

What if the U.S. Helps Hamas Win?

By Bernard-Henri Lévy

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The path Joe Biden and Chuck Schumer have chosen means the end of any hope of peace.

Let's imagine that Israel yields to the pressure. Pushed by an American president already under fire from a segment of the electorate that objects to his support for a "genocidal" state, Israel refrains from entering Rafah to finish off Hamas's four surviving battalions. Israel agrees to the general cease-fire of indeterminate duration that the U.S. administration seems to push amid increasingly virulent antisemitism.

The idea that Washington unconditionally supports Israel is a longstanding myth. While the U.S. often vetoes anti-Israel resolutions at the United Nations Security Council, the one that passed Monday was far from the first exception. Recall Resolution 1701 (2006) to halt Israel's Lebanon offensive at the Litani River—thus sparing what remained of the Hezbollah units.

So the supposition that the U.S. pushes Israel into capitulating isn't implausible. It is the path forward that Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who styles himself the Jewish state's shomer, or protector, has chosen. It isn't hard to picture an Israel that is sermonized, impeded and prevented from dealing with Hamas the way the U.S. dealt with Al-Qaeda and ISIS a few years back—an Israel forced into defeat.

If that came to pass, what would happen? Hamas would declare victory—on the verge of defeat, then the next minute revived. These criminals against humanity would emerge from their tunnels triumphant after playing with the lives not only of the 250 Israelis captured on Oct. 7, but also of their own citizens, whom they transformed into human shields.

The Arab street would view Hamas terrorists as resistance fighters. In Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—nations that signed the Abraham Accords or were leaning toward doing so—Hamas's prestige would be enhanced. In the West Bank as in Gaza, Hamas would quickly eclipse the corrupt and ineffective Palestinian Authority, whose image would pale next to the twin aura of martyrdom and endurance in which Hamas would cloak

itself.

After that, no diplomatic or military strategy would prevail against the iron law of people converted into mobs and mobs into packs. None of the experts' extravagant plans for an international stabilization force, an interim Arab authority, or a technocratic government presiding over the reconstruction of Gaza would stand long against the blast effect created by the last-minute return of this group of criminals adorned with the most heroic of virtues.

Hamas would be the law in the Palestinian territories. It would set the ideological and political agenda, regardless of the formal structure of the new government. And Israel will never deal with a Palestinian Authority of which Hamas is a part. Goodbye, Palestinian State. Hope for peace harbored by moderates on both sides will be dead.

This is why the world has one choice. Instead of putting all their energy into trying to get Israel to bend, leaders should push Hamas to surrender. The Biden administration should redirect the time it is spending in useless negotiations with the Qataris—experts in double-dealing—to calling the Qataris' bluff by demanding that they push the "political" leaders of Hamas, whom they host and protect, to live up to their responsibilities.

Those who portray themselves as praying for the end of this war and a negotiated peace on "the day after" must recognize there is only one path to that end. First, the release of all hostages. Next, the evacuation of civilians from the zone of imminent combat. When will the world recognize that Israel, having been forced into this war, is doing more than any army ever did to prevent civilian deaths?

And finally, in Rafah, the destruction of what remains of Hamas and its death squads. Without this military victory, the endless wheel of misfortune will begin to spin yet again, though faster. This is the terrible truth.

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What Would You Have Israel Do to Defend Itself?

By David Brooks

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Part of the Chinese strategy of cultural warfare.

There seems to be a broad consensus atop the Democratic Party about the war in Gaza, structured around two propositions. First, after the attacks of Oct. 7, Israel has the right to defend itself and defeat Hamas. Second, the way Israel is doing this is "over the top," in

President Biden's words. The vast numbers of dead and starving children are gut wrenching, the devastation is overwhelming, and it's hard not to see it all as indiscriminate.

Which leads to an obvious question: If the current Israeli military approach is inhumane, what's the

alternative? Is there a better military strategy Israel can use to defeat Hamas without a civilian blood bath? In recent weeks, I've been talking with security and urban warfare experts and others studying Israel's approach to the conflict and scouring foreign policy and security journals in search of such ideas.

The thorniest reality that comes up is that this war is like few others because the crucial theater is underground. Before the war, Israelis estimated Hamas had dug around 100 miles of tunnels. Hamas leaders claimed they had a much more expansive network, and it turns out they were telling the truth. The current Israeli estimates range from 350 to about 500 miles of tunnels. The tunnel network, according to Israel, is where Hamas lives, holds hostages, stores weapons, builds missiles and moves from place to place. By some Israeli estimates, building these tunnels cost the Gazan people about a billion dollars, which could have gone to building schools and starting companies.

Hamas built many of its most important military and strategic facilities under hospitals, schools and so on. Its server farm, for example, was built under the offices of the U.N. relief agency in Gaza City, according to the Israeli military.

Daphne Richemond-Barak, the author of "Underground Warfare," writes in Foreign Policy magazine: "Never in the history of tunnel warfare has a defender been able to spend months in such confined spaces. The digging itself, the innovative ways Hamas has made use of the tunnels and the group's survival underground for this long have been unprecedented."

In other words, in this war, Hamas is often underground, the Israelis are often aboveground, and Hamas seeks to position civilians directly between them. As Barry Posen, a professor at the security studies program at M.I.T., has written, Hamas's strategy could be "described as 'human camouflage' and more ruthlessly as 'human ammunition.'" Hamas's goal is to maximize the number of Palestinians who die and in that way build international pressure until Israel is forced to end the war before Hamas is wiped out. Hamas's survival depends on support in the court of international opinion and on making this war as bloody as possible for civilians, until Israel relents.

