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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1. Israel zwischen zwei Parlamentswahlen	1
2. Startschuss für Trumps Jahrhundertfrieden	4
3. Angriff auf syrische Ziele	7
4. Medienquerschnitt	8

1. Israel zwischen zwei Parlamentswahlen

Drei Monate vor den geplanten Neuwahlen in Israel beginnen die Parteien damit, sich neu aufzustellen. Avi Gabbay, bis vor kurzem Chef der Arbeitspartei, zog die Konsequenz aus dem fatalen Ergebnis für die Sozialdemokraten, die lediglich sechs Mandate bei den Wahlen im April 2019 erreichten. Er gab seinen Rücktritt bekannt. Meretz und die Arbeitspartei geraten unter Druck, die Kräfte vor dem nächsten Urnengang zu vereinen. Zusammengehen werden mit großer Wahrscheinlichkeit die arabischen Parteien. Die Vereinte Liste war bei den vorvergangenen Wahlen auf drei Mandate mehr gekommen als die beiden arabisch-antizionistischen Listen, als sie im April getrennt antraten. Grund für erneute Wahlen ist, dass es Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu nicht gelang, fristgerecht eine Regierungskoalition auf die Beine zu stellen. Bis zum Wahltermin 17. September 2019 wird er die Regierungsgeschäfte weiterführen. Einen Wechsel im Kabinett gab es indes schon: Ex-Bildungsminister Naftali Bennett und Ex-Justizministerin Ayelet Shaked, die beiden Gründer_innen der Partei Hayamin Hehadash (Die Neue Rechte), die bei der Wahl im April an der Sperrklausel gescheitert waren, wurden von Netanyahu nun aus ihren Ämtern entlassen. Den Posten von Shaked übernahm der Likud-Abgeordnete Amir Ohana. Mit ihm bekleidet zum ersten Mal ein offenkundig lebender Mann den Posten des Justizministers. Allerdings geriet Ohana bereits kurz nach sei-

ner Nominierung unter harsche Kritik, u.a. aufgrund seiner Aussage in einem Interview vor einigen Monaten, dass nicht alle Entscheide des Obersten Gerichtshofs respektiert werden müssen.

Netanyahu's coalition failure was really a secret success

(...) Under normal circumstances, Netanyahu would have banged his fist on the table and explained the political reality to his ultra-Orthodox coalition partners: the alternative to a Netanyahu government was a Yair Lapid government. And that was the very last thing that their constituents would ever want. Netanyahu also promised, off the record, that even if the draft law were - God forbid - approved by the Knesset, he would find a way around it for them. After all such things had already occurred in the past. (...) Netanyahu knew it, the spiritual leaders of the ultra-Orthodox parties knew it and so did Avigdor Liberman. Which surely brings us to the conclusion that if Netanyahu really wanted to, he could have formed a coalition government. (...) Netanyahu's gamble was based on cold and calculated personal analysis. When the current Knesset was sworn in, he realized that his coalition partners were not exactly clamoring to pass legislation to ensure his immunity from prosecution. And even if they did agree, he could not afford the heavy diplomatic-economic-political price they would demand. (...) Netanyahu and his inner circle calculated that he

needed a larger Likud party, with at least 40 seats in the Knesset. And given the massive number of votes lost to right-wing parties that did not pass the threshold, a target of 43-42 seats in the next Knesset does not seem fantastical. (...) By refusing to join his coalition, Liberman threw Netanyahu a lifeline. Do not let his downcast grimaces fool you; do not be tempted to feel his pain. Netanyahu is playing his own game - his inability to form a new coalition was not failure, but success.

