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**1. Endspurt im Wahlkampf**

*In Erwartung einer erneuten Pattsituation gingen Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) und sein Herausforderer, der frühere Generalstabschef Benny Gantz (Blau-Weiß) in die Parlamentswahlen am 17. September. Netanyahu scheiterte im April an der Bildung einer Koalition, nachdem ihm der weltlich-nationalistische Avigdor Liberman (Yisrael Beiteanu) einen Strich durch die Rechnung gemacht und ein Zusammengehen unter den Bedingungen der ultraorthodoxen Parteien abgelehnt hatte. Im Vorfeld der Wahl am 17. September legte Netanyahu einen beachtlichen Endspurt an den Tag. Nur als Regierungschef kann er ein Gesetz durchsetzen, das ihm Immunität verschafft und so vor Prozessen und möglicherweise dem Gefängnis bewahrt. Unermüdlich hielt er das Land mit immer neuen dramatischen Ankündigungen auf Trab und sorgte so dafür, dass die Korruptionsaffären letzthin kaum noch Erwähnung in den Medien fanden. Immer wieder beschuldigte er die Araber des Wahlbetrugs. Mit einem Gesetzentwurf zur Anbringung von Überwachungskameras in arabischen Wahlstationen scheiterte er. Seine international verurteilten Annexionspläne des Jordantals, die Ankündigung, eine wilde Siedlung bei Jericho zu legalisieren, und schließlich das geplante Verteidigungsabkommen mit den USA gehörten zu den Schlagzeilen der letzten Tage vor der Parlamentswahl. Doch der von Netanyahu*

*erhoffte Erfolg stellte sich nicht ein: seine Partei Likud erzielte laut dem inoffiziellen Wahlergebnis lediglich 31 Mandate aus insgesamt 120 (gegenüber 35 im April zuzüglich 4 Mandate von Kulanu, die sich inzwischen mit dem Likud vereinigt hat). Weder der Rechtsblock rund um Netanyahus Likud (55 Mandate) noch der Mitte-Links-Block rund um Blau-Weiß (57 Mandate mit der Vereinigten (arabischen) Liste) erreicht im Moment eine Mehrheit von mindestens 61 Mandaten, da Avigdor Liberman mit seiner Partei Yisrael Beiteanu (8 Mandate) auf eine große weltliche Koalition von Likud, Blau-Weiß und seiner Partei besteht. Benny Gantz hofft auf Meuterei im Likud. Eine Große Koalition scheint seine einzige Chance zu sein, um das Zepter zu übernehmen. „Eine weltliche Regierung“ von Blau-Weiß und Likud, ohne Zutun der orthodoxen Parteien und natürlich ohne Netanyahu schwebt ihm vor. Staat und Religion war eins der zentralen Wahlkampfthemen. Noch hält die Likud-Partei treu zu Netanyahu – trotz der schweren Korruptionsvorwürfe und drohender Anklagen gegen den Chef. Es gilt nun abzuwarten, ob der Likud dem Druck standhält, denn einen dritten Wahlgang möchte keiner.*

**Why you should vote for me**  
**Let me complete this change**, Benjamin Netanyahu (...) For the past three decades, I have led a determined struggle against tremendous pressures,

at home and abroad, to retreat to the 1967 lines that jeopardized our very existence. I resisted the pressure of the Clinton and Obama governments, repaired the damage of the Oslo Accords and led the greatest decade in the history of the country in terms of security, political and economic. (...) We are halting Iran's entrenchment in Syria, exposed the Iranian nuclear archive, worked to achieve the annulment of the Iranian nuclear agreement and the establishment of a tough sanctions regime against Iran. The last decade had the lowest number of Israeli casualties from terrorist activity. Now, after decades of resisting pressure (...) we have been changing the direction of Jewish and Israeli history. No more concessions, but recognition of our existential rights and interests. First came the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, followed by the relocation of the embassy and later American recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. (...) I intend to apply Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and then apply sovereignty to further localities and other areas of security and national importance in Judea and Samaria. Now I ask for your confidence to complete this historic work and fortify the borders and security of the State of Israel forever.

