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1. Schlagabtausch im Norden

Israel steht offiziell hinter den Angriffen auf militärische Stützpunkte südlich von Damaskus. Ziel sei gewesen, der unmittelbaren Bedrohung durch iranische „Killerdrohnen“ zu begegnen. Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu lobte die Operation der Luftwaffe, die einen Angriff iranischer Milizen verhindert habe. Im Süden Beiruts sollen, Berichten der Hisbollah zufolge, außerdem zwei israelische Drohnen abgestürzt und explodiert sein. Die israelische Armee kommentierte den Vorfall nicht. Der Iran und seine Verbündeten, wie die Hisbollah, gelten in Israel als gefährlichster Feind. Einige hundert Angriffe flog die Luftwaffe in den Jahren des syrischen Bürgerkrieges auf Ziele in Syrien. Anfangs galten die Bombardierungen Waffenlieferungen, die an die Hisbollah gehen sollten. Später zielten die israelischen Kampfflugzeuge auf iranische Luftwaffenstützpunkte in Syrien. Aktuell geht es der Regierung in Jerusalem darum, eine dauerhafte Stationierung iranischer Militärs in Syrien zu verhindern. Iranische Truppen kämpften Seite an Seite mit russischen Truppen und der syrischen Armee gegen die Rebellen. Für Israels Armee gilt infolge der Angriffe auf die iranischen Revolutionsgarden und möglicher Vergeltungsschläge erhöhter Alarm. Im Norden wurden mehrere Raketenabwehrsysteme in Betrieb genommen. Israel zeigt sich entschlossen, die Revolutionsgarden auch mit militärischen Mitteln zu vertreiben, sollten diplomatische Bemühungen im Sande verlaufen.

The facts behind Nasrallah's threats directed at Israel

Nasrallah claimed the base that was attacked, located south of Damascus, was a Hezbollah base, despite the fact that his organization does not operate in the area. His aim was not only to remove blame for his Iranian patrons, but also to clear the Syrian regime from any responsibility. The Hezbollah chief (...) hoped to increase tension in the Israeli public and force the IDF to invest resources in order to stay on high alert. (...) Nasrallah's threat to take out Israeli drones is unfounded. The organization has been trying unsuccessfully to bring down Israeli manned and unmanned aircraft for years. He may try to dispatch drones into Israel in the near future, in response to the public humiliation suffered by the Iranian led forces. (...) His claims made in his speech, that one of the drones was on an intelligence gathering mission is unfounded especially because any such mission would be carried out at a much higher altitude and could certainly not be taken down by children throwing stones.
Ron Ben-Yishai, YED, 25.08.19

Israel's war of attrition could get out of hand

In recent weeks Israel has broadened its cycle of attacks on military targets linked to Iran, and has operated several times in Iraq, which is not an enemy state. (...) Israel Defense Forces attacked in Syria, and this time issued an official statement saying the attack was aimed at foiling an Iranian

drone mission that was apparently meant to avenge the attack on pro-Iranian forces in Iraq. (...) meanwhile, two drones crashed in Lebanon under unclear circumstances, with Hezbollah blaming Israel. (...) it seems as if Israel has decided to forcibly remove from the Middle East any arms that could be aimed in its direction. The comments by Netanyahu and ministers in his government, which describe an actual war against Iran, raises concerns that Israel is trying to set ambitious objectives that could lead to entanglement. (...) An aggressive security policy has characterized Israeli election campaigns since the 1950s, especially when the ruling party is accused of being too soft in the face of attacks and provocations by whoever the enemy is at the time. This time Netanyahu is battling for another term while taking potshots from both left and right about the military's weakness against Hamas in Gaza and the deadly attacks in the West Bank. Has Netanyahu decided to escalate the "war between the wars" in the north to deflect the criticism and display control of the situation and a strong hand, in an environment that's far from the public eye and in which the IDF enjoys advantages over its rivals? Is the security cabinet of this transition government, whose members are busy with an election campaign, even capable of evaluating the prime minister's decisions? These questions are disturbing and must be subject to public and political discussion. Experience shows that wars of attrition tend to get messy, and that even the most pummeled enemy can develop a response to Israeli capabilities. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 26.08.19

A distress signal from Iran

The bi-weekly military strikes we have seen in recent months, dealing heavy blows to Iran's hostile, anti-Israel military deployments in Iraq and Syria, are imperative to the country's defense. The Middle East in the wake of the Arab spring has been trying to rehabilitate itself and lick its wounds. In an effort to exploit the tumultuous environment, the Iranians have tirelessly sought to forge a new reality by establishing a regional and military presence in the Shiite areas of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. This presence, according to the Iranian line of thought, is vital to strengthening the Shiite "diaspora." (...) Israel's attacks in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon (reportedly) are drawing entirely predictable threats from Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, dictated by Iran. (...) Nasrallah, as the self-anointed protector of Lebanon's holy soil, wants to defend the country even if doing so means risking all-out war with Israel. With-

out question, any and every threat he makes should be heeded and taken seriously by Israel's political and military leaders. It's possible, however, that these threats are in fact a distress signal from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps and its foreign arm, the Quds Force – sensing they have become increasingly vulnerable, transparent and predictable. Israel's intelligence agencies and air force are proving daily that these forces, cunning as they may be, will be exposed and hit. Now, in an attempt to steer Israel's attention away from Syria and Iraq, the Iranians are trying to create a diversion in Lebanon, but the only ones who will pay the price for a clash with the IDF are the Lebanese people themselves. (...)

