



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Palestinian consensus since 1988: a Palestinian state within 1967 lines, minimal land swaps, the cessation of settlement activity, east Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine and the return of refugees in accordance with U.N. Resolution 194 and the Arab Peace Initiative. It was another in a long line of rejectionist, to squander yet another opportunity.

Commentary...

Predictably, Abbas Misses the Mark By Reuven Berko

According to one Arab proverb, "The eye must see that which is written on one's forehead." That is to say, a person or nation's fatal mistakes can be seen in advance. The late Abba Eban, one of the country's most prominent diplomats and politicians, touched upon this with his iconic sentence: "The Palestinians have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity."

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' speech before the Palestinian Central Council in Ramallah on Sunday indicates a Palestinian trend toward confrontation with the United States and Israel. Abbas' "opening acts" were Palestinian National Council Chairman Salim Zaanun and former Hadash MK Mohammad Barakeh, head of the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee.

In their long-winded speeches, Abbas and his cohort underscored Jerusalem as the eternal "Muslim and Christian" capital of Palestine – not Jewish. They called the city "the key to peace and war" because it had always been under Palestinian control, and argued that the British never had the right to grant the city to the Jews. In their unbridled attack on the U.S. and its ambassadors in the United Nations and Israel, the Palestinian orators called for a re-examination of the Oslo Accords and recognition of Israel, voiced support for a "peaceful popular uprising," praised Palestinian prisoners and "martyrs" of Palestine and Jerusalem, and hailed the "right of return" for Palestinian refugees.

Barakeh, as the representative for the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee, Arab-Israeli local authorities and the Joint Arab List, identified with the Palestinian struggle against "Israeli fascism and apartheid," and said the 1.5 million Israeli Arabs "inside" (an insidious moniker synonymous with "Zionist entity") represent a foundational root for the Palestinian cause. In turn, Abbas derided traitorous Arab states, and the gall and extortion displayed by the Americans – whose "deal of the century instead slapped the Palestinians in the face" in contradiction to the will of the international community. According to Abbas, by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and trying to destroy the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, the Americans had lost their status as impartial mediators. The Palestinians, Abbas continued, will only meet with the Americans as part of a joint international mediation effort.

Referencing a multistage map hanging on the wall behind him, Abbas exposed himself as a professional falsifier of history – truly in the vein of the doctorate he purchased in Moscow – and laid out a protracted, fraudulent doctrine about a "historical Palestine" plundered by a global conspiracy. The Holocaust denier's swan song also included a thesis whereby the Jews have no connection to Palestine, positing that the Jews have been exploited throughout history as a tool of Western imperialism – from Oliver Cromwell in the 17th century to Napoleon, Balfour and Truman – until the disaster that befell the Palestinian people, supported by the Americans, in 1948.

In Abbas' mind, the Palestinians, who he claims are the descendants of the Canaanites, are sole heirs to the land and are defined in the Quran as "ribat" – a term for those who gather before a conquest of land in defense of Islam.

Abbas, who heads a syndicate of incitement and the greatest terrorist startup in history, refuted the claim put forth by the U.S. Congress that the PLO is a terrorist organization. How so? The Palestinians are committed to fighting terror, the PA president reasoned – while simultaneously justifying the continuation of payments to terrorists, security prisoners and "shahids" (martyrs); and then beseeched the masses to engage in an intifada of resistance. The PA president detailed the conditions for reconciliation with Hamas and lambasted senior Hamas official Mahmoud a-Zahar for his "forked tongue" and Hamas' refusal to accept the "one government, one army" idea for the Palestinians (why would they need an army?).

Abbas vowed that the Palestinians will not receive external dictates and will focus on the diplomatic struggle, which will include denouncing Israel as part of a process to spearhead U.N. resolutions predicated on the

brazen speeches, and it managed (Israel Hayom Jan 16)

Time to Impose Sanctions on the Palestinian Terror Authority

By Michael Freund

A Palestinian gunman near Nablus (Shechem) unleashed a hail of 21 bullets at an Israeli car on Tuesday – an atrocity that should prompt a thorough reassessment of how Jerusalem and Washington view the hostile entity known as the Palestinian Authority.