**An opportunity to restore the state to its citizens**, Benny Gantz (...) after a decade of Netanyahu, Israel needs do something different. It needs to progress. (...) I have behind me decades of security service that culminated in serving as IDF chief of staff. These years of service took me to the corridors of the Pentagon, government ministries and the Knesset, and heading the organization with the largest budget in the State of Israel. (...) in recent years something has happened. The rifts are deepening, the gaps are widening and basic solidarity between us is unraveling: right against left, Jews against Arabs. The social fabric is torn. At the same time, the gaps between the poor and the rich are among the biggest in the OECD (...) and in the field of security the state is abandoning the people of the south, and it is Yahya Sinwar and Hamas who set the agenda. (...) this is the direction in which our leadership has taken us. (...) security is not created by empty promises before elections, but by deeds. We will restore deterrence in the south, make it a priority to stop the extortion and increase support for immigrants, the elderly, people with disabilities, residents of the social and geographical periphery. (...) This is a crucial moment. After years of extortion and surrender to small parties that care about

limited sectors of society, we will establish a government to represent the majority and take care of all Israel's citizens.

Benjamin Netanyahu, Benny Gantz, YED, 15.09.19

### **Chaos at the Blue and White HQ is testimony to party leader's ineptitude**

Even if the cell phones of Benny Gantz and other leading figures in Blue and White were really hacked, and even if they were really attacked by Russian hackers, this whole affair serves to show us the ineptitude that seems to define the party's leader, Benny Gantz. (...) how did a story about hiring a private investigation firm (...) spun out of control and ridiculed an entire political party that claims to be able to change the ruling government? (...) a deluge of leaks, gossip and information washed over the party and the media. (...) Whether we're talking about a full-blown conspiracy, or a random bit of information, Gantz needs to wake up. A few controversial decisions he has made lately beg the question where is he heading and does he trust those who are his political partners? Hiring an investigation firm to protect and secure information is done by every political party participating in the elections. But Gantz's conduct seems to give people outside the party access to sensitive information, such as finding the mole and locating leakers. (...) Gantz rehired an advisor who had fallen out with Yair Lapid with whom he shares the leadership. That shows a lack in judgement. It's ok to be right, but it's important to be smart as well.

Yuval Karni, YED, 01.09.19

### **Israel needs an old-fashioned leader**

There is nothing the left likes better than eliminating its leaders. The moment that Benny Gantz managed to win 35 Knesset seats and became the only person endangering the rule of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the left began to make him look ridiculous. (...) In the diplomatic arena, Gantz said that unlike Netanyahu, he is opposed to annexing the territories and he will attempt to enter a diplomatic process. (...) However, Gantz wants an agreement with the Palestinians to include the annexation of the settlement blocs, a security border on the Jordan River, and Jerusalem remaining in Israeli hands. He would also like the Palestinians to choose a new leader instead of Mahmoud Abbas, who is shackled to old ideas. (...) what's better? A leader who is a talented speaker, a master of spin, an inciter of brother against brother, and who is willing to sacrifice all of us on the altar of saving him from prison –

or someone who is not as good at speeches, and even lacks charisma, but he is an honest man with good intentions who only wants to repair what's broken. An old-fashioned leader.  
Nehemia Shtrasler, HAA, 03.09.19

### **This election campaign has reached a new low**

It's not the indifference that's the problem, it's the sheer disgust of it all. Like a beaten society, we've grown accustomed, accustomed to the idiotic idea of going to the polling stations yet again, because the stars didn't align for Benjamin Netanyahu and Avidgor Liberman in April. We've grown accustomed to yawning in the face of more and more transcripts about cigars, champagne, dark dealings and corrupt news. We've grown accustomed to everyone telling lies (...). More and more hollow words are produced, and none really expects us to believe that they're sincere. (...) The elections were never for those with refined tastes, but we still had the spiritual willingness to go and do our civil duty. Voting for those who reflect our beliefs in the least twisted way is a hell of a task, but still the feeling of civic duty sustained us as we stepped into the voting booth. (...) This time, all our sacred cows have been butchered on the altar of the elections. (...) Cameras were pulled from thin air to scare certain communities or maybe just to frighten a certain attorney general, or maybe to get us all to talk about the things they want us to talk about. Entire campaigns whose sole purpose was to blacklist certain communities were organized: rabbis are the devil; members of the LGBTQ community are perverts, Arabs are locusts; and the Supreme Court is an institution that needs to be dismantled. Even the small parties who attract mainly niche or protest votes have vanished. (...) They were all swallowed by bigger fish. (...)  
Chen Artzi Srur, YED, 14.09.19

