insult when they see one.

Critically, I would like them to understand that Marouf’s tone and words sound a warning about how a stateless Jewish minority in the Middle East would be treated by its overlords. The abolition of Zionism is not a mere slogan. It is a plan of action to be implemented in those schools and synagogues and community centers that would be permitted to exist. It leans far more towards compulsion than it does to persuasion. Its goal is subordination.

Having heard what Marouf has to say, Jewish anti-Zionists are faced with a choice. They can agree with him and accept their inferior role. Or they can use his remarks as an opportunity to fundamentally rethink their positions—and finally grasp that those who say that Jews are not indigenous to the region, are colonialists, engage in “genocide” and should be sent back to the lands where they were once murdered are the real liars and charlatans here. (JNS Nov 7)

Republicans Need JD Vance to Debunk the ‘Israel First’ Smear

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Some of Tucker Carlson’s defenders and apologists have argued that the backlash against the former Fox News host-turned-podcaster isn’t really about antisemitism.

Given the cozy interviews he’s granted to neo-Nazi “groyper” Nick Fuentes and Holocaust-denier “historian” Daryl Cooper—and his willingness to invite anyone on his show that will promote blood libels against or otherwise smear Israel—that’s not an argument anyone should take seriously. There’s no doubt that Carlson, like so many on the left, are determined to move the Overton Window of acceptable discourse so as to make it acceptable to engage in a wide variety of

antisemitic tropes aimed at stigmatizing Jews and anything to do with the Jewish state.

But it’s also true that there is an ongoing debate about foreign policy in which Carlson’s efforts to aid the cause of delegitimizing the Jewish state and its supporters is playing a significant role. As Carlson has made clear, the ultimate target of his attacks isn’t really Jews or even the state of Israel. He’s just as, if not more, interested in taking down Americans who support it, thereby altering American foreign policy in the Middle East.

If he is to be stopped, it won’t be because conservative supporters of the U.S.-Israel alliance like Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) speak up in defense of Israel and its friends. Rather, it will be because Vice President JD Vance, who is not only Carlson’s avowed friend and ally, as well as a frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination, does so.

The phrase Carlson uses is “Israel First,” which is an attempt to disparage anyone who backs the U.S.-Israel alliance as not merely unpatriotic but also somehow at odds with President Donald Trump’s “America First” foreign policy. The expression is essentially an antisemitic trope about dual loyalty, and is linked to other ones about Jews buying influence. That’s why, rather than maintaining silence about Carlson’s most recent platforming and coddling of a neo-Nazi, the vice president needs to show that he is prepared to challenge allies to his right. If he fails to do so, it will not only hurt the country; it will also harm Vance’s own chances of following Trump into the Oval Office.

The “Israel First” smear delineates the distinction between the contemporary right-wing version of Jew-hatred from the even more potent one on the left.

Both are rooted in toxic myths.

Leftists are wrong to think of the Jewish state as either “white” or a manifestation of imperialism, since the Jews are the indigenous people of Israel. But left-wingers, like New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, hate Israel because they see it through the lens of their mindset in which the world is divided between two groups: people of color who are always victims no matter what they do, and “white” oppressors who are always in the wrong.

Progressives have successfully indoctrinated a generation of young Americans to believe in critical race theory, intersectionality and settler-colonialism. As a result, their mischaracterization of the genocidal Palestinian-Arab cause of destroying Israel as justified resistance to racism has become something close to orthodoxy for most liberals.

Unlike the left, the overwhelming majority of American conservatives do not hate Israel. Nor are they antisemitic.

But a growing and increasingly loud minority on the right who are hostile to Israel view it as being part of a conspiracy to undermine American sovereignty. They regurgitate Carlson’s canards about Israel’s supporters—both Jews and evangelical Christians—wrongly manipulating the United States into conflicts in which it has no stake. Some of them also believe this is a threat to Christianity and white supremacy. Their support comes from a group of predominantly male youngsters who are influenced by the likes of Carlson, podcaster Candace Owens and the vile Fuentes.