With the pull of a trigger, the terrorist murdered Rabbi Raziel Shevach, 35, turning his wife into a widow and his six small children – all under the age of 10 – into orphans, denying them the love of a father and destroying their innocence and childhood.

Rabbi Shevach was a mohel (trained to perform circumcisions) who in his spare time served as a volunteer medic. He committed no crime nor did he pose a threat to anyone. Shevach was a resident of Havat Gilad who was simply making his way home that night to be with his family, like men and women everywhere.

His wife will surely be haunted by his final words, uttered when he called to say he had just been shot.

And his children will grow up with a void in their lives that can never be filled.

From beginning to end the incident highlights the lethal role played by the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah. It underscores the need to impose punitive sanctions forthwith on the blood-stained regime of Mahmoud Abbas.

It is time to stop coddling Abbas and start treating the institution he heads in a manner befitting its promotion and encouragement of terrorist violence.

For months, as Palestinian Media Watch has documented, the PA and its official bodies have brazenly incited Palestinians to attack Israelis, hailing those who have done so as heroes and deliberately trying to heighten tensions on the ground.

With its constant stream of venom aimed at young and old alike, Palestinian television, radio and newspapers have become platforms for advocating violence, barbarism and brutality.

Using everything from music to visual imagery to the written word, the propagandists in Mr. Abbas's employ continue to produce an ongoing symphony of savagery that has created an environment rife with hate.

Even more telling is what Rabbi Shevach's murderer chose to do after he completed his dastardly act: He fled by car to PA-controlled Nablus, knowing full well he could find safe refuge there without fear of prosecution.

Not only does the PA foster attacks, it provides sanctuary to those who carry them out as well.

As if that weren't enough, terrorists are rewarded by the PA for spilling the blood of innocent Israelis, as recently revealed in startling new statistics.

At a Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting on Tuesday, the Defense Ministry disclosed that the PA paid out well over half a billion dollars to Palestinian terrorists and their families over the past two years. In 2016, it shelled out \$320m., while in 2017 the figure rose to \$347m.

Even more astonishing is that the PA relies on foreign aid from Europe and elsewhere, as well as on taxes and customs revenues transferred to it by Israel, for its financial survival.

After cashing the checks, the PA takes its money and doles out enormous sums to terrorists and their families, thereby signaling the priority it places on providing financial incentives for Palestinians to reach for the gun.

This moral madness must be brought to an end. Instead of indulging Abbas and those around him, serious measures must be taken without delay to punish the PA and penalize its penchant for terror.

We need to start by calling things by their true names and label the

Abbas regime “the Palestinian Terrorist Authority.”

A would-be government that goods people to violence, provides terrorists with shelter and immunity and then bestows financial gifts to them cannot and must not be considered a legitimate governing body or a possible partner for peace.

Next, it is essential that the law proposed by Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman – which would deduct the amount the PA pays to terrorists from the taxes transferred to it by Israel – be enacted as soon as possible.

Washington should also cut off aid to the Palestinians for their obstructionism and refusal to negotiate, as President Trump threatened to do earlier this month.

There is no reason for the Jewish state or American taxpayers to send money to the PA at the same time it is funneling funds to terrorists.

There has been plenty of talk over the years about such steps, but now is the time for the US and Israel to translate that talk into action.

Abbas must understand that he can no longer act with impunity while he almost literally laughs all the way to the bank.

The Palestinians will have no one but themselves to blame for the economic fallout that will follow a cutoff of funds.

The PA had a choice to make between terror and peace. Its preference is quite clear. Our resolve must be no less decisive. (Jerusalem Post Jan 14)

The Fiction that Destabilizes the Middle East By Evelyn Gordon

If I were compiling a foreign policy wish list for 2018, high on the list would be ending the fiction that Lebanon is an independent country rather than an Iranian satrapy governed by Iran’s foreign legion, Hezbollah. The Western foreign policy establishment maintains this fiction out of good intentions; it wants to protect innocent Lebanese from suffering the consequences of Hezbollah’s military provocations against its neighbors. But this policy has enabled Hezbollah to devastate several neighboring countries with impunity, and it’s paving the way to a war that will devastate Lebanon itself.