Ronen A. Cohen, IHY, 26.08.19

An escalation with Iran, and Israel's opposition is silent

(...) In the midst of a confrontation between Israel and Iran, which is spilling over in the Middle East, Israelis are only hearing the opinion of the government, which isn't being challenged for a moment by those supposed to be an alternative in the upcoming election. (...) the public is denied a discussion on the objectives and risks of the fighting. The opposition is remaining silent in the spirit of the sacred "quiet, we're shooting" doctrine. What was stressed as an advantage of the Kahol Lavan party – the three generals in its top leadership – is now becoming a major disadvantage. When the cannons roar the former army chiefs remain silent as if they were still in uniform and only supposed to carry out government policy. Apparently Kahol Lavan's leaders have forgotten that they were discharged from the army quite a while ago and now it's their duty to offer the public a policy that represents an alternative to Netanyahu's – yes, even when it comes to security, even in times of fighting and especially during an election campaign. Netanyahu has maneuvered Israel into a course of unprecedented escalation against Iran. Some of the actions are interpreted by the enemy as a violation of the rules of the game and even a declaration of war. (...) Israel can't let itself be led blindly by any leader (...) in a functioning country there are supposed to be checks, balances and monitoring mechanisms, as well as alternative ideas and strategies. That's the role of a functioning opposition: to present the people with an angle different than the one presented by the government. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 27.08.19

Rein in Hezbollah

(...) No one wants another war, and Hezbollah's rhetoric, as well as its actions, are a violation of UN Resolution 1701 that ended the last war in 2006. It is essential that the international community hold Hezbollah and Lebanon to the same international standards as other states. Lebanon's political leadership – Michel Aoun, Saad Hariri, and Nabih Berri – have all been unhelpful in inflaming the situation, accusing Israel of violating the country's sovereignty and even intimating that what happened was a "declaration of war." (...) Does this generation really seek to pay the price for Nasrallah's extremism, while he sits ensconced in his bunker leaving others to face the result of his rash decisions? Lebanon's leadership feels free to inflame the situation with its comments and talk of "war," because the country has not been sent a strong message from the international community that it must de-escalate tensions, as opposed to increasing them. (...) From Baghdad to Beirut, Iran's "land bridge" of threats, including drones and precision-guided ballistic missiles, reveal the way Iran seeks to use neighboring states as staging areas to threaten Israel. (...) For years, Hezbollah felt that it could do whatever it wants – building tunnels into Israel, stockpiling weapons under the nose of the Lebanese army and the UN, sending its fighters into Syria to aid the crimes of the Assad regime – and there was no attempt to rein it in. This added to an increasingly tense situation in the region, and the future looks bleak. Netanyahu means it, and not because Israel is in the midst of an election campaign. (...) When Israeli intelligence discovered the plot, the IDF did what it always does when faced with an imminent and real threat: it acted to wipe out that threat. Now is the time for France, the US, and other countries that have an interest in peace in the region to make it clear to Hezbollah and its allies that they must de-escalate, and not make a mistake by attacking Israel. The world should fear the consequences for Lebanon if that happens.

Editorial, JPO, 27.08.19

Israel's new strategy just slapped Hezbollah across the face

(...) Both Israel and Hezbollah have violated UN resolution 1701, passed after of the Second Lebanon War, to end the conflict. But the number of clashes between the two, over all these years, has remained small and most have occurred in Syrian territory. (...) Israel has avoided visible action in Lebanon, allowing Nasrallah to claim his enemy is

deterred. But now he has reason to be concerned. Recent events could indicate a change in Israel's perception regarding Hezbollah's abilities. (...) having completed almost a decade of fighting in Syria, mostly with good results, Hezbollah is now prepared to set its sights on Lebanon's southern border with Israel and should be reminded of its vulnerabilities. (...) Next month talks are set to begin, with American mediation, on demarcation of a maritime border between Israel and Lebanon. The outcome of these talks will determine Lebanon's natural gas production, which means millions of dollars that both Hezbollah and the Lebanese government are in desperate need of. The bottom line is that a military conflict with Israel will most likely abolish any political gain achieved by the Iran-backed movement, whose leader has become the strongest politician in Lebanon. A divided country, with parts of its population opposed to Hezbollah's policies and actions, will deteriorate quickly towards the destruction of the Lebanese tourism industry and its infrastructure. Israel is taking full advantage of Nasrallah's vulnerability and is backing him up against the wall. (...) The question is whether Israel is taking a calculated risk by its actions or is this a gamble. (...)

