

Zionist Strategy for Israel

written by David M. Weinberg | 27.07.2023

On the day after Tisha BeA'v, it would be nice to write about national unity, shared destiny, moderation, and restraint. But I cannot ignore the kasach – the unbridled confrontation, the inflammatory demagoguery, the violent warmongering – that has become standard and acceptable behavior for some of Israel's once and supposed leaders.

There are very specific people responsible for this degradation, with Ehud Barak taking first place in the ugly contest for the most hateful, most extreme, most seditious rabble-rouser of all.

Former prime minister Ehud Barak appears at every anti-government protest rally and in every foreign television studio with preening self-confidence, sky-high arrogance, and the most untamed political language heard in this country in decades. He savages Prime Minister Netanyahu and anybody to the right of him as “dark and dangerous ultra-nationalists who are undermining the foundations of Zionism and Israeli democracy.”

He blabbers uncontrollably about Israel becoming a “fascist state” and an “apartheid” country. He even called a recent Israeli Supreme Court ruling that went in Netanyahu's favor “a Weimer Republic-like decision.”

This year he has escalated his rhetoric to talk about the “shattering of Israeli democracy,” the “darkest days Israel has known,” “imminent dictatorship in Israel,” and “silencing” by the right wing. (Funny, Barak doesn't seem so silenced.)

In one speech I heard, Barak hurled the epithet “fascist” at Netanyahu three times, “dictator” at Justice Minister Levin four times, and “apartheid” at right-wing West Bank settlement policies another three times. He then accused all Israelis to his political right of wearing Nazi-style “selection eyeglasses” (mishkefei selectzia shel hayamin) – which is a disgusting political slur whether used by an antisemitic non-Jew or a born-again wannabe Israeli leader.

To this, Barak recently has added piercing, scornful characterizations of Netanyahu and his cabinet ministers as “jokes,” “jackasses,” “pissers,”

“drivellers,” “simpletons,” and “people sick with autoimmune diseases.”

Barak delivers all this dreadful demagoguery alongside incessant use of the epithet “messianic” in describing policies of the right wing. This, of course, is supremely ironic, since the only messianism that exists in abundance in Ehud Barak’s presence is his own messianic self-assurance.

Ehud Barak’s near-antisemitic language is unacceptable

Whatever you think of the Netanyahu government or its judicial reform proposals, Barak’s wild exaggerations and exceedingly belligerent characterizations are disgusting. His use of near-antisemitic and pseudo-BDS language is unacceptable. His feral ambitions and savage hatreds clearly have propelled him off into the deep end.

WORST OF ALL, by far worst of all, is the lead role that Barak has taken in calling for subversion of the IDF through mass refusal-to-serve by Israeli soldiers and reserve duty officers.

Barak began barking about the need to refuse to serve in the IDF “under dictatorship” at a February Haaretz conference. “When a black flag of extreme illegality flies over an army order, it is not just the right of a soldier to obey that order, it is his obligation,” said Barak. “We are now facing the civilian equivalent of black flag illegality.”

“Our only obligation is to liberal democracy as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. We have no obligatory contract with dictators, and history will judge to purgatory all those who submit to the dictates of dictators.”

Asked whether he wasn’t going too far with his call for mutiny in the military, Barak responded with his characteristic messianic self-possession that “we are the right side of history and we are not afraid of anybody or anything.”

On Channel 12 television on July 6 Barak specifically called upon “air force pilots and front-line commandoes” to warn Netanyahu that if the so-called reasonability restriction legislation was passed, they would “refuse to serve a dictatorship, period.”

Reportedly, the Israel Police have opened an investigation into the possibly treasonous remarks made by Ehud Barak, and by Yair Golan of Meretz, but don’t

hold your breath waiting for indictments. Prosecuting these people for sedition and concrete damage to the security of the State of Israel would not be politically correct.

It would require Israel's legal elites to admit, which they won't, that Barak's discourse is the true threat to Israeli democracy. It would require them to concede, which they won't, that those screaming the loudest about imminent threats to democracy are the people engaging in tactics that smack of dictatorship and lawlessness. It would force them to draw red lines, which they are unwilling to do, against the growing calls from Barak and his coterie to deny political and civil rights to anybody who thinks and votes differently, like ultra-Orthodox Jews.

THIS IS THE PLACE to remind readers of Ehud Barak's dismal political record. He was resoundingly defeated in the elections of 2001 and 2009, leading the once all-powerful Labor Party to a nadir. His term as prime minister was blessedly the shortest term of any Israeli prime minister. He was responsible for the helter-skelter retreat from Lebanon, which led to the rise of Hezbollah. His disastrous diplomatic policies led directly to the second intifada.