Sheltering Lebanon from the consequences of Hezbollah’s behavior is both a bipartisan and a transatlantic consensus. This was evident from the West’s wall-to-wall outrage in November, when Saudi Arabia abortively tried to end the pretense that Hezbollah doesn’t rule Lebanon by pressuring the organization’s fig leaf, Prime Minister Saad Hariri, to resign. The International Support Group for Lebanon, which includes the U.S., UN, European Union, Arab League, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, China, and Russia, issued a statement demanding that Lebanon be “shielded from tensions in the region.” The State Department’s acting assistant secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, David Satterfield, demanded that Saudi Arabia “explain why Riyadh was destabilizing Lebanon.” French President Emmanuel Macron proclaimed it vital that Lebanon remains “disassociated” from regional crises. And the list goes on.

Yet the West has shown no similar concern for shielding the many Mideast countries which Lebanon’s de facto ruling party has destabilized for years. Thousands of Hezbollah troops have fought in Syria’s civil war, helping the Assad regime to slaughter hundreds of thousands of its own citizens. Hezbollah also has troops in Yemen to support the Houthi rebels in that country’s civil war, and it may have been involved in firing missiles from Yemen at Saudi Arabia. It has trained Shi’ite militias in Iraq and fought alongside them. And, of course, it has built an arsenal of some 150,000 missiles—bigger than that of most conventional armies—for eventual use against Israel.

Granted, Hezbollah isn’t Lebanon’s official ruling party; it’s part of a coalition government led by Hariri, who actually belongs to a rival party. But not only does Hezbollah have official veto power over all government decisions, it’s also the country’s dominant military force. Hariri has no power to stop Hezbollah from sending its troops all over the region; he can’t even stop it from doing as it pleases within Lebanon itself.

One small example perfectly illustrates his impotence. In early December, Qais al-Khazali, the head of an Iraqi Shi’ite militia, was videotaped accompanying Hezbollah operatives to the Lebanese-Israeli border and proclaiming his militia’s willingness to help Hezbollah fight Israel. Hariri termed the visit a “flagrant violation” of Lebanese law and ordered the Lebanese army to make sure no such incident recurred. A few weeks later, as if to underscore Hariri’s powerlessness, Hezbollah took another senior commander from a Syrian Shi’ite militia to the border for a similar videotaped pledge. Yet despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the West has insisted on maintaining the fiction that Lebanon is somehow independent of Hezbollah rather than ruled by it. And in so doing, Western countries have actually enabled Hezbollah’s aggression.

Thanks to this fiction, the West gives hundreds of millions of dollars in both civilian and military aid to Lebanon. Civilian aid, of which the EU has provided over \$1 billion in recent years, frees Hezbollah of the need to pay for the consequences of its actions, like caring for the 1.1 million Syrian refugees its own aggression helped drive from Syria into Lebanon. American military aid, of which Lebanon is the world’s sixth-largest recipient, has given Hezbollah access to training, intelligence, equipment

and other military capabilities, since the Lebanese army shares everything it receives with the organization, whether willingly or under compulsion from Hezbollah’s greater strength.

Moreover, thanks to this fiction, the West has repeatedly watered down sanctions on Hezbollah to avoid harming Lebanon and has also repeatedly pressured other countries not to penalize Lebanon for Hezbollah’s aggression. This has allowed Hezbollah to wage its foreign wars without its own Lebanese constituency paying any price. If Hezbollah knew its own citizens would suffer for its actions, it might think twice about foreign adventurism.

But aside from destabilizing other Mideast countries, this Western policy is liable to boomerang on Lebanon itself. Serious observers currently rate another Hezbollah-Israel war as somewhere between likely and inevitable. And because Hezbollah has 150,000 rockets pointed at Israel’s civilian population, Israel would have no choice but to employ maximum force to end such a war as quickly as possible. Against a threat of that magnitude, protecting its own people would trump any international pressure for “restraint.”