The Israelis have not found an easy way to clear and destroy the tunnels. Currently, Israel Defense Forces units clear the ground around a tunnel entrance and then, Richemond-Barak writes, they send in robots, drones and dogs to detect explosives and enemy combatants. Then units trained in underground warfare pour in. She writes: "It has become clear that Israel cannot possibly detect or map the entirety of Hamas's tunnel network. For Israel to persuasively declare victory, in my view, it must destroy at least two-thirds of Hamas's known underground infrastructure."

This is slow, dangerous and destructive work. Israel rained destruction down on Gaza, especially early in the war. Because very few buildings can withstand gigantic

explosions beneath them, this method involves a lot of wreckage, compounding the damage brought by tens of thousands of airstrikes. In part because of the tunnels, Israel has caused more destruction in Gaza than Syria did in Aleppo and more than Russia did in Mariupol, according to an Associated Press analysis.

John Spencer is the chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point, served two tours in Iraq and has made two visits to Gaza during the current war to observe operations there. He told me that Israel has done far more to protect civilians than the United States did in Afghanistan and Iraq. Spencer reports that Israel has warned civilians when and where it is about to begin operations and published an online map showing which areas to leave. It has sent out millions of pamphlets, texts and recorded calls warning civilians of coming operations. It has conducted four-hour daily pauses to allow civilians to leave combat areas. It has dropped speakers that blast out instructions about when to leave and where to go. These measures, Spencer told me, have telegraphed where the I.D.F. is going to move next and "have prolonged the war, to be honest."

The measures are real, but in addition, Israel has cut off power in Gaza, making it hard for Palestinians to gain access to their phones and information and, most important, the evacuation orders published by Israel. Israel has also destroyed a vast majority of Gaza's cellphone towers and on occasion bombed civilians in so-called safe areas and safe routes. For civilians, the urban battlefield is unbelievably nightmarish. They are caught between a nation enraged by Oct. 7 and using overwhelming and often reckless force and a terrorist group that has structured the battlefield to maximize the number of innocent dead.

So to step back: What do we make of the current Israeli strategy? Judged purely on a tactical level, there's a strong argument that the I.D.F. has been remarkably effective against Hamas forces. I've learned to be suspicious of precise numbers tossed about in this war, but the I.D.F. claims to have killed over 13,000 of the roughly 30,000 Hamas troops. It has disrupted three-quarters of Hamas's battalions so that they are no longer effective fighting units. It has also killed two of five brigade commanders and 19 of 24 battalion commanders. As of January, U.S. officials estimated that Israel had damaged or made inoperable 20 to 40 percent of the tunnels. Many Israelis believe the aggressive onslaught has begun to restore Israel's deterrent power. (Readers should know that I have a son who served in the I.D.F. from 2014 to 2016; he's been back home in the States since then.)

But on a larger political and strategic level, you'd have to conclude that the Israeli strategy has real problems. Global public opinion is moving decisively against Israel. The key shift is in Washington. Historically pro-Israeli Democrats like Biden and Senator Chuck Schumer are now pounding the current Israeli government with criticism. Biden wants Israel to call off its invasion of the

final Hamas strongholds in the south. Israel is now risking a rupture with its closest ally and its only reliable friend on the U.N. Security Council. If Israel is going to defend itself from Iran, it needs strong alliances, and Israel is steadily losing those friends. Furthermore, Israeli tactics may be reducing Gaza to an ungovernable hellscape that will require further Israeli occupation and produce more terrorist groups for years.

Hamas's strategy is pure evil, but it is based on an understanding of how the events on the ground will play out in the political world. The key weakness of the Israeli strategy has always been that it is aimed at defeating Hamas militarily without addressing Palestinian grievances and without paying enough attention to the wider consequences. As the leaders of Hamas watch Washington grow more critical of Jerusalem, they must know their strategy is working.

So we're back to the original question: Is there a way to defeat Hamas with far fewer civilian deaths? Is there a way to fight the war that won't leave Israel isolated?

One alternative strategy is that Israel should conduct a much more limited campaign. Fight Hamas, but with less intensity. To some degree, Israel has already made this adjustment. In January, Israel announced it was shifting to a smaller, more surgical strategy; U.S. officials estimated at the time that Israel had reduced the number of Israeli troops in northern Gaza to fewer than half of the 50,000 who were there in December.

The first problem with going further in this direction is that Israel may not be left with enough force to defeat Hamas. Even by Israel's figures, most Hamas fighters are still out there. Will surgical operations be enough to defeat an enemy of this size? A similar strategy followed by America in Afghanistan doesn't exactly inspire confidence.

A second problem is that the light footprint approach leaves power vacuums. This allows Hamas units to reconstitute themselves in areas Israel has already taken. As the United States learned in Iraq, if troop levels get too low, the horrors of war turn into the horrors of anarchy.

Another alternative strategy is targeted assassinations. Instead of continuing with a massive invasion, just focus on the Hamas fighters responsible for the Oct. 7 attack, the way Israel took down the terrorists who perpetrated the attack on Israeli Olympians in Munich in 1972.

The difference is that the attack on Israelis at Munich was a small-scale terrorist assault. Oct. 7 was a comprehensive invasion by an opposing army. Trying to assassinate perpetrators of that number would not look all that different from the current military approach. As Raphael Cohen, the director of the strategy and doctrine program at the RAND Corporation, notes: "In practical terms, killing or capturing those responsible for Oct. 7 means either thousands or potentially tens of thousands of airstrikes or raids dispersed throughout the Gaza Strip. Raids conducted on that scale are no longer a limited, targeted operation. It's a full-blown war."

Furthermore, Hamas's fighters are hard to find, even the most notorious leaders. It took a decade for the United States to find Osama bin Laden, and Israel hasn't had great success with eliminating key Hamas figures. In recent years, Israel tried to kill Mohammed Deif, the commander of Hamas's military wing, seven times, without success.

