

**Netanyahu's Triumph****By The Editorial Board****Israel's PM wins a fifth term and now faces a Trump peace plan.**

Benjamin Netanyahu's election Tuesday to what is likely to be a fifth term as Israel's Prime Minister is a personal triumph, as well as a testament to how much he has moved the Jewish state's politics to the right in the past 20 years.

With 97% of votes reported, the Prime Minister's Likud party is expected to win 35 seats in the Knesset. Former Gen. Benny Gantz, whose rookie Blue and White party led many pre-election polls, also secured 35 seats. Mr. Netanyahu has a clear path to a governing coalition in the 120-seat parliament and Likud has won more seats than in any previous election in which he was the leader.

The veteran Prime Minister ran as a statesman indispensable to Israel's security. The fruits of his close relationship with President Trump helped make the case: a U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem; American recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights; and Monday's designation of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization. He could also point to improved relations with Sunni Arabs in the Gulf states and Egypt. Israel's economy under Mr. Netanyahu has prospered as he has tried to remove its socialist shackles.

Proof of his success is that Mr. Gantz focused not on policy but on Mr. Netanyahu's long tenure and bumptious personality. "I think Benjamin Netanyahu has done a lot for the country. He is the son of this country," the former top general said earlier this month. "But, as they say, enough is enough."

**Why Israel Still Loves Netanyahu****By Shmuel Rosner****Yes, he has many faults. But on the issues that matter most, he's a visionary leader.**

There are more than a few reasons to dislike Benjamin Netanyahu. He can be smug and vindictive. He can be ruthless when going up against political enemies. He is likely to be indicted on corruption charges related to three separate cases, which, if they are accurate, indicate that he is greedy, vain and manipulative.

And yet last night, this dislikable prime minister appears to have won his fifth — yes, fifth! — term in office. If he forms a government in the coming weeks, as he is expected to, Mr. Netanyahu will surpass Israel's founder David Ben Gurion as the country's longest serving prime minister. How is this possible?

To be fair, this was a close race. The main opposition party, Blue and White, is expected to get as many seats in

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Also striking is the collapse of the Labor Party that ruled Israel for most of its first three decades. The party barely passed the threshold to make it into parliament with about 5% of the vote. The refusal of the Palestinians to accept landmark peace offers in 2000 and 2008, plus the bloody record of Hamas in Gaza, has created a new consensus in Israel skeptical of the old "two-state" solution.

Assuming Mr. Netanyahu forms a new government, he will have to deal with his likely indictment by Israel's attorney general on charges of bribery, breach of trust, and fraud. He's accused of accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in gifts in exchange for favors, as well as cutting illicit deals with media publishers. He denies wrongdoing, but he may have to step down as he fights the charges.

Voters knew about these legal troubles and delivered a majority to Mr. Netanyahu and his allies anyway. He may now push legislation granting immunity to a sitting Prime Minister, with some democratic justification. But changing the rules in response to a personal crisis will provide fodder for his political opponents and tempt competitors to look for an opening to replace him.

He will also have to manage a peace proposal that Mr. Trump has said he'll release later this year. The contours are likely to include some form of land for peace that won't be welcomed by some of Mr. Netanyahu's coalition partners. The Prime Minister made a last-minute campaign promise to annex Jewish settlements on the West Bank, which will further complicate negotiations. But as the election results show again, Mr. Netanyahu has a remarkable feel for the Israeli public's mood.

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the Knesset as Mr. Netanyahu's Likud party. The coalition that he forms will probably have little more than the minimum 61 seats behind it.

Given Mr. Netanyahu's unsavory qualities, many people were intent on defeating him. Just a few months ahead of the election, Blue and White, a new centrist alliance led by three decorated generals and a former security minister, came together with little purpose other than to present an alternative to Mr. Netanyahu, who has been in power since 2009. They campaigned fiercely — but civilly. At rallies, General Benny Gantz, the head of Blue and White, made it a habit to thank the prime minister for his service to the nation; this was a mirror image of Mr. Netanyahu's and Likud's name-calling and personal attacks. But civility and centrism weren't enough to carry the day.

Mr. Netanyahu may be cynical but he doesn't rig elections. He wins fairly, often against great odds, including, this time, the coming indictments against him and an understandable fatigue with his decade-old leadership, not to mention various other inter- and intraparty squabbles. But he seems to have succeeded again this time for the same reason he has dominated Israeli politics for most of the past 25 years: because when it comes to Israel's national security, he is a leader with strategy and vision. And that is what many voters want.

In the mid-1990s, during his first term as prime minister, Mr. Netanyahu rejected the assumptions underlying the peace process with the Palestinians. At the time this was considered daringly right wing. Today, it is considered common sense in Israel, including by Mr. Netanyahu's political rivals. Likewise, Mr. Netanyahu was one of the first politicians to recognize Iran as the main threat to Israel's survival, and fought fiercely in international forums to get the world's attention to this problem. Today, this view is also widely appreciated across the Israeli political spectrum.

The list goes on: In 2005, he warned that withdrawing Israeli troops from Gaza would end in disaster — and it did. He successfully resisted eight years of the Obama administration's pressure to offer concessions to the Palestinians. He quickly forged an alliance with President Trump that has already proved to be of great benefit to Israel. In two years, Mr. Trump has moved the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, withdrawn from the nuclear agreement with Iran, recognized Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, and on Monday,

### **Old ties, new interest: Decades after the Jews went into exile, some Arabs want them back**

**By The Economist**

**economist.com**

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**Arab dictators seeking Western approval are not the only ones.**

It is simply called "the villa". Its white walls have no markings and an official permit is pending. For its founders, though, the low-key opening of the Arab world's first new synagogue in generations signals the dawn of a Jewish revival. Standing near the beach-front in Dubai, the synagogue offers Hebrew classes and kosher catering and has just acquired a rabbi. "The promise of our community is the rekindling of a Judeo-Islamic tradition," says Ross Kriel, president of the new Jewish Council of the Emirates.