### **A referendum on whether or not Netanyahu is above the law**

(...) The Yamina party is in Benjamin Netanyahu's pocket. (...) former justice minister Ayelet Shaked (...) clarified that Yamina would not try to change the immunity law, but would consider supporting the granting of immunity to Netanyahu according to the existing law. Bennett and Shaked's statements clearly indicate that Yamina is joining the list of Netanyahu's "natural partners" who are ready to do anything it takes to let him escape facing justice. (...) Netanyahu lied regarding his future intentions as he did when stating that he hadn't dealt with immunity in the past. (...) His associates also con-

stantly worked on a law that would overrule court decisions, which would allow the legislature to pass laws at will, with no checks and balances exerted by the judicial branch of government. As justice minister, Shaked maintained a consistent policy of weakening the judiciary and enfeebling the gatekeeper agencies. There never were nor can there be any expectation that she and Bennett will be the ones to save the rule of law from Netanyahu's machinations. Previously, due to the political balance of forces, the two maintained a vague stance regarding immunity. Now, with the lame excuse of "stability," they're putting their tails between their legs and fawning over Netanyahu. (...) there is no longer any doubt that voting for a right-wing party is tantamount to granting immunity to Netanyahu. The choice facing the Israeli public is between maintaining the rule of law or the rule of Netanyahu, which amounts to savaging the law.  
Editorial, HAA, 03.09.19

### **Why not positivism?**

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the present election campaign for the 22nd Knesset is its negativism. Some political parties cannot refrain from sullyng their competitors, presumably thinking voters will take this into consideration when casting their votes. In the media particularly, this negativism has reached a crescendo, with nary a positive word on any of the political parties. Is there nothing positive to report? (...) Instead of throwing dirt, it would be far more useful to report on what has been done that is good. (...) The Arab parties have shown a measure of maturity. Instead of two or three parties running against each other, they have a unified list. This can only provide the Arab population with sorely needed representation. (...) One sees in the past few years an attempt by the Arab MKs to move away from the harsh political pro-Palestinian rhetoric toward a platform that defends the individual rights of their constituency. This is laudable. Continuing to the Left side of the political spectrum is the Israel Democratic Party. Here is another example of willingness to overcome differences and pool resources, not only to bring in more voters, but also to provide its constituency with meaningful actions. (...) Also on the Left, but to the right of the Israel Democratic Party, one finds the Labor-Gesher alliance. Labor Party leader Amir Peretz had the guts to create a coalition with Gesher Party leader Orly Levy-Abecassis – who does not identify with the political Left – to present a social-oriented party that will do whatever it can against the prevalent capitalist poli-

cies. (...) The Geshar Party's positive statements are aimed at convincing those whose life is not all too good that the union with Labor will bring about change. The Blue and White Party is characterized by an impressive expertise in military affairs. It is a broad home to many parts of Israeli society, bridging gaps between right-wing religious representatives and deep secularists. (...) here, too, its leaders managed to overcome differences, exemplifying its ability to bring rational compromise to Israel's political scene and governing bodies. (...) The Likud Party has found ways to bridge differences between secular, religious and haredi (ultra-Orthodox) sectors of society. It has immeasurably increased government financial support for Arab cities and towns, improving infrastructure and education. (...) If the polls are correct and close to 50% of voters are still undecided, the media should have risen to the challenge, providing information that would help people make up their minds, instead of merely explaining what the parties are doing in the polls. (...) Yisrael Medad, Eli Pollak, JPO, 12.09.19