Alex Fishman, YED, 27.08.19

Hezbollah can't not respond

Three factors make it inevitable that Hezbollah will hit back for the drone strike in Beirut: Israel interfered with its precision missile project; the action was "noisy" and seen by the public; and this was the second time Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah was humiliated by Israel in 24 hours. (...) Logic says that if this was an action "against the state of Lebanon and an attack on its sovereignty," it would be appropriate to leave the decision about how to respond to the Lebanese government, not Hezbollah alone. The government could carry out military action, or possibly take a diplomatic route, such as appealing to the United Nations or the UN Security Council. There's no doubt that Nasrallah has no desire for a major military conflict with Israel right now, when his organization is engulfed in a serious financial crisis following heavy cuts to its Iranian funding and is still licking the wounds it sustained fighting in the Syrian war, in which Hezbollah racked up thousands of casualties and wounded. But (...) the organization feels compelled to respond. (...) Nasrallah is counting on the fact that Israel did not respond to an attack on IDF troops in January 2015, which came after six Hezbollah operatives were killed on the Golan Heights. It might try to recreate that scenario

and attack IDF troops along the border, as it hinted it might do. But there are no guarantees that this is how it will play out this time, and no one can ensure that the "calculated strike" won't get out of control and that a clash with Hezbollah won't escalate into a war. (...) Netanyahu could have reminded the furious Hezbollah leader that not only will Israel continue to strike at any members of the organization who try to take action against Israel from Syria or anywhere else, it will also keep up its efforts to thwart attempts by Hezbollah to refine or upgrade its missiles.

Oded Granot, IHY, 28.08.19

2. In Israel nicht willkommen

Am Ende durfte die US-Abgeordnete Rashida Tlaib zwar nach Israel einreisen, entschied sich jedoch, es nicht zu tun. Innenminister Arye Deri gab dem Antrag der in den USA geborenen Tochter palästinensischer Einwanderer aus humanitären Gründen nach. Tlaib hatte den Innenminister zuvor explizit um eine Einreisegenehmigung gebeten, weil sie ihre über 90 Jahre alte Großmutter, die im Westjordanland lebt, besuchen wollte. Ursprünglich plante die Politikerin gemeinsam mit der US-Abgeordneten Ilhan Omar, die in Somalia geboren und wie Tlaib muslimischen Glaubens ist, nach Jerusalem und ins Westjordanland zu reisen. Israel verweigerte zunächst die Einreise unter dem Vorwurf, die beiden Frauen unterstützten die Boykottkampagne BDS (Boykott, De-Investition und Sanktionen). „Das israelische Gesetz untersagt Personen, die sich für einen Boykott gegen Israel einsetzen, die Einreise“, begründete Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu. Das Vorgehen Israels sei nicht ungewöhnlich, setzte er hinzu. „Andere Demokratien verbieten Leuten die Einreise, die darauf abzielen, dem Land Schaden zuzufügen.“ Israel sei eine „freie und lebendige Demokratie, die offen ist für Kritik“. Seit März 2017 setzte die Knesset mit einer Gesetzreform den Kritikern von Israels Besatzungspolitik Grenzen. Wer demonstrativ den Kauf von Siedlerprodukten verweigert oder aus Protest gegen Menschenrechtsverletzungen im Gazastreifen und im Westjordanland dazu aufruft, Israel zu boykottieren, riskiert, an der Grenze abgewiesen zu werden. Tlaib und Omar sind lebhafteste Kritikerinnen Israels. Bereits im Vorfeld meldete sich US-Präsident Donald Trump auf Twitter zu Wort. „Es wäre ein Zeichen großer Schwäche, wenn Israel den beiden Abgeordneten Omar und Tlaib die Einreise erlauben würde. Sie hassen Israel und das jüdische Volk.“ Umgekehrt verurteilte der parteilose US-Politiker Bernie Sanders das Einrei-

severbot als „Zeichen enormer Respektlosigkeit gegenüber gewählten Vertretern, dem Kongress der Vereinigten Staaten und den Prinzipien der Demokratie“. Sogar die pro-israelische Lobby AIPAC hatte sich im Vorfeld der Reise dazu ausgesprochen, dass „jeder Kongressabgeordnete unseren demokratischen Verbündeten Israel besuchen und erleben dürfen sollte“.