Sever Plocker, YED, 02.06.19

Right-wing leaders, do not betray your base

There is no rage more justified than that which is boiling the blood of the national camp at this time. Yisrael Beytenu party chief Avigdor Lieberman, in one of the most despicable acts of fraud in Israel's political history, stole an unprecedented electoral victory from an ideological camp. This goes beyond a ploy to bring down the government or political opportunism; it is the pillaging of democracy in full view of the cameras. (...) The Left, after stuttering a few words in embarrassment, has now come to its senses, the initial shock slowly replaced by signs of optimism; and rightfully so, from its standpoint. Lieberman is the realization of their hopes; he is the weakest link. The speed with which the man who just a few days ago was depicted as the most blatant representative of racism and fascism in Israel has become something of a cultural hero is sickening. (...) The Right cannot afford to be dragged to the depths of despair at this time. (...) The splits and multiplicity of parties to the Right of the Likud have been a failure. The boutique parties, which purported to offer fussy voters a political party exactly to their liking, have proved a safe way to ensure the wholesale loss of Knesset seats. Hundreds of thousands of voters have had their political voice silenced. (...) Right-wing voters have been traumatized by Lieberman's betrayal. Party heads must not do this to them once again. (...) unite and run together! Every other niche, spiteful, egotistical political framework that goes beyond one united right-wing party will expose the nationalist camp to the same blow it was struck with in the last election, only this time, the blow will be fatal. (...)

Eitan Orkibi, IHY, 04.06.19

Terra Incognita: Paternalism, Israel's Arab minority and elections

(...) Israel needs a new kind of politics. (...) In order to win the next elections, a new Arab-Jewish party must emerge on the Left, and this will finally galva-

nize the voters and bring about a paradigm shift. (...) One problem, though. Only Jewish voices seem to be championing this new paternalism. (...) There are two leftist parties in Israel that have numerous Arab voters and already have Jews and Arabs at the top of their lists historically. Meretz and Hadash have these components. (...) The problem for those who imagine a fantasy new Arab-Jewish party or Arabs choosing to vote for Labor or Blue and White is that no one is even interested in listening to Arab voters. (...) They know that a large centrist party made up primarily of former generals and right-wing parties, which are where most of the Israeli Jewish electorate increasingly stands, isn't much of a choice. All the voices who have prophecies about Arab voters might spend the next month listening to concerns in Rahat, Nazareth, Jisr e-Zarka, Jish, Taiba and other places, and then have an Arab write about their concerns in the next elections. The rest is just wasted paternalism.

Seth Frantzman, JPO, 04.06.19

Time to unite the left

Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to form a right-wing government (...) has provided a unique opportunity for Israel's democratic camp. (...) For the first time in a decade of unchallenged right-wing rule, doubts have begun to arise about Netanyahu's leadership inside his own political base, as the date approaches for his hearings in cases in which he's suspected of committing bribery, graft and breach of trust. The opportunity that has been created for a possible change in leadership, and to stop the right from moving ahead on extremist plans to annex territory in the West Bank and destroy the judiciary, makes it essential for supporters of peace and democracy to unify their ranks ahead of the September 17 election. (...) At issue is the fate of two left-wing parties - Meretz, which barely made it to the Knesset, and Labor, which has dwindled to just six seats and whose showing in opinion polls barely scrapes the threshold of votes needed to win Knesset representation. Both parties must unite to strengthen the camp that believes in dividing the land between Israel and the Palestinians, and in civil liberties. (...) Labor was once a part of an alignment with Mapam, which was one of Meretz's precursor parties. (...) There is no reason for these parties not to collaborate anew. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 05.06.19

