



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*

will do it for them. Third, Israel should publicly declare its refusal to accept that tens of thousands of missiles are aimed at its cities and villages. Fourth, it should embark on an international diplomatic campaign to explain that because

Iran and its satellite states use civilian populations as human shields, they will bear sole responsibility for any harm to these populations as a result of Israel's need to defend itself. (Israel Hayom Nov 18)

Commentary...

Restore Israeli Deterrence Now By Michael Oren

Alongside the joy over the progress made in procuring a coronavirus vaccine, we must not neglect the vaccine for threats that in the long run could prove more destructive than the pandemic. We must learn the lessons of the past—whether it be the Cuba missile crisis or the 1967 Six-Day War—and implement them as soon as possible. Although it may be difficult to talk about security responsibilities with the coronavirus crisis in the background, that's what leadership is for.

On Jan. 20, a new U.S. president, Democrat Joe Biden, will be sworn into office, and in Israel, a debate on whether we have taken full advantage of the past four years under the previous administration will commence. While it is true that we have seen historical gestures made in Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and Judea and Samaria, might we also have received President Donald Trump's administration's unreserved support for the removal of strategic threats to the state, including those along our borders?

The Trump administration was willing to grant us, without hesitation, the three types of assistance vital in times of war: the provision of ammunition, diplomatic and legal defense at the United Nations and other international institutions, and economic and diplomatic support the day after. It is doubtful we will be able to get all three types of assistance from the incoming administration, or that what we do get we will receive to the same extent. It is clear that our enemies also recognize this fact and are capable of reaching their own conclusions based upon it. That is why we must act openly and with determination to prove to them that they cannot profit from this situation, and are liable to pay a high price for any attempt to take advantage of it.

Israel's power of deterrence has been harmed in recent years despite widespread Israeli military activity in Syria and even reported covert operations in Iran. In 2019, an attack tunnel dug by Hezbollah under the northern border was discovered, something that would have justified the launching of a war, yet Israel did nothing in response. Hamas fired missiles at millions of Israel's residents in the south, and Israel responded in a purely symbolic manner. At the last United Nations General Assembly, Israel presented conclusive evidence Hezbollah was manufacturing precision-guided long-range missiles in underground factories in the heart of Beirut. It seems Israel has hung its hopes on U.N. involvement in the matter because we seem to not be doing anything else about it. The message that has been sent is not one of power but of weakness.

At the same time, Israel is coming to terms with the presence of 150,000 missiles in southern Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. In 1962, then-U.S. President John F. Kennedy expressed a willingness to launch a nuclear war to prevent the deployment of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Five years later, Israel embarked on a preventive war to maintain deterrence. Then-Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, together with IDF Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin, came to the conclusion that if Israel did not fend off the forces coming together around it, Arab leaders would interpret this as Israel being scared and vulnerable. The result was an absolute victory for Israel and for the strategic alliance between it and the United States, which was deeply impressed by the result of the war.

Obviously, the use of military force is not the solution to every problem or the correct response to every threat. It also certainly entails a price to be paid by Israeli citizens and soldiers. There is a place for diplomacy and negotiation in instances where these means can be effective, but in situations where there is no room for negotiation, we must not create the impression of hesitation. A country that hesitates to defend itself only invites greater aggression.

Before a new U.S. administration enters the White House, Israel must immediately take four steps to bolster its security and establish its defense: First, it must adopt a "no rocket, no tunnel" policy and commit to responding with massive force every time there is a violation of this principle. Second, it must issue an ultimatum to Lebanon that if it does not act to close these missile factories, Israel

The Never-Ending 'Struggle for Palestine' By Asaf Romirowsky

In his 1974 book *Palestinians and Israel*, the late Yehoshafat Harkabi wrote that following the Six-Day War:

"The collision with the Palestinians is presented as the essence of the conflict, for this is allegedly a struggle for national liberation. Arabs explain, especially to foreigners, that the antagonism is not that of large Arab states versus a small state like Israel but of an oppressed people against a strong, colonialist oppressive state. ... The focus of the conflict has shifted. It is not between states but between a government and a people struggling for its liberation, which by definition is a just war that deserves support."

