



Opinion and Analysis, Week ending 15 May 2014

1. Fighting terror the Israeli way

Special Correspondent, The Star-Kenya, 10 May 2014

No one understands terrorists' motivations, and knows how to counter them, better than the Israelis. And the sooner Kenya taps into Israeli counter-terror knowhow, big time, the faster this country and region will begin the long journey to becoming a virtually terror-free zone.

<http://www.the-star.co.ke/news/article-166526/fighting-terror-israeli-way>

2. How Israel's dusty Zionist bureaucracy survives

Anshel Pfeffer, Jewish Daily Forward, 10 May 2014

Jobs for cronies — and ties to a deep-pocketed generous diaspora

<http://world.einnews.com/article/204153083/Du8TBo-EVPbHEVh5?n=1&code=qW6DMXoR1IMrlp3n>

3. Apartheid? Blame the Geneva Convention

Evelyn Gordon, Commentary Magazine, 8 May 2014

All occupying powers have given their own citizens more rights than the occupied noncitizens, from the British in India through the French in Algeria to the Americans in Iraq; yet none of these were ever labelled apartheid. Why should Israel be any different?

<http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/05/08/apartheid-blame-the-geneva-convention/>

4 Palestinian Magical Thinking

Jonathan Spyer May 7th 2014

The campaign to place pressure on Israel through activism on the international stage is the latest example.

<http://tinyurl.com/p5nep6w>

5. UN replaces notorious Richard Falk – don't expect changes

Anne Bayefsky, Fox News, 7 May 2014

No UN rapporteur on Israel could be independent. The 1993 U.N. job description says the mandate holder must investigate only Israel's human rights violations. Investigating Palestinians is off limits.

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2014/05/07/un-appoints-human-rights-experts-experts-on-israel-bashing/>

6. BDS movement: Barbarians at the Gate – Part I
Dennis MacEoin, Gatestone Institute, 7 May 2014

The Nazis invented the Jewish boycott -- and went on from there to the Holocaust. One might well ask if the boycotters' real concern is the welfare of the Palestinian or actually, as it clearly appears, the obliteration of Israel. It is the wrong boycott in the wrong place at the wrong time.

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4274/bds-movement>

7. BDS movement: Barbarians inside the Gates – Part II
Dennis MacEoin, Gatestone Institute, 8 May 2014

These politically correct activists are all supposed to be anti-racists and multiculturalists. Yet when artists are banned just because they happened to be born in Israel, it tears apart the very basis of both anti-racism and multiculturalism.

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4275/bds-movement-barbarians>

8. Happy 66th birthday, Israel!
David Harris, Huffington Post, 6 May 2014

I have enormous admiration for Israel - for its resolve, resilience, courage, and ingenuity. What it has achieved in the past 66 years is breath-taking: the rebirth of a state with a rock-solid democratic foundation; the ingathering of millions of refugees and immigrants from just about every corner of the world; the creation of a world-class economy; the building of a first-rate army; and a determination to overcome one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after another.

<http://www.ajc.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=7oJILSPwFfJSG&b=8478237&ct=13932005¬oc=1&msource=DAH050614>

9. The right way to press Iran
Kenneth Pollack, New York Times, 6 May 2014

The Obama administration should focus on three factors: conducting intrusive inspections, designing a mechanism to easily re-impose sanctions if Iran cheats, and extending the duration of the agreement.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/opinion/the-right-way-to-press-iran.html?ref=opinion&r=1>

10. The Muslim Brotherhood and terrorist organisations
Valentina Columbo, Gatestone Institute, 6 May 2014

"[T]he organization of the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist organization, and anyone who asks either to reconcile with them, to join them or to ally with them is himself a terrorist." — Refaat Saïd, leader of Egypt's Socialist party, al-Tagammu', and previously close friend of former Muslim Brotherhood Supreme Guide, Mahdi Akef.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the motto of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is also the verse singled out by Hassan al Banna: "Fight them until there is no *fitnah* [discord], and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah." [Qur'an, Sura VIII, verse 39]

The link between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas is clear, and confirmed by Article 2 of the Charter of Hamas, which reads: "The Islamic Resistance movement is one of the wings of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine".

<http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4297/muslim-brotherhood-ansar-bayt-al-maqdis>

11. Why it is hypocritical to boycott Israel **Jake Wallis Simons, UK Telegraph, 5 May 2014**

Later this month, I am planning to travel to Israel to appear in the Jerusalem literary festival. As surely as night follows day, I have received an "open letter" from a group of 71 activists calling themselves the British Writers in Support of Palestine (BWIP). They were, I was informed, "extremely disappointed" by my decision, and "respectfully encouraged" me to boycott the event. But I am honoured to have been invited to Israel, and will be proud to attend.

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/jakewallissimons/100270057/why-it-is-hypocritical-to-boycott-israel/>

1. Fighting terror the Israeli way

Terrorism is now such a worldwide phenomenon, occurring everywhere except in North Korea, that President Uhuru Kenyatta left it in Kenya at the weekend only to arrive in a Nigeria in the clammy grip of terrorists.

Uhuru was in Nigeria as a guest of President Goodluck Jonathan when two extraordinary international offers of counter-terrorism help were made to Africa's biggest nation and armed forces, against the background of terror kidnappings of schoolgirls.

The offers came from Washington and London. President Barack Obama made the American offer when he condemned the Nigerian terrorist organisation Boko Haram, in no uncertain terms, as a horrendous entity that brings chaos to people's lives. Obama called Boko Haram's mass kidnapping of more than 250 Nigerian schoolgirls three weeks ago "a heartbreaking and outrageous situation".

The offer from London was that the Special Air Services (SAS), one of the world's foremost elite Special Forces units, were on standby to go to Nigeria and help in the search for the girls if Abuja made the request. Whitehall officials said Britain was offering intelligence-gathering aircraft and SBS (Special Boat Services, the SAS's naval equivalent) personnel.

The UK officials were meeting as the government's security committee known as Cobra (for Cabinet Briefing Room A).

Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has reportedly announced that the schoolchildren will be sold into slavery in countries that neighbour Nigeria. Indeed, there were reports in Nigerian and other media to the effect that some of the girls had already been married off in Cameroon.

This is a whole new world of terror and horror. A world in which an outfit like Boko Haram exists and hundreds of buyers of kidnapped schoolchildren can be found is a place that calls for massively preventive counter-measures.

Boko Haram, which has terrorised Nigerians for several years now, has finally mobilised world attention, revulsion and unprecedented offers of collaborative counter-terrorism efforts with its new wrinkle on terror – the mass targeting of girls.