Israel's election sequel has a new plot but it might have the same ending

In July, Benjamin Netanyahu will break David Ben Gurion's record and become Israel's longest serving Prime Minister. Bibi wanted to celebrate this milestone as the triumphant leader of a right-wing coalition (...). Instead he is back on the campaign trail, a caretaker Prime Minister fighting his second election in 6 months. (...) Bibi failed to find a deal. In the high stakes game of Israeli political poker he threw in his cards and kicked the table over. (...) His potential coalition partners were dealing with a weakened Prime Minister caught in a criminal case. It was obvious from the start that Netanyahu's top priority was to utilise his position to fight off impending prosecution. To do this he pursued a new immunity law and legislation to limit the power of the Supreme Court to overturn an immunity law or an immunity vote. His putative coalition partners responded to his weak position with maximalist demands making coalition negotiations harder than ever. (...) For Netanyahu a second election is a sobering experience and means, even if he wins, tricky coalition negotiations will coincide with the hearing on his criminal case expected in October. (...) The last election was a battle between Likud and the Blue and White party. But if Gantz and Lapid are to repeat their double act and win more seats they must win over Likud voters. To do this they need to avoid the trap of running another campaign that morphs into a referendum on Benjamin Netanyahu. The (...) failed coalition negotiations have provided a stark glimpse of what a new Netanyahu Government would look like. The real test for Gantz and Lapid is whether they have the skills to paint that picture and offer a real, credible alternative. If they fail again we could see a repeat of the last few months with the same characters reaching the same political stalemate.

James Sorene, TOI, 05.05.19

We must change our electoral system

(...) In Israel today it is said that 80% of the people agree on about 90% of the issues. We the people (...) are against both the annexation of the West Bank and withdrawal from the West Bank. We oppose a return to socialist economics but we want the government to actively manage our emerging free market, including by imposing price controls on certain goods. We resent the Orthodox monopoly over our religious life and even disdain their rabbis, but we confine the non-Orthodox religious to the distant periphery. (...) And yet, despite our over-

whelming agreement on almost all important issues, we the people failed to deliver a political verdict (...). Instead of picking a winner and a loser, we delivered a hung parliament. (...) The hung parliament is the defective political product of our decayed electoral system, which has outlived its usefulness. This system is known as "proportional representation" and it corrals all citizens into a single electoral district. The system was perfectly appropriate when Israel adopted it 70 years ago, when our voting population was just 600,000, almost all of whom were Jewish. (...) For decades, tribalism has put the fate of the nation into the hands of men who vigorously resist social integration and national unity. By sending us back to the polls, tribalism now threatens to turn Israel into a banana republic. And that means that tribalism's wicked grip on our electoral system must end. But that can only be accomplished by replacing our tribal electoral lines with the artificial lines of electoral districts. Dividing the polity into electoral districts will dramatically shrink the voting pool available to each of our domestic tribes, whose members generally live clustered together in a few different geographic areas. (...) Changing our electoral system by dividing the polity into electoral districts might seem like a very tall order even after the hung parliament result of our April election. But its urgency will become acute when the September round of elections produces yet another hung parliament.

Avi Berkowitz, JPO, 10.06.19

Religious parties hurt their religion

On the surface, the fact that Israel is headed back to an election only weeks after the last one looks like a system failure. (...) And yet, if we look at the reason for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's failure to cobble together a coalition – one party's refusal to kowtow to religious parties – this "do-over" election presents a unique opportunity for a political upgrade. Israel's religious parties crave political power because it enables them to fulfill their religious agenda, from refusing to enlist in the Israel Defense Forces to forcing Torah laws on the public. (...) This dispute is rooted in the founding of the Jewish state, when Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion made the fateful decision to exempt ultra-Orthodox men (only a few hundred at the time) from enlisting in the IDF. (...) If you're an Israeli parent whose children are risking their lives to defend the state, why should ultra-Orthodox citizens be exempt? And if you see ultra-Orthodox leaders fighting to keep their community out of the army, how would that make you feel about religion in general? There

are countless other ways that political power in the hands of ultra-Orthodox parties has become corrosive. (...) Religious intolerance is also a key contributor to the growing schism between Israel and Diaspora Jewry. The equitable compromise to allow egalitarian prayer at the Western Wall (...) was sabotaged by religious parties. The list goes on, from overly stringent conversion rules to the rejection and humiliation of non-Orthodox streams of Judaism. How could this be good for the Jews or for Israel? (...) Religion ought to be a beautiful thing, not a political thing. Religious leaders have every right to inspire people to become more religious and God-fearing. But when they impose rather than inspire, they end up hurting what matters most to them – their own religion.