The political costs of this kind of strategy might be even worse than the political costs of the current effort. Turkey, a Hamas supporter, has made it especially clear that Israel would pay a very heavy price if it went after Hamas leaders there.

A third alternative is a counterinsurgency strategy, of the kind that the United States used during the surge in Iraq. This is a less intense approach than the kind of massive invasion we've seen and would focus on going after insurgent cells and rebuilding the destroyed areas to build trust with the local population. The problem is that this works only after you've defeated the old regime and have a new host government you can work with. Israel is still trying to defeat the remaining Hamas battalions in places like Rafah. This kind of counterinsurgency approach would be an amendment to the current Israeli strategy, not a replacement.

Critics of the counterinsurgency approach point out that Gaza is not Iraq. If Israel tried to clear, hold and build new secure communities in classic counterinsurgency fashion, those new communities wouldn't look like safe zones to the Palestinians. They would look like detention camps. Furthermore, if Israel settles on this strategy, it had better be prepared for a long war. One study of 71 counterinsurgency campaigns found that the median length of those conflicts was 10 years. Finally, the case for a full counterinsurgency approach would be stronger if that strategy had led to American victories in Afghanistan and Iraq, which it did not.

A fourth alternative is that Israel should just stop. It should settle for what it has achieved and not finish the job by invading Rafah and the southern areas of Gaza, or it should send in just small strike teams.

This is now the official Biden position. The national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, has argued that Israel can destroy Hamas in Gaza without a large invasion but "by other means" (which he did not elaborate on). The United States has asked Israel to send a delegation to Washington to discuss alternative Rafah strategies, which is good. The problem is that, first, there seems to be a budding disagreement over how much of Hamas needs to be destroyed to declare victory and, second, the I.D.F. estimates that there are 5,000 to 8,000 Hamas fighters in Rafah. Defeating an army that size would take thousands of airstrikes and raids. If you try to shrink the incursion, the math just doesn't add up. As an Israeli war cabinet member, Benny Gantz, reportedly told U.S. officials, "Finishing the war without demilitarizing Rafah is like sending in firefighters to put out 80 percent of a fire."

If this war ends with a large chunk of Hamas in place,

it would be a long-term disaster for the region. Victorious, Hamas would dominate whatever government was formed to govern Gaza. Hamas would rebuild its military to continue its efforts to exterminate the Jewish state, delivering on its promise to launch more and more Oct. 7s. Israel would have to impose an even more severe blockade than the one that it imposed before, this time to keep out the steel, concrete and other materials that Hamas uses to build tunnels and munitions and that Gazans would need to rebuild their homes.

If Hamas survives this war intact, it would be harder for the global community to invest in rebuilding Gaza. It would be impossible to begin a peace process. As the veteran Middle East observers Robert Satloff and Dennis Ross wrote in *American Purpose*, “Any talk of a postwar political process is meaningless without Israel battlefield success: There can be no serious discussion of a two-state solution or any other political objective with Hamas either still governing Gaza or commanding a coherent military force.”

So where are we? I’m left with the tragic conclusion that there is no magical alternative military strategy. As Cohen wrote in *Foreign Policy*: “If the international community wants Israel to change strategies in Gaza, then it should offer a viable alternative strategy to Israel’s announced goal of destroying Hamas in the strip. And right now, that alternate strategy simply does not exist.”

The lack of viable alternatives leaves me with the further conclusion that Israel must ultimately confront Hamas leaders and forces in Rafah rather than leave it as a Hamas beachhead. For now, a cease-fire may be in the offing in Gaza, which is crucial for the release of more hostages.

Israel can use that time to put in place the humanitarian relief plan that Israeli security officials are now, at long last, proposing (but that the country’s prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has not agreed to so far). Israel would also have to undertake a full-scale civilian evacuation of Rafah before any military operation and then try to take out as much of Hamas as possible with as few civilian casualties as possible. Given the horrors of this kind of tunnel-based urban warfare, this will be a painful time and painfully difficult. But absent some new alternative strategy, Biden is wrong to stop Israel from confronting the Hamas threat in southern Gaza.

Finally, like pretty much every expert I consulted, I’m also left with the conclusion that Israel has to completely rethink and change the humanitarian and political side of this operation. Israel needs to supplement its military strategy with an equally powerful Palestinian welfare strategy.

Israel’s core problems today are not mostly the fault of the I.D.F. or its self-defense strategy. Israel’s core problems flow from the growing callousness with which many of its people have viewed the Palestinians over the past decades, magnified exponentially by the trauma it has just suffered. Today, an emotionally shattered Israeli

people see through the prism of Oct. 7. They feel existentially insecure, facing enemies on seven fronts — Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Iran. As Ross has noted, many often don’t see a distinction between Hamas and the Palestinians. Over 80 percent of West Bank Palestinians told pollsters they supported the Oct. 7 attack.

As the columnist Anshel Pfeffer wrote in the Israeli paper *Haaretz*, “The very idea that Israel needed to take any responsibility whatsoever for the place from which those who had murdered, raped and pillaged had emerged was seen as a moral abomination.”

Pfeffer continued that because of this attitude, “the government’s policy on humanitarian supplies to Gaza is a combination of vengeance, ignorance and incompetence.” He quoted unnamed I.D.F. officials who acknowledged that of course Israel is responsible for the welfare of the people in the area it controls but that the civilian leaders refuse to confront this.

On occasions when Israel has responded to world pressure and shifted policy, it has done so in secret, with no discussion in the cabinet.

An officer whose duties specifically include addressing the needs of civilians told Pfeffer that he didn’t have much to do except for some odd jobs.