President Kenyatta, during whose absence away in Nigeria there have been four improvised explosive devices (IEDs) blasts in Nairobi and Mombasa, and the safe disabling of a fifth

device in the coastal city, must have paid very close attention indeed to unfolding events and developments in Nigeria. The question of how to prevent terrorism must have been revisited in Uhuru's mind and among members of his delegation, particularly the senior security officers among them.

In fact, on the first day of his visit, the same day Washington and London made their offers of help to Abuja, Boko Haram seized eight more girls.

The internationalisation of counter-terrorism strategies and joint action also needs to happen in Kenya as a matter of the highest national security priority and on a truly unprecedented scale. Being the regional business, communications, tourism, peacemaking and refugee hub, Kenya needs all the expert counter-terror help and technologies that it can get, before we become the regional hub, too, of terrorist attacks.

The greatest terrorist threat Kenya faces is from the Somali murder and mayhem militia known as al Shabaab, an affiliate of al Qaeda. Since the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) went into Somalia in hot pursuit of al Shabaab, there have been 80 terror attacks, 150 fatalities and more than 250 injured.

The fatalities and injuries include the 67 dead and 176 injured of a single outrage – the terror attack on the Westgate mall on September 21 last year.

Unless something very drastic begins to happen in Kenya's counter-terrorism strategies and forces, these grim statistics can only get grimmer. This is an unacceptable prospect. Kenya needs superior strategies to fight terror with immediate effect. This country also needs a much more robust Prevention of Terrorism Act.

As we reach out for collaborative expert help and experience, we must clear in our minds about one thing: Crushing terrorism needs much more than brute force.

Although help from the US and UK is undoubtedly welcome, even vital, what Kenya really needs is what we may call the 'Israel Option'. Israel has faced existential terrorist threats since its foundation in 1948. And Tel Aviv has fought back over the past six decades with a counterterrorism cocktail like none other – it is part Intelligence, brute force, prevention, the most costly retribution and versatile assassination bureau, with no limits in outreach, no statutes of limitation and no acknowledgement, no denial.

And yet Israel's enemies indubitably know that the Jewish state knows that they know that she knows.

There has never been an intelligence network and capability like Israel's. It is the ultimate antidote to the strain of terrorism that seems to be afflicting Kenya now. It makes eminent sense, therefore, for a basically peace-loving and enterprising country like Kenya to borrow best-practice from Israel's long experience, expertise, tradecraft and security technologies.

The trick is to avoid turning counterterrorism measures into counter-productive outcomes.

The best counterterrorism is preventive, not curative. By the time a national security system goes for whatever its notion of a cure might happen to be, the body count is already in the thousands, the streets flowing with blood and devastation (think 9/11 in the USA). The worst counterterrorism is vengeance for its own sake, as it only adds to cycles of violence, often attacks the wrong targets and always becomes the breeding ground for the next generation of terrorists.

While terrorism cannot be terrorised out of existence, it can be outsmarted to the point of near-futility. This has been the Israeli way, on top of occasionally overwhelming brute force and targeted retribution and, or prevention slayings. Today, Israel is the safest place in the Middle East, the eye of the storm that is the strife in that region which also comprises her most deadly foes.

Israel's intelligence system comprises the three branches of domestic, foreign and military. Israel's foreign Intelligence agency, known worldwide as The Mossad, is also called the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations.

The Mossad's mission on behalf of the State of Israel is to collect information, analyze intelligence and perform special covert operations beyond its borders.

The Mossad's motto comes from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs 11: 14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety".

One of the most comprehensive histories of the Israeli Intelligence system, and required reading for senior spies (and aspiring spooks) everywhere, is Every Spy a Prince: The Complete History of Israel's Intelligence Community, by Dan Raviv and Yossi Melman.

The Mossad has one of the most fearsome reputations of any national security service anywhere, including in history. It is a reputation that strikes fear into the most hardened terrorist and, or other enemy of the Jewish state. The Mossad's reputation precedes it. Raviv and Melman quote from a once-secret US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report that was leaked by the Iranian authorities after the seizure and siege of the American embassy in Tehran following the fall of the Shah in 1979. The CIA had concluded: "Israeli intelligence and security services are among the best in the world. Their expert personnel and sophisticated techniques have made them highly effective, and they have demonstrated outstanding ability to organize, screen and evaluate information obtained from recruited agents, Jewish communities and other sources throughout the world".

If Commander-in-Chief Uhuru and his security advisers are reading this, they will want to underscore a line like, "Their expert personnel and sophisticated techniques have made them highly effective", and then act on it.

When it comes to terrorism garbed in Islamist robes, there is no more effective counter-terrorism strategy, expertise or techniques than those of the Tel Aviv regime. There is no infiltration, no interception and no success rates, when it comes to so-called Islamist radicalisation and terrorism, than the tested, tried and proven Israeli Option. And among those who perfectly understand this are hundreds of millions of real and true Muslims, including in Kenya, who have no truck with terror and for whom the sale for sex of kidnapped schoolgirls or the blowing up of Kenyan commuters have nothing whatsoever to do with their faith.

No one understands terrorists' motivations, and knows how to counter them, better than the Israelis. And the sooner Kenya taps into Israeli counter-terror knowhow, big time, the faster this country and region will begin the long journey to becoming a virtually terror-free zone.

2. How Israel's dusty Zionist bureaucracy survives

The Knesset is full of young politicians, a generation unacquainted with the national Zionist institutions, which thinks they're dusty and irrelevant old relics. Only the experienced

operators — headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman — are aware of the treasure that lies in them: unsupervised budgets, jobs for cronies and a direct link to the golden goose that is the Jewish Diaspora.

Israel's media long ago forgot these un-sexy bodies. There are no dedicated Diaspora reporters anymore, and last month's investigation into the affairs of the Jewish National Fund on Channel 10 was a rarity. But the JNF is just the richest and strongest link in a chain of organizations set up in the days of pre-independence to create the state-to-be. Israel is now 66 years in the being, and there seems less justification than ever to keep alive the bureaucracy, which should have been disbanded at independence.

The secret of the survival of the World Zionist Organization, the JNF, the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod — United Israel Appeal is the people running them — politicians of the kind that other politicians, no matter of what party, can do business with. People who can quickly and quietly transfer funding, solve a problem for a mayor or deputy minister, connect a Jewish donor with a good cause and find a job for a loyal Knesset member who lost his seat.