A justified barring

(...) Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar are no friends of Israel. For quite some time now, both have openly voiced their hostilities towards Israel and the Jewish people. (...) These two are no peacemakers. They wanted to go to Israel in order to confirm their own biases. And Prime Minister Netanyahu was quite right when he decided to deny them this opportunity. (...) the Democrats who are rushing to attack Israel are quite ridiculous. Some of these lawmakers (...) are Jewish. (...) These are the same Jewish hypocrites that have granted these venomous individuals free rein in Washington, DC. Their commentary on this matter should be fully ignored, as they lost all credibility due to the fact that they continue to allow Tlaib and Omar to spout nonsense unopposed. (...) Within the last several months, quite a few well known Muslims visited Israel in the hopes of building bridges of peace and cooperation. Saudi blogger Mohammad Saud toured the country with an open mind and an open heart. Sarah Idan, a former Miss Iraq, likewise visited the country to show that Arabs and Jews need not fight one another. And a group of Muslims from the United Kingdom visited a few weeks ago, with the stated aim of multi faith dialogue. Notice the difference? Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib spew venom and bile wherever they go. They (...) wanted an opportunity to further insult the country. Their hearts are full of malice, not love. (...) their presence would only further exacerbate tensions.

Harold Ohayon, TOI, 16.08.19

The day Israel humiliated its US friends in Congress

Last week, over 40 freshmen Democratic members of Congress visited Israel. It was the largest-ever group of freshman Democrats to come to Israel, and they came under the auspices of the pro-Israel lobby in Washington, AIPAC. By organizing the largest Democratic Party mission to Israel at a time of growing Jewish concern over anti-Israel voices within the party, the Democratic leadership was making a statement: Don't let the fringes mislead you; we

remain passionately committed to the Israeli-American relationship. But with the Israeli government's decision to deny entry into Israel to two anti-Israel Democratic members of Congress, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib (...), one wonders how many of those members of Congress who came here last week would have come if the trip had been scheduled for next week. (...) the anti-Israel voices within the Democratic Party are growing; but those voices remain marginal. Yet now the government of Israel has empowered those voices. By encouraging the perception that the Israeli government is controlled by President Trump, Netanyahu has boosted the identification of the Jewish state with the most divisive American president in modern memory (...). And by ignoring the personal pleas of a furious Steny Hoyer, Netanyahu weakened those who are working to preserve Democratic Party support for Israel. Finally, Netanyahu's repeated reversals — from initially agreeing to admit the two Congresswomen, to banning both, to partly admitting Tlaib — have weakened Israeli credibility. No prime minister has done greater damage to bi-partisan support for Israel, a precondition for a thriving American-Israeli relationship. In barring a minor politician from entering Israel, Netanyahu did not weaken our enemies; he humiliated our friends. Next time, how many freshman Democrats will risk the political fallout of coming to Israel?

Yossi Klein Halevi, TOI, 16.08.19

Confronting democrats

The decision to bar Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from entering Israel (...) has the potential to create irreparable damage to Israel. Still today, members of the Democratic Party recall Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "insult" (...) to President Barack Obama when he spoke before Congress in 2015 against the Iran deal. Many refer to that moment in time as the breaking point in ties between the party and the Jewish state. The decision not to let Omar and Tlaib into Israel (...) could be remembered as another moment like the 2015 speech. By reversing an earlier decision to let the congresswomen in, Israel — in one fell swoop — aligned the entire Democratic Party behind its two most radical and extreme members. It essentially gave Tlaib and Omar a gift they could not have imagined — propelling them to a status that even the mighty country of Israel is afraid of what they would do if allowed inside its borders. (...) Israel has nothing to hide and the damage caused by blocking the congresswomen — the continued fraying of biparti-

san support in the US for Israel — far outweighs the potential damage they would have caused on their trip here. They would have tweeted against the occupation and made some small provocations in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. So what? It would have made them look extreme and radical. Now, they are martyrs. (...) the Jewish state is being used, in this case, as a political football by President Donald Trump. (...) He is using Omar and Tlaib for political purposes. By getting the entire Democratic establishment to support them, he is attempting to expose what he believes is the true face of the party ahead of the 2020 election. He wants to demonize the Democratic Party, and there is no better way to do that than by highlighting its most radical members. (...) Netanyahu was in a bind. (...) he could have stood up for what would have been right for Israel, but he would have run the risk of sparking a crisis with the president without knowing how it would end. After all the benefits he and Israel have received from this president, now was the time for payback. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 17.08.19

Netanyahu endangers Israel

(...) The prime minister's flip-flopping over an entry permit to Israel for the two Democratic lawmakers is clear evidence that Netanyahu is no longer fit to lead the country. (...) Netanyahu is endangering Israel's ties with its key ally. (...) Israel's ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer, said Israel would not deny entry to any American lawmaker "out of respect for the U.S. Congress and the great alliance between Israel and America." (...) after U.S. President Donald Trump made clear he was unhappy with Israel's decision to let the two lawmakers, whom he despises, into Israel, Netanyahu backtracked and decided not to allow them in. (...) Subsequent events only made the situation worse. (...) The list of people and organizations that condemned Israel's decision includes senior figures from both parties including Bernie Sanders, Nancy Pelosi, Joe Biden, Chuck Schumer, Marco Rubio and Steny Hoyer. A long list of prominent Jewish organizations, among them the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Committee, joined the condemnation — as did even the most pro-Israel group in the United States, AIPAC, which rarely criticizes Israel. In groveling to Trump, Netanyahu endangers bipartisan American support for Israel, which has always been considered the heart of Israel's strategy. He has tied his political fate — and Israel's fate — to

Trump's, burning bridges built by generations of Israeli governments.

