



Netanyahu ignores global opinion at Israel's peril

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Few things are more infuriating than to hear Western leaders lecture Israel about how it should behave — whether the issue is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or other matters — while they say little if anything about far more serious matters of regional stability or human rights around the world.

After all, it's Israel — and no other nation — that sustains the rocket fire that the terrorists of Hamas direct from Gaza, and it's Israel that suffers the consequences of anti-Jewish incitement by the supposedly moderate Palestinian Authority from the West Bank. No Western leader should tell Israel how best to protect its people.

Having said that, rising anti-Semitism that's often cloaked in the politer guise of anti-Zionism is a global fact of life, and so is growing hostility to Israel among leftist political parties across the West. Thus, the Jewish state, which seeks U.S. and other Western support when it's under attack at the United Nations or elsewhere, should be at least somewhat sensitive to the global ramifications of its actions.

That's among the reasons why Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent embrace of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, a disciple of Kahanism, is not only a morally despicable way for him to maintain his governing coalition, but it's also a dangerous one that plays into the hands of Israel's global detractors.

Kahanism is named for Meir Kahane, the fiery Brooklyn native who cofounded the Jewish Defense League in 1968, was convicted in 1971 of conspiracy to manufacture explosives, cofounded Israel's Kach party (which Israel later banned as racist) also in 1971, and served in the Knesset in the 1980s.

An ordained rabbi, Kahane supported violence against those he considered enemies of Jews, and he called for expelling Palestinians from Israel and outlawing sex between Jews and Arabs. Though an Arab murdered him in New York in 1990, his views remain deadly. During Ramadan in February of 1994, the Kahanist Baruch Goldstein gunned down 29 Palestinians and injured another 125 at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank city of Hebron. Another Kahanist, Yigal Amir, shot Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to death a year later for seeking Israel-Palestinian peace.

All of that brings us to Netanyahu. With elections looming, the Prime Minister worked behind the scenes in recent days to broker a deal through which the far-right Jewish Home party, and perhaps another far-right party, will join forces with the latest iteration of Kahanism — Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) — and, together, they would presumably reach the vote threshold to serve in the Knesset. In exchange, they would secure positions in whatever government Netanyahu put together.

Netanyahu's move was so morally bankrupt that even the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which seeks to work closely with whatever Israeli government is in power, joined with the American Jewish Committee to blast the move and said it will boycott the "racist and reprehensible" Otzma Yehudit.

On a more practical level, Netanyahu's ugly effort to retain power comes at a particularly dicey time for Israel. That's because in key capitals across the West, the Jewish state has become a far more partisan issue.

In Great Britain, the Labour Party is helmed by Jeremy Corbyn, who has called the Jew-hating genocidal terrorists of Hezbollah and Hamas his "friends;" called Britain's labeling of Hamas as a terrorist organization a "big, big historical mistake," laid a wreath at the grave of a Palestinian terrorist involved with the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics, consorted with Holocaust deniers, and backed the Palestine Solidarity Campaign that calls Israel an "apartheid" state.

In fact, seven Labour parliamentarians resigned from the party the other day because, among other reasons, it has grown so anti-Semitic under Corbyn. That Corbyn is Britain's opposition leader at a time when Prime Minister Theresa May is so politically weak should trouble Israel deeply.

In the United States, the Democratic Party has moved leftward and, as a result, is increasingly critical of, if not hostile to, Israel. Among new Democratic lawmakers, the 2018 congressional elections brought to power two Muslim members and several other leftists who have already showcased their hostility to Israel. Meanwhile, a new Pew survey revealed that the share of liberal Democrats who sympathize more with Israel than the Palestinians has shrunk markedly in recent years.

The party's drift has so alarmed its Israel-backing stalwarts that several leading Democratic activists and ex-officeholders have formed a new group — the Democratic Majority for Israel — to rebuild the party's steadfast support for the Jewish state.

An Israel with shakier support in key capitals shouldn't be providing ammunition to the hostile forces already arrayed against it.

Lawrence J. Haas, senior fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council, is the author of, most recently, "Harry and Arthur: Truman, Vandenberg, and the Partnership That Created the Free World".