That may sound unduly hopeful in the Arab world, which uprooted its 800,000 Jews in the decades after the creation of Israel. But, surprisingly, Arab leaders from Morocco to Iraq are repeating the message. In February Egypt's president, Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, said he would build new synagogues if the country's Jews returned. His government is restoring the Eliyahu Hanavi synagogue in Alexandria (pictured), once the Middle East's largest. It is also cleaning up the vast Jewish cemetery, flooded with sewage, in southern Cairo. And for the second time under Mr Sisi, Egyptian television has scheduled a soap-opera

designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist organization.

Blue and White tried to make this election a referendum on Mr. Netanyahu. Its campaign focused largely on the prime minister's personal failings, the corruption accusations against him, and exhaustion with his leadership. But in Israel, security trumps all other issues. (A poll ahead of the election found voters rated security as their No. 1 concern.)

Blue and White thought that by placing former Israel Defense Forces chiefs of staff at the top of the party list, it could counter Mr. Netanyahu's image and experience as a defender of Israel, diplomatically and militarily. But the public still showed that it trusts the incumbent more.

Has Mr. Netanyahu ever been wrong when it comes to security? The truth is, many Israelis will find it hard to think of an example. And this goes not just for voters for the Likud party, or even the right-wing parties that are expected to join Likud in the next government, but even for Blue and White, which largely echoed Mr. Netanyahu's positions on important foreign policy and national security questions.

Those Israelis who do want Mr. Netanyahu gone — and yes, there are many — want him gone because of his personality, his coarsening of Israeli political discourse, his pettiness and, maybe, his corruption. Those Israelis who want Mr. Netanyahu to stay — and the election makes clear that there are many — want him to stay despite those same characteristics. They can forgive the prime minister for often being a small man, because they appreciate him as a great leader.

about Jews to run during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. It tells of a soldier's steamy affair with a Jewish woman.

Others in the Gulf are following Dubai's lead. "I feel more comfortable wearing a kippa in Bahrain than Berlin," says Marc Schneier, an American rabbi working to "develop Jewish life" in five Gulf states. The Muslim World League, Saudi Arabia's missionary arm and long a bullhorn of bigotry, marked Holocaust Day with a letter in Arabic condemning Holocaust denial. Muhammad al-Issa, its head, plans to lead a multi-faith delegation to Auschwitz. "Circumstances have changed," he says.

After decades of hate speech, cynics deride this volte face as a publicity stunt by Arab dictators seeking Western approval. But the Arab spring in 2011 swept away a host of taboos. People challenged long-standing state ideologies as never before. From Iraq to Libya, a swathe of politicians, film-makers and academics, from secular types to the Muslim Brotherhood, have been re-examining the past, including the post-1948 eviction of Jews.

Released from the fear of the censors, the internet has enabled Muslims and Jews to leapfrog borders and passport controls. Virtual communities have grown online.

“I talk to friends in Baghdad all night,” says an Iraqi Jew in London who left Baghdad in the 1960s. Last year a popular Arabic Facebook site ran a poll on whether to restore Iraqi citizenship and the right of return to Jews exiled 70 years ago. Over three-quarters of the 62,000 participants voted yes.

Television, books and student campuses reflect this cultural shift. Arab documentaries search for Jewish diasporas that once lived in Arab lands. A new generation of Arab novelists elevates Jews from bit-players to centre-stage. “I wrote it to show that Jews are part of our culture,” says Amin Zaoui, the Algerian author of “The Last Jew of Tamentit”. The Arabic translation of Lucette Lagnado’s “The Man in the White Sharkskin Suit”, the memoir of an Egyptian Jew, has had multiple reprints.

Hebrew departments in Arab universities, once the preserve of would-be spooks, have mushroomed. Today 13 Egyptian universities teach Hebrew, up from four in 2004. Some 3,000 Egyptian students will finish their Hebrew studies this year, double the number five years ago. Even Syria’s state news agency has a Hebrew website.

For all this reappraisal, the Arab world today is a far

## **There’s a Chance the Trump Administration’s Peace Plan Just Might Work**

**By Tom Gross**

**blogs.spectator.co.uk**

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**This time, will Arab states encourage Palestinians to say “yes”?**

Could Donald Trump win the Nobel Peace Prize? He would be following in the footsteps of his predecessor but unlike Barack Obama in 2009 his award could be for something significant: helping to bring an end to one of the world’s most intractable conflicts – the dispute between Israelis and Palestinians.

It might sound implausible but Trump may have a better chance of delivering peace – or at least a non-belligerency agreement – than previous presidents, even if those chances do still remain low. Trump’s Middle East peace envoy (and ex-real estate lawyer) Jason Greenblatt, who I met recently, says that the Trump team will soon unveil their plan – the “deal of the century”, as Trump has dubbed it. It could even come a day or two after next Tuesday’s Israeli elections. The election results will be known the same evening and the coalition that is then formed may be greatly influenced by the content of the plan.

Israel’s election has been closely fought. Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party has for weeks been running slightly behind the new centrist “Blue and White” party of former general Benny Gantz in the polls. But under Israel’s complex proportional representation system, Netanyahu – even if his party wins fewer seats – is still more likely to gain a record fifth term in office; he has a better chance of building a coalition with smaller parties.

But whether Netanyahu survives or not, why might Trump succeed where others have fallen short? For years, diplomats have tried – and failed – to bring about peace. Offers of an independent Palestinian state made to the

cry from the early 1950s, when Egypt’s first president, Muhammad Naguib, went to synagogue on Yom Kippur and Muslims prayed next to Christians and Jews at the graveside of Moses Maimonides, a medieval rabbi, in Cairo. From Tlemcen in western Algeria to Qamishli in Syria’s north-eastern corner, ornate ancient synagogues rot away. “They’ll take everything when we die,” says one of the last Jews in Damascus. Under the guise of preserving Jewish heritage, some outfits backed by Arab governments plan to seize disused property. The old invective dies hard. “They don’t need a second homeland,” said a Salafist, after an Algerian minister suggested reopening the synagogues.