On Monday night, when Israel's great and good gathered at Mount Herzl in Jerusalem for the traditional ceremony marking the transition between Memorial and Independence Days, they looked beyond Theodor Herzl's grave towards Helkat Gdolei Ha'umah, the plot of the nation's greats. Only presidents, prime ministers and speakers of the Knesset are eligible for burial there, along with their partners. But the resting place of one functionary, virtually unknown to the Israeli public, is reserved on the mount — Avraham Duvdevani, the chairman of the World Zionist Organization.

Duvdevani, or "Duvdev," as everyone calls him, is a veteran member of the old National Religious Party, now rebranded as Habayit Hayehudi, the son of a Knesset member and a devoted public servant in his own right who has spent his entire career in various posts in the Jewish Agency and JNF.

Duvdevani is the landlord of Mount Herzl, as the WZO is responsible for Herzl's gravesite. And as WZO chairman, a title first held by Herzl and subsequently David Ben-Gurion and Haim Weitzman, Duvdevani, he is also eligible to be buried there.

Despite his anonymity, Duvdevani has achieved a rare feat that few are aware of. He breathed new life into an organization that the entire Jewish establishment had written off as a useless appendage.

Five years ago, following a prolonged struggle, the heads of the Jewish Federations of North America, which finance two-thirds of the Jewish Agency's budget, succeeded in forcing the Agency to detach itself from the WZO, which had served as its board of directors with seats divided according to the relative strength of the Zionist parties in the Knesset. The Jewish Agency Chairman was also the head of the WZO, which symbolized to American members all that was corrupt and politicized; an obstacle to reform. Disconnecting the two organizations was their victory.

Duvdevani's appointment was seen as a consolation prize to the shrunken NRP. The WZO, founded in 1897 at the First Zionist Congress, had no clear role besides managing the national cemetery. But Duvdevani ... succeeded in tripling the WZO annual budget, replacing the \$7 million it used to receive from the Jewish Agency with \$20 million from the JNF, which had a clear interest in bankrolling the WZO, the only body that officially supervises it and appoints its leaders.

With the money, Duvdevani embarked on a wide range of programs across the Jewish world. He funded Zionist education projects, aliyah campaigns, anti-Semitism monitoring initiatives and more. These may have been the roles of other organizations, such as the Jewish Agency, but the Diaspora is wide and the Agency has been in retreat for years due to cutbacks and reorganization. And anyway, Jewish Agency Chairman Nathan Sharansky, though once a renowned freedom fighter, is a failed politician. Duvdevani, on the other hand, always knew how to work with all parties, and they felt comfortable with him. The WZO became a useful source of funding for the parties' international branches. Suddenly, Zionist youth movements grew, at least on paper. The WZO is also a convenient umbrella organization for the Settlement Department, the government's long and hidden arm for building in the West Bank and a willing subcontractor for any other Zionist mission. The Settlement Department is the apple of the eye of Duvdevani's national-religious party colleagues. With the backing of Habayit Hayehudi leader Naftali Bennett, Housing Minister Uri Ariel and Knesset Finance Committee chairman Nissan Slomianski, it funnels tens of millions of shekels annually into building new neighbourhoods and infrastructure in the settlements. A proper Zionist cause.

With the realization of the dream of generations in the foundation of an independent and sovereign Jewish state, all the roles of the JNF should have been transferred to the new government. After all, the JNF's objective, building the national home, had been fulfilled.

But for the past 66 years, the JNF's sole objective has been perpetuating itself. If the national institutions' hacks admire Duvdevani for bringing the WZO back to life, then JNF Chairman Efi Stenzler is their superstar. Stenzler has leveraged the billions in the fund for a continuous public relations campaign, rebranding the musty old foundation as a "green," environmentally friendly, movement. But the JNF's new image is the most expensive false facade in Israel's history. In reality, it is a massive real estate business, which also supplies the government with forestry services (at a fraction of its budget) to justify its existence to the credulous public.

"Keren Kayemet [the JNF] does a lot of important things," says one former board member. "But the question is, shouldn't these things be done by the government? The concern is that if JNF didn't exist, the government wouldn't do these things. But anyway, disbanding JNF isn't on the government's agenda. It's a never-ending supply of liquid cash." A former senior employee in the JNF's forestry service says, "JNF's forestry management is one of the most advanced in the world, but in any normal country, the government provides that service." Many Israeli environmentalists also question the JNF's green credentials as the organization develops conservation areas for building.

The only reason the JNF still exists is that no politician is in a hurry to dismantle an organization that holds nearly 15% of the country's land and a 4 billion-shekel (\$11.6 billion) slush fund that it uses without supervision or standards. The JNF doesn't even have to market land itself, the Israel Land Authority does it for them, for a 25 percent management fee. One thing the JNF has gotten a lot better at in recent years is demanding from the ILA a better return on the sale of "its land." But the very idea of "JNF land" is a fallacy, since the lands were purchased for the use of the Jewish people, or came into the state's ownership, JNF was only ever supposed to be a custodian, not an owner.

The familiar terms "JNF forests" and "JNF parks" are also highly misleading. The 1.6 million dunams (395,000 acres) of forests in Israel are on state land, they are just managed by the JNF. "When land is sold, JNF maintains that it's theirs, not the state's," says a former employee. "But when there's a forest fire, they suddenly remember that it belongs to the state." Most of the land "owned" by JNF is classic real estate for development, around the cities of central Israel. Treasury officials routinely claim that the JNF holds the key to solving

Israel's housing crisis, and they're not wrong. Properly managed, the dissolution of the JNF and the transfer of the land it currently holds to the state could open up the entire housing market.

JNF tries to pretend it's a major fund-raising operation in the Jewish world. In reality, its network of fund-raisers around the world bring in only a tiny portion of its income. In the United States and Britain, entities presented as part of the JNF actually belong to Israel's Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael — Jewish National Fund, which after long legal battles has been allowed to use the prestigious brand-name for fund-raising in local Jewish communities, while most of the donations go to independent projects in Israel.

The JNF board controls a massive cash fund filled by selling public land ("JNF land") to the public. The fund allows them to distribute funding for lucrative projects — like parks, boulevards and buildings — to local councils headed by connected and influential politicians. The JNF gains twice from this funding. It purchases valuable political backing and protection and at the same time invests in PR. The Channel 10 investigation revealed how under Stenzler, JNF's PR budget quadrupled.

But why does Stenzler, a former mayor of the Tel Aviv suburb Givatayim, need so much political goodwill and public recognition? He's a survivor of an old system whereby his party, the historical Israeli Labour movement, controlled the national institutions. As Labour's power shrunk, JNF remained the only stronghold. The parties in power, Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu and Bayit Yehudi, which already took over the rest of the apparatus, would like control of JNF as well. The only way Stenzler can hold on is by proving that the Labourite from Givatayim can come up with the goods.

