Stop Whitewashing Ilhan Omar’s Antisemitism

By Sean Durns

Strong language,“the Likud lobby,” Winston Churchill once said, “is often used by weak men and it is never used more strongly than on a weak case.” The Washington Post’s opinion pages are filled with plenty of strong language about Israel and antisemitism — and correspondingly few facts.

With growing frequency, The Washington Post has published op-eds that effectively whitewash or obfuscate on antisemitism when it emanates from the left. The recent debate over Ilhan Omar’s most recent anti-Semitic tweet offers several examples.

On February 10, the Democratic freshman congresswoman tweeted “It’s all about the Benjamins” to explain why some of her fellow members of Congress were condemning a previous tweet of hers that accused Israel of “hypnotizing the world.” When asked to clarify whom she was talking about, Omar responded, “AIPAC!” Omar was stating that money — Jewish money — was buying the votes and opinions of her fellow members of Congress.

Numerous pundits and politicians — Democrat and Republican alike — condemned Omar’s comments for their use of the anti-Semitic stereotype that Jews exert unequal political influence. As The Washington Post itself reported: “House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the entire Democratic leadership on Monday condemned Rep. Ilhan Omar for suggesting that Israel’s allies in American politics were motivated by money rather than principle, an extraordinary rebuke of a House freshman in the vanguard of the party’s left flank.”

In a signed statement, Pelosi and other Democrats called Omar’s “use of anti-Semitic tropes and prejudicial accusations about Israel’s supporters” deeply offensive, and insisted on an apology.

White supremacist and Holocaust denier David Duke defended Omar. So did op-eds published in The Washington Post. Decrying those who said Omar’s tweet was anti-Semitic, Duke exhorted, “The most powerful political moneybags in American politics are Zionists.” Writing for The Washington Post’s Plum Line blog, Paul Waldman wrote that Omar “has to be careful about making claims that play into stereotypes, and the stereotype about Jews using money to control the world is one of the most pernicious there is.”

According to him, Omar wasn’t anti-Semitic, but just “criticizing the relationship between the United States and Israel,” albeit in “an unfortunate way.” Accordingly, Omar “just has to be more careful about how she presents that criticism.”

The real problem, as the Post blogger sees it, is that “the whole episode reveals how insanely narrow the debate over the subject of Israel is in Washington.” The reason? AIPAC, which is really “the Likud lobby, representing the interests of the Israeli right wing.”

Another Post op-ed by Mairav Zonszein, a freelance journalist who has worked for Jewish Voice for Peace — an organization that has partnered with organizations representing Palestinian terrorist Rasmee Odeh and the ADL as a “radical anti-Israel activist group” — went even further.

Zonszein wrote that Omar’s tweet “didn’t strike me as anti-Semitic.” “By now,” she claims, “many in Washington have come to embrace a consensus that being a good American means supporting Israel — regardless of its human rights violations or democratic record.”

Yet when it comes to American support for Israel, there is a consensus. And both Waldman and Zonszein are well outside of the mainstream. The truth is less conspiratorial than they, or Omar and David Duke, would have you believe.

Many members of Congress support Israel because the majority of Americans — those they are elected to represent — support Israel. Citing a Gallup poll, the left-wing Israeli paper Haaretz reported in March 2018 that 74 percent of Americans hold a favorable view of Israel. The reasons for that support are complex and multifaceted. Among other things, Americans see a fellow democracy, with many shared values and principles, as well as a military partner and key ally in the war against Islamist terrorism.

Further, AIPAC does not give money to lawmakers — a fact that Waldman admits but Zonszein obscures. Nor is AIPAC, which doesn’t take money from the Israeli government and is explicitly bipartisian, the
romanticism and pragmatism. It is the result of shedding the aforementioned notion that the 'Palestinian question' must be resolved before establishing a modicum of normalization with Israel; and the willingness of all parties to institute deep cooperative ties – some of which is hidden from the public eye. The relative emergence of strategic cooperation between Israel and this new Palestinian national movement, these relations have been characterized by the inherent tension between the Zionist desire to return to the Jewish home, in the heart of the Middle East, and the other nations of the region. The current development could purport the erosion of the cliché that paints Israel as a "villain in the jungle" – which is meant to highlight its isolation in a hostile environment. Its fruits are already evident. For example, Qatar is playing the role of mediator between Israel and Hamas in Gaza; not to mention the overt display of partnership at the Warsaw conference.

