1. Israel vor den Wahlen

Unite to change the government
(…) Gantz and his people couldn’t have hoped for a better response, and the rage darts hurled at them by Likud and other coalition members are the best proof of that. (…) for the first time in years, Likud chairman Benjamin Netanyahu is in for a political battle with a rival his own size. (…) The left-center bloc’s supreme goal is to replace the government and halt Israel’s ongoing deterioration down the radical-right slope under the leadership of the bribery suspect Netanyahu. The public that wants to replace the government must stand united and strong against Netanyahu. But joining Yesh Atid isn’t enough. The center-left camp needs the Labor Party
headed by Avi Gabbay by its side and must expand its political ranks and reach out to more partners. Only a strong, large political union behind the person most likely to accomplish the mission will provide him with a real chance of winning the public’s confidence, and the president’s blessing to form a government.

Editorial, HAA, 01.02.19

Leftists, don’t jump ship

(…) The Labor Party is a tragic story. The party that built the state, absorbed massive waves of immigrants and was the traditional alternative to Likud during its long years in power now faces disaster (…). Despite the deep desire of all those who hate Benjamin Netanyahu to finally see him ousted after so many difficult years, abandoning the left in this election would be a crime against conscience. (…) Strategic voting causes deep ideological damage, which greatly exceeds the possible benefits of playing a “sophisticated game” according to the rules of realpolitik. In the war for centrist voters – those masses too lazy to stop for a moment and think about what their positions are on burning issues that affect our existence here – everyone is fleeing from being identified with the left. Consequently, the imaginary point where that amorphous center is located keeps drifting further and further rightward. (…) the only result of the destruction of the Zionist left, to anyone with a broad view of Israeli society that goes beyond a few Tel Aviv bars, is its own dismantling (…). Against this backdrop, in the best case, opportunistic deceivers like Lapid and Orli Levi-Abekasis will flourish, and in the worst case, rightists like Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked will settle smack in the heart of the Israeli consensus. The thousands of votes that intellectuals and creative artists cast for right-wing Arab nationalist parties like Balad and the southern branch of the Islamic Movement don’t hasten the arrival of any kind of equality, only an even more destructive right-wing government, in which MK Bezalel Smotrich will be a senior cabinet minister. (…) Even if the criticism of Zandberg and Labor chairman Avi Gabbay is justified, and sometimes it is, it shouldn’t sentence them to death. There are far worse people on our political map who are doing much better in the polls. (…)

Ravit Hecht, HAA, 01.02.19

Decisions despite elections

(…) Fair and open elections are the foundation for any democratic country like Israel. They need to be held without interference (…). By announcing a decision to indict Netanyahu (…), Mandelblit appears to essentially be wading into Israel’s political process. His decision could lead voters to take their votes away from Netanyahu and possibly even have the opposite effect – push voters to rally behind him. On the other hand, we support Mandelblit’s decision to finalize the investigations against the prime minister and announce his decision on whether he will indict Netanyahu without any connection to the ongoing election campaigns. If Mandelblit decides to indict Netanyahu, it will be an announcement of intent, since the final decision on an indictment will only be made after a hearing is held, a process that is predicted to take at least a year. The justice system needs to continue to operate independently of politics and political decisions. Otherwise, we potentially open the justice system to political intervention and influence. (…) As a country, Israel should prefer to change its leaders via the ballot box and not through criminal investigations. But if investigations are opened, they need to be allowed to be conducted without political interference. (…)

Editorial, JPO, 02.02.19

The Right has already won

(…) The polls are far from flattering for Gabbay, however, the Labor party will definitely pass the electoral threshold, which cannot be said about Livni’s Hatnuah Party, whose agenda of reaching a peace agreement trails far behind the bar that would enable her to return to the Knesset. This must be the price for being the last party leader who still waves the banner of the leftist diplomatic worldview. (…) Benny Gantz’s (…) chose to stress that the times of division between the Right and the Left
The Israeli left’s unabashed militarism

(…). In the hope of toppling long-serving PM Benjamin Netanyahu, an army of senior retired officers and security personnel has been recruited with the express goal of orchestrating a broad political framework comprising the largest possible number of generals. (…) In stark contrast to the Left’s former self-righteous indignation about anything that smacks of right-wing policy, and despite its close familiarity with the concept of “cultural militarism,” there has been almost no discussion of the disturbing sociopolitical implications of this phenomenon. There is no mention that these generals are hardly paragons of liberal or multicultural values and are far from quintessential members of the “peace camp.” (…) Nor has there been any acknowledgement of the similarity of this development to the all-too-common Third World predilection among military officers (…) to seize power in order to “save the nation” from the rule of “corrupt politicians” (…). It seems that the obsession with toppling Netanyahu (…) has driven those who habitually identify (nonexistent) “disturbing past processes” that supposedly endanger Israeli democracy, and who warn of “militarism” or “fascism” whenever a military officer addresses high school students about their looming conscription, to pin their hopes for electoral victory on a military party seeking to oust a ruling civilian party.  