Which faction poses the greater threat to what is left of what was once optimistically termed as a bipartisan pro-Israel consensus? And how do we reach and persuade either variety of Israel-haters—whether on the left or the right—that they’re wrong?

It’s easy to see the left as a greater problem simply because it now dominates the Democratic Party.

The intersectional left-wing base of the Democrats is in thrall to the ideologues who falsely analogize the Palestinian war on the Jewish state as a rerun of the American civil-rights movement. Faith in that distorted understanding is so deep that nothing Israel’s opponents do—including the atrocities of Oct. 7, 2023 and a century of rejection of every attempt at compromise, including offers of Palestinian statehood—can make them realize that they are backing a genocidal cause rooted in hatred of Jews. Nor do they seem to care that the side they’re on is reactionary Islamist one that opposes all of their other progressive beliefs about society, including LGBTQ and women’s rights.

Such people not only dominate party activism. They also virtually monopolize the ranks of liberal journalism, thus amplifying

their ability to control the discussion in the mainstream media about the Middle East.

Pro-Israel Democrats, such as Sen. John Fetterman (D-Pa.), are an increasingly small minority out of step with the rest of their party. So are moderates, like Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who, while deeply critical of the Jewish state, are still supportive of the alliance. But, despite the hopes of Shapiro and other non-leftists who will hop into the race in the next two years, it's increasingly likely that the next Democratic president, whether in 2028 or some point in the future, will not merely be a half-hearted ally, as was the case with Joe Biden, or unfriendly in the manner of Barack Obama, but an open and unabashed foe of Israel in a way that is unprecedented.

As dire as that prospect is for Israel-supporters, there is a strong argument that the threat from right-wing Israel-haters is just as dangerous heading into the next presidential election cycle.

Given that Trump is the most pro-Israel president since the founding of the modern Jewish state, and that the base of the GOP is largely evangelical and devoted to the welfare of Israel, that doesn't make sense. Unlike the case with the Democrats, the Republican GOP congressional caucuses in the House and Senate are both strongly supportive of Israel.

But it would be a mistake to underestimate the potential of those who cheer on Carlson and his even more extreme Israel-haters and antisemites to influence discourse on the right.

Indeed, as Vance's response to a question from a student at a Turning Point USA event at the University of Mississippi indicated, signs of real trouble are on the horizon. The student asked why the United States supports Israel and gives it "hundreds of billions of dollars." He also questioned both the value of the alliance and repeated slanders about "ethnic cleansing" in Gaza (falsely attributed to the late Charlie Kirk), and claimed that not only did Israelis practice a different religion but "openly support the prosecution of ours."

Vance could have shot down the lies about "ethnic cleansing" and Israeli persecution of Christians, not to mention the exaggeration of the extent of the military aid it gets. But he didn't. Instead, he did his best imitation of former Vice President Kamala Harris's kowtowing to the libels of leftist Israel-haters during last year's campaign. He expressed sympathy with the student and asserted that the Trump administration wasn't getting bossed around by Jerusalem.

It's that kind of answer from a politician who is fully capable and willing to challenge critics and questioners when they are in the wrong that encouraged the paleocon American Conservative magazine to ponder whether Vance will be the one to "lead a post-Israel America."

That may be wishful thinking. After all, Vance made a compelling case last year that the Jewish state was a model ally for an "America First" administration, since it is willing to do its own fighting and has shared interests with the United States. But right now, he seems more interested in maintaining his close friendship with Carlson and appealing to the audience who watches him and other far-right podcasts than in telling the truth about the antisemitic libels directed at Israel.

The populist national conservative wing of the GOP seems to be increasingly worried about its young voters being under the influence of antisemites.

That was on display in the last few weeks as the Heritage Foundation think tank failed to fully dissociate itself from Carlson. Others on the right, such as Megyn Kelly and Matt Walsh, who are more interested in bashing those who care about Israel and antisemitism than in criticizing even the craziest of Jew-haters like Owens, seem to agree that a neo-Nazi of Fuentes's ilk speaks for the concerns of many, if not most, young conservative males. Support for engagement with Fuentes and his followers, rather than condemnation of them, is a disturbing abandonment of principles.