Thus far, this sea change has mostly transpired under the veil of ambiguity. Completely lifting this ambiguity, however, could stall its progress and herald the prospects of a realistic new Middle East. The new Middle East driven by the Right still requires a policy of ambiguity.

The writer is a researcher and lecturer at Achva Academic College and a former member of the Shin Bet. (Israel Hayom Feb 19)

The Kushner Compromise? By Stephen M. Flatow

The precise details of the forthcoming Trump administration Middle East peace plan are not yet known, but the basic principle was declared by senior adviser and presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner at last week’s Warsaw conference.

“Both sides will have to make compromises,” he said.

Kushner’s statement follows numerous similar statements by American officials, including the president himself. In his Feb. 9, 2017 interview with Israel Hayom, U.S. President Donald Trump said: “I think that both sides will have to make significant compromises in order for achieving a peace deal to be possible.”

That was followed by a report in The Jerusalem Post on Feb. 20, 2018, quoting Kushner and the administration’s other top Middle East envoy, Jason Greenblatt, as saying “that both sides are going to love some of [the plan] and hate some of it. And the United States will negotiate a United Nations.”

Nikki Haley said in a Feb. 22, 2017 speech in Chicago: “The plan won’t be loved by everyone. But it won’t be hated by everyone either. And it won’t be hated by either side.”

Let’s take a closer look at what the both-sides-have-to-compromise approach means, both in principle and in practice.

In principle, the idea that Israel should have to make additional “compromises” is outrageously unfair. Since the day the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, all of the Oslo Accords have been made “compromises” to appease the Palestinian Authority:

— Israel allowed the creation of an almost-sovereign P.A. regime in 40 percent of Judea-Samaria.
— Israel has expelled all Jews from Gaza (and four Jewish communities from Samaria), leading to the establishment of a de facto Hamas state in Gaza.
— Every Israeli government has refrained from authorizing the creation of even a single new Jewish community in Judea-Samaria (except for a still-planned town to house Jewish refugees from other communities).
— Prime Minister Netanyahu froze all Jewish construction in Judea-Samaria for ten months, and has repeatedly limited Jewish construction in the territories during other periods.
— Israel has refrained from actively challenging the P.A.’s wanton violations of the accords, such as the P.A.’s refusal to disarm, outlaw and extradite terrorists.
— In exchange for all these compromises, what has Israel received? Twenty-five years of suicide bombings, rockets and flaming kites. Twenty-five years of anti-Semitic incitement. An entire generation of young Palestinian Arabs raised to hate and kill Jews. Thus, the Trump-Kushner-Greenblatt demand that Israel should now make additional “compromises” is absurdly unfair.

Now let’s consider what more “Israel compromise” will mean in practical terms.

Right now, the P.A. has total control over the cities in Judea-Samaria that contain 98 percent of the Arab population. Tulkarm is the third largest of six Palestinian cities. Qalqilya is the fifth largest. Their capitals are under Palestinian rule.

I’m singling those two out because if you look at the map, you see they are located on the far western edge of P.A. territory. They are a little more than nine miles from the Mediterranean Sea. In other words, there are just nine miles of Israel between Tulkarm and the Mediterranean Sea.

Obviously, the P.A. is never going to agree to those cities becoming part of a Palestinian state. That was followed by a report in The Jerusalem Post on Feb. 20, 2018, listing all of the Palestinian territories that would be under Palestinian rule forever. The only question is whether that will be under the current P.A. regime, or in a full-fledged “State of Palestine.”

We don’t know exactly what “Israeli compromises” the Trump plan will demand. But they obviously will involve moving closer to a Palestinian state. Because there’s nothing else left on which Israel could “compromise.” And there’s nothing else the P.A. would ever consider. Certainly, Trump and Kushner are not going to put forward a plan if there is zero chance the Palestinians will even consider it.