David Suissa, IHY, 10.06.19

Another chance for the Joint List

Only rarely do politicians get a second chance (...). Once again, Arab Knesset members have a second chance. Over half of the Arab public did not turn out to vote in the last elections (...) for the overwhelming majority of those who did not vote at the last elections (...) it was a deliberate decision. The reasons were many: frustration at the lack of political influence in the Knesset, anger at the passing of the "Nation-State Law," and also — harsh criticism of the Arab parties for trashing "the will of the people" and shattering the dream of unity that had been realized with the formation of the Joint List. This deliberate refusal to vote sent a clear political message to the Arab parties, indicating that they must adopt a new and more constructive discourse, that they must be more attentive to the feelings of their public, and that they cannot allow the Joint List to disintegrate. This was a constructive message that could only have been conveyed via the highly unconstructive step of boycotting the polls. (...) Arab politicians need to prove to the Arab public that the problems that are of most concern to it — health, education, housing, employment, and crime — cannot be addressed without effective representation in the relevant Knesset committees. (...) Above all, Arab politicians must send their public a straightforward message: This time, we won't let the opportunity slip through our fingers.

Arik Rudnitzky, TOI, 11.06.19

Labor Party must learn from Gabbay's mistakes

Labor Party chairman Avi Gabbay did the right thing when he announced (...) that he won't run for reelection as the party's leader. (...) the party under

his leadership won just six Knesset seats in the recent election. That's an embarrassing result (...). Gabbay recognized his failure. (...) He (...) made serious mistakes when he first took the reins. People who believed that he was the right man at the right time, and that he had the ability to attract new groups of voters to the party, later felt that for this goal, Gabbay was willing to alienate Zionist Union's base and ignore its values. His willingness to accept Benjamin Netanyahu's stereotype of the left as having "forgotten what it means to be Jewish" caused many to reject his leadership. Many voters were also infuriated when he dissolved Zionist Union and ousted Livni on live television. They felt that in his efforts to get rid of the leftist label, he had forgotten the left's values. (...) In fairness, it must be said that his own mistakes weren't the only thing he had going against him. The entry into the race of former Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Benny Gantz and Gantz's formation of the Kahol Lavan joint ticket created a strong, attractive political alternative that reshuffled the deck. Many Zionist Union voters ended up voting Kahol Lavan because they thought it had the best chance to replace Netanyahu's government. (...) Labor would do well to learn from Gabbay's mistakes before the September election. Its efforts to appeal to new groups of voters must not come at the expense of loyalty to its old voters, or to the basic values that connect them.

Editorial, HAA, 12.06.19

2. Startschuss für Trumps Jahrhundertfrieden

US-Botschafter David Friedman ist für seine pro-israelische Haltung bekannt. Mit seiner jüngsten Aussage, Israel habe das Recht, Teile des Westjordanlandes zu annektieren, erregte der US-Botschafter einmal mehr die palästinensischen Gemüter. Israels Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu hatte unmittelbar vor den Wahlen im April angekündigt, schrittweise die von Israel besetzten Gebiete zu annektieren. So kurz vor der zunächst für Ende Juni angekündigten Veröffentlichung des US-Jahrhundertplans für einen Frieden im Nahen Osten nährte Friedman durch sein Interview mit der „New York Times“ das Gerücht, er habe die Palästinenser zusätzlich gegen eine Kooperation bewegen wollen. Nötig wäre das nicht, denn die Palästinensische Befreiungsbewegung (PLO) unter der Führung von Palästinenserpräsident Mahmud Abbas hält seit Ende 2017, als Trump Jerusalem als Hauptstadt Israels anerkannte, konsequent daran fest, die USA

als Vermittler im Friedensprozess abzulehnen. Die PLO will keine Vertreter zur Konferenz in Manama schicken. Bei dem für den 25. Juni geplanten Bahrain-Gipfel wollen die beiden Sondergesandten Trumps, sein Schwiegersohn Jared Kushner sowie der amerikanische Jurist Jason Greenblatt, einen Investitionsplan für die Palästinenser vorstellen. Die Veröffentlichung des gesamten politischen Plans könnte sich, wie Greenblatt signalisierte, noch bis zum November verzögern.