### **Blue and White hypocrisy on full display**

Senior Blue and White officials have been speaking out against the security situation in the Gaza periphery of late, criticizing the government's response to missile fire from the terrorist enclave. Gantz has promised to "go tough" on the Gaza Strip, asserting that his party would strive for a decisive victory against Hamas and would send ground forces into the territory for as long as necessary. These are nice declarations, as far as declarations go. But when Gantz was responsible for Israel's security as IDF chief of staff during 2014's Operation Protective Edge, the military avoided a ground operation until Hamas made use of its cross-border attack tunnels, leaving the military with no other choice. And when the military did finally take action, it was limited to neutralizing the tunnels and not at achieving a decisive victory over Hamas or maintaining a presence in Gaza. While the government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at its head bear full responsibility for this, Gantz was no low-ranking official. (...) Gantz believed in a defensive and cautious strategy (...) it was his belief that "in Israel, it has been understood that you only opt for a broad escalation when there is no choice. (...) One can criticize the government's policies in recent years, but the fact is that all those who had a role in the decision-making process have more or less taken the same position. Gantz and his fellow party leader Moshe Ya'alon were up until recently senior partners to the man-

agement of operations in Gaza, and the government's conduct on the matter has not undergone a material change of late. In order to convince the public that "things will be different" with them, Blue and White's leaders will need to explain when and how exactly their security philosophy changed. Akiva Bigman, IHY, 12.09.19

## **2. Netanyahu kündigt die Annexion des Jordantals an**

*Mit heftiger Kritik reagierten die UN, die EU und arabische Staaten auf die Ankündigung von Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu im Falle seines Wahlsiegs, das Jordantal und das nördliche Gebiet am Toten Meer annektieren zu wollen. Die geplante Annexion wäre "verheerend für die Möglichkeit einer Wiederbelebung von Verhandlungen und des regionalen Friedens", hieß es in einer Stellungnahme von UN-Generalsekretär Antonio Guterres. Eine Zwei-Staaten-Lösung würde dadurch erheblich erschwert. Das fragliche Gebiet macht rund ein Drittel des Westjordanlandes aus. „Ein solcher Schritt würde jede Möglichkeit für einen Frieden begraben“, kommentierte Saeb Erekat, Generalsekretär der PLO (Palästinensische Befreiungsbewegung). Im Jordantal an der Grenze zu Jordanien leben nach Angaben der israelischen Menschenrechtsorganisation B'tselem rund 60.000 Palästinenser\_innen und etwa 5.000 israelische Siedler\_innen. Mit Blick auf die rechten Wähler argumentierte Netanyahu, dass die in Kürze erwartete Veröffentlichung des US-Friedensplans eine „historische Chance“ sei, um Israels Souveränität in Teilen vom Westjordanland zu festigen. Die Annexion von Teilen der C-Zone, die seit 52 Jahren noch immer komplett unter israelischer Kontrolle steht, war anfangs nur Programm der Siedlerpartei, die sich zu den Parlamentswahlen neuformierte und unter dem Namen Yemina (Nach rechts) antrat. Parteichefin Ayelet Shaked, ehemals Justizministerin, kommentierte Netanyahus Pläne mit Skepsis. Abgesehen davon, dass er, „was grundsätzlich zu begrüßen ist“, die Politik der Rechtspartei auf seine Fahnen schreibt, habe man „schon viele Versprechungen von ihm gehört“. Würde er ernsthaft eine Annexion wollen, hätte er das längst haben können.*

### **Netanyahu's election stunt**

A day after holding a news conference about Iran's nuclear program, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanya-