Editorial, HAA, 18.08.19

Personae non gratae

US Reps. Ilhan Omar (...) and Rashida Tlaib (...) are the new face of the anti-Semitic, anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. That was enough to turn them into personae non gratae in the country. And when they allowed a terrorist-sympathizing group to organize their planned trip, their provocation could not be ignored. (...) The freshman congresswomen's trip was planned by MIFTAH, a nongovernmental organization headed by Hanan Ashrawi, a longtime anti-Israel activist, academic, and member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization. (...) Omar and Tlaib (...) knew it was likely their visa applications would be rejected. Showing this was the point from the outset (...). Omar and Tlaib had no real interest in visiting Israel, and indeed, their itinerary made no mention of Israel. They could have entered the West Bank quietly, through Jordan. But their purpose was to put a foot on the ground in Israel, just as the ancient victor put his leg on his dead foe's head. (...) Trump's pro-Israel critics claim he is turning support for the Jewish state into a partisan issue. But it is those who wish to ruin Israel economically, not the president, who are doing that. Americans greatly benefit from Israeli scientific research and development, much of which is spurred by broad US-Israel cooperation. Boycotting, divesting from and sanctioning Israel would shoot all Americans, including Omar's and Tlaib's constituents, in the foot. (...)

Nurit Greenger, IHY, 27.08.19

And this is how it's done

Did US Congresswomen Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib really want to go to Israel? Maybe they never wanted to go but just wanted to create hysteria and garner attention, something at which they are experts. (...) Omar and Tlaib made it a point in their press conference on this issue to point out that they were "Muslim." They also said they were going to meet people from both sides and work at "peace." Yet they have no qualms about slamming the entire country and therefore the entire people – all the time. Did Omar and Tlaib make a statement condemning the brutal murder of 17-year-old Rina Shnerb without simultaneously justifying anti-Jewish violence? With the BDS drama and the Al-Quds Day charade, the Left aligning themselves with the Islam-

ists have made a platform of nothing but antisemitism, and the two Congresswomen are key players in this regard. Their remarks about the Jewish community as a whole are offensive, inflammatory and hateful. As a Muslim woman who has been to Israel a dozen times, let me tell them how it's done. I fully support Israel's right to exist with Jerusalem as its capital and the right of the Jewish people to be free from orchestrated antisemitic attacks. In my travels to Israel, I go with an open mind and no preconceived notions. I'm well aware of the problems, and I've met and spoken to people from both sides of the equation. I've met policy-makers, activists and ordinary citizens and heard their stories. It always amazes me how critical Israelis can sometimes be about their own government, but this is what a democracy is all about. So I invite Omar and Tlaib to come with me. I will show them what Israel stands for and the beauty of the Israeli people.

Raheel Raza, JPO, 29.08.19

3. Countdown zum Urnengang

Wenige Wochen vor den erneuten israelischen Parlamentswahlen am 17. September geben sich Likud und Blau-Weiß mit erwarteten 31 Sitzen in der Knesset (Parlament) ein Kopf-an-Kopf-Rennen. Auf Platz drei stehen mit gut zehn Mandaten die Vereinigte Liste der arabischen und antizionistischen Parteien, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beitenu und das neue Rechtsbündnis Yamina unter dem Vorsitz der früheren Justizministerin Ayelet Shaked. Überraschend sind die guten Perspektiven für Lieberman, dessen Partei in der ausgehenden Knesset nur fünf Abgeordnete stellte. Sollten sich die Umfragen im Wahlergebnis bestätigen, würde die Yisrael Beitenu mit gut der doppelten Anzahl von Parlamentarier_innen in die Knesset einziehen. Meretz hat mit Stav Shafir und Ehud Barak das Demokratische Lager gebildet und liegt bei sieben bis acht Mandaten. Abgeschlagen bleibt die Arbeitspartei unter dem Vorsitz des früheren Gewerkschaftschefs Amir Peretz, der im Zusammengang mit der liberalen Partei Geshar laut Umfragen sechs bis sieben Mandate erreichen wird. Den beiden religiösen Parteien werden 15 Mandate zugetraut. Mit nur neun Parteien, die reelle Chancen haben, die Sperrklausel von 3,25 Prozent zu schaffen, werden in der kommenden Knesset weniger Listen vertreten sein als je zuvor.