Over the years, the struggle became not only just but even divine.

A binary understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict has dominated thinking for decades. The conflict is presumed to be unsolvable as it is caught between demands for Israel's total destruction and the inevitability of Arab-Palestinian exile and political oblivion.

But the paradigm may have shifted following the Abraham Accords and Israel's normalization with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan. Even the Saudis have noticed the change, as illustrated by a recent statement by the former director-general of the Saudi Intelligence Agency, Prince Bandar bin Sultan Al Saud. He openly criticized Palestinian leaders with these words:

"The Palestinian cause is a just cause but its advocates are failures, and the Israeli cause is unjust but its advocates have proven to be successful. There is something that successive Palestinian leadership historically share in common: they always bet on the losing side, and that comes at a price."

This damning statement from a traditional Palestinian ally raises the question of the Palestinian endgame and, more importantly, the centrality of—and fatigue with—the Palestinian struggle in the Arab world.

Historically, the Palestinian cause was the glue that kept that Arab world united in animus towards the Zionist entity and its presumed threat. Throughout his career, Yasser Arafat's ultimate goal was to make the Palestinian issue the flagship cause of the Arab world, which, he argued, should not rest until the Palestinians received the justice they are divinely owed.

Arafat was largely successful in this regard—though not necessarily to the benefit of the Palestinian people, who were used by many Arab regimes and Islamist groups as a tool with which to galvanize support for their own causes. Arafat was the walking symbol of the Palestinian cause, but since his death, the Palestinian leadership has struggled to keep the cause front and center.

So long as the glue was sticking across the Arab world, the PLO's 1974 Phased Plan remained intact:

- Through the "armed struggle" (i.e., terrorism) to establish an "independent combatant national authority" over any territory that is "liberated" from Israeli rule (Article 2).
- To continue the struggle against Israel, using the territory of the national authority as a base of operations (Article 4).
- To provoke an all-out war in which Israel's Arab neighbors destroy it entirely ("liberate all Palestinian territory") (Article 8).

The plan was feasible only as long as all roads to peace went through Ramallah. It allowed Israelis to be convinced that peace was at hand, and allowed Arafat and then his successor, Mahmoud Abbas, to sell the "struggle for peace" to the Palestinian people knowing full well that they believed the end result would be a one-state solution. As always, self-delusion and deception go hand in hand.

But what happens when the Palestinian cause loses its grip on the Arab street?

Israeli journalist Ehud Yaari correctly observed that a "concept which was destroyed by the intifada is what is called in Arabic

‘istiqlaliyat al-Qarar al-falastini,’” which means the complete and total independence of Palestinian decision-making on issues relating to Palestine. A companion Palestinian slogan was “no Arab wisayah,” which translates to “no Arab patronage, sponsorship, interference, or intervention.”

When Arafat began his political career in the 1950s, he ran on these catchphrases, denouncing the Arab world for betraying the Palestinians in 1948. This became the core of the Fatah movement.

The PLO’s basic strategy was in line with Abu Iyad’s (Salah Mesbah Khalaf, PLO deputy chief and head of intelligence under Arafat) 1971 statement that it had “no right” to negotiate a settlement but must keep struggling, “even if they cannot liberate a single inch,” to preserve the option to regain all of Palestine someday. In 1984, he still thought so: “Our steadfastness and our adherence to our land is our only card. ... We would rather be frozen for 10 more years than move toward treason.”

Abu Iyad further believed that a PLO victory would bring a revolution and transformation to the Palestinians, saying, “The struggle itself was transforming Palestinians from ‘poor helpless refugees’ into heroic combatants.”

In short, the struggle is the endgame.

Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz summed up armed struggle this way:

“If one side cannot completely disarm the other, the desire for peace on either side will rise and fall with the probability of further successes and the amount of effort these would require. If such incentives were of equal strength on both sides, the two would resolve their political disputes by meeting halfway. If the incentive grows on one side, it should diminish on the other. Peace will result so long as their sum total is sufficient—though the side that feels the lesser urge for peace will naturally get the better bargain.”