Still, spikes in tension over Israel no longer spark anti-Jewish pogroms. Some Palestinian politicians still whip up anti-Jewish feeling, but many speak Hebrew and have greater awareness and understanding than before. A surprising number of researchers uncovering the Middle East’s Jewish past are Palestinian. Some even speak of a common fate with dispossessed Arab Jews. “We’re entering an age of post-colonialism,” says a Christian cleric from Cairo. “We’re again learning how to see richness in others, not threats.”

first Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat by then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak (under the guidance of Bill Clinton) in 2000 and 2001 fell on deaf ears. So, too, did the proposal by Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert in 2007-08 that gave the Palestinian Authority pretty much everything it supposedly wanted. US secretary of state John Kerry also implored Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to accept the secret peace offer put on the table in 2014-15. He refused. So what is different now?

Firstly, the American team. The vast majority of western Middle East specialists think the Trump plan has no chance of success, in part because it is being formulated by non-diplomats. Jared Kushner has a real estate background and Greenblatt and David Friedman were both lawyers for the Trump Organisation. But my experience of observing and meeting western diplomats over many years is that most are misguided as to what might work in the Middle East – the region perhaps doesn’t need statesmen, it needs hard-nosed deal makers.

This view is shared by senior figures I have met from various Arab governments, who privately say they are already far more impressed by Trump and his team (in part because they are unabashedly pro-American and sympathetic to America’s allies) than they were by Obama and his – including his two secretaries of state, John Kerry and Hillary Clinton.

Secondly, the Arab states have changed. Utterly tired of Palestinian intransigence and the refusal to even negotiate publicly for a decade now – and far more concerned about the increasing Iranian threat across the region – they are favourably disposed to Israel as never

before. They also know that their economies can benefit greatly from Israeli expertise.

In recent months, ties between members of the Netanyahu government and leaders from across the Arab world have been made increasingly public. In the space of just ten days last October and November, several right-wing Israeli cabinet ministers were publicly welcomed in separate visits to Gulf states with whom Israel has no official relations. Netanyahu himself was hosted in October by the Sultan of Oman, who later broadcast the visit on state TV for his people to see. More recently, in February, Yemen's foreign minister was photographed alongside Netanyahu at a summit in Warsaw.

There have, too, been growing ties with Muslim-majority countries in Africa. Netanyahu went to Chad in January, renewing diplomatic ties cut off since 1972. Closed-door meetings between senior Israelis and leaders throughout the Arab world have also been taking place. The Palestinians are, in effect, being bypassed by much of the Muslim world; they may realise they have little choice but to also improve relations with Israel.

The Trump team has been careful not to leak any specifics of the plan for peace, which has been two years in the making, but we have some idea of what it may involve. Jared Kushner told Sky News Arabia that the plan will address all the main issues of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including borders, and "freedom...of opportunity (and) religion". He said it would economically benefit the wider Arab region, not just the Palestinian economy. "We want to see Palestinians under one leadership that will allow them to live in dignity," Kushner said. "We are trying to come up with realistic and fair solutions that are relevant to the year 2019."

Officially, the Palestinian Authority has refused to speak to the Trump administration for over a year now, but from private discussions I have had, I understand that if Abbas continues to refuse to negotiate, several Arab states – as well as the US – may apply the kind of serious pressure on the Palestinians that previous presidents never employed.

In the past, when Palestinian leaders turned down offers of independent statehood without even agreeing to further discussions (offers of a kind that Chechens, Kurds, Baluchis, Tibetans and dozens of other stateless people would have jumped at), far from being pressured or ostracised, the Palestinian leadership was given even more money and more red carpet treatment by western countries. Casting themselves as perpetual victims paid off. No longer. Trump has already shown, through his decision to move the American embassy to west Jerusalem, recognise Israeli sovereignty on the Golan Heights, and cut funding to the Palestinians, that there will be a price to pay for such intransigence.

President Abbas is currently in his 15th year of a four-year term. While the Palestinian Authority has a firm grip on power, Abbas is not immune from public (and international) pressure. There is great discontent with his rule and it may be hard for him to once again turn down

an offer of a state – however imperfect the borders may be viewed by many Palestinians. There are, however, rumours that parts of east Jerusalem may be included as a Palestinian capital in the Trump plan.

Palestinians will learn that there will be massive financial investment if they accept. Incentives were offered in the past too, but the Palestinian public was never properly informed. Today, because of very high internet usage, it will be hard for Palestinian leaders to hide from their people what is at stake.

Thirdly, Trump has already said Israel will be expected to make painful concessions. So will Netanyahu accept? Many pundits doubt it. However, if he wins next week's elections, this will likely be his last term, and I believe he may accept. Although he is an Israeli nationalist, he is also a pragmatist. He knows Israel may never be in a stronger position to reach a deal, with the backing not just of Trump and the Saudis, but the tacit approval of Vladimir Putin, with whom Netanyahu enjoys exceptionally close relations and whom he is meeting again today. Netanyahu has also forged close ties with governments in India, China, Brazil and elsewhere.

Israel has never been stronger. It is now ranked the eighth most powerful country in the world, according to the US News and World Report's 2019 power ranking – a remarkable achievement for a small country. The economy is thriving. Some 250 multinational companies – including Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, Google, Facebook, Intel, AT&T, AOL, HP, IBM, PayPal, Samsung, Dropbox, SanDisk, Sony, and Yahoo – have established major research and development centres in Israel. Israel has even just sent a rocket to the moon, only the fourth country to do so. Netanyahu – who has long said that peace is best established through a position of strength – knows Israel may never have a better opportunity than now.