Miri Shalem, YED, 03.02.19

Saving the Arab vote

(…) The sensational departure from the Joint List of MK Ahmad Tibi (…) shook up the market for division in the Arab community. Now everybody wants to be the leader. (…) How shameful. How will we tell our Jewish brethren, who are also experiencing a flourishing market in division? And we’ll tell those who don’t exactly share our mindset but still want a change in government that if the Arabs don’t unite, the plague of division will strike them as well. After all, the Arab vote is the surest vote against Netanyahu (…). The Arabs and their Jewish allies now have 13 Knesset seats and are a strong foundation for political change in Israel. Without those 13 seats, we can only dream of a change of government. Every seat less will reduce the chance to replace Netanyahu, and if, perish the thought, the Joint List or its splinters fall apart, we could lose five or six seats because we’ve become star-struck around here. (…) Let’s say (…) that Tibi’s future ticket gets six seats. Even then, the members of his party will only get three seats, and the other three will go to the allies he brought to the ticket from the outside. While now, in the Joint List, he has at least two seats, and that number is probably not final. Is one more seat worth this whole big to-do, and the despondency that has descended on Arabs and democratic Jews? (…)  

Odeh Bisharat, HAA, 04.02.19

Why do Israelis have a soft spot for generals as politicians?

(…) Two men, two parallel paths. Both have the same ideology. (…) Both of them are native-born Israelis, or sabras, children of immigrant parents, men who molded their lives with their own hands. Both of them are successful. But if the elections were to be held now, one’s party would
Netanyahu lost big this week. Here’s what it means for the next government
The case of Gideon Sa’ar offers (...) proof of the independence of the party’s rank-and-file. (...) Thanks to Netanyahu, who hounded him (...), he got a public tailwind and was effectively marked as the leading candidate for the morning after. Sa’ar received party backing by placing in the top five after four years outside the political arena. (...) Like Sa’ar, Edelstein profited from the premier’s attempt at political liquidation. The leak (...) that Edelstein wasn’t on the party leader’s list of recommended candidates, stirred a counter-protest: People came to Edelstein’s aid; they were affronted on his behalf and they voted for him. (...) Netanyahu has made a habit of abusing and humiliating his cabinet ministers (...). Should he succeed in forming a broad coalition, of 70-75 MKs, with Benny Gantz or with Yair Lapid, he’ll be happy to skip over his Likud rivals when it comes to giving out ministerial portfolios (...) Bibi realized that he has lost the attorney general, Avichai Mendelblit. (...) his campaign had focused on Mendelblit. (...) After the train left the station, as it were, the strategy was revamped. (...) Now, his gaze is focused on Election Day, April 9. He needs a clear-cut Likud victory, but also a strong right wing-Haredi bloc of at least 65 MKs. (...)
Yossi Verter, HAA, 08.02.19

2. Ende der Beobachtermission in Hebron

TIPH and threats: Temporary and permanent
(...) beyond monitoring, the international observers have been playing a one-sided
role (...). Its 64 observers (...) produce reports focusing on alleged Israeli abuses against Palestinians. (...) Twenty-five years is a long time for something temporary (...). There was a continuous Jewish presence in Hebron, Judaism’s second-most holy city, for thousands of years. It ended with the 1929 massacre of Jews by their Arab neighbors, which forced the surviving members of the Jewish community to flee. (...) It seems memories are shorter than TIPH’s presence. Far from having a calming effect, TIPH itself has occasionally come under attack – from the very Palestinians they profess to be protecting. (...) The decision to end TIPH’s mandate did not come out of the blue. Last July, a video emerged showing a Swiss TIPH member slapping a 10-year-old Jewish boy in the face and the same month a Hadashot TV news report showed security camera footage of a TIPH member slashing the tires of a vehicle belonging to a Jewish Hebron resident. Both staffers were expelled by TIPH, but their departure did not restore even the pretense of impartiality. (...) TIPH’s long-term temporary presence in Hebron is part of a much broader phenomenon: The ongoing attempt to internationalize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (...) There are undoubtedly some Jewish residents of Hebron who are hotheads, but it is up to the Israeli public to condemn them and the Israeli authorities to deal with them. (...) Liat Collins, JPO, 01.02.19