As conservative thinker Rod Dreher noted in his Substack, he's now convinced that "between 30 and 40 percent" of the Zoomers who work in official Republican Washington are fans of Nick Fuentes." If the actual number is anywhere close to that number, it isn't merely shocking. It's something that ought to be setting off alarms among those who have confidently assumed that the right was immune to antisemitism, especially when compared to the political left.

It's hard to imagine anyone with a strong following on the left, like Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) or others in the Congressional left-wing "Squad," pushing back against the

intersectional myths about Israel's being a "white" oppressor or asserting that Jews aren't the indigenous people of Israel. But it ought not to be fanciful to imagine Vance, who has an early but impressive lead in the race to succeed Trump in 2028, disabusing young conservatives of the myths that Carlson or Fuentes have been feeding them.

As someone who has opposed an unlimited U.S. commitment to the war in Ukraine and the need to prioritize the coming threat from China, he has the standing to take the opportunity to reiterate the arguments for the alliance with Israel at a time when many on the right look to him for leadership to defend the conservative movement from antisemites.

He could point out that, contrary to Carlson's assertions, the United States benefits enormously from security cooperation, joint weapons and technology development and intelligence-sharing with Israel.

He could make it clear that almost all of the billions in military aid that Israel receives is spent in the United States, and that assisting American arms manufacturers is just as crucial for the U.S. as it is for the Jewish state.

He could also argue that far from persecuting Christians—a lie that Carlson floated in an interview on his program with the Israel-hating sister of former Clinton administration staffer and ABC News host George Stephanopoulos—the Jewish state is the only country in the Middle East where Christians can live and worship freely. That's something unimaginable in virtually every Muslim and Arab country, including Qatar, which Carlson falsely lauds as a true American ally.

He might also note that the smears against the pro-Israel AIPAC lobby that are frequently repeated by users of the term "Israel Firsters" are similarly mendacious. Contrary to its detractors and some of its supporters who have also exaggerated its influence, AIPAC is not only not the dominant force in Washington; its efforts are dwarfed by those of other special interest groups, ranking 191st in direct lobbying, 18th in direct contributions to candidates and 21st in outside spending.

By contrast, Qatar is operating a vast influence operation in the United States that encompasses not just direct contributions, but also the Islamist propaganda broadcast on its Al Jazeera network. It also involves buying the loyalty of American businessmen such as Trump envoy Steve Witkoff and journalists like Carlson. It invests heavily to subvert American higher education, to which it is the largest foreign donor.

This invidious campaign aims not only to promote the emirate's financial and political interests, such as supporting its terrorist clients like Hamas. It also seeks to spread Islamist beliefs among U.S. Muslims and secular college students that are antithetical to the values of Western civilization that conservatives believe in and wish to defend against the effort by woke progressives to tear down.

Anyone who worries about defending biblical values or putting American interests first ought to be sounding the alarm about Qatar. And this means all those who tap into the deep religious, ethical and political support for Israel as AIPAC does, especially conservative Christians.

But the vice president seems to be making a political calculation that he can't afford to alienate Carlson's and Fuentes's fans if he is to secure the support of the right in future races.

That's unfortunate and not just because at a time of an unprecedented surge in American antisemitism, the country needs moral leadership. It's potentially dangerous because the longer Carlson and those on the right who share his obsessive hatred of Israel are allowed to expand their foothold in mainstream conservative discourse, the stronger they will grow.

That will not only fuel the kind of Jew-hatred on the right that we now take for granted on the intersectional left. But it will lend legitimacy to the anti-Israel Democrats who have so much in common with Carlson and fumble a GOP opportunity to seize the political center from a party that treats extremists like AOC and Mamdani as rock stars and their future leaders.

Repudiating the far-right won't deprive Vance of the votes he needs to obtain the 2028 GOP presidential nomination. But it could cost him the general election if he makes the same mistake as Harris did in 2024: allowing himself to be captured by extremist allies.

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