Stenzler has been joined by another survivor — his co-chairman, Eli Aflalo of the now near-extinct Kadima party. Aflalo also needs political backing after crossing his former party leader Tzipi Livni and supporting Shaul Mofaz in the primaries. As justice minister, Livni has embarked on a campaign to force the JNF to accept the supervision and scrutiny of the state comptroller, and the JNF chiefs accuse her of doing so just to get back at Aflalo. They needn't worry — Livni has scant chance of getting a majority in the government to approve her plan. Last Sunday, she lost a vote on the plan by the cabinet legislative committee. Most of the other ministers are fine with the JNF continuing unsupervised.

Stenzler and Aflalo's days at the helm of the organization are probably numbered though. Their positions are coveted by coalition members. Still, the political establishment will forever be in Stenzler's debt for the way in which he transformed the JNF from a gray and boring sinecure to an attractive green platform, creatively using its budget to accrue unprecedented political credit.

An old Jerusalem joke goes like this: A lion escaped from the Biblical Zoo and hid in the courtyard of the National Institutions building on King George Street. Every day, it ate a Jewish Agency official. Nobody noticed until it ate the lady who distributes tea. This joke is unfair to the Agency, which has recently undergone drastic cutbacks and layoffs. It's hard today to call it wasteful. Some even say it's grown too small, but there was no choice. Relying throughout its history on the largesse of Diaspora philanthropy worked as long as Israel had a failing economy. But with the rise of "startup nation" at the same time as the global financial crisis, it became much more difficult to continue convincing Jewish donors, even the most ardent Zionists, to bankroll the Agency.

The Agency tried everything. It agreed to strict governance rules in the hope that the American federations would come to its rescue. It hired Chairman Sharansky's friend Misha Galperin for an obscene sum to head a new fund-raising operation in the hope he would act

as a rainmaker. Keren Hayesod — UIA (another of the national institutions run by Netanyahu's confidante ex-minister Modi Zandberg), which is in charge of fund-raising in other parts of the world, beefed up its efforts to attract new money from oligarchs. Nothing worked. Donations were down, and the funds that continued to come in were greatly eroded due to the weak U.S. dollar.

Donors were once willing to put their money in a general fund, believing the money would be put to good Zionist use. That willingness is disappearing, and much in the way Hadassah failed to continue funding its hospitals in Jerusalem, the Agency has been forced to come to terms with the fact that the new Jewish donor, like casino tycoon Sheldon Adelson, prefers to donate to young and sexy pet projects, like Taglit-Birthright, which offers free tours of Israel to young Jews and has become much more prominent than the Agency in recent years.

As it is, the Jewish Agency's *raison d'être*, encouraging and organizing Jewish immigration to Israel, has been weakening for years. Nearly all the Jews outside Israel live in relative prosperity in safe and stable societies. Their decision on whether to emigrate is based on financial calculations, and if they need any additional information, they can go online or hop on a plane. They don't need a Jewish Agency "shaliach," or "emissary," to explain things. The number of immigrants continues to dwindle along with the Agency's traditional mission.

The Agency has tried to reinvent itself in recent years as an educational and "community-building" movement, fostering Jewish identity and "peoplehood," but this field is crowded and not sexy to donors.

Agency representatives are still responsible for the initial screening of those eligible to receive Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. But there's no reason that can't be done by officials at the Interior or Immigration Ministries. As it is, the Immigration Ministry under Minister Sofa Landver of Yisrael Beitenu is already becoming much more proactive and trying to encourage more immigration from the former Soviet Union, which used to be the Agency's role. At the same time, the nongovernmental organization Nefesh b'Nefesh has taken over the business of aliyah from North America and Britain, claiming to have made the process more user-friendly (though numbers have not increased noticeably as a result). Meanwhile, the Agency has given up its territory without a fight.

Ironically, this has happened under a prime minister who is very aware of the concerns of the Diaspora. Netanyahu is trying to launch a "strategic initiative" that will rejuvenate the relationship between Israel and the Jews of the world. He is even prepared to be the first Israeli leader to reverse the paradigm whereby Jews abroad pay for everything and has committed hundreds of millions of Israeli taxpayers' shekels to Diaspora-focused programs. The new initiative could save the Jewish Agency if it succeeds in divining what Netanyahu wants to achieve and adapts accordingly. If it fails, it will have reached the end of its journey.

Even if the JNF were monitored by the state comptroller, it probably wouldn't make much difference. Take for example another powerful but less well-known organization at the Israel-Diaspora nexus.

Last September, State Comptroller Yosef Shapira published a special report on Nativ, or as it was once called Lishkat Ha'Keshet (The Contact Bureau). Despite the report's severity, it was barely mentioned in the media, and like previous reports, it will change nothing. The comptroller slams every aspect of Nativ's activity — budget management, hiring, unauthorized trips and projects — and a severe lack of oversight. But the most troubling conclusion comes right at the start, in Shapira's personal introduction, where he writes of the

government agency, "There is a lack of clarity, an opacity as to Nativ's role, its status and responsibilities."

Nativ is formally part of the Prime Minister's Office and employs some 120 full-time staff, a third of them serving in the former countries of the Soviet Union. Its budget has been growing for years and currently stands at nearly 100 million shekels (\$29 million). Even after spending two years investigating Nativ, the comptroller's staff failed to understand why it exists.

The report tries to define Nativ's unique status, a unit of the Prime Minister's Office but under the auspices of Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. It contains no explanation as to why Lieberman, who controls Israel's official foreign service, wields a second international network. The answer, which doesn't appear in the report, has been clear for years to anyone involved in Israel's relations with the Jewish communities of the former Soviet empire. "For seven years, Nativ has had one aim: maintaining Lieberman's political and personal ties in the Russian-speaking region and those of Yisrael Beitenu with its potential electorate," says an official who was worked in Russia and its neighbours for many years.

Nativ was founded in 1952 to keep contact with the Jews living behind the Iron Curtain. For decades it was a secret service, part of Israel's intelligence community. But like the JNF, WZO and Jewish Agency, whose historical roles ended with the establishment of the state, Nativ lost its raison d'être in the early 1990s with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel, Russia and its former republics.

From the mid-1990s, Nativ's budget was slashed and the threat of closure hung over it. It was saved by a coalition agreement signed in 2006 between Lieberman and former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Lieberman, who was appointed strategic affairs minister, became responsible for a new beefed-up Nativ, with expanded though loosely-defined powers and greatly increased funding and manpower. Even when Lieberman was temporarily forced out of the cabinet by political and legal circumstances, he retained his hold on Nativ. When Netanyahu formed his second government and appointed Lieberman foreign minister, he found himself in control of the official diplomatic corps and a smaller, separate staff, working out of the embassies and consulates in countries with Russian-speaking Jewish communities. Nativ representatives use diplomatic cover, but they don't answer to the local ambassadors and sometimes even act against Israel's official diplomatic policy.