The result would be massive civilian casualties, given Hezbollah’s habit of embedding troops and weapons in urban areas, as well as the destruction of Lebanese infrastructure, which Hezbollah uses to move and resupply its troops. In short, Lebanon would be devastated.

The only way to prevent such a war is to reverse the Western policies that have enabled Hezbollah to grow to its current monstrous proportions. This means exerting massive pressure on Hezbollah, even if it also hurts Lebanon. Such pressure should include targeting Hezbollah’s drug trade and sanctioning Lebanese banks that handle its finances. This might keep the organization so preoccupied with its own survival that it has no energy to spare for taking on Israel. In addition, the West must be clear that it can’t and won’t protect Lebanon if war does break out. If Hezbollah believes the West will once again intervene to shield Lebanon, it’s liable to make the mistake of thinking it can fight Israel without intolerable consequences to its own people.

Several decades of “protecting” Lebanon have only strengthened Hezbollah, and it’s folly to think more of the same will produce different results. Thus, it’s long past time to acknowledge that Lebanon is a fully-owned Iranian subsidiary and to treat it accordingly—not only for the sake of Lebanon’s neighbors but for the sake of Lebanon itself.

(CommentaryMagazine.com Jan 11)

Harnessing Anger for Smart Policy By David M. Weinberg

Anger, writes Maimonides, is a treacherous emotion to be avoided in most situations, as is hate (Codes, The Book of Knowledge, 2:3). Except when faced with evil. Then, anger is an appropriate, necessary and energizing emotion. And it is a mitzva to hate those who seek to undermine the morality of society or to destroy the nation.

In matters of defense and foreign affairs, anger can be an especially dangerous basis for policy. One hopes and expects that cooler heads will dominate government decision-making in these fields, even when facing brazen assaults on our national dignity and security.

And yet, there comes a point when one hankers for a bit more peeve in Israel’s positioning; a touch more irritation in Israel’s response to attacks on it; a little less acceptance of the inevitability of hypocrisy in the way Israel is treated by putative allies and the usual enemies alike.

Anger has served US President Trump well in shucking off some of the existing orthodoxies in Washington. His resentment of liberal elites and their conventions has driven him to upset the apple cart in ways heretofore unthinkable; and guess what, not always detrimental.

This includes Donald Trump’s rejection of the Holy Grail status of accords such as the Paris climate agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran. It includes his unwillingness to ignore North Korea’s nuclear provocations. It includes Trump’s bucking of the global diplomatic consensus not to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.

It includes his refreshing stance regarding the violability of US funding for the malevolent UN, for the funding of Palestinian forever-refugee support schemes like UNRWA, and for Palestinian pay-for-slay programs.

So, to a certain degree, annoyance at accepted wisdom can be a valuable spur to creative policy. Pique and impatience can be harnessed, one hopes intelligently, for nifty change.

Would it to be so here in Israel, too.

It is high time that the public angrily demands that both government and opposition parties put aside their internal rivalries and overcome paralyzing hyper-attentiveness to foreign criticism, and do what is necessary in order to break out of Israel’s long-standing diplomatic straight-jacket.

Partially, this means being truly open to new diplomatic initiatives coming from Washington, which I think will yet come forward (despite the current Palestinian refusal to engage in any talks that don’t promise

them everything they want in advance).

But it also means that it is no longer acceptable just to sit back and sigh that “Israel’s hands are tied” in response to terrorism and lawfare.

This is particularly true in the days following the terrorist attack in Samaria that slew Rabbi Razel Shevach, and the launch by the Palestinian Authority of yet another round of legal action against Israel in international forums. It doesn’t get the sense that Israel’s political leaders, on either side of the aisle, are truly burning with ire, and moving decisively to counter these assaults.

Doing what is needed to improve the personal security of Israelis and advance the country’s national goals should not require any apologies. Israel should act.