'Deal of the century' must address Jewish refugee issue

(...) before there can be peace, there must be truth, justice, and reconciliation. (...) with few exceptions, almost every time the term "refugees" has been brought up in the context of the Israeli-Arab conflict, it has been used purely in reference to Palestinian refugees. In fact, while Palestinian refugees have (...) a substantial international consensus surrounding their plight, the over 850,000 Jews driven from their homes in the Middle East and North Africa during the middle of the 20th century have received scant attention. Even in Israel, the issue has only recently started to be dealt with in a serious fashion. (...) Over the next few weeks, U.S. President Donald Trump will put forward (...) "the deal of the century," it is supposed to be an attempt to arrive at a deal that takes into account and solves all of the outstanding issues. (...) if it is to succeed in ending the conflict and deal with issues of justice and compensation, the issue of the Jewish refugees must be an important element of it. (...) it is not just a matter of correcting a historic injustice, it could also be politically astute to include the Jewish refugee issue when presenting the plan to Israelis. More than half of all Israeli Jews have roots in the Middle East and North Africa, and all have stories of how they were forced out of lands their families and communities had lived in, sometimes for millennia, without much more than the clothes on their back. (...) Obviously what was lost will not be reclaimed, but it is vital that there be redress. If there is, then those who were forced to flee their homes and communities, as well as their descendants, will feel their grievances are being taken seriously and will view the U.S. plan more favorably as a result. (...)

David A. Dangoor, IHY, 03.06.19

Jared Kushner just killed the Palestinian peace camp

The most disturbing aspect of U.S. President Trump's 'Deal of the Century,' developed by multi-

millionaire son-in-law Jared Kushner (...) is its disastrous effect on the overall peace process paradigm. (...) Palestinians are losing faith fast with the foundational idea of peace through negotiations. The humiliating and extremely biased parameters of the deal (...) is causing wide and ever-growing disillusionment amongst Palestinians with the peace process itself and the path of negotiations. (...) Furthermore, Palestinians now see that someone like President Mahmoud Abbas, whose controversial legacy was centered around his obedient fulfillment of Israel and the international community's demands to police the occupation, and provide unrequited security and stability to Israel at the expense of Palestinians, not only got absolutely nothing out of this, but is now being fought, demonized and drained of resources by the Trump administration. (...) the abusive and degrading parameters of Kushner's peace plan, aimed at "finishing off" the irritating obstacle of Palestine are dramatically empowering the most extreme voices in the conflict at the expense of the peace camp. Most prominent among these is the new Islamic Jihad leader and Iran's loyal man, Ziad Nakhalah, who has found a quick and easy ride upwards, a rising star on the back of the failing status quo and the Kushner deal. (...) The Trump peace plan is now becoming Nakhalah's best card to play. He feeds on popular despair, disillusionment and disappointment to build towards nihilistic conclusions - that another war is better than the continuity of the unlivable status quo. (...) The Palestinian peace camp has to hope that the political complications that both Trump and Netanyahu face mean they'll step away from the deal, and that they can keep their camp alive until the scales of the peace process are balanced once again.

Muhammad Shehada, HAA, 04.06.19

Unilateral Annexation

Anyone who has monitored the ups and down of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process since the Oslo Accords would hardly be surprised by Friedman's statement. (...) But an official statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government was nowhere to be seen or heard. Maybe it's because the prime minister, after years in charge, still has not decided what he wants to do with the West Bank. Netanyahu pledged just prior to the April 9 election to extend Israeli law to all West Bank Jewish communities but that was election rhetoric aimed at swiping votes away from the far-Right parties running for the Knesset. In reality, there is no formulated Israeli policy on the issue. Even with the across-

the-board support the Trump administration is giving to Israel, as exemplified by Friedman's statements, Netanyahu hasn't made an official decision if unilateral moves is the direction he wants to go in and whether it will be good for Israel. Any solution to the stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians will have to come from the parties themselves, not from support or opposition coming from outside sources, be they the US or the EU. Unilateral moves can result in chaos, vacuums of power and more violence – just look at the aftermath of Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon and from Gaza and the strengthening of Hezbollah and Hamas. They can also help move forward a long-term solution. Either way though it is not Friedman who needs to decide what Israel should do. (...)
Editorial, JPO, 10.06.19