Nativ is no longer part of the intelligence community, but it has not shed its atmosphere of secrecy. It doesn't publish its activities and operates out of an anonymous building in south Tel-Aviv. Nativ director Naomi Ben-Ami, a former diplomat and ambassador to Ukraine, served as Lieberman's foreign-affairs adviser when he was national infrastructure minister. Since her appointment in 2007, complaints have accumulated that to be hired by Nativ one must first be approved by a senior member of Lieberman's party. "Naomi is a pro who is trying to keep the organization relevant," says a former Nativ employee. "But in reality, it [Nativ] is Lieberman's plaything and continues to exist only due to his political influence and for his interests." Nativ's defenders say that it cannot justify its existence in public due to the sensitive nature of Israel's relations with Russia, which are evident now in the crisis in Ukraine. They say that to maintain those relations and protect the local Jewish communities, Israel needs a team of experienced and discreet operators.

"That's ridiculous," says a veteran diplomat who has served in Eastern Europe. "What does Israel have diplomats for? If Nativ is so capable, why has more than one of its representatives been kicked out of Russia and other places in recent years? And why is Nativ trying to work in Germany and the U.S.? The only reason is it provides Lieberman with funding and people to safeguard his interests with his base."

Nativ today has only two defined roles: To examine the eligibility of potential immigrants and to operate Israeli cultural centres. "It's redundant since the Jewish Agency is the body that normally prepares immigrants, and there are cultural attaches at the embassies," says an experienced aliyah activist. "As it is, emigration from the Former Soviet Union is dwindling, and there's no reason it can't be handled through the consulates in an orderly fashion."

Despite everything, Nativ is under pressure to justify its existence and is occasionally forced out of the shadows. The comptroller found it overstepped its authority by organizing "hasbara," or "Israeli PR," and "branding" events abroad. In that, Nativ is no different than the "national institutions," which have all been trying recently to get in on the hasbara act, the new global frontier of Zionism.

Two weeks ago, the National Information Directorate in the Prime Minister's Office held an unofficial gathering of hasbara organizations. "Members of over 30 private organizations came," said one of those present. "It was incredible, there wasn't enough room for everyone." Each of these groups has heavy-weight donors, offices in Israel and abroad, a strong presence on the Internet and social media and a steely determination to conquer the battlefield of ideas — for Israel and the Jewish people.

In the absence of mass aliyah, the hottest cause in the world of Jewish organizations is hasbara — fighting the two-headed monster of anti-Semitism and the delegitimization of Israel. "There's no security or diplomatic crisis," says one Zionist activist with years of hasbara experience. "But you have to keep the Zionist engines running, so you manufacture a threat."

"Everyone now wants to be a hasbara hero," sighs an Israeli diplomat. "They need a crisis, so they have 'delegitimization,' as if that's going to destroy Israel."

Despite the often-heard complaints that "Israel doesn't explain itself well," the Jewish state has never had so many self-appointed ambassadors to the world, and the government's allocations for PR are breaking records. Entire organizations, such as the World Jewish Congress, which used to focus on discreet diplomacy, have been refocused on hasbara for Israel and fighting anti-Semitism. The WZO has beefed up its anti-Semitism department and hired a PR firm to draw journalists' attention to any and every odious utterance on the Internet.

As in any war, facts go out the window. Research showing that anti-Semitism in Europe and North America have actually gone down is disregarded, as is the expert view that the threat to Israel from delegitimization and the pro-Palestinian BDS movement has been blown far out of any proportion. "Thirty years ago, Jewish officials were talking about the poisonous atmosphere on campuses in America, exactly as they are today," says one Israeli who works with American-Jewish organizations. "But if you look at things from a historical perspective, nothing has changed. It's just the Internet that's magnifying the threat. Meanwhile, Israel's diplomatic and commercial ties with the world have improved exponentially and there's absolutely no sign of any reversal of that trend."

The argument over the severity of the threat has combined with a turf war between the Foreign Ministry and other government departments trying to get in on the hasbara act. In the previous Netanyahu government, Yuli Edelstein's Diaspora and Public Diplomacy Ministry tried to lead the charge and push campaigns on campuses. Funding that it transferred abroad was blocked by the consulates and Edelstein had to get Foreign Minister Lieberman to intervene. A hasbara activist complains, "The Foreign Ministry wants everything to stay with them, that's why Israel's image is so bad. They block initiative and resources because of the diplomats' prestige."

In the current government, the standard-bearer is Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz. His office has prepared an ambitious plan to fight delegitimization, which demands a budget of 100 million shekels. "All they want to do is fight the whole world," says a dismissive diplomat. "We have to engage with people, but they are convinced we're facing an existential threat."

Netanyahu has yet to decide whether to award Steinitz the budget. While the squabbling within the government continues, the freelance organizations are representing Israel. They all claim to be non-political and "pro-Israel," but the reality is they hew to a hard-right agenda, often creating absurd situations. Earlier this year, a group of British Jewish students backed by the Stand With Us movement expelled from the Israel Society at Oxford University Israeli students who were unhappy with their obsessive focus on fighting pro-Palestinian groups on campus.

"Only the right-wingers are on the frontline" says a British left-wing Zionist activist. "I wish groups like Peace Now and J Street were prepared to confront the anti-Israel far-left. Instead the right-wing has totally monopolized hasbara and it's all become very violent and theatrical. The whole world now believes the far-right represents Israel."

3. Apartheid? Blame the Geneva Convention

John Kerry's infamous apartheid comment continues to make waves in Israel, eliciting pushback from some surprising places - like yesterday's *Haaretz* column by Zvi Bar'el. Bar'el, whom nobody could accuse of being an Israel apologist (his column asserts Israeli control over the West Bank is even worse than the apartheid), points out that under apartheid, the legal regime discriminates between citizens of the same country. That's fundamentally different from an occupation, under which the legal regime discriminates between the occupying power's citizens and the occupied noncitizens. All occupying powers have given their own citizens more rights than the occupied noncitizens, from the British in India through the French in Algeria to the Americans in Iraq, he noted; yet none of these were ever labelled apartheid. Why should Israel be any different?

