

Israel's New Government Will Put American Lives at Risk

Extremists' ascent makes US-Israel relationship more dangerous to civilians and military

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Global Research, January 12, 2023

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January 2023

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

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Benjamin Netanyahu's return to power in Israel has ushered in a government more dominated by religious and ultra-nationalist extremists than any ruling coalition in the country's 74-year history.

While that fact has been well-reported, most Americans are oblivious to a grim implication: The new Israeli government's extreme policies toward Palestinians and regional rivals will imperil American lives at home and abroad.

Americans aren't jeopardized by those policies per se, but rather by the U.S. government's unconditional military, financial and diplomatic support of Israel, which are seen as enabling such policies. Anger over that support is a principal motivator of terror attacks on American targets, and it intensifies when Israel's actions grow more extreme.

At the same time civilians face a heightened danger from terror attacks, members of the American military will face a higher risk of being drawn into pointless conflicts initiated by more hawkish Israeli government.

Support of Israel a Key Driver of Anti-US Terrorism

Along with U.S. intervention in the Middle East and support for corrupt dictators in the region, American backing of Israel was repeatedly cited by al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as a foremost motivator of his jihad against the United States

Indeed, Bin Laden said his determination to attack targets in the United States initially sprang from Israel's destruction of apartment towers during Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon...so much so that it focused his attention on the World Trade Center as a target:

“We witnessed the injustice and tyranny of the American-Israeli alliance against our people in Palestine and Lebanon...As I watched the destroyed towers in Lebanon, it occurred to me punish the unjust the same way [and] to destroy towers in America so it could taste some of what we are tasting and to stop killing our children and women,” bin Laden said in a [2004 speech](#).

In his 1996 declaration of war against Americans, he pointed to the [First Qana Massacre](#), in which Israel launched an artillery attack on Lebanese civilians sheltering at a UN compound. The attack killed 106 — half of them children —and video evidence points to Israel’s awareness that they were targeting civilians.

Bin Laden said Muslim youth “hold [the United States] responsible for all the killings...carried out by your Zionist brothers in Lebanon; you openly supplied them with arms and finance.”

The same reasoning drove 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. As the 9/11 Commission report asserted, Mohammed’s “animus toward the United States stemmed not from his experiences there as a student, but rather from his [violent disagreement with U.S. foreign policy](#) favoring Israel.”

U.S. backing of the Israeli government also animated individual 9/11 hijackers, including Mohammad Atta, who led the hijackers inside the United States and piloted American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center’s North Tower.

Atta signed his will on April 11, 1996, the day Israel unleashed Operation Grapes of Wrath on Lebanon. “According to one of his friends, Atta was enraged, and by filling out his last testament during the attack, he was offering his life in response,” writes Lawrence Wright in [The Looming Tower](#).

When future United Flight 175 hijacker-pilot Marwan al-Shehhi was asked why he and 9/11 lead hijacker Mohammed Atta never laughed, al-Shehhi [said](#), “How can you laugh when people are dying in Palestine?”

Testifying before the 9/11 Commission, FBI Special Agent James Fitzgerald was asked what drove the hijackers to sacrifice their lives and kill thousands of civilians. He [said](#), “I believe they feel a sense of outrage against the United States. They identify with the Palestinian problem...and I believe they tend to focus their anger on the United States.”

Despite the overwhelming evidence, it’s understandable that most Americans are ignorant about the link between terrorism and the U.S.-Israel relationship — influential forces in their government want it that way.

In its final report, the 9/11 Commission gave very little attention to the question of motives, largely sweeping al Qaeda’s Israel-rooted motivations under the rug. In their memoir, commission co-chairs Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton [explained](#) that a group of commissioners prevailed in keeping the Israel-Palestine factor out of the report:

“In their view, listing U.S. support for Israel as a root cause of al Qaeda’s opposition to the United States indicated that the United States should reassess that policy.”

Though 9/11 is the most jarring example of an attack that targeted Americans over their government’s support of Israel, [there](#) have [been](#) many [more](#) instances where terrorists have

directly articulated that motivation — most recently, the New Year’s Eve [machete attack](#) on police officers near Times Square.

Meanwhile, though it received very little media attention, the Department of Homeland Security recently concluded that Al Qaeda is planning new attacks in the United States. According to a non-public intelligence alert issued on Dec. 31 and obtained by [Judicial Watch](#), the attacks, “possibly involving planes, will use new techniques and tactics.”

Israel: Extreme Rulers, Provocative Policies

Because the risk of U.S. citizens being targeted by terrorism is driven in part by the actions of the Israeli government, the new Netanyahu government is particularly concerning.

To retake the prime minister’s office, Netanyahu built a ruling coalition that gives unprecedented power to ultra-religious and ultranationalist parties with names like “Jewish Power” and “Religious Zionism” that leave no doubt about their nature.

Extremists have advanced from the fringe to hold key ministerial posts. For starters, consider Jewish Power Party leader Itamar Ben-Gvir, a man who:

- Was [barred from Israeli military service](#) over concern for his extreme views.
- Was convicted of [inciting racism](#) while joining attacks on Arabs.
- [Brandished a gun](#) when Arab security guards asked him to move his car from a no-parking zone.
- [Decorated](#) his living room with a photograph of Baruch Goldstein, who slaughtered 28 Muslim worshipers and wounded another 125 in 1994’s [Cave of the Patriarchs massacre](#).

He’s now [national security minister](#), which ominously gives him responsibility over Israeli police in the West Bank, where Palestinians live under a 55-year-old military occupation and suffer recurring attacks by Jewish settlers and the demolition of their homes by Israeli authorities.

Far from promoting security, Ben-Gvir is known for provocative behavior — so much so that [The Times of Israel](#) called him a “pyromaniac.” He’s only been national security minister since Dec 29, but has already used his new role to pull off a series of anti-Palestinian provocations.