Primarily, this means shutting down the radical Islamic and nefarious Turkish networks operating in Jerusalem; rolling-back illegal (and EU-funded) Palestinian settlement in Area C; halting the pollution of Israeli water sources by Palestinian sewage; and acting to shore up Israel’s strategic hold on key zones in the disputed territories.

It means building massive amounts of housing for the continuing Zionist settlement project in areas that are in Israeli consensus and not up for future negotiation with the Palestinians – such as Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley and the strategic mountain ridges of Judea and Samaria. It means real building – not just announcements of intention to build – in E-1, Ma’aleh Adumim and Givat Hamatos, and in Oranit, Petzael, Ariel and Netiv Ha’avot.

Unfortunately, the government has actualized very few of its announced building plans. The de facto settlement freeze – mainly in “settlement bloc” areas where the government has solid control over tenders and permits! – is so drastic that even the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process and the Peace Now movement have each acknowledged that this government barks a lot about settlements but bites and builds very little.

It’s almost as if Israel has been lulled into a stupor by the intractable nature of the conflict with the Palestinians. No matter how many times Palestinians violate their treaty obligations and Mahmoud Abbas incites to violence by spreading lies about Israeli threats to the mosques in Jerusalem, Israelis, it seems, just settle back into the living room armchair to sigh and cluck in sadness.

And no matter how many times the international community votes to deny Israel’s patrimony in Jerusalem or fails to acknowledge Israel’s incredible contributions to global health, science and security, the government, it seems, takes it on the chin. Israel didn’t even think about withdrawing from UNESCO until Trump led the way.

You have to wonder: When will we learn to harness the vitality of anger, instead of marching in place and waiting for the next blow to land? (Jerusalem Post Jan 11)

Mahmoud Abbas, World’s Worst Historian By Rafael Medoff

A number of recent or current international leaders hold earned doctorates, in fields such as law (the president of Greece), economics (the prime minister of India) or chemistry (both the chancellor of Germany and the prime minister of Belgium). But, irony of ironies, the only world leader who holds a PhD in history has turned out to be one of the worst historians in the world: Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority. This week he demonstrated yet again why he deserves that label.

Addressing the Palestinian General Council on Sunday, Abbas said the State of Israel “is a colonial enterprise that has nothing to do with Jewishness. The Jews were used as a tool under the concept of the promised land – call it whatever you want. Everything has been made up.”

Abbas has a long record of denying Jewish history in the Holy Land. “They claim that 2,000 years ago they had a temple; I challenge the claim that this is so,” he said in August 2000. He refers to it as “the alleged Temple” (August 2012). He claims the “never-ending digging” in the city is a conspiracy by Zionist archaeologists to “vindicate the Israeli narrative [but] they have failed miserably” (February 2012).

Israelis are captives of “delusional myths,” he says, and are trying “to change Jerusalem’s landscape in every detail [in order to] invent a history” (January 2014).

If the Jews weren’t there, who were? According to Abbas, “the Palestinians have existed before Abraham” (March 2016), and their achievements include “the invention of the Canaanite-Palestinian alphabet more than 6,000 years ago” (May 2016). Remarkable accomplishments indeed, considering that the very word “Palestine” was invented by the Romans only in the 1st century CE, and there were no expressions of distinctly Palestinian Arab nationalism until the 20th century CE.

Middle East history is not Abbas’s only victim. In his 1983 PhD dissertation-turned-book, titled *The Other Side: The Secret Relations Between Nazism and the Leadership of the Zionist Movement*, Abbas asserted that David Ben-Gurion and other Zionist leaders “collaborated with Hitler” and wanted the Nazis to kill Jews, because “having more victims meant greater rights and stronger privilege to join the negotiating table for dividing the spoils of war once it was over.”

The “real” number of Jews murdered by the Nazis was “much lower” than six million and might well have been “below one million,” Abbas wrote. “Many scholars have debated the figure of six million and reached stunning conclusions – fixing the number of Jewish victims at only a few hundred thousand.”

Asked about his Holocaust writings in a January 2013 interview with a Lebanese television station, Abbas replied: “I challenge anyone to deny the relationship between Zionism and Nazism before World War II.”