But Bar'el neglects to mention one important point: The legal distinction all occupations make between citizens and noncitizens isn't just a whim of "racist" occupiers; it's mandated by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

This convention largely bars occupiers from applying their own laws to the occupied population, requiring them instead to maintain the pre-existing legal system except where alterations are necessary to ensure the occupier's security. For instance, Article 64 states "The penal laws of the occupied territory shall remain in force"; Article 51 requires the occupier to uphold the "legislation in force in the occupied country concerning working conditions"; and so forth. One of the most discriminatory practices of all is explicitly mandated by Article 66, which states that if the occupier promulgates laws for its own security in the occupied territory, violators from among the occupied population shall be tried in "properly constituted, non-political military courts."

Israel has never officially deemed the West Bank occupied territory; it considers it disputed territory to which Israel has a valid claim. But under pressure from the rest of the world, which insists the West Bank *is* occupied territory, Israel long ago agreed to voluntarily uphold most of the Geneva Convention's provisions. The ironic result is that in many cases, West Bank Palestinians have fewer rights than Israelis.

For instance, Israeli labour law provides more protections than the patchwork of Jordanian and Ottoman law in place when Israel captured the West Bank in 1967. But the world views any application of Israeli law to “occupied territory” as a sign of annexation (see, for instance, the international outcry when Israel applied Israeli law to the Golan Heights in 1981). Thus for fear of sparking international protests, Israel has refrained from applying its own labour laws to the West Bank.

Similarly, human-rights organizations repeatedly slam trials in military courts as inherently inferior to those in civilian courts, and not without reason: Most democratic countries, Israel included, have laws requiring civilians to be tried in civil rather than military courts. That’s why Israeli civilians who commit crimes in the West Bank are tried in Israel’s civil courts rather than military ones - just as American civilians who committed crimes in Iraq were tried in American civil courts rather than military ones. But the Geneva Convention requires Palestinian civilians to be tried in military courts instead.

In short, it’s precisely all those people who insist the West Bank is “occupied territory” who have no grounds to complain about the discriminatory legal system in place there - because occupied territories are supposed to be governed by the Geneva Convention, which mandates this discriminatory regime. That such people are now accusing Israel of “apartheid” for having bowed to their demand to apply the convention is hypocrisy on a truly epic scale.

4. Palestinian Magical Thinking

So April 29th has passed, and the nine-month period allotted by the current US administration for its effort to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute has come and gone. Entirely predictably, it has failed, in its entirety.

What can be learned from the failure? And what may be expected to happen now?

The failure of the talks was predictable first and foremost because of the irreconcilable positions of the sides. This is not a matter of small details, as is sometimes maintained. It isn’t that the Palestinians want 99% of the West Bank while Israel will offer only 98%.

Palestinian nationalism in both its Fatah and Hamas variants rejects the possibility of accepting the permanence of Jewish statehood in any part of the area west of the Jordan River.

For the Palestinian Authority, the nine-month period of negotiations came as an unwelcome interruption to a very different strategy to which it will now return. This strategy consists of an attempt to place pressure on Israel through action in international forums to isolate and delegitimize the Jewish state. Presumably the intended result of this is to induce Israel eventually to make concessions in return for nothing. The struggle would then continue for further concessions.

This strategy is unlikely to bear fruit, but its adoption follows a notable pattern in Palestinian politics – namely, the constant attempt to find an alternative to a negotiated peace based on compromise.

At the root of Palestinian perceptions is a very notable strategic optimism.

The Palestinians see themselves as part of the local majority Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslim culture. From this point of view, the establishment of a non-Muslim sovereignty in Israel was not only an injustice, it was also an anomaly. Israel, being an anomaly, is therefore bound eventually to be defeated and disappear. So there is no need to reconcile to it, with all the humiliation therein.

This core perception leads to the momentary embrace of all kinds of unlikely strategies, which are invested with tremendous hopes.

This pattern has been around for a while.

In the 1970s, in their first incarnation as an independent national movement, Palestinians believed that the long war strategy of the Palestinian terror organizations would serve to hollow out and destroy the hated Zionist entity, on the model of the FLN in Algeria.

In 1990/91, almost forgotten now, Palestinians en masse embraced the empty promises of Saddam Hussein to “burn half of Israel.” Arafat went to Baghdad to embrace the Iraqi dictator.

In 2000, after the short Oslo period, Palestinians looked to Hizballah and its ideology of resistance as the model for what they hoped would be a successful military and terror campaign against Israel.

All these strategies failed. All turned out to be based on illusion.

In the meantime, the Jewish state went from strength to strength – absorbing millions of new immigrants, leaping ahead economically, diplomatically and militarily.

The campaign to place pressure on Israel through activism on the international stage is the latest example of this Palestinian magical thinking. It is likely to share the fate of its predecessors. The noisy BDS movement notwithstanding, Israel's position on the global stage remains strong.

Its alliance with the U.S., despite the utter lack of warmth from the current administration, remains strong at its core, reflected in cooperation on myriad levels, both military and economic.

Israel is forging ahead in constructing positive relationships with the emergent powers of India and China. It maintains very close and warm relations with Canada, Australia, Germany and other important western players. None of this is under threat from the automatic majority the Palestinians enjoy at the UN because of the Arab and Muslim blocs of states.

So Palestinian optimism regarding the model for defeating Israel is hard to understand. But then the faith placed in the previous approaches noted above also made little apparent sense.

What we are in for now is a period in which the current chimera will need to be played out. On the bright side, this means that a return to large-scale political violence is unlikely. The Palestinians were defeated heavily in the 2000-4 period, and there is little energy for a return to war.

The Palestinian elite and their children live comfortable and privileged lives in Ramallah and elsewhere in the region and beyond it. Combining this with diplomatic and political activity can be pleasant and rewarding. Combining it with military activity, by contrast, could be harmful and has already been proven not to work.

So expect more furious and pathos-filled denunciations of Israeli crimes from various UN committees largely staffed by the representatives of sundry dictatorships.

Expect Saeb Erekat and the others to come up with yet more inventive reasons as to why Islam and Arabic are “indigenous” to Jerusalem while Judaism and Hebrew represent foreign implants. And so on, and so forth.

And at the end of all this, expect more failure, more bewilderment and a pause until the next alternative to a negotiated peace is stumbled upon. This is the nature of the magical thinking that lies at the core of Palestinian Arab politics.

This politics, in its various manifestations, exists to reverse the verdict of the war of 1948. It has no other purpose.

Its credo was perfectly rendered in the words of the Moroccan scholar Abdallah Laroui, as quoted by Fouad Ajami: “On a certain day everything would be obliterated and instantaneously reconstructed and the new inhabitants would leave, as if by magic, the land they had despoiled; in this way will justice be dispensed to the victims, on that day when the presence of God shall again make itself felt.’