Clausewitz’s last point is the key. While each party must feel equally rewarded by peace, in the Palestinian case it will be a zero-sum game for as long as the struggle remains more attractive than the alternative. (BESA Nov 17)

Trump’s Vital Parting Lesson to Israel By Eyal Zisser

Although the media has hastily eulogized U.S. President Donald Trump, he still has two more months in the White House, and it’s hard to imagine him letting them pass by without trying to leave one last mark. This pertains in particular to the Middle East, where his administration has notched more successes than anywhere else in the world.

Alongside advancing the peace process between Israel and the Arab world, Trump intensified pressure on members of the “axis of evil,” Iran, Syria and Hezbollah, and brought them to the verge of economic collapse. Contrary to the advice from the experts and the policies of his predecessors, Trump adopted the dictum that “whatever can’t be achieved by force, can be achieved by more force,” thus forcing America’s enemies to backpedal.

In his final days in office, therefore, Trump can advance a series of measures that will determine his legacy in the region and shape the long-term face of the Middle East, perhaps beyond 2024 when he can again vie for the presidency.

Beyond getting more Arab countries to sign peace treaties with Israel, Trump could promote unilateral moves in the Palestinian arena, which would create facts on the ground and make it easier for the Jews and Arabs of the Land of Israel to make peace down the road. American recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the large settlement blocs, or taking the Palestinian refugees’ “right of return” off the table, would be consistent with the moves he’s already made and position the region, even at the Palestinians’ chagrin, at a more convenient and realistic starting point for achieving a real peace.

Trump could also amplify the already devastating pressure on Iran, Syria and Hezbollah in a way that would bury Iran’s machinations even deeper. After all, in one fell swoop—the assassination of Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani a year ago—Trump struck a serious blow to Iran’s capabilities. He needn’t shy away, therefore, from harsh measures that will devastate Iran and its allies and neutralize, even for just a few years, their ability to inflict damage on others.

It’s possible, however, that Trump’s most significant contribution to Israel upon his departure is forcing it to revert to and strengthen the foundational principle of Israel’s foreign affairs and defense policy, whereby “Israel can and must rely only on itself.”

Washington was and will continue to be Israel’s closest friend and

ally, but it was President Trump who openly stated what Americans believe in their hearts: We give Israel generous economic assistance so that it can defend itself and won’t need American soldiers to fight on its behalf. Indeed, we all know that when the moment of truth comes, Israel will only have itself and its capabilities to rely on.

This is an important lesson for Israel, coincidentally delivered by such a friendly administration. Ultimately, the Americans have their own interests and considerations, which will always come before Israel’s interests. There’s also a difference between friendship and even reliance. It was former Prime Minister Menachem Begin who said, at the height of a severe disagreement with the Reagan administration, which was unquestionably friendly to Israel in its own right, that Israel cannot become a vassal state that blindly acquiesces to Washington’s every dictate, and must pursue its own interests even if it means “fighting with friends” in the United States.

(Israel Hayom Nov17)

Assassination of Senior Al-Qaeda Leader is Clear Message to Iran By Yoav Limor

One key question surrounding the assassination of senior Al-Qaeda leader Abdullah Ahmed Abdullah still remains: Why was the incident divulged only now?

There’s no doubt that the New York Times story was intentionally leaked. The report is replete with accurate details, meant to negate Iran’s and Al-Qaeda’s denials in advance. Whoever relayed the information wanted not only to shed light on an assassination carried out in the shadows but to send a message that would reverberate throughout the entire Middle East.

This message was meant for numerous entities. For Al-Qaeda, of course, which lost yet another senior leader, and on the 22nd anniversary of the terrorist bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which he helped plan. It was meant for Iran, which was exposed as harboring a leader of an organization that is supposed to be its bitter ideological and religious enemy. And it also sent the message to all other extremist actors in the region that the United States and Israel, regardless of their coronavirus and domestic political problems, will continue working together in the war on terror.