Israel is failing to lay the groundwork for some sort of better Palestinian future — to its own detriment. The security experts I spoke with acknowledge that providing humanitarian aid will be hard. As Cohen told me: “If the Israeli military takes over distributing humanitarian aid to Gaza, they will likely lose soldiers in the process. And so Israelis are asking why should their boys die providing aid to someone who wants to kill them. So the United States needs to convince Israel that this is the morally and strategically right thing to do.”

For her book “How Terrorism Ends,” the Carnegie Mellon scholar Audrey Kurth Cronin looked at about 460 terrorist groups to investigate how they were defeated. Trying to beat them with military force alone rarely works. The root causes have to be addressed. As the retired general David Petraeus reminded his audience recently at the New Orleans Book Festival, “Over time, hearts and minds still matter.”

Israel also has to offer the world a vision for Gaza’s recovery, and it has to do it right now. Ross argues that after the war is over, the core logic of the peace has to be demilitarization in exchange for reconstruction. In an essay in *Foreign Affairs*, he sketches out a comprehensive rebuilding effort, bringing in nations and agencies from all over the world, so Gaza doesn’t become a failed state or remain under Hamas control.

Is any of this realistic given the vicious enmity now ripping through the region? Well, many peace breakthroughs of the past decades happened after one side suffered a crushing defeat. Egypt established ties with Israel after it was thoroughly defeated in the Yom Kippur War. When Israel attacked Hezbollah in southern Lebanon

in 2006, the world was outraged. But after the fighting stopped, some Lebanese concluded that Hezbollah had dragged them into a bloody, unnecessary conflict. The Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, was forced to acknowledge his error, saying he didn't know Israel would react so violently. The Lebanese border stabilized. Israel's

over-the-top responses have sometimes served as effective deterrents and prevented further bloodshed.

Israel and the Palestinians have both just suffered shattering defeats. Maybe in the next few years they will do some difficult rethinking, and a new vision of the future will come into view. But that can happen only after Hamas is fully defeated as a military and governing force.

Destroying Hamas is the only goal that makes sense

By Moshe Phillips

israelnationalnews.com

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There is a lot more at stake here than another October 7th.

On March 18 Jake Sullivan, the United States National Security Advisor, said "The president told the prime minister again today that we share the goal of defeating Hamas."

And the very next day, in a briefing on March 19, Matthew Miller, Spokesperson for the United States Department of State, said "every step must be taken to degrade Hamas so such an event like October 7th can't be repeated."

Is the State Department now saying that the Biden Administration policy is to see Hamas degraded and not destroyed? If the defeat of Hamas remains "the goal" why hasn't State corrected its March 19 statement?

Is the delivery of conflicting signals intentional?

To have the goal that Hamas does not ever carry out another October 7th type event assumes that Hamas is evil and both needs and deserves to be utterly and completely destroyed. Destroyed because it is evil. The moral thing to do is to destroy evil when it poses a "clear and present danger" or likely will again.

When the Allies after World War Two conducted a systematic effort of denazification it was not because the Nazi Party or Nazi ideas were going to be threat in 1946 or 1947 but because the Nazis' ideas were dangerous enough that if not outlawed and fought and vanquished on the battlefield of ideas then the Allies had every right to believe that they might have to return to combat on the actual battlefield in the 1950s or 1960s and fight the Nazis yet again. Israel has fought Hamas too many times already.

The purpose of war is to permanently eliminate the threat coming from your enemy. Far too often history has revealed the eternal truth that wars are things that must be won decisively or they will cause subsequent conflicts that will grow in both intensity and the degree of devastation. Evil must be confronted and evil must be destroyed. Hamas is evil. Hamas is the enemy. Hamas must be eliminated.

Destroying Hamas is the right thing to do.

Destroying Hamas is a necessary thing to do.

Destroying Hamas is something it is possible to do.

Those who argue that it is wrong to want to destroy Hamas do not accurately understand what Hamas is all about. Those in the American government who argue that it is unnecessary to destroy Hamas do not comprehend the

threat that a well-armed Iranian proxy within a morning's drive to Tel Aviv really means.

Would any U.S. president allow an al-Qaeda guerilla army to train and prepare for war against America from northern Mexico? Those who argue that it is impossible to destroy Hamas may have a strong argument. It will not be easy. Finding and killing Osama bin Laden was not easy. But it was well worth it.

And be sure these subjects are closely connected:

DATELINE: GAZA, September 11, 2001. Mass dancing and celebrating has been seen throughout the streets of Gaza after news reports of the Islamic terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon were first heard here. Hamas celebrated in the hours after the attacks by distributing candy to Gazan school children.

DATELINE: WASHINGTON DC, September 11, 2001. President Bush stated in his address to the nation that: We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them ... America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism.

DATELINE: WASHINGTON DC, September 20, 2001. President Bush stated in his address to the United States Congress that: "We will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime."

DATELINE: GAZA, May 2, 2011. Ismail Haniyeh, then the Hamas prime minister in Gaza declares "We condemn the assassination of an Arab holy warrior ... and the continuing American policy ... of shedding Muslim blood."

Calling for support of the Hamas/Fatah alliance is a wrong move for U.S. foreign policy makers. The idea rejects the Bush Doctrine that Americans so strongly embraced in the days after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Asking Israel to accept the new Hamas/Fatah arrangement is no different than asking the American people to agree to a truce with al-Qaeda now that Osama bin Laden has been eliminated.

Moreover, it must be remembered that Hamas and al-

Qaeda share an identical world view, strategy, and are allied. Just read the pledge of Hamas as it is revealed in their official covenant (constitution): "Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model, the Koran its Constitution, Jihad its path and death for the cause of Allah is its highest belief."