hu hosted an election stunt promising to apply Israeli sovereignty over Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria. (...) Netanyahu's desire for annexation now buries the words of the Bar-Ilan speech in 2009 in which he appealed to Palestinians to begin peace negotiations. (...) In all of the recent elections, Netanyahu has vowed to annex settlements in the West Bank but has yet to do so. (...) To his credit, Israel has achieved awesome results under his leadership, from the economy to security. He has not dragged Israel into more wars in Gaza, and he has navigated the Iranian challenge in Syria (...) avoiding war there while keeping back the Iranians and neutralizing their threats. (...) Netanyahu's terms as prime minister have generally been empty of bold decisions regarding the Palestinian issue. (...) Netanyahu prefers to manage the conflict. But this tinkering with the conflict has been thrown out the window now that Trump is in Washington. It was fine when it came to Jerusalem and the Golan, which Israel had already annexed. But Netanyahu's vow to annex the Jordan Valley would be the first major change in Israel's policy since disengagement and the momentous decision like Oslo or the peace accords with Egypt, steering Israel in a new direction. This has led to concern abroad and among Israel's friends. (...) What comes after the annexation? What happens to the Palestinians who live in the Jordan Valley? What happens to the rest of the West Bank? We don't know the plan, probably because there is no plan. Instead, Netanyahu is pushing a massive policy change just for votes. This cheapens Israel, cheapens the image of the prime minister, and erodes trust abroad. It is essential that Israel have that trust to receive support, and it is important that foreign leaders don't think Israeli politicians make bold decisions just for votes.

Editorial, JPO, 11.09.19

### **Please, Bibi, let the annexations begin**

Here's one campaign promise by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that we should hope will be fulfilled: annexing the Jordan Valley to Israel. So far, no other campaign promise has been as encouraging as this one. (...) Let him annex the Jordan Valley, and afterward the entire West Bank. Let him turn the reality in this territory into a political reality, without hiding it any longer. (...) The time has come to put an end to the great masked ball that Israel and the world have been holding for 52 years already. The apparently eternal reality in this territory should be translated into legal language. The Jordan Valley was annexed long ago, as was the entire West

Bank. The Green Line has been erased; nothing remains of it. (...) Enough with the occupation, we have annexation. There are no settlements, there are towns. The two-state solution has been put to death, and it actually happened long ago. What remains is one state, in which the only battle will be over the system of government. (...) In the name of the (slim) hope that annexation will rouse someone or something, we must hope that this time, Netanyahu isn't just promising. Please, Mr. Prime Minister, let the annexations begin.

Gideon Levy, HAA; 12.09.19

### **Netanyahu's annexation pledge proves he puts his own welfare above Israel's**

(...) There is indeed a certain consensus, from the Democratic Union with its Meretz leadership all the way to the far-right of the political spectrum, that the Jordan Valley remains in Israel's control under any peace agreement with the Palestinians. An election statement like the one Netanyahu made (...) hurts this consensus, as it turns the Jordan Valley into a political issue and ignites old disputes. Just as the Nation-State Law failed to strengthen Israel's position as a Jewish, democratic country, the declaration on the Jordan Valley only strengthens those with anti-Zionist views who oppose the very existence of a Jewish, democratic country. Over the last three decades, many peace initiatives have been discussed. The Palestinians said no to all of them, including those that offered them partial or complete control of the Jordan Valley. In such a situation, Israel could use the Palestinian stubbornness to justify its hold of the Jordan Valley. (...) what did Netanyahu do? (...) he actually gave away Israel's justification to the world for continued control of the area. There's (...) this move is only detrimental to Israel. If before Tuesday there was no real international front to dispute Israel's hold of the Jordan Valley, now there certainly will be. (...) For last few days before the elections, the Likud leader going to move more and more to the right, aiming to take votes from Ayelet Shaked's "Yamina" party. Throughout most of Netanyahu's rule, he has shown national responsibility, that the national interest was more important to him than personal interest. But now, that is not the case. Something terrible has happened to him in recent years. (...) At the end of the day, it's not clear if Tuesday's announcement will benefit Netanyahu. What is clear though, is that it will hurt Israel.

Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 12.09.19

### **The Jordan Valley is waiting for Zionist action**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's promise to apply Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley should be welcomed. (...) Most of the supporters of a Palestinian state want it to be demilitarized from any weapons that could pose a security risk to Israel. Even the PLO supposedly accepted that demand, but what actually happened is that Judea and Samaria became hotbeds of terrorism. The failure of UN forces in Lebanon to enforce Resolution 1701 to keep Hezbollah from arming itself in southern Lebanon shows why the proposal of having foreign peacekeepers in the Jordan Valley can't guarantee any demilitarization. The valley, as a buffer zone held by Israel and defended by the IDF, is an existential requirement for Israel. (...) the Jordan Valley in its broad geographical definition is crucial to Israel as somewhere for as many as a million Israelis to live and a space to house national infrastructure that can't be jammed into the dense coastal region. Currently, the north and south, the Galilee and the Neg- ev, depends almost entirely on the packed coastal highways. Israel is becoming more crowded and needs another north-south road – Highway 80 – from Arad to the Gilboa. It's waiting to be built. A well-developed infrastructure of roads in the Jordan Valley will make it possible for Israel to fulfill its role as a bridge between Asia and Africa. That pioneering vision has waited for years to be implemented. (...) The Jordan Valley has been waiting for the Zionist vision for too long.

Gershon Hacohen, IHY, 13.09.19

### **3. Erneuter Schlagabtausch an der Grenze zum Libanon**

*Die Lage an Israels Grenze zum Libanon spitzt sich nach einem erneuten Schlagabtausch gefährlich zu. Milizen der islamistischen Hisbollah griffen aus dem Süden Libanons israelische Militärfahrzeuge an. Der Angriff sei ein Vergeltungsakt für den Tod zweier ihrer Kämpfer in Syrien. Israels Armee reagierte mit Artilleriefeuer und Kampfhubschraubern. Israelische Ortschaften im Grenzgebiet wurden angewiesen, die zivilen Bunker zu öffnen. Israel greift regelmäßig Ziele in Syrien an, um eine dauerhafte Stationierung der iranischen Revolutionsgarden zu verhindern. Während des Bürgerkriegs unterstützten Hisbollah-Milizen und iranische Soldaten die syrische Armee im Kampf gegen die Rebellen. Zuletzt war es 2006 zu einem einmonatigen Krieg zwischen Israel und der Hisbollah gekommen. Laut Waffenstillstandsabkommen sollten die Hisbollah-*

*Milizen aus dem Südlibanon abziehen und internationale Truppen die Wiederaufrüstung der Islamisten unterbinden. Weder das eine noch das andere kam jedoch zur Umsetzung. Israelische Geheimdienste vermuten, dass die Hisbollah heute im Besitz von über 100.000 Raketen ist.*

### **Hezbollah's missile misstep could ignite the Israel-Lebanon border**

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah had one chance (...) and he failed miserably. He had across-the-board support in Lebanon to carry out an attack on Israel, but this didn't deter the Jewish state from allegedly carrying out the recent assaults on Lebanon attributed to it. Now Nasrallah no longer has the legitimacy to carry out another strike (...) a second attack would portray the Hezbollah leader as someone who compromises Lebanon's security and gives Israel legitimacy to intensify its strikes across the border. (...) Israel is going to watch the arch-terrorist's every move. If he succeeds in convincing the Lebanese public that he managed to strike a damaging blow to the IDF, he will most likely get down from the tree into whose high branches he has climbed. But if the incident turns into a political weapon against him within Lebanon – he could be pushed into a corner and make a mistake that would enflame and engulf the entire Israel-Lebanon border. The Israeli leadership also has its own role to play here. The less they poke fun at Nasrallah's failure, the better the chances are that he swallows his pride and accepts the trick that the IDF Northern Command played on him. (...) Last week's attack on shipping containers carrying precision-guided missiles in Beirut was a necessary one. Whoever made the decision assumed that if the covert action was revealed, Hezbollah would have to respond in order to maintain its deterrence. For if there were no response, Israel's finger would grow looser on the trigger. (...)

Alex Fishman, YED, 02.09.19

### **Hezbollah claims victory in Israel flare-up despite the facts**

(...) Thirteen years ago, Nasrallah claimed victory although both he and Lebanon suffered severely. Now, during this latest speech his followers bore the same signs - "Victory is from God" - as he tried to create an alternative narrative that would justify his recent actions and the haste in which they were carried out. (...) he clung to some facts but only emphasized those that were advantageous to him in order to instill a victorious narrative in his listeners.