He added that he has “seventy more books that I still haven’t published” that he says would prove his claims.

Nor is Abbas above misrepresenting the words of an American president. When challenged in 2014 over his refusal to recognize Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state, Abbas told *The New York Times* that his position was supported by none other than Harry S. Truman. How so? Abbas pulled out a reproduction of president Truman’s statement, in 1948, recognizing the newborn State of Israel. The Palestinian leader pointed triumphantly to the fact that the words “Jewish state” were crossed out and replaced by “State of Israel.”

The real reason for that name change had nothing to do with Truman’s opinion as to whether Israel should be a “Jewish state.”

Israel’s representatives in Washington drafted their request for US recognition before the state was proclaimed and its name known. They learned the new country’s name – via shortwave radio – just moments before handing their request to the president.

They corrected it by hand to save time.

Not that any of this is a secret; it appears in many mainstream history texts – but not the sort of books that interest Abbas very much, apparently.

How can one explain why an international statesman with a PhD in history would consistently resort to such gross distortions of the historical record? A skeptic might point to the quality of his education. Abbas earned a law degree at the University of Damascus, which is controlled by a regime with precious little regard for laws or facts. Similarly, he received his PhD from the Soviet-controlled Oriental College in Moscow, an institution whose regard for history may be measured by the fact that it approved Abbas’s Holocaust-denying dissertation.

But that would be letting Abbas off too easy. It has been four decades since he completed his dissertation. That’s more than enough time to read some genuine history books and become acquainted with basic historical facts. A more plausible explanation for his chicanery is that Abbas is well acquainted with the facts – but cynically chooses to disregard all but the ones which he can wield as weapons in his fight against Israel. (Jerusalem Post Jan 16)

The Anti-BDS Effort: Targeting the Symptoms, Not the Sickness

By Martin Sherman

“The Palestinian narrative claims that the Jews of Israel are colonialist interlopers who stole the land from the Palestinians, its rightful owners. The narrative makes no distinction between Tel Aviv and Hebron. All of Israel is a crime against the Arab world. All of Israel is illegitimate.”

— Caroline Glick, June 1, 2017.

I recently participated in a rather animated televised debate on the new English language channel, ILTV, dealing with the BDS campaign against Israel.

Given the objective time constraints of such a program, it is inevitable that one cannot fully elaborate on all the points raised in it, or adequately articulate arguments to underpin the positions taken on it. Accordingly, I should like to devote this week’s column to a more detailed, orderly and comprehensive presentation of the issues I broached in that debate.

Late last month, it was announced that the Israeli government had approved a plan to set up a fund of \$72 million to counter the ongoing international BDS campaign against Israel. According to this plan, the funds will be allocated to a yet-to-be-established not-for-profit organization whose board will be made up of government officials and donors from abroad, and which will oversee what is reportedly to be the first major “civil-society infrastructure servicing the State of Israel and the pro-Israel community in the fight against the de-legitimization of Israel.”

The planned initiative appears to signal a welcome — and long overdue — change in the hitherto dismissive attitude of Israeli officialdom towards public diplomacy and towards the pernicious effects such disregard was having not only on Israel’s international standing, but also on the predicament it created for pro-Israeli advocates abroad.

This detrimental insensitivity was starkly displayed by none other than the person who ought to have been most alive to it — Israel’s then-incumbent foreign minister, Avigdor Liberman, a few years ago, in a regrettable exchange with a young pro-Israeli activist at an international conference in New York.

During question time from the audience, Liberman was asked by a young pro-Israel undergraduate activist (Justin Hayet of Binghamton University): “What is the Foreign Ministry doing to stand with college students, like myself, to fight BDS on campus?”

Dispensing with any semblance of civility, and any expression of encouragement for the voluntary efforts of young pro-Zionist activists in defense of Israel on hostile campuses, Liberman brusquely conveyed to him that endeavors like his were essentially unnecessary, and largely a waste of time — since, according to the then-foreign minister, BDS should not be a great source of concern for Israel. (For Hayet's impassioned and dismayed response — see here)

Liberman's response was, of course, disturbing and, as I wrote back then: "it encapsulated all the misperceptions, and mismanagement that have characterized Israel's diplomatic strategy. In particular, it spotlighted the incomprehension and incompetence Israeli officialdom has displayed in the conduct of our public diplomacy, going a long way to explain Israel's growing international beleaguement."