Amir Peretz: This is your last chance – take it

(...) The odds are slim, yet I call on Amir Peretz: This is your last chance – take it. (...) The Labor

Party has spent years ingratiating itself to the right, failing time after time. Labor was kept alive artificially by seats that came from Meretz, all in hope of defeating Benjamin Netanyahu. The result was one party that shrunk and another party afraid to fight for its values. Don't fall into this trap, Peretz. The risk is too great this time. I am familiar with the criticism about Ehud Barak. I have written much of it, but Barak is one of the sharpest opposition voices around today, at a time when a man with three pending indictments is running to lead the government, with a contemptuous union of nationalist Haredim and Kahanists to his right, posing a clear and present danger to democracy. (...) there is a chance here to see a large leftist party that doesn't fear its own shadow. Peretz can be part of that. And if you, Mr. Peretz, decide in the end to run separately – go all the way. Fight for every vote on the right. Make a campaign based on social welfare issues like only you can do. Give it a chance. But please, drop the attacks on your leftist colleagues in an attempt to pick up another half a seat. You are bigger than that. The stakes are too high to get lost in old grudges and cannibalizing votes.

(...)

Zehava Galon, HAA, 01.08.19

Nobody talks about economy in this election campaign

Candidates should know we will decide our vote based on the solutions presented for the huge deficit and the budget cuts that will surely be needed, so it is time for them to tell us what their economic plans are. (...) The new government will have to take the economic crisis up before anything else, the huge budget deficit and the cuts it will require will have to be addressed. (...) Will there be nothing but silence until the Knesset elects its finance committee? Only then will we hear the politicians speak? (...) Israeli is facing one of its most serious financial problem in years: a NIS 50 billion deficit, the health services on the verge of collapse; shortage of qualified teachers due to poor wages; infrastructure in need of repair; transportation in need of upgrade; seniors reduced to poverty; lack of funds for agriculture and environmental protection and a cost of living higher than most other countries. Has any candidate presented a plan to fix any of this? None, Nada, crickets. Why should they raise the subject? Talk of necessary budget cuts in services to the public, or more taxes that will be a burden on the working man, or the inability to assist senior citizens, or the needy or the Holocaust survivors, or the aid recipients, are not

conducive to winning elections, so it is up to us to force candidates to address the issue and impress upon them that how they plan to fix the problems is a factor in who we chose to elect. Only parties with solutions will get our vote. So to the candidates we say: Don't tell us it is easy to resolve, it is not. (...) Give us the opportunity to understand your ideology and how it will get us out of the hole in the long run. Gad Lior, YED, 04.08.19

The NRP – from Golda Meir to Ayelet Shaked

Now we are facing a new stage in the whitewashing of women in public positions. (...) when Golda Meir ran for the office of mayor of Tel Aviv, she was boycotted by the National Religious Party – Mapai's traditional partner (...) On July 1, 2007, Moshe Katsav resigned from his position as president of the state. Speaker of the Knesset Dalia Itzik served as acting president until Shimon Peres assumed the position. After the end of Peres's term, Itzik competed for the presidency. These were not hot news items, save for the fact that she was supported by members of the United Torah Judaism and Shas parties. (...) Now we are facing a new stage in the whitewashing of women in public positions. Ayelet Shaked of the New Right Party was selected to head the United Right, which includes the Bayit Yehudi (Jewish Home) Party, heir of the NRP. Rabbi Rafi Peretz, leader of Bayit Yehudi, gave up the leadership of the united party in favor of Shaked. He did so in spite of a public statement by more than 40 religious-Zionist rabbis that anyone heading the list must be a "God-fearing and Torah-observant" individual and should be "someone who flies the banner of Torah." It should be noted that the objection to Shaked was not because of her gender, but rather because of her being a secularist.

Moreover, two of the most prominent among the movement's rabbis – of Safed Chief Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu and Rabbi Eli Sadan, head of the Bnei David pre-military academy – were quoted as giving their backing to Shaked to head the joint list. Sadan issued a statement denying the quotation. Instead, he declared that "he is convinced that politicians will act in the best way possible to maximize the electoral potential for their electorate," which practically means choosing Shaked to lead the list. Indeed, the NRP has come a long way, from objecting to Golda Meir to supporting Ayelet Shaked.

Asher Maoz, JPO, 04.08.19

The pre-election fiasco is a holiday for Netanyahu's eunuchs

The slates of Knesset candidates were closed last week. It was a holiday for the castrated. The castrated are those who understand the damage being caused by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but aren't saying so. Those same right-wingers who deep in their hearts don't want a continuation of Netanyahu's rule, but whose moves are determined by the royal family, even if they oppose it with all their might. (...) what about Avi Dichter? Just a few years ago he appeared in the film "The Gatekeepers," in which former heads of the Shin Bet security service express opposition to Israel's policy and its behavior in the territories (...). Suddenly Dichter has become the main spokesman in the service of His Highness. Why? Because he wants to wink at all the Netanyahu admirers who are unwilling to accept anyone who doesn't express unreserved support for the ruler. Dichter is also one of those who we are likely to hear after the election saying: Yes, to Likud, no to Netanyahu. Another castrated one is Yuval Steinitz, as proven by his silence – not in the diplomatic realm, but certainly in the realms of personal ethics and corruption. His time is also likely to come, if he shakes off his fear of the kingdom. And Gilad Erdan? After all, he is one of Netanyahu's potential heirs, but he was ground to dust as communications minister and as public security minister. The degree of his castration is clear to all. He is in charge of the Israel Police, but instead of defending its official and public status he prefers to stutter pitifully. The prime minister's residence on Balfour Street demands full and absolute castration of him. Support for Netanyahu against the rule of law has become a mitzvah for him. His time is also likely to come, if he manages to extricate his head from the harness it's stuck in. Gideon Sa'ar is not castrated, he's a man who fights for what he believes in. (...) Right-wing leaders Ayelet Shaked and Naftali Bennett are not castrated. (...) that the Netanyahu family forced on them, the tines of evil that raked their flesh – require a response. Nobody expects them to support a left-wing government, but both of them are familiar with the man and his behavior. (...) Likud members were asked to sign a declaration that they would not replace Netanyahu. Clearly the prime minister is afraid that if he can't form an immunity government, the castrated ones will declare: Yes to the right, no to Netanyahu.