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Palestinian “Pay-For-Slay” Policy Will Go On, Despite Israel’s New Law. By Ruhjie Blum

The Israeli security cabinet decided on Sunday to put into effect a law passed in July to deduct half a billion shekels (approximately $138.2 million) from the annual tax revenues it transfers to the Palestinian Authority each year. The purpose of the legislation—like its precursor, the Taylor Force Act, which was approved by the U.S. Congress in May—is to coerce the P.A. to cease rewarding terrorists with hefty “pay-for-slay” stipends.

Initially, Israeli security officials opposed cutting the funds on the grounds that doing so could endanger security cooperation between Jerusalem and Ramallah, and lead to an escalation of terrorist attacks. But after 19-year-old Ori Ansbacher was raped and murdered earlier this month by a Palestinian wannabe “martyr for Allah,” public pressure on the government to crack down on the P.A. caused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to say that he would begin implementing the law to withhold funds as soon as he received the green light from the security cabinet.

“The Palestinian Authority views the approval of the decision to deduct funds as a robbery of the Palestinian people’s money and as a unilateral violation of the agreements signed between the two sides, such as the Paris agreement,” P.A. chairman Mahmoud Abbas’s spokesman Abu Rudaina said in a statement. “This decision will have dangerous consequences on all levels.”

Rudaina was referring to the 1994 Protocol on Economic Relations, part of the Oslo Accords, a peace treaty that the Palestinians have used since then as an excuse to wage war.

Inverting reality by accusing Israel of violating agreements is par for the Palestinian double standard. The P.A. has repeatedly violated the accords, and Abbas himself not only acknowledges paying terrorists for their service, but boasts about it.

In fact, when Israel passed the bill in July to withhold P.A. funds, Abbas announced: “Even if we have only a penny left, we will give it to the martyrs, the prisoners and their families. We view the prisoners and the martyrs as planets and stars in the skies of the Palestinian struggle, and they have priority in everything.”

According to a report on Monday by Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), which first revealed the exorbitant sums that the P.A. spends annually on terrorist prisoners, released prisoners and families of dead terrorists, Abbas reiterated this message in October, declaring: “I say this to everyone—the salaries of our Martyrs, prisoners, and wounded are a red line. They [Israel] try by all means, and exert pressure by all means, and they continue to exert: ‘It cannot be that you will pay.’ And they’ll even deduct our money that’s in their hands. They’ll deduct from it the amount that we pay to the Martyrs. We have said that this is a red line and we will not allow it. From 1965 until now, this matter is sacred to us. The Martyrs and their families are sacred, [and so are] the wounded and the prisoners. We must pay all of them. If one penny remains in our hands it is not even as wide as Washington, D.C., or the Bronx.”

As if this weren’t proof enough that the P.A. leader and his henchmen consider death of both Israelis and the terrorists who murder them more valuable than the lives of his people, Abbas conveyed an official message last week, through his civil affairs minister, that if Israel “deducts even one penny” from the tax revenues, he will refuse to receive any money at all.

Though this might sound like a peculiar, even childish, form of cutting off his nose to spite his face, it is actually a calculated move with two aims.

The first is to show the Palestinians that he is just as tough as his rival
terrorist counterparts in Hamas when it comes to annihilating the Jewish state. The second is to arouse international condemnation of Israel for the financial plight of the Palestinian populace. Sadly, he is likely to have greater success with the latter than the former.

Even so, he must understand the fact that we can live with or without the funds to keep P.A. civil society afloat, the terrorists will continue to be in clover. It is a no-win situation both for Israel and any Palestinian who would prefer to earn a living than die in order to do so. (JNS Feb 19)

**Anti-Semitism in Yellow Vests** By Meyer Habib

These are dark days for France, days that are giving rise to questions about the future of France's Jews.

For months, we have witnessed the Yellow Vest popular protests. The demonstrations, which began because of justified claims against the government's monetary policies, are now more based on hate. To no avail, we have been in talks with the establishment and for social justice, we are hearing shouts we never thought we would hear in the streets of Paris in 2019. Some of the yellow vest protests are based on myths and stories that wouldn't shame "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." Not a week goes by in which French President Emmanuel Macron's former work with the Rothschild Bank isn't mentioned, hinting at links between wealth, power and the Jews.