According to foreign reports, this level of cooperation between the two countries is not unusual and has been evidenced many times in the past. The relationship between the Mossad and IDF Military Intelligence Directorate and their American counterparts is a deep one. It entails the sharing of intelligence information, and for the past 15 years, operational intelligence as well. Two of the most prominent examples are thought to have been “Operation Olympic Games,” in which the Stuxnet computer worm disrupted Iran’s uranium enrichment efforts for many months, and the assassination of former Hezbollah military leader Imad Mughniyeh in Damascus in 2008.

This type of cooperation, it appears, can be attributed to Abdullah’s case as well. It seems the Americans provided the intelligence and the Mossad carried out the operation, possibly indicating the Americans lack sufficient operational infrastructure in Iran. Even the U.S. assassination of Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani in January was carried out in Iraq.

The Mossad, on the other hand, has proven over the past decade (based on foreign reports) to possess impressive operational capabilities on Iranian soil—from the assassination of several Iranian nuclear scientists to the explosion that rocked the centrifuge facility in Natanz last June. In all these cases, the Mossad was said to have employed the services of others. This is a customary mode of operation in the world of espionage, which the Mossad likely practices as well in order to protect its agents as much as possible.

Yet still, the Mossad’s involvement in Abdullah’s assassination shouldn’t be seen as a given. While Abdullah—whose alias was Abu Mohammed al-Masri—did plan attacks against Israeli targets in Kenya in 2002, Israel’s declared policy is that assassinations are only a means for preventing future attacks, not exacting vengeance. Although Israeli officials have claimed Abdullah was busy planning attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets across the globe, it isn’t very likely considering the fact that Al-Qaeda—which for years now has struggled to carry out high-profile attacks—is focusing its efforts on fighting the Americans and moderate Sunni regimes in the region, not Israel.

It’s more reasonable to assume that Israel lent a hand to its most important ally (despite concerns that doing so would make it a target of Al-Qaeda). There is clear operational value in this, but also

considerable deterrence value. Toward Al-Qaeda, obviously, but mainly toward Iran, which understands it is again penetrated and is under the crosshairs of the Israelis and Americans. This message should not be underestimated: Iran is mulling its nuclear options and must know this comes with zero tolerance.

Regardless, Iran isn't likely to alter course. The clear takeaway is that the Middle East is largely motivated by interests, rather than ideology. Iran, which is fighting Al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria, was hosting one of the organization's most senior figures because he served its interest by fighting the Americans in Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda, too, won't alter course. Al-Masri is not the organization's first senior member to be assassinated, and won't be the last. In recent years, his symbolic importance outweighed his operational importance, and he belonged to the gradually vanishing founding generation. A new and younger operational leadership has sprouted in its place, operating under the patronage of the organization's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, whose health and whereabouts are in question. It's safe to assume that officials in Washington (and perhaps in Jerusalem as well) would be glad to add his name to al-Masri's as soon as possible. (Israel Hayom Nov 15)

The Usual Suspects against Jewish Construction in Jerusalem

By Ruthie Blum

A good way to evaluate a policy is by examining the identity of its critics. The controversy surrounding the tenders issued on Sunday by the Israel Lands Authority for the construction of 1,257 new housing units in the southeastern Jerusalem neighborhood of Givat Hamatos is a perfect case in point.

Outrage at the building plan, which has been in the works for six years, was swift to emerge from the usual suspects: the Israeli NGO Peace Now, the Palestinian Authority, the European Union and the United Nations. It's basically all one needs to know before forming an opinion about the move.

Let's begin with Peace Now. In September 2014, the organization that serves as a kind of settlement watchdog—growling and barking about every balcony added to an apartment in an area of the Jewish state that they deem “illegally occupied”—alerted fellow Israel-bashers across the ocean to the fact that the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee had approved the construction of homes in Givat Hamatos.

Never mind that the neighborhood, originally filled with caravans for the housing of new immigrants from Ethiopia, is outside the so-called Green Line.

Forget that the plan includes a phase of the construction of Arab housing on private lands belonging to the nearby Palestinian town of Beit Safafa.

Disregard the shortage of land available for Jewish housing in Jerusalem—a situation that has caused a hike in rent and purchase prices, as well as an exodus from the Israeli capital.