The language is elegant. The message is one of politicide and destruction. For as long as this credo remains at the root of Palestinian politics, peace between Israelis and Palestinians will remain unachievable. All else is mere detail.

5. UN replaces notorious Richard Falk – don’t expect changes

For over a month, the U.N.’s top human rights body has been struggling with a major dilemma. How much prior Israel-bashing experience is necessary to be appointed U.N. “independent expert” on Israel?

On Wednesday we found out. Indonesian Makarim Wibisono has just the right mix of confirmed anti-Israel bias and diplomatic cover to replace outgoing U.N. “expert” Richard Falk.

Falk was a notorious anti-Semite, infamous 9/11 conspiracy theorist, and Boston Marathon apologist. But at the U.N., a six-year time limit forced his retirement -- and not a matter of principle.

Former Indonesian U.N. ambassador Wibisono is from a country that does not recognize Israel’s right to exist. He served as the president of the U.N. Human Rights Commission in its last year of operation in 2005 – a body that even U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said “cast a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole.”

In a 2006 statement to the new Human Rights Council, Wibisono, described Israel as showing “ruthless contempt for the lives of the innocent,” and perpetrating “callous attacks against terrorized and defenceless civilians.”

A biography says that until January 2014 (and his application for the job) he was “active in the private sector as an advisor to the Third World Network.”

That NGO spews out hysterical anti-Semitic vitriol – such as Israel is guilty of “bestiality, barbarity,” AIPAC pays “cash and other perks” for “towing the Zionist line,” and “the US plays the role of God in modern times” holding “back the sun to enable Israel...to finish the job” against its Arab victims.

And there’s more. Wibisono’s appointment was part of larger deal, because the U.N. Human Rights Council had 19 openings for the job of U.N. human rights expert or “special rapporteur” on a variety of subjects.

Wibisono was not the top anti-Israel choice of Arab and Islamic countries. So at the same time as Wibisono got the nod, someone who had been slated to become the U.N. independent expert on the human rights of older persons was suddenly denied the post. Who was he? Internationally-renowned Israeli professor of gerontology, Israel Doron.

And there’s still more. Richard Falk lives to see another day. His wife and close professional “collaborator” – to use his word – Hilal Elver will become U.N. Special Rapporteur on the right to food.

Notwithstanding the generic title, as have past U.N. incumbents in this particular position, Elver can be counted upon to spend her time Israel-bashing from her new U.N. perch. Elver’s writing circles right back to Falk, including references to the “Jewish lobby” and admiration for 9/11 conspiracy fans.

These U.N. jobs matter. Though they do not carry a salary, they do involve other perks: expenses, travel, status and most important an instant global platform as the world’s leading “expert” on the human rights subject at hand.

That is why Arab and Islamic states fight so hard to ensure anti-Israel discrimination is embedded into the system. An allegedly independent guru on human rights is a potent weapon in a systematic campaign to use lethal politics to destroy the Jewish state.

The sordid background to the appointment of Wibisono indicates how much better America’s enemies play the U.N. game than the State Department.

In the case of the Israel rapporteur position, there were ten candidates. A consultative committee of five states, geographically representative, produced a short-list and ranked Christina Cerna first. She was an international human rights lawyer with no known political views on the Arab-Israeli conflict. So the Arab and Islamic groups of states formally objected to Cerna on the grounds that she did not have the “relevant experience.”

The Arab group then put forward extremist Christine Chinkin as the candidate “with the relevant experience.” Chinkin’s “relevant” expertise included her prior membership on the infamous U.N. Goldstone committee, which declared that Israel deliberately intended to murder Palestinian civilians rather than act in self-defence against eight years of Hamas rocket attacks.

The Arab and Islamic choice was initially supported by the president of the U.N. Human Rights Council – who just happens to be from Gabon, a member of the Islamic group. When he ran into opposition, he chose Wibisono instead. His selection is to be confirmed by the Council on Thursday.

Wibisono then emerges as the laughable “compromise.”

In fact, no U.N. rapporteur on Israel could be independent. The 1993 U.N. job description says the mandate holder must investigate only Israel’s human rights violations. Investigating Palestinians is off limits.

6. BDS movement: Barbarians at the Gate – Part I

As you doubtless know, there has been, and continues to be, an international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against the Jewish state. This BDS campaign against Israel is dishonest -- it tells less than half of a complex story, borrowing Palestinian lies and fables to bewitch unthinking Westerners whose only formula for peace lies in the destruction of the only national home for the Jews, possibly as well as the post-Nazi destruction of the Jews themselves.

Most interesting are remarks made in 2012 by Norman Finkelstein, an American academic who has made it his business to pursue hatred for Israel. He has expressed solidarity with Hezbollah and Hamas, and approved their policies of targeting Israeli civilians. In 2012, however, he declared that the BDS movement a “hypocritical, dishonest cult like the Munchkin cult in Oz” that tries to pose as human rights activists while in reality their goal is to destroy Israel. “I’m getting a little bit exasperated,” he said, “with what I think is a whole lot of nonsense. I’m not going to tolerate silliness, childishness and a lot of leftist posturing. I loathe the disingenuousness. We will never hear the solidarity movement [back a] two-state solution.” He also declared that the BDS movement has enjoyed few successes, and that, as in a cult, the leaders pretend they are hugely successful even though the general public rejects their extreme views.

Coming from someone such as Finkelstein, this hatred of the boycott campaign is startlingly refreshing. Of course if a real boycott of Israel were to take place, we would be unable to use our computers or take countless medicines, and thousands of Arabs -- who, with Israelis, are building real bridges of peace, as we have seen recently with the company SodaStream -- would be thrown out of work.

On the cultural front, here, for instance, is Jennifer Grout, an American in her twenties from Boston reaching third place in the 2013 Arabs Got Talent show. You’ll find several clips On YouTube of her singing very different sorts of Arabic songs, including one in which she plays the oud and sings part of Ba’id’ani, a classic song by the great diva of the Arab world, Umm Kulthum. She does it brilliantly. The audience and the judges, laughing at her to begin with, are knocked sideways. They apparently cannot believe that a young blonde American woman, who now lives in Marrakesh, can do this.

And here are two more musicians: Riff Cohen and Ester Rada. Both are Jews and both are Israelis. Born anywhere else, they might well by now be international stars. Both cross boundaries and show a degree of multiculturalism that can only be envied. But neither can enter “Arabs Got Talent.”

To the BDS campaigners, Riff and Ester are personae non gratae, as are all Israeli musicians, writers, artists, dancers, and actors. The offense they commit is to have been born where they were. This is the egalitarianism of the far left and the Muslim extremists. Your race does not matter, your nationality does not matter, your religion does not matter – unless, of course, you are Jewish and Israeli, in which case you are nothing but the scum of the earth.