Accordingly, the newly-announced initiative appears, overall, to be a step in the right direction, and seemingly heralds a refreshing, new awareness of the vital importance of public diplomacy in the nation's strategic arsenal.

Indeed, in some aspects it resembles — albeit on a far smaller scale — measures I have long advocated.

Almost half a decade ago, I called for setting up an extra-ministerial "national authority for the conduct of strategic diplomacy" which would "interface with Zionist NGOs and help finance their pro-Israel activities, enhance their impact and expand their reach — as a counterweight to the massive funding that post- and anti-Zionist NGOs receive from foreign governments."

Moreover, given the strategic importance and urgency of enhancing Israel's public diplomacy performance, I urged assigning 1% of the state budget (then \$1 billion, now considerably more) for this purpose annually — far more (almost ten-fold!) than the budget planned for the newly envisaged entity.

In broad brush strokes, I set out the kind of activities, with which this strategic diplomacy authority would be tasked, and for which the prescribed budget would be utilized.

- Its activities would be assertively offensive, geared to uncompromisingly attacking and exposing the mendacious and malicious nature of Israel's adversaries — a necessary condition for international understanding of Israel's policy imperatives.
- Its staff would not be professional diplomats but articulate and committed intellectual ideologues, neither bound by the constraints of diplomatic protocol nor versed in the niceties of diplomatic etiquette but rather adept in the mechanism of mass media, cyberspace and social networks (see my "Intellectual warriors, not slicker diplomats").
- Their task would not be to interact with foreign counterparts but to wage diplomatic warfare, at home and abroad, with a \$1 billion budget at their disposal to saturate the web with polished, professional Zionist content — on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and by means of full-page "infomercials" in the leading printed media."

In this, there is a fair amount of overlap between my prescription and the reportedly planned operation of the nascent anti-BDS non-profit initiative.

There are, however, some important differences — apart from those of scale — between the two proposals. These relate to substantive issues of scope, focus and ongoing proactivity.

According to press reports, the creators of the planned entity envisage it operating on "a regular basis to counter pressure applied to artists, performers and commercial enterprises not to engage with Israel. But it would shift into high gear at sensitive periods such as fighting, waves of terrorist attacks, and anti-Israel votes at international forums."

Clearly, then, it would appear that the nature of the planned operation will be essentially reactive, rather than proactive, designed almost exclusively to deal with — i.e. rebuff, negate, discredit — BDS-related attacks against Israel, with the level of intensity of such activities determined by largely exogenous events such as hostile military or diplomatic offensives against Israel.

These are grave shortcomings, which are liable to seriously undercut the efficacy of the prospective initiative — for two different, but interrelated, reasons, the one substantive, the other methodological.

The first of these relates to the restriction of the focus to BDS related activity. In many ways, this is like focusing on the symptoms of an illness, rather than on its origins, in search of a remedy. Sadly, it is likely to be just as ineffective.

For what is crucial to realize is that, in essence, BDS is not an attempt to delegitimize Israel, but rather a product of Israel's delegitimization. In other words, it is a consequence, rather than a cause of that delegitimization.

On reflection, this should be an almost self-evident truth. After all, if Israel was perceived internationally as legitimate, anything remotely resembling the BDS campaign against it would be inconceivable.

Accordingly, without contending with the underlying sources of the delegitimization of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, there is little hope of effectively stifling the impulses that give rise to phenomena such as the BDS movement.

In this regard, it is crucial to grasp two things:

The first is, as Caroline Glick alludes to in the introductory excerpt above, the Palestinian narrative and the Zionist narrative are, for all intents and purposes, inconsistent with each other. In other words, they are mutually exclusive narratives.

Accordingly, enhancing the legitimacy of one necessarily implies undermining the legitimacy of the other. (For a more detailed elaboration of this matter see "Deciphering delegitimization".)