Israelis should not celebrate U.S. ambassador's talk of West Bank annexation

(...) we should pay attention to the facts. The Palestinians have rejected every proposal that would lead to them having a state. (...) Now the Palestinians are demanding the 1967 lines, which were so vehemently rejected in the past. But when you do give it to them - they don't want to take it. In the past two decades, there were further proposals that gave the Palestinians 95 percent of the territories (...). According to every peace proposal, the major settlement blocs (...) will remain in Israeli hands. If this is the definition of annexation, then Friedman did not say anything new. The point is, it is not clear what Friedman did mean. Is this annexation in the vein of the peace proposals, or annexation as imagined by the Yesha Council of Settlers? The former is completely legitimate, but only within the framework of an arrangement. The second option would be a disaster that would lead to Israel's destruction. I suspect that Friedman, however, did mean the latter. Palestinian rejectionism is leading the slow march toward the common solution of the extreme right and the anti-Israel left - a single big country. Donald Trump, at the beginning of his tenure, did not reject the idea of a single state, and now Friedman has poured oil on that fire. And the blame is placed on the Palestinians. But the Palestinians are achieving their goal. True, they derided and rejected Friedman, but declarations of annexation both from Israel and the U.S. serve their purpose. Senior Palestinian official Ziad Abu Ziyad said in response to Friedman that annexation should happen, but it should be annexation of all of the territories in order to create a bi-national state. Friedman's statement, therefore, is

no cause for Israeli celebration; it is cause for concern.

Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 10.06.19

Trump's man in Jerusalem is harming the peace process

The remarks by U.S. Ambassador David Friedman (...), implying that the United States is giving Israel's government the go-ahead to unilaterally annex part of the West Bank, are tantamount to spitting in the face of the Palestinians. (...) These statements, which are identified with the position of Israel's annexationist right, destroy Friedman's legitimacy as an honest broker and retroactively justify the Palestinians' apprehensions about Trump's peace plan. After such remarks, it's hard to be surprised by the Palestinians' suspicions, which are expressed in part by their stated intention to boycott the summit in Bahrain where the United States is expected to disclose the plan's economic section. (...) If the United States is sincere about wanting to hold a peace conference with Palestinian participation and to act as an honest broker between the two parties, its representatives must be neutral. Friedman represents the interests of the settler right, and he does not meet these preconditions.

Editorial, HAA, 10.06.19

The US accepts Israel's territorial rights

US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman's remarks (...) are not so dramatic as they seem. (...) Friedman essentially said that if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu finally forms his fifth government, the US administration would no longer try to negotiate a settlement based on the 1967 borders and will discard this notion, recognize Israel's sovereignty in the settlement blocs or even its sovereignty on all settlements in Judea and Samaria. In fact, settlements comprise less than 5% of Judea and Samaria. (...) The so-called "deal of the century" the Trump administration is pursuing, is less about the Palestinians and Israelis decide; it is about what Israel and the United States decide. The borders will be determined by the two countries based on their mutual understandings and benefit the Palestinians economically. The (...) most important thing in the interview was that it reminded us that Israel has a right to Judea and Samaria. The entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River has been designated for Jewish settlement by international law as early as the 1920s through several international bodies, including the League of Nations. This right did not expire with the 1947 partition plan, and

not with the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. It has remained in place after the Six-Day War and has been accepted by jurists in Israel in the first generation after that war. Only recently have Israeli legal scholars started to interpret international law against Israel, but this too is changing.
Amnon Lord, IHY, 10.06.19