Furthermore, he is facing corruption allegations, he says (with, it seems, some justification) because the Israeli liberal establishment, exasperated by lack of peace and his length of time in office, have been scraping the barrel to see what they can pin on him. In order for these charges to be dropped or minimised – or prevent new charges being brought, Netanyahu may wish to form a centrist government, with Gantz as his deputy and also with the Israeli Labour Party, to push ahead with the Trump plan at the expense of the Israeli hard right.

And if Netanyahu fails to win the election? Trump's plan can still be implemented by a Gantz government. But history has shown time and again that right-wing leaders have a better chance of carrying more of their population (especially nationalists) with them when concessions are being made: think Nixon and China; Reagan, Thatcher and the Soviets; De Gaulle and Algeria; and in Israel itself, when right-wing leader Menachem Begin, 40 years ago this month, forged peace with Egypt, at the time Israel's most implacable foe.

For sure, Netanyahu would face concerted domestic opposition from the Israeli right to the concessions Trump is likely to ask Israel to make; and there will have to be

very sophisticated security measures put in place for some time until a Palestinian state has proved itself not to be hostile, in order to prevent rocket and other attacks.

There are other obstacles, including Hamas in Gaza. But here again there is behind-the-scenes mediation going

### **Israel's Unfailing Commitment to Bring Its Soldiers, and Their Remains, Home to Their Families**

**By Matti Friedman**

**theglobeandmail.com**

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**On the morning of Dec. 22, 1947, in the first weeks of Israel's War of Independence, a 19-year-old stepped out of a car on a stretch of road between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.** He had a neat mustache, spoke Arabic and carried the modest toolkit of an itinerant barber. The friend who dropped him off sat behind the steering wheel and watched him stride off toward a nearby Arab town. No one ever saw him again.

Seven decades later, what's left of the vanished 19-year-old – the details of his short life, a description of what he was really doing that day and his name, Nissim Attiyeh – can be found in a file in a spartan army office along an ordinary street in the urban sprawl around Tel Aviv. This is where the Israeli military's missing-soldier unit works. In these offices, the story of Attiyeh, of the strange unit to which he belonged, and the stories of others who disappeared in battle 70 years ago, remain alive long after they've been forgotten nearly everywhere else.

I encountered Attiyeh's story while writing a book about a few young men who became Israel's first spies in the war. The spies belonged to a small, amateurish unit called the Arab Section, which was part of the Jewish military underground before the creation of the army and the state. It went on to become one of the seeds of the Mossad. The unit's story, though dramatic and important, has – like that of Attiyeh – been mostly lost to history. When I visited the missing-soldier unit in February, after years of work on this project, I felt a kinship with the researchers. In my book, I've tried to do what they've been trying to do: resurrect something that has been forgotten and give it the place it deserves.

In December, 1947, the first month of the War of Independence, irregular Jewish and Arab forces were fighting a hit-and-run war. The British, who had ruled Palestine for 30 years, were about to pull out, leaving the sides to decide the fate of the country. Palestine was disintegrating into a civil war. The declaration of the state of Israel, and the invasion of five Arab armies, was five months away.

The Jewish military forces knew little about the other side and were operating with scant information. One of the only effective intelligence tools they had was the Arab Section. The Section was made up of Jews who'd recently left their homes in the Arab world, where nationalistic and religious hostility was on the rise. Because they were native Arabic speakers at home with Arab culture, the Jewish military command hoped they'd be able to move freely in Palestinian Arab areas. Often disguised as itinerant barbers or peddlers, and armed with flimsy cover stories, they'd slip back and forth across the treacherous ethnic lines,

on between Hamas and the Israeli government, with Egyptian participation, and the problem is not insurmountable.

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picking up tidbits of information and reporting back. That's what Attiyeh, the sixth son of poor parents from Jerusalem, was recruited to do.

It was dangerous work. In December, 1947, the Jewish and Arab populations in Palestine were frightened and on edge. A slip in grammar, or an inconsistent biographical detail, could get you killed. Of about a dozen active agents at the war's beginning, half were caught and killed.

Two days before Attiyeh set out on his last mission, two of his comrades from the Arab Section were caught in the Arab city of Jaffa. Both were young Jews recently arrived from Iraq. They claimed to be Arab workers, but their cover stories were blown by perceptive members of the local Arab militia. The militiamen interrogated the suspicious pair, took them to some dunes outside town and shot them both, burying them in an unmarked grave.

The trigger for Attiyeh's dispatch two days later appears to have been an attack by Arab fighters on a Jewish convoy. He was supposed to pick out a route for a retaliatory raid and report back the same evening. But, like his two unlucky comrades in Jaffa, Attiyeh caught someone's eye. His cover must have slipped. He's assumed to have been executed in one of the nearby orchards, but no one knows for sure; he just disappeared. Nissim Attiyeh, and the two spies killed in Jaffa the same week in December, 1947, were the first fatalities of Israeli intelligence.

In the offices of the missing-soldier unit, known by the Hebrew acronym EITAN, there are 95 files still open from the 1948 war. A team of about 50 active researchers is tasked with closing them – a hybrid outfit of detective-historians, not regular soldiers but rather reservists called up for a few weeks a year. In their real lives, some of the researchers are academic historians. Others are policemen, or computer programmers. The necessary personality type ranges from patient to pedantic. They might spend years on one case. The rule is that they can never give up.

The unit's commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Nir Israeli, told me that part of his job is keeping an open mind. He's regularly contacted by civilians with a lead or just a hunch about where a body might be found. He gets quite a few calls from psychics. "I don't turn anyone away," he said. Why persist, even long after the close relatives of the missing have died, and long after it would no longer seem to matter?