The last point is especially important. Barak betrayed the trust Israelis had given him, by agreeing at the July 2000 Camp David summit to divide Jerusalem and give away the Temple Mount. This was a radical diplomatic departure from the platform on which he had campaigned and which he had reaffirmed publicly just two months earlier. (So much for "democratic" behavior...)

This reckless gambit, for which Barak had no public mandate, terribly weakened Israel's political hold on Jerusalem. It heedlessly broke an important and rightful Israeli diplomatic taboo about maintaining Jerusalem united under Israeli sovereignty.

This transgression undermined a core Jewish claim to legitimacy in Zion, which at source is rooted in the holiest place on earth to Jews – Jerusalem's Temple Mount. It appreciably enfeebled Israel's diplomatic fortitude. It drove Palestinian expectations sky-high and became the baseline for international demands that the city be split into two capitals. It later gave cover to other politicians on the Left (like Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni) to go astray too.

It also promptly led to Yasser Arafat's so-called second intifada, the most

murderous spree of Palestinian terrorism in Israel's history.

Arafat incorrectly assumed that all Israelis would be as supine as Barak; that several dozen bus-bombers would push Israelis over the edge and bring about capitulation in Jerusalem and across Judea and Samaria.

And sure enough, Barak almost gave away the store at the January 2001 Taba summit, after his government had fallen and despite the raging intifada. For the first time, an Israeli prime minister imprudently accepted the 1967 lines (and 97% of Judea and Samaria) as the basis for a Palestinian state. Fortunately, Barak was swiftly kicked out of office, and Israelis proved far more resilient and loyal to their principles than either Barak or Arafat imagined.

Barak has never expressed remorse for his flagrant offenses: for the near plundering of Jerusalem, and for his near subversion of democracy. God only imagines to what insane ends of surrender Barak might go if he were to regain the reins of power.

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500 days of war in Ukraine

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Some 500 days have passed since armored columns shook the ground of Ukraine, but there is no end in sight for the war. The outbreak of hostilities ended the Pax Europaea that had reigned supreme since World War II, marking a historic milestone in the new world order. It is hard to tell if we are past the peak, but the results of this conflict will determine the global balance of power and impact the international norms, as well as shape our world for the next several decades.

Five days before the war, the annual Munich Security Conference took place in Germany. With the war drums already heard in the background, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pleaded with NATO and Western leaders, saying, "What are you waiting for? Has our world completely forgotten the mistakes of

the 20th century? I just want to make sure you and I read the same books. How did we get to the biggest security crisis since the Cold War?"

In what was the speech of his life, the Ukrainian leader called on the world to act immediately so that Russia's plot would be foiled. "Don't wait for the bombs; when they fall we will no longer need your sanctions," he warned, but to no avail. All those who believed that bloody wars can no longer happen in the 21st - or only in far-flung areas of the world - century got a rude awakening by reality. "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun," the Book of Ecclesiastes says.

Weakness invites evil. This is the first lesson from this war. While the methods of war keep changing due to technological advances and other developments, war's essence remains. Its human component continues to be the most important factor. Margaret Atwood once wrote: "Wars happen because the ones who start them think they can win."

It's hard to assess what impact the US actions in Afghanistan and the Middle East had on what has unfolded in Europe. At the very least, we can say that they were not a restraining factor in Russia's overall calculus. The lessons of the war in Ukraine highlight the need to resolve the Iranian issue. Iran's arrogance and its self-confidence under the current US and European policies have demonstrated the West's eroding stature. This is clear in Tehran's brazen conduct on the nuclear issue and its destabilizing actions in the form of arming militias and other proxies, as well as expanding and enhancing its export and production of UAVs and missiles. Iran is not just involved in the war in Ukraine but also occupies a significant role in the re-establishment of an anti-West and anti-US axis. It has lent its support for Russia's war effort and the two have deepened their cooperation, while Iran has simultaneously come close to China, whose leader has recently said that it supports Iran's rights on the nuclear issue.

The regime in Tehran has picked up the West's weakness and is squeezing everything it can from it to its benefit. Iran is threatening the stability and peace of the entire world; there is no need for any additional proof.

The West's leaders, chiefly the US, now have an opportunity to implement the lessons of the war in Ukraine. They must look at what is going on in Europe and make a decision to change their posture toward Iran. They must assume that the

current provocations of the regime will pale in comparison to what it would allow itself to do if it were to have a nuclear arsenal.

If history is any guide, we know that only a credible military threat will stop Iran's nuclear program. Such a threat from the US will not drag Washington into the war it seeks to avoid because the regime in Tehran knows full well what the balance of power is and the fate of other regional leaders who tried to use their force vis-a-vis the US. In fact, if the US fails to act forcefully against Iran, this will greatly increase the likelihood of a regional war that Washington can prevent.

The future of the world order is on the line. The US knows this, as do the Europeans. Let's hope that they marshal enough courage and leadership to make the right decisions.

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