Compare this to Ben Laden's infamous August 1996 Fatwa: "Those youths know that their rewards in fighting you, the USA, is double than their rewards in fighting someone else not from the people of the book. They have no intention except to enter paradise by killing you. An infidel, and enemy of Allah like you, cannot be in the same hell with his righteous executioner."

Hamas and al-Qaeda share a bloody, genocidal, and megalomania driven philosophy. Israel's opposition to Hamas rule in Gaza is an extension of America's war against Islamic terrorism.

Let's remember the words of columnist Cal Thomas from January 2009 "Hamas, a group designated as a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department, are the Nazis of modern times. Israel is right to pound military targets inside Gaza."

The State Department is wrong to speak about a goal to "degrade Hamas." If U.S. policy states that Israel cannot destroy terrorist organizations that attempt every single day to kill Israelis, then on what grounds does America have the right to target terror groups seeking to harm her?

There is a lot more at stake here than another October 7th and both the White House and the State Department need to internalize that, and soon.

Note: And while we are talking truth to power, read David Bedein below:

Qatar poses as an innocuous mediator.

However, you do not need a commission of inquiry to identify Qatar as the nation that funds Hamas and its henchmen.

Therefore, Qatar bears criminal responsibility for their Hamas proxy in the rape and kidnap of hostages hijacked from sovereign Israel, an act which inflicts daily grief on the people of Israel, let alone on the hostages themselves.

This is not a crime confined to October 7.

Today, Qatar captives suffer rapes, starvation and torture, which will continue until Qatar pulls the plug on Hamas.

When you get ulcers, give ulcers.

When the business week begins on Monday, conduct acts of peaceful protest, and close Qatari missions until Qatari captives are free.

Give Qatar the collective ulcers that they deserve by Choosing your local Qatari mission for direct action from this list of Qatari diplomatic around the world:

<https://embassies.net/qatar-embassy>

Schumer's Netanyahu Derangement Syndrome

By Binyamin Rose

mishpacha.com

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Chuck Schumer is the latest victim of an old political malady.

If Senator Chuck Schumer, a Jewish Democrat from New York, made aliyah and wished to remain in politics, he could fit in seamlessly as second in command to Yair Lapid at Yesh Atid. (Just realized that Lapid rhymes with Atid.)

If Schumer's ego won't allow him to play second fiddle, he could form a new party, born in SIN — an acronym for "Save Israel from Netanyahu."

The above is only a Purim spiel, but Schumer, the Senate majority leader, with 25 years of seniority in the Senate,

tarnished his longstanding pro-Israel reputation forever in the eyes of a majority of Israelis and a goodly number of Americans by taking to the Senate floor to call for new elections in Israel.

According to Schumer, Binyamin Netanyahu has "lost his way," and his "coalition no longer fits the needs of Israel." With unprecedented arrogance, he threatened that if Netanyahu's coalition remains in power, "and continues to pursue dangerous and inflammatory policies," then "the United States will have no choice but to play a more active role in shaping Israeli policy by using our leverage to change the present course."

In plain English, Schumer, who cleared his speech with the Biden administration in advance, declared that if Israel doesn't install a new government that pursues

Schumer's overriding interest — the re-election of the Biden-Harris ticket — America will curtail its military and political support for Israel.

Schumer's Senate floor speech was a premeditated breach of the protocol of non-interference in another democratic country's internal politics. It was especially hurtful aimed at a strategic ally like Israel, embroiled in a multi-front war it didn't ask for. Aside from Lapid, who cited Schumer's speech as proof that Netanyahu was shedding allies right and left, even Benny Gantz, who is waiting in the wings for a new election, issued a statement saying Schumer blundered, and reminded him that Israel is a democracy that makes its own choices.

Schumer did aim for balance in calling for Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas to step down "to support a gradual succession plan for responsible Palestinian leaders to take his place."

That's presuming Abbas, who is serving the 19th year of the four-year term he won in 2005, will exit gracefully. Schumer also distastefully drew moral equivalence to "Hamas, and the Palestinians who support and tolerate their evil ways" with "radical right-wing Israelis in government and society," singling out Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben Gvir, referring to them as the "bigots" in Bibi's coalition who "reject the idea of a Palestinian state."

Chuck, I've got news for you. You don't have to be a bigot or a right-wing radical to reject a Palestinian state. You just need to keep your eyes and ears wide open — an

imposing challenge for people who live in a dream world. There is a multitude of evidence from recent history that a Palestinian state would pose an existential danger to the Jews of Israel.

And Israel is not alone. The global outbreak of Islamic-sponsored anti-Semitism has every Jew in the world feeling queasy.

Schumer's Flip-Flop

Schumer's vocal opposition to Netanyahu is also a major turnaround. When Netanyahu delivered his controversial speech to Congress in 2015 to try to sway elected officials to oppose the Obama-Biden Iran nuclear deal, Schumer expressed his displeasure with Bibi's approach in a private conversation. Even then, Schumer attended Netanyahu's address and was one of four Senate Democrats who bucked Obama by voting against the deal. However, when it became politically expedient, Schumer flip-flopped and criticized Trump for exiting the deal in 2018 after he took office.

It was Fox News that coined the term "Trump derangement syndrome" to describe people who opposed Trump no matter what he said or did. That disorder is contagious and has infected Netanyahu critics, too.

Bibi has served more than 15 years in nonconsecutive terms as Israel's prime minister. His longevity places him in a league with other iconic modern-day leaders of Western democracies, including Germany's Angela Merkel, Britain's Tony Blair, and Canada's Stephen Harper, but the longer a politician serves in high office, the more time he has to make political enemies.