In the Jewish tradition, families must have a grave where they can mourn, he explained. And they need closure. "This is a commitment we make to our soldiers – we sent this person, and we have to bring them home," Lt.-Col. Israeli said. Sometimes he tries to demonstrate this

value by bringing young soldiers along in his search parties. In a recent sweep to find the remains of four Givati Brigade soldiers who went missing in a skirmish with the Egyptians in 1948, for example, he used soldiers from the modern-day incarnation of the same military unit. (They found traces of the battle, such as old bullets, but no bodies.) “Every soldier going into combat should know that we’ll do everything to find them, even if it’s 70 years later,” the officer said.

Each file is periodically opened and reviewed for clues – something that might be apparent to a fresh pair of eyes, a hint that that might have evaded researchers in the past. Special teams open graves of unknown soldiers to perform DNA tests. In the field, they’ve started using drones with magnetic sensors that can pick up potentially significant details – old metal canteens, for example, or shell casings. Sometimes it’s a matter of spending weeks in the military archives, looking for leads: Maybe a soldier thought to have been in one unit was actually assigned somewhere else? Maybe the wrong person was buried in the wrong grave?

All of this usually turns up nothing, but the EITAN researchers manage to close a few files a year. In May, for example, after years of searching, they found the body of a 34-year-old fighter, Libka Shefer, who was killed in an Egyptian army assault against a kibbutz in southern Israel in 1948. Seventy years after her death, she was finally buried under her own name.

One of the unit’s notable successes involved the two Arab Section agents who were executed in Jaffa in December, 1947, around the same time that Attiyeh vanished. By 2004, more than 56 years had elapsed since they’d disappeared, but the missing-soldier unit was still looking. Researchers had honed in on two anonymous graves in a military cemetery in a different part of the

## Don’t Rejoin the Iran Deal, Fix It

By David Albright, Andrea Stricker

**As of now, Tehran is on course to have nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.**

Should the United States rejoin the Iran nuclear deal and rescind reimposed U.S. sanctions? This course of action is being recommended by deal supporters, who want to reverse the Trump administration’s decision last year to unilaterally leave the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and ramp up U.S. sanctions against Iran. Despite the U.S. decision, other parties have so far kept the deal intact. Deal supporters have expressed fears that Iran would walk away from the deal, but Iran has so far not done so and would suffer even worse economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation if it were to leave the deal.

Notwithstanding good intentions, rejoining the deal without the necessary fixes to it would in essence bless Iran to enlarge its conventional, missile, and nuclear programs without receiving any commensurate concessions from Iran. All these increases will occur during the next administration, whoever wins the

country, the port city of Haifa. The bodies buried there had been found side by side in 1977 by construction workers building a school near Jaffa, and had been identified as regular fighters who fell in a battle nearby. But using DNA samples from surviving relatives, the researchers confirmed that the two bodies were, in fact, the two missing spies. They were reinterred with full military honours under their real names – Lieutenant David Shemesh and Lieutenant Gideon Ben-David of the Arab Section, both 21 when they died.

Not all of the Section’s fallen spies were lucky enough to merit a grave. Two others who were executed by the Egyptians in Gaza in August, 1948, are thought to be buried where a Palestinian high school now stands, and have been declared inaccessible. The Section’s last fatality, a spy caught at a border crossing and hung by the Jordanians in 1949, was buried in the yard of a military prison in Amman. Fifty-five years later, after Israel and Jordan signed a peace agreement in 1994, an EITAN team went to look for him but found that the prison and its grounds had been subsumed by new construction. The body of the spy, Yaakov Bokai, who was just 19, is thought to be under a highway.

At the office near Tel Aviv, the file of Nissim Attiyeh remains open. Three years ago, 68 years after he vanished, a search party combed the area of his disappearance. Every so often, the researchers sit around a table and brainstorm, throwing out possible solutions. No trace of him has yet been found. For the army researchers, and for me, that absence is a challenge – a summons to resurrect these lost people from a long-ago war, to mark the contours of their story and to consider the ways their lives and actions still echo today.

*Mr. Friedman’s latest book is Spies of No Country: Behind Enemy Lines at the Birth of the Israeli Secret Service.*

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presidential election. Whatever one’s views of the Trump administration’s decision to no longer participate in the nuclear agreement, this approach will not address its flaws and the threat of Iran being able to build nuclear weapons. Rather than making this a partisan issue, a better option is to use the new leverage created by the reimposition of sanctions to build domestic and international consensus to fix the flaws in the deal during the next few years.

The Democratic National Committee adopted a resolution that lauded the deal’s achievements and advocated for reentry. It did not urge any preconditions for a U.S. return. The statements urging rejoining typically contain notable mischaracterizations, such as asserting that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) stated Iranian “compliance” with the deal, something the IAEA has never certified in its quarterly safeguards reports. Moreover, each quarter since the deal has been implemented in January 2016, the IAEA has reported that it still has not been able to determine that Iran has no undeclared nuclear facilities and materials and thus cannot

conclude that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. While Iran has been pressed successfully to stop its multiple technical violations of specific nuclear limitations, the basic proposition of whether Iran seeks nuclear weapons has not been answered in the three plus years since the deal commenced.

If the United States unconditionally rejoined the deal, it would sacrifice important leverage to reach a stronger agreement with Iran that fixes well-known shortcomings in the current deal: the end to key nuclear limitations, the failure to address ballistic and cruise missile development related to nuclear weapon delivery, and the need for more effective inspections to characterize Iran's past and possibly ongoing nuclear weapon activities. Rejoining the nuclear deal unconditionally would seriously undermine U.S. security interests in the Middle East and increase the risk to the security of our allies in the region.

Supporters of the deal had hoped that the deal by itself would open new diplomatic channels to address other international concerns, such as Iran's aggressive regional behavior, ballistic missile developments, and human-rights violations. In reality, these international concerns have grown worse following the implementation of the nuclear deal. European diplomats are coming to appreciate that, even while they have sought to stay in the deal. Increasingly, even supporters of the deal in the United States recognize that.