According to a recent poll, almost half of the yellow vest activists believe in an international Zionist conspiracy. I am calling on the movement to take a look at itself and reassess the situation. This is the main reason for the recent upsurge of anti-Semitic threats and graffiti. On the internet, we are witnessing a tsunami of hatred. Just as an example, I receive dozens of death threats on a daily basis. I file complaints with the police, as is my civil duty, but without results. Is it reasonable for a member of parliament to need security just because he's a Jew?

The numbers are astonishing. Figures indicate a 74% rise in anti-Semitic incidents in 2018 after a 26% rise in 2017.

Seventy-five years after the Holocaust, not much has changed. The only thing that is different is the existence of Israel - a true defense for all Jews in the Diaspora and a life insurance policy.

To a large extent, the current parliament and a Jew, I am worried mainly for France itself. Too many are unwilling to call a spade a spade when they talk about anti-Zionism. It doesn't matter if it's the Left or the extreme Right - hatred of Israel has become a calling card for those who hate Jews. The hypocrisy reaches new heights when we hear far-left parties defending the recent anti-Semitic incidents. These are the same parties that advocate boycotts of Israel and laud terrorists in street demonstrations.

All this is happening as France boycotts the Warsaw summit, which is effectively a meeting about counting Iran. Where is the logic? How can we roll out the red carpet for a regime that espouses hatred of Jews and hatred of Israel, while at the same time condemning anti-Semitism at home? Our opponents are right to worry about the rise in anti-Semitism but, paradoxically, they are trying at all costs to normalize our relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, a jihadist regime that unceasingly calls to "wipe Israel off the map" and seeks to perpetrate a second Holocaust.

The writer is a French parliamentarian who represents French citizens living in Israel and the Palestinian territories. (Israel Hayom Feb 18)

**Gantz’s Dangerous Ambiguity on West Bank Disengagement** By Gershon Hacohen

Unilateral disengagement from the West Bank, which Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced he will pursue if elected in March, is not a legal move, a decision made by the Israeli government and carried out by the IDF and the settlers in a painful, but good manner. We need to take the lessons learned and implement them elsewhere.

Leaving aside the ambiguity of these well-worn terms (e.g., most of the world views Jewish neighborhoods in eastern Jerusalem as ‘settlements’, while Israelis consider them an integral part of Israel) or the feasibility of evacuating some 140,000 Jewish residents from their homes with no Palestinian quid pro quo, Gantz’s thinking seems to be predicated on dated suppositions that have long been taken over by events.

The political and strategic precepts underlining the Oslo “peace” process, which Gantz echoes, vanished long ago. The PLO has unequivocally revealed its true colors: its total disinterest in peace, unyielding rejection of the idea of Jewish statehood, and incessant propensity for violence and terrorism. The United States, which rose to worldpower status on the basis of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the east European bloc, has largely lost this status over the past decade, while Russia has recovered much lost ground and regained a firm military and political foothold in the Middle East.

Tehran is rapidly emerging as regional hegemon, with its tentacles spreading from Iran in the west to Iraq in the south, to Lebanon and Syria in the east. It is now posing the quest for nuclear weapons continuing apace under the international radar. Even the terror groups of Hezbollah and Hamas pose a far greater threat to Israel’s national security than they did a decade ago. Under these circumstances, Israel’s withdrawal from the West Bank Area C would constitute nothing short of an existential threat.

The writer is a past member of the Knesset, has been the leading voice for removing and calling for a full withdrawal from the West Bank, and was a key member of the 2010 disengagement policy which saw the evacuation of 12 Jewish settlements. The writer is the op-ed editor of the Jerusalem Post.

Livni: The Undoing of a Flip-Flopper By Amnon Lord

The merry-go-round of Israeli politics spins like a rusty centrifuge in a secret Iranian enrichment plant.

Because of this intensity, we often forget that sometimes politics can be about long-term principles, too: loyalty, vision, the party. Heck, it can even be about ideology.

MK Tzipi Livni, who announced on Monday that she would not continue in April as Labor leader and thus deserved to be prime minister on a rotating basis, her answer was simply no, saying she won the election and thus deserved to be prime minister.