The second is that it is the Palestinian narrative, and its perceived legitimacy that underpins the legitimacy of the claim for Palestinian statehood. In other words, undermining the legitimacy of the Palestinian narrative undermines the validity of the claim for Palestinian statehood.

Thus, as I have argued elsewhere, "for the notion of a secure Israel [as the nation-state of the Jews] to regain legitimacy, the notion of a Palestinian state must be discredited and removed from the discourse as a possible means of resolving the Israeli-Arab conflict."

But the converse is also true: As long as the Palestinian narrative is perceived as legitimate — and, hence, the claim for Palestinian statehood is seen as valid — the legitimacy of a secure Israel will always be challenged — and hence vulnerable to measures that arise from that challenge, such as the BDS campaign.

For those who find this too disturbingly adversarial to accept, I would refer them to an article authored by Omar Dajani and Ezzedine Fishere, published in the prestigious "Foreign Affairs" and entitled "The Myth of Defensible Borders." In it, the authors — an adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team and an adviser to the then-Egyptian foreign minister, respectively — write, not without significant justification: "A policy of defensible borders would... perpetuate the current sources of Palestinian insecurity, further delegitimizing an agreement in the public's eyes."

They therefore conclude "... Palestinians are likely to regard defensible borders as little more than occupation by another name."

Consequently, for any settlement to be perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the Palestinian public, Israel must resign itself to being indefensible — as claims for it to be defensible (i.e. viable) would delegitimize it as an occupier.

Thus, as I pointed out in "The political algorithms of the Arab Israeli conflict," there is a chain of algorithmic-like reasoning, which inexorably demonstrates that Israel's acceptance of the legitimacy of Palestinian national claims has, in effect, laid the foundations for the assault on its own legitimacy.

The architects of any anti-BDS enterprise will ignore this reasoning at the peril of fatally undermining the success of their endeavor.

For as long as the Palestinian-Arabs are perceived as having a legitimate claim to statehood, any counterclaim by Israel to ensure its viability will be perceived as thwarting that claim — thereby, ipso facto, delegitimizing such counterclaims — and, hence, exposing the very legitimacy of the notion of a viable Israel to attack — such as the BDS initiative.

Accordingly, just as focusing on reducing the temperature of a patient suffering from a severe infection will not cure that infection, so focusing on BDS will not remedy the delegitimization drive against Israel. Just as the source of the infection must be diagnosed and treated, so must the sources of the delegitimization of Israel.

Clearly then, if the Palestinian narrative is diagnosed as the source of the delegitimization of the Zionist narrative, then the re-legitimization of the latter calls for the delegitimization of the former. No amount of politically-correct gobbledygook, decrying such a stark "zero-sum" assessment, can obscure this inconvenient, but inevitable, conclusion.

The operational implications of this are clear.

The BDS campaign is not — and cannot — be treated as a "stand alone" problem. To eradicate it, one must eradicate its root causes — and since the roots of BDS sprout from the delegitimization of the Zionist narrative, the causes of this delegitimization must be eradicated. However, as the delegitimization of the Zionist narrative can be traced to the legitimization of the incompatible, mutually exclusive Palestinian narrative, the unavoidable imperative is that for any anti-BDS initiative to be successful in the long run, it must focus efforts on the discrediting and delegitimizing of the Palestinian narrative.

Expose mendacious myths underpinning a fallacious narrative

Accordingly, any successful long term anti-BDS strategy cannot confine itself to responding to manifestations of anti-Israel calls for boycotts, sanctions or divestment — however infuriating these might be, and however telling such responses may be.

It must go on a genuine, proactive offensive against the primary sources of those calls—by resolutely and relentlessly exposing the mendacious myths that underpin the fallacious Palestinian narrative, while highlighting how these contrast with the fact-based foundations of the Zionist narrative.

After all, if the Palestinian narrative is discredited and delegitimized, who would want to instigate boycotts, sanctions or divestments in order to endorse or promote it? (Algemeiner Jan 12)