Rejoining the deal without preconditions means supporting the provision in the JCPOA that allows Iran to start building up its industrial infrastructure to build advanced gas centrifuges that enrich uranium in 2023, just four years from now, during the next presidential term. A more sensible strategy is to oppose that increase in Iran's nuclear weapons capability, particularly since Iran has been unable to produce any economic or otherwise credible justification for its uranium enrichment program. Based on information gathered by the IAEA in the course of inspections, Iran will never be able to produce low enriched uranium more cheaply than simply buying it from the international commercial market.

Iran's centrifuge program is a commercial failure. International concerns regarding Iran's regional behavior and latent nuclear weapons capabilities have grown far worse following the implementation of the nuclear deal, making growth in its centrifuge program a dangerous proposition. A scale-up in Iran's centrifuge program, as envisioned under Iran's long-term enrichment plan developed alongside the JCPOA, should thus be viewed as representing a military nuclear program, rather than welcomed and encouraged. For those who want to ensure that Iran does not have the capacity to build a nuclear military infrastructure, the goal of the JCPOA, would not want to implicitly endorse an unbridled, uneconomic increase in Iran's uranium enrichment gas centrifuge program starting during the next president's term. Growth in Iran's enrichment program would likely spur an increase

of the spread of nuclear weapons in the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, drastically reduce Iran's breakout timeline to missile-deliverable nuclear weapons, and heighten the chances of military confrontations. It would mean conceding once again to these shortcomings rather than demanding that they be addressed using the new leverage garnered through reimposed sanctions and Iran's relative diplomatic isolation.

Rejoining also means accepting the end of the UN conventional arms embargo on Iran, slated to happen no later than October 2020, as codified in UNSC Resolution 2231, a resolution closely associated with the JCPOA. At that time, Iran will be able to freely import conventional arms and military hardware from such states as Russia and China. Iran has already lined up billions of dollars in contracts with Russia for advanced conventional weaponry, and a military pact with China that it can execute when the embargo ends. Rejoining the JCPOA without changes would be a tacit acceptance of the end of the arms embargo and Iran being able to arm itself as never before, posing a much greater risk to U.S. and allied forces in the region.

Iran's development of missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons has also continued apace, with Iran conducting multiple launches of nuclear-capable missiles in defiance of UN Resolution 2231. These developments threaten U.S. allies in the region, Europe, and ultimately threaten the United States with nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). How are U.S. national-security interests in the Middle East served by an end to the UN missile embargo on Iran, slated to end no later than 2023, as stipulated under UN Resolution 2231? Support for reentering the JCPOA offers implicit support for ending this ballistic missile embargo. At that point, Iran will be able to freely import missile technology, materiel, and equipment from willing suppliers. One can imagine how dangerous North Korean/Iranian missile cooperation could become as both seek to build longer range, more reliable nuclear-capable ballistic missiles.

The IAEA has only slowly investigated the contents of a curated "Nuclear Archive" kept by Iran, and it has not ensured that all non-peaceful Iranian activities have been terminated and relevant capabilities dismantled. In April 2018, revelations about this Iranian archive emerged, underlining the key weaknesses of the deal's implementation in not requiring the IAEA to conduct a thorough investigation to ensure Iran's military nuclear work had ended before granting sanctions relief.

The archive contains tens of thousands of pages and CDs on Iran's past efforts at nuclear weapon design, development, and manufacturing, which the Institute for Science and International Security has assessed in an ongoing series of reports. Although, Iran made important reductions in the scale and scope of its rapidly moving nuclear weapons program, information from the archive shows that in 2003 it also reoriented key parts of its

nuclear weapons program to preserve vital nuclear capabilities, continue working on sensitive military nuclear weapon aspects in a more clandestine manner, and embed certain nuclear weapons activities into ostensibly civilian programs. It also shows that Iran serially lied in its declarations to the IAEA about many sensitive activities and facilities.

While supporters of the JCPOA still tout the agreement as allowing the most intrusive inspections ever designed, the archive shows that the nuclear deal struck a bad bargain in sweeping the issue of past and possibly ongoing nuclear weapons activities under the rug. IAEA inspections have so far proven inadequate in ensuring the absence of ongoing nuclear weapon activities.

The existence of a curated archive is a strong indication of Iranian violations of the JCPOA, Iran's safeguards agreements, and even the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In other countries, when such archives were discovered, their possession was seen as a violation of the NPT. The existence of the archive shows an Iranian determination to keep at least a nuclear weapons option alive, if not actually meaning that Iran is secretly advancing portions of its nuclear weapons efforts today. After all these years, that the IAEA cannot answer the basic question about whether Iran's nuclear program is peaceful is a troubling blemish on the JCPOA and the NPT.

Achieving stronger inspections in Iran is a priority to ensure that Iran does not have undeclared nuclear

**To Cure Gaza's Ills, Restore Its Connection to Africa  
By Maj. Gen. (res.) Gershon Hacohen**

besacenter.org

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**Giving control to Ramallah won't help.**

When a single rocket launched from Gaza into central Israel forces the Israeli PM to cancel an important slate of meetings in Washington and return post haste to Jerusalem, it is clear that the Strip has become a major strategic threat rather than a containable terror problem. Yet while public discourse on the latest conflagration revolved around the desirable IDF response to Hamas's growing brazenness, with the customary recommendations ranging from dealing a harsh blow that would "restore lost deterrence" to a campaign to vanquish Hamas, it is worth taking a broader look at how the Gaza problem came to pass in the first place.

A city in a cul-de-sac.

The current tendency is to see the Gaza problem as originating in the refugee population that burgeoned there after the 1948 War of Independence. It would make more sense, though, to go back a few steps further and consider the city's millenarian geographic location as an intermediate station on the ancient highway – between Asia and Africa, between Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Without that main route as its wellspring, Gaza cannot go back to being what it was. Even after the 1906 drawing of the international border by Britain (which had controlled Egypt since 1882) and the Ottoman Empire, traffic through Gaza did not stop. It was the establishment

facilities, materials, and activities. All should support the IAEA raising the archive with Iran and ensuring access to sites, equipment, and individuals detailed in the archive. Ending sanctions and rejoining the JCPOA is not a vehicle to obtain these goals.