He glossed over the fact the attack on Israel failed to reach its goals. (...) Hezbollah will now take the fight to the "Palestinian occupied territories" he said, referring to Israel. From this point on, bragged Nasrallah, his forces would retaliate by attacking any target along the Israeli border, even reaching up to seven kilometers into Israeli territory, if not further. He hinted he would not hesitate to deploy weapons more sophisticated than the anti-tank missiles used in Sunday's attack should the enemy strike in Lebanon and injure Lebanese citizens. Nasrallah's second threat directed at Israel was that the group would shoot down any Israeli drones in Lebanese skies, whether gathering intelligence or attacking targets. (...) If in fact the Iran-backed terror group can compromise Israeli drones operating over Lebanon, it could affect Israeli action against the ongoing precision missiles project. The threats made to Israel were a promise to his Lebanese followers that any violation of their territory in order to combat the missile project will be answered with force. Nasrallah is usually not one to make idle threats, so unless he has chosen a different path, perhaps because he failed in his retaliatory strike against Israel, this could mean he has a trick up his sleeve, courtesy of some new Iranian capability.

Ron Ben Yishai, YED, 03.09.19

### **A preemptive attack is a must**

Contrary to the message that the IDF and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are conveying, the last battle concluded with a victory for a Hezbollah in terms of deterrence and psychological warfare. Hezbollah fired Kornet anti-tank missiles and Israel responded in the north as it has responded for the past 14 years in the south: With a useless bombardment of open areas. (...) The "crushing counter-blow" that Netanyahu threatened was, once again, a dummy strike. And the same goes for the childish "deception exercise." Israel's acceptance of the Kornet fire has enabled Nasrallah (...) to conclude that the years'-long policy of containment in the south now applies to the north as well. In other words, the decision of when to open fire and when to hold fire will be up to Hezbollah, just as it is with Hamas. (...) Hezbollah knows full well that it cannot seize territory within Israel and stay there. And that it certainly cannot seize its ultimate desire: Jerusalem. Therefore, arming itself with more than 100,000 missiles has one purpose only: widespread killing and destruction. No other country in the world is under such a threat; no other country in the world has a government and army that have fallen asleep

on their watch and allowed terrorist organizations in the south, and even more so in the north, to arm themselves with such an abundance of missiles. Only now, after it let Hezbollah build up this balance of terror against us, does the IDF remember to declare that it is determined to prevent Hezbollah from arming its missiles with precise navigation systems. What about the hundreds of missiles that have already been armed this way? What about the hundred thousand "dumb" missiles that could, without precise navigation, sow unprecedented death and destruction? Iran has no intention of dispatching its army to conquer Israel. It does have a burning desire, as it has publicly proclaimed numerous times, "to destroy the Zionist state," i.e., to annihilate as many Jews as possible. However, the moment it launches missiles at us, Tehran will be laid waste, and Iran's leaders know this. And Tehran is deterred. But when its emissaries, such as Hezbollah, launch missiles, at its orders and with its funding, thousands of missiles whose purpose is to destroy Israel, it does not worry that Tehran will be wiped off the map. (...)

Israel Harel, HAA, 06.09.19

### **Hezbollah's demographic problem explains its restraint**

Israel's alleged three-pronged attacks (...) in Syria, Iraq and above all, in Dahiye (...) was met with a very limited Hezbollah response. (...) Hezbollah wanted to avoid escalation that could lead to all-out war. (...) There are several reasons why Hezbollah is restrained, but probably, the most important has to do with Hezbollah's demographic predicament. Despite pretenses of being an all-encompassing Islamic resistance movement (...) Hezbollah is perceived in Lebanon and beyond in almost strictly sectarian terms as an exclusively Shi'ite organization. (...) Hezbollah has also been at odds, often violently, against the Sunni community, especially in Tripoli, Lebanon (...). Hezbollah's recruitment pool is strictly limited to the Shi'ite community in Lebanon. And there is the rub. Not only is the Shi'ite community relatively small, between a million to a million-and-a-half souls, it is suffering from a rapidly declining birth rate very much similar to the declining fertility rate in Iran, the only large country with a Shi'ite majority. This declining Shi'ite birth rate, from five to six children per woman of child-bearing age in the 1980s to less than the 2.05 that is needed to maintain the existing population 25 years later, has many implications. (...) small families are reluctant to sacrifice what is all too often their only son in a soci-