Days after being sworn in, he went to the Jerusalem [plateau](#) that’s home to the Al-Aqsa mosque, revered by Muslims as the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven. A similar stunt in September 2000 by then-opposition leader Ariel Sharon sparked the Second Intifada, a four-year conflict with between Israel and Palestinians that killed thousands.

Last week, Ben-Gvir toured a renovated prison and said he wanted to ensure the renovation [didn’t](#) result in an improvement of conditions for jailed Palestinians. Hamas — the Palestinian political and militant organization that controls Gaza — called his visit and rhetoric “a dangerous escalation.”

In a brazen attack on an essential expression of Palestinian identity and aspirations for statehood, Ben-Gvir on Sunday announced that he’d ordered Israeli police to [remove Palestinian flags](#) from public spaces.

Ben-Gvir isn't the only worrisome character in the new government. Another is Bezalel Smotrich. The leader of the Religious Zionism party and now finance minister, Smotrich has called for Israel's annexation of the entire West Bank and the imposition of citizenship requirements that would [preclude](#) most Palestinians from qualifying.

His immediate plans include authorizing dozens of illegal West Bank outposts and continuing the [demolition](#) of unauthorized Palestinian homes there.

Smotrich has made racist comments, to include [asserting](#) that new Jewish mothers in hospitals should be separated from new Palestinian mothers. "[My wife] would not want to sleep next to someone who just gave birth to a baby who might want to murder her baby in twenty years," he said.

He and his party aspire to [make Israel a theocracy](#) governed by the Torah, and both Smotrich and Ben-Gvir have advocated the expulsion of Arabs who fail to agree that "the land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people."

In late December, Netanyahu put aspirations of a two-state solution squarely in the crosshairs of his new government, [declaring](#) that "the Jewish people have an exclusive and inalienable right to all parts of the Land of Israel. The government will promote and develop the settlement of all parts of the Land of Israel" — including the West Bank, the presumed home of a future Palestinian state.

On [The Scott Horton Show](#), U.S.-Palestinian journalist Ramzy Baroud summed up the bleak implications for Palestinians — and for peace:

"Something terrible is going to happen. We're talking about the potential of a real war. So everyone should be very worried about what will happen in Israel now that Netanyahu has not only a government of fascists, but he has...a total and absolute majority in the Knesset."

Tensions are already mounting. Hamas threatened retaliation for Ben-Gvir's Al-Aqsa provocation. In response, an Israeli member of parliament and the Jewish Power party said Israel's practice of attacking the Palestinians "every two or three years" should be ended with a "final war" that would ["subdue them once and for all."](#)

As if provocations of anti-U.S. terrorism weren't enough to worry about, Netanyahu also has a history of [directly aiding al Qaeda](#). In 2016, it was revealed that Netanyahu's government provided direct medical support to members of the Al Nusra front —an al Qaeda spin-off in Syria — treating their wounds and sending them back to wage jihad.

Asked why Israel would help al Qaeda, which had carried out the 9/11 attacks on Israel's benefactor, former Mossad head Efraim Halevy [said](#), "Al Qaeda, to the best of my recollection, has not attacked Israel."

US Military Service Members At Risk

While American civilians face an heightened risk of terrorist attacks sparked by resentment of the U.S. government's backing of Israel, American military service members will be at greater risk of being drawn into an Israel-sparked war.

There are many scenarios under which that could happen. For example, a third intifada

uprising by Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank — triggered by new levels of Israeli subjugation — could expand to include the well-armed, Iranian-backed Hezbollah political party and militant group in Lebanon. That, in turn, could expand to all-out war with Iran and with Syria, where U.S. troops are still deployed.

The Israel-Palestine conflict aside, there's also the risk that this more-hawkish Netanyahu government will carry out a solo military strike on Iranian nuclear energy facilities, which could spark a wider war that pulls in the United States.

Netanyahu has appointed [Tzachi Hanegbi](#) to lead Israel's national security council. In November, Hanegbi [said](#) Netanyahu will "have no choice but to strike Iran's nuclear facilities." Israel opposed the deal that limited Iran's nuclear program, encouraged Donald Trump to abandon it, and has [fought](#) efforts to restore it.

A little-reported October U.S. Department of Defense assessment reiterated previous conclusions that Iran "[does not pose a nuclear threat](#)" and has not decided to pursue nuclear weapon development. Of course, Netanyahu has long been [crying wolf](#) about Iran's nuclear energy program, as he stands ready to fight Iran down to the last American.

It's part of an established pattern where Netanyahu angles for American attacks on Israel's regional rivals. While so far he's mostly come up short where Iran is concerned, Netanyahu — who once privately [boasted](#) that "America is a thing you can move very easily" — did help push America into the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq.

"If you take out Saddam, Saddam's regime, I guarantee you that it will have enormous positive reverberations on the region," Netanyahu [told Congress](#) in 2002.

In addition to its dreadful toll on Iraqis and others, the Iraq war killed more than [4,500](#) American military members, wounding some [32,000](#) more — while only making the region more unstable.

That instability isn't a bug of Israeli policy in the Middle East; it's a feature —and one that's also embraced by many in the DC establishment. As Lawrence Wilkerson, chief of staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, [told me](#), "There are people in this country who believe the chaos in the Middle East...is conducive to Israel's security."

With Americans' security already subordinated to the Israeli agenda in both Washington and Tel Aviv, and with extremists now installed in key Israeli ministerial posts and holding greater sway in the legislature, brace for even more Israel-cultivated chaos...with potentially deadly repercussions for American civilians and service members alike.

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Featured image: The Israeli and American flags displayed on the walls of the Old City in Jerusalem (Photo: Yonatan Sindel)

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