Finally, rejoining the JCPOA misses a critical opportunity to work together to fix the flaws in the JCPOA and reach a supplementary or new agreement that ensures that Iran does not continue on a trajectory of maintaining and expanding its nuclear weapons capabilities, including the development of nuclear-capable long-range ballistic missiles. The most likely endpoint of the JCPOA is an Iran that in about a decade can quickly build nuclear weapons mounted on intermediate-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles, lacks an inspection regime that can ensure that Iran does not have undeclared nuclear facilities and materials, and has a greatly expanded conventional armed forces and ballistic missile arsenal. Presidential candidates and policymakers alike should reconsider the implications of walking that pathway if they want to adopt a serious foreign-policy platform that protects U.S. national-security interests. Far better to use the growing leverage to build domestic and international support for a new agreement which fixes the deficiencies in the current deal.

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of the State of Israel that blocked this ancient route, severed Egypt from the Arab east (mashriq), and turned Gaza into a cul-de-sac at the edge of Egyptian territory.

The March 1979 Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty considerably exacerbated the Gaza problem. In a shrewd move, President Anwar Sadat shifted the Gaza problem exclusively to Israel's purview. After the Israeli town of Yamit and neighboring villages had been razed and the Sinai in its entirety had been restored to Egyptian sovereignty all the way to the 1906 international border, Gaza could no longer develop westward into the potential open space between Rafah and El-Arish. The Strip was thus closed in the Egyptian direction and deposited on Israel's doorstep as an urban pressure cooker on the verge of explosion.

Sadat thus set in train the transformation of Gaza and the West Bank into a single entity and made Israel solely responsible for solving the Palestinian problem in the territories it held. As Ezer Weizmann, defense minister at the time of the Egyptian-Israeli peace negotiations, put it on the tenth anniversary of the peace treaty: "I have a feeling that [PM Menachem] Begin is sitting at home not because of the commonly assumed reasons [i.e., 1982 Lebanon war] but because he has realized that with the signing of the 1978 Camp David Accords he put the future

of 'Greater Israel' in a delicate situation, if not in jeopardy."

The 1993 Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority further marginalized Gaza in comparison to the governmental and economic center in Ramallah. Discussion of a strategic solution to the Gaza problem must, therefore, begin with the geographic background that spawned the Strip's distress as a territory with no egress. Even if the IDF removes Hamas from power, Gaza's plight will continue, and it will require a solution that cannot be found solely in the domain of Israel's responsibility.

And what happens after the takeover?

Over the years, the issue of the objective of a ground operation in Gaza has become a complex dilemma. One can see how much things have changed simply by reading the IDF's definition of the offensive's goal in its basic combat doctrine: "An offensive seeks to impose a change in the existing political-strategic reality by applying the conquering state's sovereignty to the conquered territory."

Therein lies the basic unanswered question: Is it desirable for Israel to conquer Gaza and reimpose its rule, as in pre-Oslo days? If not, then Hamas's military defeat requires an answer to the question of who should be given control of the Strip. Should Israel sacrifice its sons to serve Gaza on a silver platter to Mahmoud Abbas? It was, after all, Yasser Arafat, Abbas's predecessor as PLO leader, who transformed Gaza into an ineradicable terrorist hotbed in flagrant violation of the Oslo Accords that he had signed.

This kind of predicament is not unique to Israel. A few weeks after the 9/11 terror attacks, the US army responded by pounding Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Ever since then, along with NATO troops, US forces have been bogged down in a futile attempt to create a stable government in the country. The IDF undoubtedly has the

## How the Names of Israeli Political Parties Became So Jingly

By Philologos

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It's part of a trend away from names that once projected clear identities (Workers' Party) and toward the politics of advertising (There Is a Future).

"The gevalt campaigns worked," was a remark heard over and over on Israeli TV and radio during the long night following Tuesday's elections. It referred to the high percentage of the vote, unanticipated by the pre-election polls, received by Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud and Benny Gantz's Blue-and-White Party at the expense of their smaller competitors.

But what exactly is a gevalt campaign? The question can be answered with the help of a Jewish joke.

Yankl Rosenblum glances at his Yiddish newspaper one April morning and sees a full-page ad signed by his friend Chaim Goldfarb. "Modern New School for Gifted Children to Open in September!" declares the ad's banner caption, beneath which is the explanation that Goldfarb has founded a school for special pupils whose needs are not met by the current educational system, that it will be

capacity to defeat Hamas, but this could well turn out to be a Pyrrhic victory.

It is ironic that those pushing for a victory in Gaza are the same people advocating total withdrawal from the West Bank, basing their readiness to assume the security risks of such a withdrawal on these four key premises:

Territorial separation, including a massive evacuation of Jewish neighborhoods, will define the borders, reduce the points of friction, and foster stability.

If stability is undermined to the point of an intolerable security threat, the IDF will launch a preemptive strike that will quash the threat from the prospective Palestinian state.

The IDF, with its perennial superiority, will be able to eliminate such a security threat in a few days.

A West Bank withdrawal and the end of the "occupation" will ensure widespread international support for Israeli military operations of that kind.

The security situation since the 2005 unilateral disengagement from Gaza in general, and last year's violence in particular (ranging from riots along the border fence, to incendiary balloons, to exchanges of fire between Israel and Hamas) underscores the hollowness of those assumptions and the existential threat attending their adoption.

No less importantly, this has far-reaching implications for devising Israel's Gaza strategy: namely, that the solution to the Strip's problem will not come from Ramallah. The center of gravity for dealing with the Palestinian problem should instead be shifted from Ramallah to Gaza, with the aim of creating economic and infrastructure linkages between Gaza and its historic hinterland – the Sinai Peninsula.