Uzi Baram, HAA, 05.08.19

Israel's elections: Because and about Liberman

(...) Israel's elections are because of Liberman and his almost 30-year relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu. The man who served in the court of King Bibi is poised to dethrone him, and he is not holding back.

(...) like a well-written play, the hero finds himself facing his worst enemy: his former partner, the man who helped build him. Netanyahu's battle this election is against the man who knows him best, the person now ready to confront him head-on. (...) Liberman's current election slogans speak volume. His previous campaigns focused on right wing dog whistles — like attacking Israeli-Arabs with a "No loyalty, no citizenship" call. His new slogans include, "We want a Jewish state, not an Orthodox one," and "Make Israel normal again." The change is clear. In many ways, Liberman has been the only party leader shaping the public discussion of this election. On security, he is outflanking Netanyahu on the right. On domestic issues, he is leading a liberal, secular agenda. Liberman is also going after Netanyahu's family. And King Bibi is chasing him, reacting to him. The Likud is attempting to bring the Russian immigrants to it. Aggressively. It is investing millions of shekels in digital campaigns to lure Liberman's base of support. Netanyahu is running from non-kosher bars to meetings with Russian-speaking influencers. Usually, however, Liberman remains one step ahead, dictating the topic of the day. For example, on Saturday, August 3, Liberman hinted that Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein — the most senior Likud politician after Netanyahu — could make a good prime minister. The media coverage was enormous. The result? Netanyahu had Likud MKs sign a pledge of allegiance stating they support him, and only him, as their candidate for prime minister. (...) Current polls show Liberman has nearly doubled his political power, growing from his current of five Knesset seats to an expected 10 this September. No matter how you analyze it, Liberman holds the keys to any future coalition government, and therefore, to Netanyahu's future. Remember: the attorney general will conduct a legal hearing for Netanyahu shortly after the elections, before determining whether to indict him on bribery charges. The keys to Netanyahu's political future may turn out to be the keys to his personal freedom; it takes a 61-finger majority in the Knesset to receive immunity from prosecution. Only weeks from election day, it seems that Liberman's gamble has so far paid off. Rather than ending his political career, breaking Netanyahu's potential coa-

lition elevated him from court member to kingmaker.
(...)

Dana Weiss, TOI, 19.08.19

Winds of change in the Arab street

Joint Arab List Chairman Ayman Odeh's surprising announcement that he would be willing to join, or at least support, a Center-Left government, sent shockwaves through the Israeli political system. The Zionist parties were predictably quick to discard the notion of cooperation with Odeh and his anti-Zionist faction. More noteworthy, however, was that some of Odeh's Arab colleagues, members of the Balad party for example, hastily rejected his comment, even dubbing them as "unfortunate." Odeh's words, however, weren't intended for Zionist politicians, even those who might need him after the election (...). It goes without saying that his words weren't meant for the Jewish public in Israel, which he stopped trying to court a long time ago and which he has repeatedly and regrettably alienated through previous statements and actions. Odeh's words were aimed at the Arab voters who he needs to become an important political force in the next Knesset. Many of these voters abandoned Odeh and his colleagues during the last election (...). Arab voters aren't hiding their anger and discontent with Arab politicians in Israel, due to their personal and political conduct, but also the agenda they've sought to push. Odeh undoubtedly knows which way the winds are blowing within the Arab public, and his stated willingness to join or support a future Israeli government was apparently intended to temper his constituents' animosity. It's important to understand that Arab voters in Israel, particularly the younger generation, want to integrate and participate in Israeli society. Although they often level criticism or raise demands the Jewish public views as extreme, Arab Israelis chose the path of connection and integration over separation and alienation. They prefer a civil agenda that addressed welfare, education, employment and more, over the current agenda espoused by Arab politicians who are focused almost entirely on the question of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (...) Sadly, the Zionist parties have given up on Arab voters, abandoning the playing field to those same Arab parties who champion the age-old Bolshevik rallying cry: The worse things are for Arab Israelis citizens the better they are for Arab parties. (...)