Back then, Israelis voted with two ballots - one for prime minister and one for preferred party, and only serving MKs could run for prime minister. So the law was changed to allow Netanyahu to run but he failed to form a government and called an early election.

Following the 2009 election, when her Kadima party won the most seats, she had another shot at forming a government but was bested by Netanyahu, who got the presidential mandate.

Livni’s stars suddenly aligned in 2008 when she got the parliamentary nod to form a government after then-Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced his resignation. But she failed to form a government and called an early election.

Livni has always been a flip-flopper who kept moving to the left. Unlike Netanyahu, she has always struggled to speak clearly and often missedpoke. And on Monday, when she announced her departure from politics, she once again launched an all-out offensive singularly focused on Netanyahu as the enemy of democracy.

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Following the 2009 election, when her Kadima party won the most seats, she had another shot at forming a government but was bested by Netanyahu, who got the presidential mandate.

What ultimately undid her was her refusal to strike a compromise in negotiations. As justice minister, in talks with the Palestinians, and in talks with the haredi parties after Olmert announced his resignation, she could not close the deal and simply stuck to her initial position.

Even after Netanyahu offered in 2009 that they both serve as prime minister on a rotating basis, her answer was simply no, saying she won the election and thus deserved to be prime minister.

Netanyahu offers another lesson for pundits. Two years after he was deposed from power, he was re-elected by a tremendous margin. What does this say about the quest for nuclear weapons continuing apace under the international radar? Even the terror groups of Hezbollah and Hamas pose a far greater threat to Israel’s national security than they did a decade ago. Under these circumstances, Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank Area C would constitute nothing short of an existential threat.

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Netanyahu said he decided not run because the Knesset did not dissolve, meaning that Israelis would only vote for prime minister and not
Ilhan Omar & Co. were Elected Because of Their Racism, Not In Spite of It

By Caroline Glick

Rep. Ilhan Omar is an anti-Semite and, as the actions of the congressional Democratic leadership last week made clear, hating Jews is a perfectly acceptable position in today’s Democratic Party.

Consider the chronology of events last month. Rep. Steven King (R-IA) was stripped of his committee assignments following a statement he made to the New York Times where he seemed to legitimize white supremacy. (King insists his remark was deliberately taken out of context.)

Last week, Rep. Omar tweeted another statement that was inarguably anti-Semitic. Omar argued that the only reason that Congressional Republicans seek to censure her and her colleague Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) for their anti-Jewish bigotry is because Jewish money dictates their actions.

That is, she defended herself against allegations of antisemitism by proving, yet again, that she is an anti-Semite.

The Congressional Democratic leadership responded to Omar’s statements not by censuring her, let alone stripping her of her committee assignments — including her membership on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Rather Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD), and their colleagues reacted to Omar’s presentation of further proof that she hates Jews and sees the world through the distorted lens of antisemitism by asking her to apologize.

That is, she was allowed to get away with it.

Indeed, when Omar was asked if she feared that her bigotry would cause her to be stripped of her committee assignments, she responded confidently, “Absolutely not.”

In the event, Omar issued a self-evidently fake apology, in which she effectively repeated the anti-Semitic slur that Jews dictate policy through the pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), for which she was apologizing. She then proceeded to re-tweet a post that backed up her contention that Jews control U.S. policy with their money.

What does the Democratic leadership’s decision to give her a pass for bigotry tell us about the nature of today’s Democratic Party?

Hoyer as well for Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Elliot Engel (D-NY) are strongly pro-Jewish and pro-Israel. Yet, unlike King, they have never been a foe of the Jewish state or of American Jews who support Israel and seek to secure continued bipartisan support for a strong U.S. alliance with the Middle East’s only democracy.

And yet, all of these leaders gave a pass to a woman who effectively said that American Jews should be stripped of malign and all-powerful influence over the Congress with their “Benjamins,” (which we now all know, thanks to Omar’s slur, refers to $100 bills).

What gives?

To find the answer it is necessary to look in two directions – first to former president Barack Obama’s consigliere, Valerie Jarrett. By all accounts, Jarrett is the closest person to the former president. As a practical matter, it is difficult to imagine that the views she expresses contradict those of the former president even if, from time to time, he strikes a more moderate public stance than Jarrett.