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run according to the most progressive principles, and that registration is under way.

Rosenblum picks up the telephone and dials Goldfarb. "Chaim," he says when the latter answers, "what is this school you're going to open?"

"But you don't have a penny to your name," objects Rosenblum. "Where will you get the money to open a school in September?" "It's very simple," says Goldfarb. "The parents will register their children. I'll wait until the middle of August and run another ad. This one will say: 'Gevalt! Modern New School for Gifted Children Forced to Close! Your contributions can save it!'"

That's a gevalt campaign. "Gevalt!" or "Oy, gevalt!" is a Yiddish exclamation that can be used in one of two ways. It can either lament a misfortune that has already befallen or warn of an impending one that might still be averted. Another joke illustrates this.

Cohen runs into Levy in the street one day after not having seen him for a long time. "Levy," he exclaims. "How are you?"

“Not bad, not bad at all,” Levy says.  
 “And how’s your wife Sylvia?”  
 “What, you don’t know? Sylvia died two years ago.”  
 “Gevalt!”  
 “I’m about to remarry.”  
 “You are? Mazel tov! Who is she?”  
 “Hattie Feinberg.”  
 “Hattie Feinberg? Feinberg’s divorced wife?”  
 “Yes.”  
 “Gevalt!”

In their successful gevalt campaigns, both the Likud and Blue-and-White launched a last-minute appeal to those contemplating voting for other parties that stood to be their coalition partners. “Gevalt!” cried the Likud. “If you vote for Identity, All of Us, or Israel Is Our Home, we’ll end up in second place behind Blue-and-White and lose the election.” “Gevalt!” cried Blue-and-White, which was a pre-election merger of Resilience For Israel with There Is A Future. “Vote for Energy or Bridge and we’ll be the ones to come in second.” Blue-and-White? Identity? All of Us? Israel Is Our Home? There Is A Future? Resilience For Israel? Energy? Bridge? What kind of names are these for political parties? Where have all the old names gone?

Consider, for example, the parties in Israel’s first Knesset, elected in January 1949. These were, in order of the number of votes received by them: Mapai, a Hebrew acronym for The Worker’s Party of the Land of Israel; Mapam or the United Workers Party; the National Religious Front; the Freedom Movement; the General Zionists; the Progressive Party; and the Communist Party of Israel. Also represented were the Democratic List of Nazareth, the Women’s International Zionist Organization or WIZO, and the Association of Yemenites.

That’s quite a difference from today. With the exception of Menachem Begin’s Freedom Movement or Herut, which was the historical successor of Vladimir Jabotinsky’s Zionist Revisionist Party, all of these names were staidly informative. They announced where, more or less, the parties bearing them stood on the political spectrum. They were not meant to sound novel, appealing, or exciting. Their message was: “This is the camp we represent. Vote for us if you belong to it.”

How did we get from there to such jingly rubrics as There Is A Future or All Of Us? It didn’t happen all at once. The first Israeli political party to blaze the trail was the centrist Democratic Movement for Change (ha-tenu’ah ha-demokratit l’shinui), founded in 1974 by law professor Amnon Rubinstein in the atmosphere of protest that followed the Yom Kippur War. Shortening its name to Shinui or Change, it merged in 1976 with Yigael Yadin’s Democratic Movement (ha-tenu’ah ha-demokratit), and the “d” of demokratit and the “sh” of shinui became Dash, an acronym for “regards” in Hebrew. Regards did well in the 1977 elections, garnering 15 Knesset seats.

At about the same time, Shulamit Aloni founded the left-leaning Movement for Civil Rights and Peace. In Israeli elections, which are held with ballot boxes rather than voting machines, each party is represented on the ballot by a combination of letters. For the 1977 elections, Aloni’s party was given the letters resh-tsadi, vocalizable as rahtz, which was how it began to be referred to. When it joined forces in 1997 with Mapam, the old United Workers Party, it took Mapam’s initial “M,” affixed it to Rahtz, and emerged with Meretz, a word meaning “Energy.”

Meanwhile, a new religious party was founded in 1982 with the official name of The World Sephardi Organization of Torah Observers. Its ballot letters were shin-samakh or shas, known to every observant Jew, Sephardi or not, to stand for the shishah s’darim, the six tractates, of the Talmud. Say “World Sephardi Organization of Torah Observers,” and no one in Israel will know what you are talking about. Say “Six Tractates” and you have mentioned the party that won eight Knesset seats in this week’s elections.

Creativity was now in vogue. In 1999, when Avigdor Liberman started his Russian immigrant party, he called it yisra’el beytenu, Israel Is Our Home. In 2008, the old National Religious Party united with several smaller groups as ha-bayit ha-yehudi, The Jewish Home. Media personality Yair Lapid created There Is a Future (yesh atid) in 2012. In late 2018, when There Is A Future and the newly founded Resilience for Israel formed a joint list, they reportedly considered naming it Resilience for the Future before settling on the colors of the Israeli flag.

Naming political parties with catchy and catch-all slogans is now the way it is regularly done in Israel. The trend, though, is a general one. French president Emmanuel Macron heads a party called The Republic On the Move. Italy is now governed by a partnership of The Five Star Movement and The League. Two major new parties in Spain are We Can and Citizens.

All of these parties have abandoned the kinds of names that once projected clear identities, such as Italy’s long-governing Christian Democrats or Spain’s still powerful Socialist Workers’ Party. The names they have chosen tell voters nothing while inviting them to project anything onto them. They represent the politics of advertising rather than of programs, ideas, and socio-economic classes and interests. Still, even advertisements are for real things. You can try selling a political party as though it were a car or a housing development, but in the final analysis, few people buy cars or houses because of their names. Blue-and-White could have called itself “The Party to Rid Israel of Benjamin Netanyahu” and gotten the same results. It didn’t succeed, and now Israel’s famously byzantine coalition negotiations are about to begin.

Gevalt!