Why does Netanyahu arouse such intense opposition?
Some of it is rational and some is not.

No politician is above criticism or beyond reproach. His moniker as Mr. Security fizzled after Hamas's October 7 attack and the faulty conceptions that left security forces flat-footed. Chances are growing that the Likud will replace Netanyahu before the next election, whenever primaries are held, or that party members fed up with the Likud will defect to other parties.

But that's a decision that Israel's registered voters will make. It's not up to Chuck Schumer, Joe Biden, or the rest of the world's cheerleaders for a two-state solution that could end up in the dissolution of one of them.

Rejection of Terms

One manifestation of "Netanyahu derangement syndrome" is Schumer's buy-in to the Israeli leftist narrative that Bibi prioritizes his political survival over Israel's best interests. Schumer cited Netanyahu's political pact with Smotrich and Ben Gvir as evidence. Schumer conveniently ignores the fact or forgets that Netanyahu would have preferred a coalition with centrist parties led by Benny Gantz, Gideon Saar, and Avigdor Lieberman, but they effectively boycotted him, both before and after the election.

Schumer disregards the results of Israel's last election in November 2022. Turnout exceeded 70%, and 516,146 people — to be precise — cast ballots for Smotrich and Ben Gvir's Religious Zionism party. That's almost 11 percent of the popular vote, which translated into 14 Knesset seats, making them Israel's third largest party behind the Likud and Yesh Atid.

It's not as if Israelis would have issues complying with Schumer's pleas for elections. We held five in three and a half years between April 2019 and November 2022. Each time, some 30 to 40 parties fielded slates. No Israeli is shy about expressing political opinions.

Perhaps Schumer is encouraged by the polls that show Benny Gantz leading the pack if elections were held today, which they won't be.

Some polls are also showing Religious Zionists, mainly Smotrich's faction, have lost support, but accurate predictions are impossible to make considering the major convulsions and realignments that are lurking in the political landscape.

The overwhelming majority of Religious Zionists would reject being labeled as "bigots" or even members of the "radical right." Who are they? Predominantly Israeli-born-and-bred Orthodox Jews from a broad cross-section of the dati-leumi community that includes professionals with advanced degrees, small-business owners, farmers, soldiers, and Torah scholars. Just like the chareidim, they belong to a rapidly growing demographic group in a country that has turned more religious and more right-wing since the October 7 calamities.

That being the case, that next election that Schumer clamored for on the Senate floor may render him more despondent than he is now.

The war in Gaza and beyond: At a moment of military might, Israel looks deeply vulnerable

By The Economist

economist.com

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America should help it find a better strategy.

There is still a narrow path out of the hellscape of Gaza. A temporary ceasefire and hostage release could cause a change of Israel's government; the rump of Hamas fighters in south Gaza could be contained or fade away; and from the rubble, talks on a two-state solution could begin, underwritten by America and its Gulf allies. It is just as likely, however, that ceasefire talks will fail. That could leave Israel locked in the bleakest trajectory of its 75-year

existence, featuring endless occupation, hard-right politics and isolation. Today many Israelis are in denial about this, but a political reckoning will come eventually. It will determine not only the fate of Palestinians, but also whether Israel thrives in the next 75 years.

If you are a friend of Israel this is a deeply uncomfortable moment. In October it launched a justified war of self-defence against Hamas, whose terrorists had committed atrocities that threaten the idea of Israel as a

land where Jews are safe. Today Israel has destroyed perhaps half of Hamas's forces. But in important ways its mission has failed.

First, in Gaza, where its reluctance to help provide or distribute aid has led to an avoidable humanitarian catastrophe, and where the civilian toll from the war is over 20,000 and growing. The hard-right government of Binyamin Netanyahu has rejected plans for post-war Gaza to be run by either the Palestinian Authority (pa) or an international force. The likeliest outcome is a military reoccupation. If you add the West Bank, Israel could permanently hold sway over 4m-5m Palestinians.

Israel has also failed at home. The problems go deeper than Mr Netanyahu's dire leadership. A growing settler movement and ultra-Orthodox population have tilted politics to the right and polarised society. Before October 7th this was visible in a struggle over judicial independence. The war has raised the stakes, and although the hard-right parties of the coalition are excluded from the war cabinet they have compromised Israel's national interest by using incendiary rhetoric, stoking settler violence and trying to sabotage aid and post-war planning. Israel's security establishment is capable and pragmatic, but no longer fully in charge.

Israel's final failure is clumsy diplomacy. Fury at the war was inevitable, especially in the global south, but Israel has done a poor job of countering it. "Lawfare", including spurious genocide allegations, is damaging its reputation. Young Americans sympathise with it less than their parents do. President Joe Biden has tried to restrain Mr Netanyahu's government by publicly embracing it, but failed. On March 14th Chuck Schumer, Israel's greatest ally in the Senate, decried Hamas's atrocities but said Israel's leader was "lost".

It is a bleak picture that is not always acknowledged in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. Mr Netanyahu talks of invading Rafah, Hamas's last redoubt, while the hard right fantasises about resettling Gaza. Many mainstream Israelis are deluding themselves, too. They believe the unique threats to Israel justify its ruthlessness and that the war has helped restore deterrence. Gaza shows that if you murder Israelis, destruction beckons. Many see no partner for peace—the pa is rotten and polls say 93% of Palestinians deny Hamas's atrocities even took place. Occupation is the least-bad option, they conclude. Israelis would prefer to be popular abroad, but condemnation and antisemitism are a small price to pay for security. As for America, it has been angry before. The relationship is not about to rupture. If Donald Trump returns he may once again give Israel a free pass.