None of the above prevented the administration of then-U.S. President Barack Obama from throwing a fit at the end of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Oct. 1 visit to the White House.

Though the purpose of the meeting between Netanyahu and Obama (in the presence of then-U.S. Vice President Joe Biden) had been to discuss Iran and ISIS, it was upstaged by reports in the Israeli media, courtesy of Peace Now, about—gasp—apartments slated for Givat Hamatos.

In a briefing with reporters, then-U.S. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki called the plan “contrary to Israel's stated goal of negotiating a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians,” and said that it “will only draw condemnation from the international community; distance Israel from even its closest allies; poison the atmosphere not only with the Palestinians, but also with the very Arab governments with which Prime Minister Netanyahu said he wanted to build relations; and call into question Israel's ultimate commitment to a peaceful negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.”

Netanyahu was miffed. “I think [the Obama administration] should be acquainted with the facts first,” he told NBC News at the time. “You know? First of all, these are not settlements. These are neighborhoods of Jerusalem. We have Arab neighborhoods, and we have Jewish neighborhoods.”

Nevertheless, he put the plan on hold. In February of this year, he announced that it would be going forward. Once again, Peace Now pounced.

“Construction in Givat Hamatos is a serious blow to the two-state solution,” the NGO declared. “This is the last point enabling territorial

continuity between Bethlehem and East Jerusalem. A transitional government has no mandate to take such a far-reaching policy change. Netanyahu and [U.S. President Donald] Trump claim to have advanced a ‘peace plan,’ but Netanyahu's actions, including promoting this expansion, are clear proof that he is doing everything to prevent peace and a resolution to the conflict.”

This statement is now more laughable than ever, given Israel's recent signing of the Trump-brokered Abraham Accords with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain and normalization agreement with Sudan. Naturally, these agreements didn't stop Peace Now from reacting to the release of the Givat Hamatos tenders by accusing Netanyahu of “taking advantage of the final weeks of the Trump administration in order to set facts on the ground that will be exceedingly hard to undo in order to achieve peace.”

What the anti-Netanyahu, anti-Trump NGO really means by this, however, is that the above Mideast treaties expose P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas and his henchmen—in the words of UAE official Dirar Belhoul al-Falasi—as “small-time hucksters” who “don't care about ordinary Palestinians.”

Still, Abbas maintains the charade that has served him in such good stead with his left-wing Western apologists. Responding to the Givat Hamatos tenders, his spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, reiterated the tired mantra about settlements being illegal and part of Israel's efforts “to kill the internationally backed two-state solution.”

E.U. foreign-policy chief Josep Borrell also weighed in, stating: “[Givat Hamatos] is a key location between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. Any settlement construction will cause serious damage to the prospects for a viable and contiguous Palestinian state.”

And then there's U.N. Special Coordinator Nickolay Mladenov, who said, “If built, [Givat Hamatos] would further consolidate a ring of settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank. It would significantly damage prospects for a future contiguous Palestinian state and for achieving a negotiated two-state solution based on the 1967 lines, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states. Settlement construction is illegal under international law and I call on the authorities to reverse this step.”

As Netanyahu clarified the last time he was rebuked over this issue, Givat Hamatos is not a settlement; it is a Jewish neighborhood in Israel's capital city. Furthermore, the Trump administration not only officially recognized Jerusalem as such—and moved the U.S. embassy there from Tel Aviv—but U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared last November that settlements are not “inconsistent with international law.”

Pompeo, as it happens, is in Paris, on the first leg of a seven-nation, 10-day trip to Europe and the Middle East. After leaving France, he is scheduled to visit Turkey, Georgia and Israel, before heading to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar.

When in Israel, he will reportedly tour the Golan Heights, as well as Judea and Samaria. This should serve as a reminder of two things: that the United States under Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the former, and only requested that Netanyahu postpone extending sovereignty over the latter to make it easier for the Gulf and other Muslim-majority states to jump on the peace bandwagon.

Naturally, Palestinian officials are livid with their Arab brethren for normalizing ties with Israel. They are also furious about Pompeo's upcoming visit to Judea and Samaria.