Ending foreign interference in Israeli policy

(...) TIPH’s original mandate was for members to travel around the city, observe what was happening and report their findings to the Israeli and Palestinian Authority governments. The observers were not allowed to intervene in disputes nor any incidents they observed; they were supposed to be neutral and unbiased. (...) Unfortunately, as has been proven time and again, international involvement in Israel and unbiased results do not go hand in hand. While in theory, TIPH’s mission was noble, in reality, the countries sending representatives to implement it were any-thing but. (...) TIPH and the European countries that supported it proved that their actual mission was to directly affect the situation in Hebron. Their goal was to bring an end to the Jewish presence in Hebron forever. Thankfully, they can no longer work toward this goal as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently announced that he will not be extending TIPH’s mandate. (...) The prime minister’s recent decision to end TIPH’s mandate is a step forward in ending the foreign infringement on Israeli sovereignty. (...)
Ari Kalker, IHY, 05.02.19

Palestinians in Hebron could now face another massacre

Israel just expelled the only international monitors protecting Hebron’s Palestinians from 800 heavily guarded far-right settlers, one of whom committed the 1994 massacre that triggered their deployment. No one expected Trump to respond - but where’s the European outcry? (...) The rationale of Netanyahu’s counter-peace measure was explained in clear terms; no more eyes on Israel’s conduct in this part of the occupied territories, or in any of it. (...) he no longer gives a damn about the peace process or about building trust, and no longer cares about provoking the international community. (...) the settlers don’t need international protection: they’ve got the IDF. Palestinian civilians, on the other hand, are defenseless. (...) With no concrete peacemaking strategy, no clear vision and no strong position on the conflict, the EU’s policy, in practice, is confined to adapting to the unconstrained exercise of Israel’s power in the Palestinian territories. (...) the EU’s idleness - amidst its booming cultural and economic exchanges with Israel - renders it complicit in the perpetuation of Palestinian suffering. (...) It’s about time the EU changes its strategy regarding the Palestinians to one with more moral and legal backbone. (...) the least they can offer to the isolated, immiserated and increasingly despairing Palestinians is consistent support, solidarity and acknowledgment of their dire situation. (...)
Muhammad Shehada, HAA, 07.02.19
The occupation didn't kill Ori Ansbacher

We have always been told that for as long as Israeli occupation continues (...). Sometimes, there is indeed a connection between terror and a struggle for liberation. This is not the case when it comes to Palestinian terrorism, which in recent decades has practically evolved into jihadist terrorism. They indeed were not born murderers, but the brainwashing, the incitement and the overall environment turned them into them. (...) Terror is also rampant in Sweden, Belgium, London, and New York. Is there an occupation in those places too? (...) Ansbacher was killed because her murderer originates from a community where many sanctify death and hatred. (...) She was killed because the environment that encourages murder is sustained by PA’s monthly salary payments to terrorists. (...) We must strive for peace and reconciliation, and against settlement expansion. But this is not the ambition of the jihadists. (...) one day we will be able to reach some sort of agreement, with or without the consent of the Palestinians, that will either entirely or partly end the occupation. We shouldn't, however, fool ourselves into believing that it will end jihad or terrorism. Not in Paris, not in Jerusalem, not in Nigeria. (...)

Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 11.02.19

Nationalistic motives, indeed

All the parties were interested in having the murder of Ori Ansbacher declared an attack of nationalistic motivation. The family of the suspect will not have to bear the
shame of a son who raped a girl and then murdered her. There’s no heroism here. (…) rape-murder, even if cloaked in patriotism, betray the weakness of the present Palestinian struggle. On the scale of victimhood, too, a nationalist-motivated murder is considered more prestigious than an “ordinary” murder or sexual assault committed by a man, as a man, against a woman. (…) Because the murder victim lived in the settlement of Tekoa, the symbolic stock of the settler nation has risen, due to yet another sacrifice it has offered up for the Land of Israel. Declaring the murder a nationalistic attack gave it yet another reason to launch a campaign of intimidation and stone-throwing at Palestinians (…). At Beit Fajjar and Ras Karkar police closed the road to Palestinian traffic. That’s what the settlers want, to pressure the army to regularly block more and more roads to the Palestinians, thus advancing their goal of emptying Area C (which encompasses 61 percent of the West Bank) of non-Jews. On the other hand, what isn’t “nationalistic” in our country? (…) All the crimes Israel has committed on Walaja’s lands to annex them to Jerusalem and allocate them to Jewish settlements were of the same nature. Ansbacher was raped and murdered on the border of the (Israeli) national park that was declared a few years ago on the village’s private lands and olive orchards, from which the village is now cut off by the separation barrier. The violence committed here for nationalistic motives screams from every inch.
Amira Hass, HAA, 12.02.19