This seductive story is a manifesto for disaster. Consider defence. The damage to Israel's reputation could make it harder to fight on in Gaza. The long-term threat is from Iran and its proxies, including Hizbullah. Detering this requires a military partnership with America that needs bipartisan backing, and ideally Gulf Arab support, too. The economy depends on tech exports and experts with access to global markets. And rather than making Israelis safe, permanent occupation poisons politics by emboldening the hard right and breeding Palestinian radicalism. Israelis are right that they have no partner for peace today, but they are best placed to break the cycle.

Israel's trajectory will intensify its ethno-nationalist politics and pose legal threats to the economy. As estrangement from the West deepens, so deterrence may weaken. Firms could be blacklisted. Bosses could move high-tech businesses abroad or, if they are reservists, be arrested there.

America must help Israel avoid that fate—and if it fails it will itself pay a heavy diplomatic price. Best would be a temporary ceasefire, opening a route to two-state talks. Without this, American policy will need resetting. Mr Biden's early embrace has failed, but so would coercion. If America tried to force Israel out of Gaza while Hamas could still regroup, or curbed military support, or withdrew its support at the un, Israel's security could be in jeopardy.

America should therefore use other means. It should dispense more humanitarian aid unilaterally and decline to supply weapons for an invasion of Rafah, given the lack of civilian provision. It should broaden sanctions against settlers and right-wing fanatics to show Israeli voters that America underwrites their security but not extremism or permanent occupation. And it should continue to signal that it is keen to recognise Palestine as part of a two-state peace negotiation.

The battle to come

America, however, can do only so much. Most Israeli wars are followed by political upheaval. Removing Mr Netanyahu will not be easy. But when the reckoning comes it will be huge. The war has shattered many illusions: that the Palestinians can be ignored; that the pa has any appetite for reform; that antisemitism is rare; that Israel can pay lip-service to two states as settlements expand; and that the hard right can be tamed. The good news is that there are grounds for hope. Polls suggest that centrists in Israel command perhaps 50-60% of votes, institutions like the Supreme Court are still strong and better leaders exist. A struggle for Israel's future awaits. The battle in Gaza is just the start.

Why America Can't Get Its Gulf Allies to Join the Fight against Iran

By Hussain Abdul-Hussain

algemeiner.com

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They're afraid Washington will go wobbly again.

Wafic Safa, a top Hezbollah official, is on an unprecedented visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that classifies the Iran-backed Lebanese militia as a

terrorist organization.

The visit came less than a week after The Financial Times reported that Bret McGurk, a senior Biden official, had held secret talks with Iranian counterparts in Oman

about attacks in the Red Sea.

In December, America invited Saudi Arabia and the UAE to participate in Operation Guardian Prosperity, which was designed to defend international shipping lanes in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden against Houthi attacks originating from Yemen.

Under the Biden administration's strategy of "regional integration," America's Arab allies — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Egypt — are members of Combined Task Force (CTF) 153, whose mission is to guarantee the security of the Red and the Arabian seas. Yet when Yemen's Houthi forces started targeting ships, these Arab countries passed on Washington's invitation. Some believe this was because Riyadh and Abu Dhabi correctly calculated that Biden might change course midway and quit, leaving them facing renewed animosity from Tehran and the Houthis.

With McGurk's reported meeting to ask the Iranians to rein in the Houthis, the Saudis and the Emiratis were proven right. They likely see this as evidence that Biden is an unreliable ally, and that if he thinks that diplomacy is the way forward, Saudi Arabia and the UAE can reach out to Iran, and its proxies, on their own.

Consistency is key to successful foreign policy. The Biden administration has not shown this.

In February 2021, the administration took Yemen's Houthi militia off the US State Department's List of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO), despite objections from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In January, the administration reversed its position, re-listing the Houthis, not as an FTO, but as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" group, whatever that means, attesting to the administration's obsession with word acrobatics at the expense of substantive policy.

Inconsistency has also marred the way Biden has dealt with Israel's reaction to Hamas' October 7 massacre of 1,200 Israelis. A week after the massacre, Biden said that Hamas must be eliminated. Less than six months later, as Israel prepared for a sweep of Rafah designed to deal the Palestinian group the final blow, Biden warned Israel against invading Gaza's southern town, saying that Rafah was a "red line" if the Israeli action there didn't meet his specifications.

Biden's position on Saudi Arabia has also been confused. Originally, candidate Biden had promised to turn Saudi Arabia into a pariah state. As president, Biden visited Riyadh and asked the Saudis for favors, mainly to pump more oil to lower global prices, and foreign policy help. When Biden is not applying pressure on Riyadh to raise its production levels, he and some in the Democratic Party spend their time bashing Gulf countries for their energy production, and blaming them for global warming, even though America has been leading the world in global crude oil production, while China leads the planet, by a mile, in carbon emissions.

Then there is the erratic policy of arms sales to allies. Hardware contracts are long-term and require servicing, maintenance, recalls, and upgrades. It is almost impossible to integrate systems from different countries together. This means that countries that buy US arms, and therefore help boost the American economy and create jobs, have to stick to American arms.

But Biden — and the Democrats in general — politicize arms sales and supply, whether to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Israel, or other clients. No army wants to find itself begging for resupplies mid war. That's exactly what America did to the Arab coalition that was fighting the Houthis in Yemen: Washington prohibited the sale of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia.

Gulf countries eventually decided to coexist with the rogue Houthi militia on their borders, only for America to come begging the Saudis and the Emiratis to join the coalition to protect the Gulf of Eden and the Mandib Strait.

All of a sudden, the Biden administration declared that it was planning to lift the ban on sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia. Riyadh said thanks, but no thanks, your war with the Houthis is not ours, just like our war with them was not yours. For Riyadh, it was payback time. Anyone who knows the Arab society knows the importance it places on loyalty, between individuals as well as between nations. With Biden and the Democrats, the Saudis and the UAE have been having a hard time in this department.