Jarrett is an outspoken supporter of Omar. In a series of tweets, Jarrett has praised Omar and her shocking statement not by condemning it, but by pushing that Omar represents the future of the Democratic Party. On January 3, when Omar was sworn into office, Jarrett tweeted, “You are the change in Congress we have been waiting for. Thank you Ilhan Omar for your willingness to jump with both feet into the arena! Many in the country are both counting on you and have your back!”

In other words, Omar – and Tlaib and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez (D-NY), whom Jarrett also supports – are the legitimate heirs of Obama’s Democratic Party, as far as he closest and most powerful advisor is concerned. They are the political radicals with no links to the party’s power structures. Omar, as well as Tlaib and Cortez, reflect the interests and positions of the most powerful faction in the Democratic Party – the Obama faction.

When seen in this light, the congressional Democratic leadership’s decision to censure Omar and Tlaib on charges of anti-Semitism and pro-Israel sentiment is no less linked to the party’s power structures. Omar, as well as Tlaib and Cortez, reflect the interests and positions of the most powerful faction in the Democratic Party – the Obama faction.

The other reason the Democratic congressional leadership may have chosen to give Omar a pass for her open hatred for Jews is found in the leadership dynamics of Jeremy Corbyn’s British Labour Party. If Corbyn and his supporters were traditional Labourites, then common sense would have it that he would have been ousted by now.

Given British Prime Minister Theresa May’s incompetent handling of the Brexit negotiations with the European Union, and the disarray of the ruling Conservative Party, a traditional Labour leader could certainly have been expected to be leading May in opinion polls.

Yet, despite May’s unpopularity in her own party and among the general public, Corbyn is sinking like a stone in opinion polls. According to the polls, her shot at Labour leadership is not even within May’s reach. That is, she defended herself against allegations of antisemitism by proving, yet again, that she is an anti-Semite.

The other reason the Democratic congressional leadership may have chosen to give Omar a pass for her open hatred for Jews is that he is “pressurable.” According to the newspaper headlining the event, “Corbyn seized the reins of the party, he and his supporters have achieved near-complete control over Labour’s party institutions. And so, Labour lawmakers are responding to the new Labour leader by attacking the party to see him replaced by a more centrist, less anti-Jewish leader feel they have no hope of winning back their party. Their demoralization, and effective disenfranchisement, within Labour’s political machine mean that despite his failure, Corbyn is likely to retain his hold on the party for the foreseeable future.

Corbyn’s iron grip on power is relevant for the Democrats because it shows that once the hard left seizes a party, it is all but impossible to dislodge it, even if the public abandons it. Many commentators have argued in recent weeks that the bigotry and socialism of the likes of Omar, Ocasio-Cortez and Tlaib are President Donald Trump’s best argument for re-election. He has to do in 2020 is point to them to make the case that the Democrats must not be allowed to return to the White House.

While there is truth to this argument, it is equally true that the new crop of Democrats are powerful not despite their radicalism and bigotry, but because of their radicalism and bigotry. Their ideological alignment with Obama’s consigliere and key donor groups and the party’s activist grassroots means that moderate Democrats lack the power to stand up to them.

Indeed, whereas Pelosi, Schumer, Hoyer and their colleagues responded to Omar’s Jew-hatred by making angry noises, the Democratic presidential candidates were mum. More significantly, the Democrats must not be allowed to return to the White House.

The implications of this state of affairs are fairly straightforward. Radical, socialist, anti-Semitic ideologues hold sway in today’s Democratic Party. That is why Pelosi gave Omar, an out-and-out Jew-hater, a pass for her open hatred for Jews and why she will not remove Omar from the committee even if Omar tweets and apologizes for anti-Jewish conspiracy theories all day and all night.

This is the reason that Ocasio Cortez may suffer no repercussions for nearly single handedly killing 25,000 jobs for New Yorkers by pushing Amazon to cancel its plan to set up its headquarters in New York City.

Similarly, aside from Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, all Democratic 2020 presidential hopefuls have endorsed Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal, despite the fact that its adoption would destroy much of the industrial base of the U.S. economy.

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