On Friday, P.A. Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh tweeted: “We deplore ... Pompeo's intent to visit the illegal settlement of Psagot, built on lands belonging to Palestinian owners in Al-Bireh city, during his visit to Israel next week. This dangerous precedent legalizes settlements and a blow to international legitimacy/U.N. resolutions.”

On Monday, he added, “We call upon the international community's members to reject Pompeo's visit and impose a total ban on Israeli settlement products. The Palestinian government will take every possible legal measure against any companies or investors in Israeli settlements.”

Anyone unsure about the justification for new housing units in Givat Hamatos need only note the choir of voices denouncing the plan. Indeed, nothing points to the legitimacy of the move better than the diatribes of Peace Now, the P.A., the E.U. and the U.N.

(JNS Nov 17)

How should Netanyahu Approach the New Biden Administration?

By Eric R. Mandel

In the winter of 2015, one of Israel's most senior security cabinet officials asked me what advice should he give to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in regard to Speaker of the House John Boehner's invitation to speak before the U.S. Congress, laying out his case of why the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, was a "bad deal" for both Israel and the United States. My answer surprised him. I told him not to accept the invitation, but to wait a few months until the Israeli election was concluded. I learned later that Netanyahu's former Ambassador Michael Oren also told him to decline the invitation. This is in contrast to Israel's ambassador at the time, Ron Dermer, who incensed the Obama administration as the one who "orchestrated the invitation" and wrote much of the speech.

Why is this history relevant for Netanyahu in 2020? There is an analogy to today. He is likely to create conditions in 2021 for a new election to avoid handing over power as promised to Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Benny Gantz. The Biden administration would likely be negotiating with Iran, once again at a time when Netanyahu's hold on the leadership of Israel is in doubt, as it was in 2014. This should be kept in mind by the Israeli prime minister before he has his first meeting with the Biden people, and strategizes how he should approach the new administration.

The 2014 visit to Congress was ill-timed, coming before an Israeli election later that spring. If Netanyahu won and formed a coalition, he could then have come later in the spring with a stronger mandate as the newly re-elected leader of Israel with a better chance not to throw kerosene into the fire of American politics. Any newly elected Israeli leader would naturally have asked to come to speak to U.S. leadership. If an audience with the president were denied, it would have been seen by much of the American public as petty politics on the part of the Obama administration. According to an NBC poll at the time, 68 percent of Americans "believed Iran was not going to abide by the nuclear agreement."

I was and still am a strong critic of the JCPOA, believing that it undermines American and Israeli security interests, being both dangerous and unprecedented in giving a nation on our terror list the right to enrich uranium. Yet knowing all of that, I still told my Israeli friend to try and dissuade Netanyahu from coming to Congress in 2014, even though I knew that Obama and his team had completely misled the Israelis, keeping them in the dark about the secret negotiations despite assurances that they would be kept in the loop, knowing the JCPOA was an existential issue for Israel's survival.

Although some blame the frosty relationship between Obama and Netanyahu for his administration's actions, most think that U.S. Vice President Joe Biden's relationship with the Israeli prime minister was always warmer. However, we don't really know whether Biden will prove more sympathetic to Israeli interests than Obama was. We do know that he fully supported the JCPOA and was aware of the behind-the-scenes maneuvers to keep the Israelis in the dark.

The Obama administration policy from 2009 on was to create "daylight" between Israel and the United States, and to move closer to the Iranians. Keep in mind it was Biden who told the General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America, "Bibi, I don't agree with a damn thing that you say, but I love ya." That was 2014—the same year that the administration was secretly negotiating with Iran. So with act two of the JCPOA about to preview, it would behoove Israel and its supporters to review all of the history, mistakes and consequences related to the nuclear agreement.

In 2014, I spoke with the foreign-policy advisers of the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressing my concern that they were being outmaneuvered by the Obama administration, which was cleverly creating a backdoor pathway for Senate approval of the agreement with only a minority of the Senate in favor of the deal. I emphasized that the JCPOA rose to the level of a treaty and should be submitted to the Senate as such, which would require 60 senators to vote in favor of its passage, as it was the most significant American foreign-policy commitment of the 21st century. In the end, the Obama administration brilliantly outmaneuvered the Republican leadership and was able to advance the agreement with something akin to an executive order, with only 42 senators in favor. The next year I was told by that same Senate office that when Europeans came to visit Washington, they were astonished that the JCPOA was not passed as a treaty.