America went to war on the Houthis alone. Only the UK effectively participated.

In Iraq, America responded to attacks of pro-Iran militias on Iraqi bases housing US troops by killing half a dozen senior militia leaders. Tehran and its Iraq loyalists got the message: America was not playing games and was serious in inflicting harm on the militias. The attacks on Americans in Iraq stopped, for now.

In Yemen, however, Houthi leaders enjoyed safety despite American strikes. Had America taken out a few senior leaders, it would have raised the cost of war for the militia significantly, forcing it to change its calculus.

Washington, instead, has reportedly decided to reason with the same Iran regime that has proven, time and again, that it is not interested in deals with America, only in defeating it, its allies, and ejecting it from the Middle East.

Military regional integration is a great idea, but if not backed up with a clear political vision, will, and strategy, it accounts for little. Gulf states were right to stay away from Biden's confused policy on Yemen. Now they are reaching out to Iran and its militias, on their own. Soon, America could be out of the Middle East, both militarily and diplomatically. Washington should be careful what it wishes for.

Mr. Abdul-Hussain is a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

Canada's Shameful Attempt to Make Kashrut Illegal**By Jackie Hajdenberg****timesofisrael.com****March 17, 2024****Another accusation of Jewish cruelty?**

Two of the most prominent kosher certification agencies in Canada are suing the national government, claiming that recent regulations around animal slaughter are putting the country's kosher industry at risk.

The Kashruth Council of Canada and the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, along with the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, an umbrella group representing Canada's nearly 500,000 Jews, say in the suit that the enforcement of guidelines first introduced several years ago has led to a dramatic decline in the domestic production of kosher meat in the country.

The suit was filed last week.

"Since these new guidelines have gone into effect, the amount of kosher meat produced in Canada has decreased dramatically," the three organizations said in a statement earlier this week. "The community has been trying to temporarily supplement this shortfall with imports, but this situation is not viable over the long term."

The lawsuit surrounds the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations instituted by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which monitors food, animals and plants to ensure consumer safety. According to the regulations, animal slaughter should include the initial use of a stun gun. But that is prohibited under the laws of Jewish ritual slaughter, or shechita, which mandate that the animal must be uninjured before it is slaughtered with a knife.

If a stun gun is not used, according to the regulations, ritually slaughtered livestock and birds must pass multiple cognitive tests that indicate a loss of consciousness and brain death before continuing in the meat production process. Kosher proponents say that these extra steps add time and complexity to a process that would otherwise take under a minute.

The lawsuit says that between August 2022 and

January 2023, the number of kosher meat processing plants in Canada has fallen from six to four, leading to a decline in the weekly yield of domestically produced kosher beef, from 3,400 to 1,750 head of cattle.

The Canadian lawsuit follows years of challenges to kosher slaughter in Europe. A February decision in the Court of the European Union upheld a ban on kosher slaughter in two of Belgium's three regions.

The ban also focuses on slaughter without the use of a stun gun, which also effectively precludes the Muslim method of slaughtering animals.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency said in a statement to several publications that it "remains open to new scientific findings that can support animal welfare, and to listening to and engaging with stakeholders on the challenges they face as well as on potential solutions."

But the Jewish groups said they submitted evidence last month showing that shechita is humane and meets the CFIA guidelines because it instantly makes the animal lose consciousness, but that the food safety agency rejected their appeal.

"CFIA is supposed to be a science-based organization and to date they have ignored the science," Rabbi Saul Emanuel, the director of MK Kosher, the Montreal Jewish community's agency, told the Toronto Star.

The newspaper reported that although most kosher meat in Canada is imported, the country's Jewish community wants

to ensure the availability of domestic kosher meat in case of supply chain issues and as a marker of Jewish belonging in Canada.

"Other Canadians are guaranteed access to local Canadian meat," Richard Rabkin, managing director of the Kashruth Council of Canada, told the Star. "Why should Jewish Canadians be treated any differently?"

AIPAC Congressional Election Season Appeal**Adapted from an email by Marilyn Rosenthal, AIPAC PAC Director www.aipacpac.org March 27, 2024****Defeat Israel's enemies/Support Israel's friends.**

Two of the most anti-Israel members in Congress today are Jamaal Bowman and Cori Bush, both close allies of Rashida Tlaib and AOC. Each spreads Hamas' propaganda, whitewashes atrocities carried out on October 7 and falsely accuses Israel of committing war crimes.

And their efforts go beyond rhetoric. They are actively working to undermine the U.S.-Israel relationship and the security of the Jewish state, including by trying to condition and cut off American aid to Israel. If they are allowed to succeed, Israel will be left isolated and delegitimized, lacking the lifesaving resources it needs to defend its people.

Fortunately, two pro-Israel leaders are working to defeat them, and they are depending on our community to

ensure they have the resources needed to win.

• **Wesley Bell, Candidate for U.S. House (D-MO).** Strong pro-Israel St. Louis County Prosecuting Attorney challenges anti-Israel Rep. Cori Bush.

• **George Latimer, Candidate for U.S. House (D-NY-16).** Westchester County Executive challenges anti-Israel Rep. Jamaal Bowman in 6/25 Democratic primary.

Israel needs us now more than ever before. We need to ensure that America's support for Israel never wavers. You can help by helping George Latimer and Wesley Bell get elected to Congress and defeating Jamaal Bowman, Cori Bush. Consider visiting the AIPAC PAC candidate support page to donate to these pro-Israel candidates today at <https://candidates.aipacpac.org/page/featured/>