3. Angriff auf syrische Ziele

Die israelische Luftwaffe hat erneut syrische Ziele in Syrien angegriffen, darunter ein Stützpunkt im Osten der Provinz Homs, in dem ein Rüstungsdepot der iranischen Revolutionsgarden vermutet wird. Israel lehnt eine dauerhafte Stationierung iranischer Truppen in Syrien ab. Sowohl Russland als auch der Iran hatten den syrischen Machthaber Bashar al-Assad in den vergangenen Jahren beim Kampf gegen Rebellen unterstützt. Offiziell kommentierte die Regierung in Jerusalem die Angriffe nicht. Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu steht indes grundsätzlich offen dazu, alle notwendigen Maßnahmen ergreifen zu wollen, um die iranischen Milizen aus dem Nachbarland zu vertreiben. Auch umgekehrt kommt es vereinzelt zu Angriffen auf Israel. Bislang entstand dabei lediglich Materialschaden.

Netanyahu might need a war before the election

(...) The three months of waiting for the election is a dangerous period. Ostensibly we have a transitional government with limited authority, but it still has enough maneuver room to harm the country's stability and security. For example, two airstrikes in Syria within two days, following the rocket fire from Syria at Israel, could be considered a routine response, but such strikes have a dangerous potential to ignite a conflagration. (...) in normal days, the security cabinet's decisions were perceived as being based on professional analysis and balanced thinking. Decision-making processes were often heavily criticized, but the public usually believed that the outcome was based on political impartiality and integrity. This confidence has evaporated. After Gaza started receiving financial aid in exchange for quiet, once before the election and once before the Eurovision Song Contest, now it may be Syria's turn. Attacks on it are tinged with suspicions of political considerations. The conventional wisdom is that embarking on a war or a major military operation is risky for a leader's political future. The saying that it's easy to get into a war but harder to get out of one is especially true before an election. The thing is, the country is now run by someone whose only

consideration is how to stay out of prison. This is a prime minister who has twice taken the country to an unnecessary election, a loose cannon who lost it when he couldn't cobble together a governing coalition. After appointing a defense minister with no experience or knowledge of the material, he was now willing to offer the job to a political rival who couldn't even manage his own party. For Netanyahu, the purpose of the defense portfolio is the same as it was for the communications portfolio, which he once held. If he's willing to sell it to keep himself out of prison, would he hesitate to start a war if he thought that was his only way out?

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 04.06.19

The airstrike on Syria observation post was a long time coming

(...) Tel al-Hara, which Syria claimed was attacked (...) is a 1.1km-high extinct volcano that towers over the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, just like Tel Fares and Mount Avital in Israeli territory. It is the highest point in the region, permitting visual and electronic observation reaching far into Israeli territory. For decades, Tel al-Hara has served as an intelligence base for the Syrian army and other elements such as Iran and Russia, which operate there under Syria's patronage. (...) It is fair to assume that Hezbollah, the Iranians and their proxies in Tel al-Hara intend to use it to gather intelligence for a variety of purposes: to facilitate future infiltrations into Israeli territory and attacks on civilian and military targets; to aim missiles, rockets and artillery; to monitor IDF and IAF activity as well as deployments that could indicate whether Israel was planning an operation that may disrupt Iranian and Hezbollah plans. (...) The (...) attack was only a matter of time. Israel had announced several times that it would not allow the consolidation of an Iranian-led radical Shi'ite front in Syria. The attack (...) followed several incidents (...). The site contains warehouses belonging to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and is in an area where the foreign media previously reported attacks by Israel. The night before the airfield attack, the IDF struck Syria after two rockets were fired at Mount Hermon, on the Israeli side of the Golan. (...) At least 10 people were reported to have been killed, apparently including seven foreign nationals killed in an attack south of Damascus, and three Syrians were killed in an attack in the Quneitra area.