ety where the two child family becomes the norm. (...) Declining birth rates are the result of urbanization. (...) In the city, children can no longer help on the farm, becoming consumers rather than producers. (...) Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah also knows that the declining reservoir of recruits will also be needed on the domestic front. The balance between Sunnis and Shi'ites has grown in favor of the former as hundreds of thousands of Syrian Sunnis found refuge in Lebanon. Essentially, the Alawite regime has exported its problem to Lebanon, and more specifically to the Shi'ite areas on Lebanon's eastern border. Hezbollah, then, has not only paid in blood to prop up the Syrian regime, it faces a more uncertain future in Lebanon itself as a result of that support. Under such circumstances, Hezbollah's relatively minor attack was a reasonable response.

Hillel Frisch, JPO, 04.09.19

#### **Israel must kick it's pointless Nasrallah addiction**

It is time for Israel to free itself of the dark spell cast by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. For years his likeness stared out from television screens and Israelis hung on his every word as if they were celestial utterances of a man who always delivers on his promises, despite facts to the contrary, but still mountains of analysis are piled up after each one of his speeches. The truth of the matter is that Nasrallah has never spoken the truth. Granted, he is good at making threats, but not so good at carrying them out. (...) his achievements and those of the organization he leads are light years away from his promises and dreams. For the past 15 years, the Shi'ite leader has been confined to a bunker, surrounded by guards and living on borrowed time courtesy of Israel - probably because it is preferable to keep him in a cage rather than having his replacement running free. As a virtual leader, Nasrallah devotes his ample free time to political plotting. (...) Let us put things in perspective. A few tunnels dug under the border with Israel, and a device used in the production of precision missiles that was just lying about in some courtyard in the sun do not superior strategy make. (...) When Hitler threatened Poland in the summer of 1939, making use of psychological warfare, he had the strength of the entire German army behind him. Behind Nasrallah is only the wall of his bunker and a background photo prepared for his next televised speech. Israel really does need to kick its embarrassing habit of taking Hassan Nasrallah seriously

Sever Plocker, YED, 04.09.19

#### **4. Medienquerschnitt**

##### **Netanyahus Kampf gegen die Medien**

###### **Netanyahu, stop**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fanned the flames against the media (...) accusing Channel 12 of "fake news" propaganda, broadcasting antisemitism and attacking democracy. (...) The prime minister has had a fraught relationship with the Israeli press since the 1990s, one that has given rise to frequent verbal attacks on various members of the press. Part of this is politics, and there is no reason Netanyahu or any other politician should refrain from critiquing major media companies and platforms. A free media must also accept some criticism of its own biases and explore them. But the pattern of withering denunciations from Netanyahu goes beyond these types of critiques. (...) Netanyahu's offensive against Channel 12 began with claims that it should be boycotted for producing, with HBO, the current series *Our Boys*, about the 2014 murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir. Netanyahu termed the series "antisemitic," and many have expressed reasonable concern that the program was misleadingly titled *Our Boys* implying that it would be about the three Jewish teens who were abducted and murdered. Instead, it seeks to ignore attacks on Jews to focus solely on Jewish perpetrators. (...). He then posted on Facebook to his 2.4 million followers that Channel 12 was "fake news," and (...) that the whole channel is "propaganda." (...) That is an unreasonable attack against the Israeli media. (...) This all seems like an attempt by Netanyahu to distract the public on the eve of elections. Playing to the populist feeling that the *Our Boys* program is unfairly critical of Israeli society helps encourage his base. (...) The prime minister should not let short-term political gain obscure the need for a strong and critical media in Israel. A free media makes a country stronger – the media is the watchdog in a democracy, and Netanyahu's attempts to weaken it are just another piece in his overall plan to weaken Israel's democratic institutions: the Supreme Court, the attorney-general and the police. (...) Israel's democracy is at risk. Netanyahu needs to stop.

Editorial, JPO, 02.09.19

HAA = Haaretz  
YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews  
JPO = Jerusalem Post  
IHY = Israel HaYom  
TOI = Times of Israel  
GLO = Globes

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