If President-elect Biden re-enters the JCPOA or renegotiates a new agreement, will the 2021 Republican Senate try to weigh in? Will

Netanyahu try a new approach, having learned the lessons of interfering in American politics? Biden promises to re-enter the deal in his first few months, so time will be of the essence.

The Obama administration took its revenge for the Netanyahu speech before Congress, when a year-and-a-half later, in December 2016, the United States orchestrated the passage of UNSC Resolution 2334, labeling any Israeli presence over the 1949 armistice line (1967 line or Green Line) an international crime and upending the UNSC Resolution 242, the keystone document that previously acknowledged that Israel was never supposed to return to the indefensible borders of 1967.

So how should Netanyahu approach dealing with Biden, knowing he wants to restart the JCPOA in a few months' time and wants to fulfill his campaign promise to reopen the PLO mission in Washington, the U.S. Consulate in eastern Jerusalem for Palestinian use, and restore some funding to the Palestinians, even if they have to ignore the Taylor Force Law denying American funding to a Palestinian Authority that rewards and incentivizes terrorism?

The two leaders know each other very well. They also have clashed with each other for years over settlement building, most recently when mid-level Israeli officials announced settlement building during a Biden visit to Israel, embarrassing the vice president, who choose to publicly lash out at Netanyahu despite the prime minister's apology.

Unlike the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump, which not only saw eye to eye with him on almost every issue—with tangible actions ranging from the U.S. embassy move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, to acknowledging that Israeli settlements do not break international law—Biden and his advisers want to promote a more balanced narrative and promote the aggrieved party of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They could, if challenged by the Israeli government, even choose to join the international community in boycotting Israeli goods from the West Bank (Judea and Samaria).

Netanyahu needs to prioritize his goals before engaging with the new administration. There is no doubt that the nuclear deal is the No. 1 issue on Israel's plate, and there are rumors that the new administration, unlike the Obama one, will actually listen to Israeli suggestions for a new nuclear deal.

The Israeli prime minister's highest priority is to emphasize to Biden that he shouldn't rush to rejoin the flawed deal without significant changes to the agreement, as many of its provisions will sunset in less than five years. He must convince Biden that the United States has new leverage with the Trump sanctions in place, which have caused the Iranian economy to be under tremendous strain. The revolutionary regime's first goal is to stay in power, and it worries about a rebellion from within. This is a great American advantage for negotiations if it is appreciated, as it could force the ayatollah and his minions back to the table.

"Patience, patience, patience with Iran" should be the bywords for the Biden administration, along with the willingness to leave negotiations if the regime's leaders don't meet the minimum threshold to truly end the Iranian nuclear program forever.

Netanyahu's second goal is to continue the normalization process with the Arab world. Getting the Biden administration to prioritize this early on when there is still a window of opportunity for new nations to join will require him to give Biden something back in return. That inevitably will be something in regard to the Palestinians and Israeli settlement-building.

With the Israeli prime minister looking to renege on his deal to hand over power to rival Benny Gantz next year—and another potential contender, Naftali Bennett, gaining popularity from the right—he will be seriously challenged to advance Israel's long-term goals while advancing his own political interests.

For his legacy, I would urge him to think of the long-term survival of the U.S.-Israel relationship in light of the challenges Biden will face from his own party regarding the Palestinians, Iran and Saudi Arabia, and prioritize the nuclear deal and normalization, offering some carrots to the Palestinians. The P.A. is dysfunctional, and the Palestinian people don't trust their leadership, now in the 15th year of their four-year term, so even optimists in the Biden administration know that there is a limit to what can be achieved.

You don't get something for nothing, and if Netanyahu can get 80 percent of Israel's agenda in line with a President Biden that is a huge win for America and Israel. (JNS Nov 18)