Eyal Zisser, IHY, 28.08.19

Scaring Arab voters away in droves

In the last election, the ruling party took the liberty of setting up its own election-integrity units to fight "the phenomenon of electoral fraud at Arab polling stations." Likud bought 1,200 cameras and gave them to party members who served as polling station officials in Arab towns, a move that seems to have been aimed directly at the Arab parties. According to representatives of those parties, the presence of the cameras scared off many Arab voters and lowered the turnout rate in the Arab community. In advance of September's do-over election, Likud once again sought to put cameras in the polling stations. Justice Hanan Melcer, the chairman of the Central Elections Committee, forbade this, saying it would be against the law. (...) Melcer permitted the vote counting to be filmed, but not by the parties themselves. (...) Melcer stressed that any such filming will be done by inspectors from a new election-integrity unit that will be funded by the Central Elections Committee. And in fact, the day after his decision was issued, the committee began an accelerated process of trying to recruit thousands of inspectors. But this didn't satisfy Likud. In response to Melcer's decision, the governing coalition is trying to ram a law through the Knesset that would also allow party representatives serving as polling booth officials or observers to use cameras. Likud's proposal shows that the party has no real interest in preventing fraud; it only wants to intimidate Arab voters from coming to the polls. The bill that Likud is trying to pass is unacceptable. Melcer's proposal is proportionate: It allows the integrity of the election to be monitored without undermining the secrecy of the ballot. Aside from the fact that it leaves the monitoring equipment in the hands of the state rather than political activists, it also ensures that voters won't be filmed upon entering and leaving the polling booth, and that no database will be created that contains pictures of voters, which could leak onto the internet and endanger Israeli citizens.

Editorial, HAA, 30.08.19

4. Medienquerschnitt

The Haredi establishment's threat to constitutional democracy and equal rights: No marginal issue

(...) The ongoing dismissal, in particular on the left, of the threat to constitutional democracy posed by the religious establishment is a serious danger in its own right. Ben Gurion can be excused for not realizing the danger in giving blanket draft exemption to yeshiva students — 65 years ago. There is no ex-

cuse for such blindness now. The Haredi establishment uses institutions of government, like the courts, and certainly, coalition politics, to further its own narrow, sectoral interests, while having no fundamental loyalty to these institutions. (...) The threat to public space (...) is huge and ongoing. As the Israel Women's Network and other groups have noted, this is a war of attrition. (...) If it is acceptable to discriminate against women in public space, we are back to demands for sex discrimination in buses, sidewalks, etc. We already struggle against demands for sex discrimination in universities and in the army, re-fighting the conclusion long ago reached on the basis of too much sorry experience, that there is no such thing as "separate but equal"; any such demands necessarily and inevitably entail discrimination. The Haredi establishment makes an argument for privilege: its religious "needs" and sexual objectification of women take precedence over equal civil rights. (...) While Netanyahu, increasingly cornered by various dynamics, may be further sidling up to the Haredi establishment, his opposition in the Blue and White party is hardly showing awareness of, or determination about, the threat to constitutional democracy, equal rights, or rational government, posed by the Haredi establishment. (...)
Shulamit S. Magnus, TOI, 14.08.19

Wieder Streit um den Tempelberg

The Temple Mount is in the fanatics' hands

It's clear that the Jews have to mourn the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem – all Jews, (...) particularly those who are liberal, abhor racism and for whom human rights, freedom of religion, equality and freedom of expression are important, must go to the Temple Mount (...) to mourn for our country, where chilly drafts blow through wrecked walls – a country whose leaders are corrupt, whose judges expel children and their mothers from the Promised Land and whose cabinet members stand trial. We have to mourn for its army, which is occupying 5 million people, for the high priest, the official in charge of supervising the government, who's a willing prisoner in the lap of the dictator, and for the citizens who own the country and are still convinced they're the Chosen People. (...) Most of them have never visited the Temple Mount. Some even object to the closing of movie theaters and cafes on the eve of Tisha B'Av, but they still can't stand that Muslims could be able to dictate to Israel the times for prayer and visitation rules at holy sites. At one time, this handful was labeled aberrant and strange, wild

weeds, hilltop youth – monikers designed to play down the threat they pose. Now they're the second and third generation of musclemen who have taken control of the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which is also holy to Muslims, and have set the rules for prayer there. They have taken over Beit Hadasah in Hebron, gloried in the building of the Jewish Avraham Avinu neighborhood in the heart of the Arab city, and purged entire streets of their Arab residents. (...) Other than the radical left and the Arab parties, no one bothers to ask anymore if you're for or against a withdrawal from the territories, for building settlements or uprooting them, not to mention partitioning Jerusalem. Such a question makes the asker sound weird because it requires a response on whether someone prefers political suicide or remaining alive. (...) The country can be destroyed over and over because the right to mourn over the ruins is the true test of courage and leadership. The real "handful"? It's those who look on in horror at the destruction, wring their hands and realize that this is their future.

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 14.08.19

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