Ron Ben Yishai, YED, 12.06.19

Beware an Iranian ambush in Syria

(...) ties between Moscow and Tehran may have soured over the Syrian question, with Assad complaining about having to pay the price of Iran's actions in Syria, and that, as a result, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards are interested in stirring up escalation without taking responsibility for it. The bottom line is to increase Syrian dependency on Iran, given its damage power – the power to undermine stability and disrupt the political processes necessary for reforming the country's governance. (...) Israel has restrained its strikes in Syria in recent months, apparently due to pressure from Moscow (...). The rocket-launching incident provided the IDF with an opportunity to strike at Iranian infrastructures that had been rebuilt and renewed in Syria without overly angering Russia and possibly also to demonstrate the dangers inherent to Iranian conduct and to encourage Russia, as well as the Assad regime, to move ahead with the political process in Syria. The relations and coordination between Moscow and Jerusalem displease the Iranians, who seek to neutralize Israel's achievements so far in a number of ways: harming Israeli-Russian ties; reducing Israel's freedom of aerial action over Syria; continuing Iranian consolidation in Syria, and increasing Assad's dependency on Iranian aid. (...) the way to stymie Israel is to initiate "small" incidents in Syria that will expand Israel's points of friction with the forces of both Russia and the Assad regime. The more Israel is forced to respond to incidents, the greater the chance of mistakes and clashes with Russia as well as with regime forces. (...) So far, the IDF has enjoyed aerial leeway, and if it avoids mistakes and wisely chooses what to respond to and what it might let pass (...), Israel will be able, for now, to continue striking at Iranian attempts at entrenchment and smuggling of weaponry to its proxies, including Hezbollah. In parallel, Israel will be able to improve conditions for a political arrangement led by Russia and the United States. Given the political crisis in Israel, this mission rests almost exclusively with the chief of General Staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, who bears the heavy responsibility of not falling victim to the Iranian ambush.

Udi Dekel, TOI, 13.06.19

4. Medienquerschnitt

Abschied von Nechama Rivlin

I will miss my friend Nechama Rivlin very much

(...) Nechama refused to accept anything for free. I remember one time, I invited her to one of my children's plays. She said she would love to bring her grandchildren to see the play but on condition she bought her own tickets with her own money. These little things show us what kind of a person she was. I've always believed she could show many the way, with her small and succinct gestures, and they admired her in spite of her modesty. (...) I was constantly impressed by her simplicity, her modesty and her resoluteness. (...) It maybe that our public and political sphere are so full of unnecessary noise and drama. Nechama was, in that aspect, a place of calm, and that drew people to her. She was a living example of how people could and should behave - unblemished and modest. More than anything else, I will remember her warm, slightly cynical smile. I will miss her very much.

David Grossmann, YED, 05.06.19

Israel Needs More Real People Like the President's Late Wife Nechama Rivlin

Nechama Rivlin, in keeping with the Hebrew meaning of her first name, was indeed a source of comfort, particularly in recent years when she became a public figure as the country's first lady. She distilled the charm of her husband, President Reuven Rivlin, and also added to it. (...) When you saw them, you could believe that not everything in Israel had been wrecked, that all was not lost. That not everyone in high office was a bully with an endless sense of entitlement, crazy pretentiousness and capricious chutzpah. That there were real people in office and not just unstable emperor types. That's why President Rivlin, the number one advocate of annexation of West Bank territory, found a place in Israelis' hearts, including the hearts of left-wingers who are unsympathetic to the right wing and its messianic visions. Because everyone is happy first of all to encounter a real human being, someone who, above all, by nature means well. (...) Israel is so desperate for more people like her as it groans under the weight of a destructive political bulldozer willing to tear down its democracy bit by bit. It needs people who will shine light and warmth or will simply be nice, who won't always carry a knife and be imbued with hate and paranoia. This is why Israelis in their masses have embraced Nechama and Ruvi

Rivlin. This is why today Israelis are saddened, because more than the pleasure that they derived in witnessing this couple – who in fact were a real pleasure to witness – Israelis are afraid of the image of themselves that they see in the mirror.

Ravit Hecht, HAA, 05.06.19

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

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