The Palestinians incite to rape, too
(…) The Palestinians Knesset member and Israeli citizens, like her friends in the various Palestinian terrorist organizations, were prepared for a public relations battle to characterize the rape and murder of Ori as another woman being murdered. In other words, some nameless killer with a knife just raped her for the heck of it on a chilly morning, just because she was a woman – not because she was Jewish. Why did the Palestinian criminal arm himself with a knife, cross the security barrier, rape and fatally stab Ori, rather than some random Palestinian woman? (…) Every Palestinian who is exposed to incitement (…) knows that the enemy’s blood can be shed. But if he rapes a Palestinian woman (a gender crime) or even secretly has his way with her in private, he’ll be slaughtered and his immediate family members will follow him to hell. (…) Islamic tradition allows captive women to be used as sex slaves, as they are considered spoils of war. (…) There might be normative moral laws that mostly apply to regular citizens in functioning countries but in the incitement-ridden Palestinian territories, the victims – like Ori – are never the Arab or Muslim neighbors’ daughters but rather Jews or other minorities. (…) Reuven Berko, IHY, 13.02.19

4. Medienquerschnitt

Fromme Armee

Religious vs. secular
(…) Serving in the IDF is a fantastic stepping stone for this population, and an excellent way for them to integrate into Israeli society, earn academic degrees, and successfully join the Israeli labor market. There’s no doubt that these trends are commendable, and that their contribution to society and the Israeli economy is invaluable. (…) this new trend of Israeli Judaism is (…) inclusive and intricate. It incorporates many aspects of Israeliness, with serving in the IDF being one of the most important. (…) the IDF’s goal of functioning as society’s melting pot has not yet been fulfilled 100%. But this fringe group, which is trying to pass itself off as if it was the religious community’s majority viewpoint, is fanning the flames of dissension, which in the end will have a detrimental effect on the IDF, Israeli society and our ability to live side by side. It’s so easy to point our fingers and blame our politicians for invoking feelings of animosity within Israeli society. (…) both sides need to accept compromises and concessions, especially when it comes to integrating Haredim and religious girls into the IDF. (…) Eli Ben Meir, JPO, 01.02.19
Kein Zug zum arabischen Sektor

Restore Wadi Ara train line plan
For two decades, the state has been promising the towns of Wadi Ara, an area with some 180,000 residents and a transport crisis, that it will build a train line connecting them to the national rail system. (...) the Iron train line, which would have connected the towns to Israel’s main north-south coastal train line and the newer Eastern train line, had been shelved. (...) The state neglects Wadi Ara because most of its residents are Arabs. The area ranks in the second-lowest socioeconomic decile, and for years has faced heavy traffic and a lack of public transport. (...) Strengthening the Arab towns by linking them to central Israel via a train line needs to be a national project of utmost importance. Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, who was elected to a high spot on the Likud Knesset slate in that party’s primary election, needs to assume the “bulldozer” role (...) and return to the original plan for the Iron line.
Editorial, HAA, 11.02.19

Mehr Antisemitismus

An Authentic Jewish Response to Rising Antisemitism
(...) 66% of millennials could not identify what the Auschwitz concentration and death camp was (...) as Jews we must affirm, “Never again.” We must spot the seeds of antisemitism as they begin to sprout (...) many of the founders of the state of Israel viewed those Jews who died in the Holocaust as representing the old, weak Jew and the founders were embarrassed of them. (...) But once we talk about it, what should our message be? Never again? Jewish military strength? Fight to protect our people? These are very important messages, but the Torah demands more, (...) Holocaust memory is about learning what leads to antisemitism and learning how to protect ourselves from antisemitism. (...) Holocaust memory is about responding to genocide, bigotry, hate and intolerance throughout the world and not simply say that everyone hates the Jews and other minorities and we can’t change that so we can only try to protect ourselves. (...) we have no choice, because this is our sacred mission.
Jonathan Muskat, TOI, 06.02.19