Every time an Israeli theatre or dance troupe sets out on a world tour, it is pursued by bigots -- not merely bigots, but bigots who portray themselves as the epitome of enlightenment, fairness, and love among men. Except when that love concerns Jews. Then the smiles drop and the sparkle goes out of the eyes. BDS campaigners impose a cultural boycott on Israeli performers, yet their preferred style of protest -- interrupting events, shouting and screaming to drown out music, accosting fans as they try to enter a hall or committing acts of violence on European and American campuses, or at Canada's Concordia University, in a display of outright fascism not seen since the 1930s in Germany -- show deep contempt for Enlightenment fairness and culture in any form. They burn books and boycott artists perhaps to satisfy some adolescent fantasy of perfection: Aryan beauty against Jewish brains, the Workers' Paradise against successful economies, the law of God against all manner of heretics and infidels. And behind it all lies an ignorance so deep it is unreachable.

Today it sometimes seems as if there are two Israels. One is a Jewish state under the rule of law, a democracy that venerates human rights, a compassionate country that gives new hearts to Palestinian children and sends aid to other countries in times of crisis. The other is the deliberate opposite, in which everything is evil: the people (by which is meant the Jewish people, regarded as innately evil) and their actions. Israel allegedly practises apartheid, it is a Nazi state, it kills and maims without compunction, it is a terrorist state, it commits genocide because that is the Jewish way, it is the single evil country in the world, even when set beside all the rogue states. For pure evil not even the greatest dictatorships can be compared to it.

Anyone who has been to the first Israel and knows it will not believe the second Israel. But most of Israel's detractors, including the BDS supporters, have never set foot on its deserts or sailed on its seas. Their motives for believing lies, and citing them as the justification for their crimes, are, for some, the longing for a world remade in some romantic image. For others, it is the longing to impose the Islamic faith and its political ideologies on the world. What better place to start than with the Jews, with Israel, a country that was built to be a haven for those most likely to be persecuted?

In 2012, Israel's famous dance troupe, Batsheva, founded in 1964 by Batsheva de Rothschild in association with Martha Graham, was greeted by loud, angry protests in London and Edinburgh. Even though its current artistic director, Ohad Naharin, has been described by the *New York Times* (a paper not given to saying anything pleasant about Israel) as "one of the most fascinating dance-makers on the planet", the BDS campaigners want no dance lovers anywhere to watch Batsheva's dancers perform. Is that not vandalism in the oldest meaning of the word?

When the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra came to London, an admiring audience turned up at the Royal Albert Hall to find itself surrounded by masses of vociferous protesters who tried to drown out the music. The BBC had to postpone its broadcast. No one was prosecuted: officials from the Hall refused to cooperate with Jewish lawyers who tried to bring disruptive shouters to justice. The Royal Albert Hall, one of the most important centres for classical music, would not help bring these vandals to book. Have they no shame?

Again, in 2012, when Israel's well-regarded theatre company, Habima, came to Britain to perform in London, the BDS-ers were again out in force. Famous actors, such as the painfully misinformed Emma Thomson, supported the boycott, and painted a great theatre company in the worst possible light.

With so many attacks on Israel's culture and her diplomats, are we not reminded of the Nazis, who burned modern art and encouraged bad-taste paintings that celebrated the ideals of *kinder, kirche und küche* [children, church, and kitchen]? They made bonfires of books, destroying everything they could not understand, whether books by Marx, Freud or any other Jew -- and eventually anyone whose ideas they found uncomfortable. James Joyce's *Ulysses* went up in flames along with thousands more. These self-appointed arbiters of "good" despised jazz, which they called Negro music; and the Reichsmusikkammer banned atonal music, pop, country, and, naturally, anything by Jewish composers, as apparently threatening to tear down the entire edifice of German civilization.

The Nazis did not invent the boycott -- that was done by my Irish fellow-countrymen back in 1880, when we boycotted landlords for their severe exactions, starting with land agent Captain Charles Boycott, whose name has stuck ever since. But the Nazis invented the Jewish Boycott, and went on from there to the Holocaust.

Not content with destroying anything cultural of which they self-righteously disapproved, the Germans wiped out a people who had helped make Germany great. Jewish professors, teachers, musicians, writers, businessmen, and psychiatrists were first boycotted, then shot, then gassed -- and by the war's end, Germany, which had been a prosperous nation, stood in ruins, utterly bereft of any culture to speak of, its erstwhile leaders dead or on trial for war crimes, its people in rags, its much-vaunted superiority in tatters, and its greatest "enemies" - the Jews -- on the verge of creating what is now one of the most successful nations on earth.

If some boycotts produce good results -- most famously the international boycott of South Africa, which helped destroy the apartheid system there -- they will work as long-term solutions only when they bring real promise of change for the better, when they are fair, when their targets are genuine, and when there is at their heart some real sense of decency. Given so many sick societies in the Middle East, a boycott of Israel can only intensify this sickness.

The BDS campaign is not just dishonest, it is racist: it targets only Jews -- not the Turks for occupying Cyprus, the Pakistanis for invading Kashmir or the Chinese for obliterating Tibet. It is genocidal: it supports and rewards whoever works -- often through violence -- to abolish the state of Israel and then possibly the rest of the Jews.

Rather than see the dispute as a pack of Arab and Muslim nations trying to destroy the one non-Muslim state in its midst -- a state the size of Vancouver Island that is trying to defend itself against attacks ultimately meant to destroy it -- Israel's adversaries see the dispute as it has been crafted for over thirty years by leading public relations agencies, hired by oil-rich Muslim nations. They see the dispute as if a small but vicious nation wakes up each day and thinks about how to make the Palestinians' lives as miserable as possible -- when nothing could be farther from the truth. The dispute, according to those with this mind-set, can only apparently end by capitulating to all Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim demands. The Palestinians, it seems, do not have to do a thing.

This view is ill-informed. If the Israelis did give the Palestinians what they want without even their least attempt to work for peace, it would spell an end to the only truly free country in the Middle East -- because that's what the Palestinian demands boil down to.

Such a view is unjust: how come the leaders and citizens of truly corrosive regimes, such as China, Russia, Iran and North Korea are never the focus of any boycotts, cultural or otherwise? It is actually also cruel to the Palestinians: they are denied accountable leadership, equal justice under law from their own rulers, no possibility of free speech or free media or even the possibility to earn a decent living so long as they disdain peace and make suicidal demands on their neighbour. One might well ask if the boycotters' real concern is the welfare of the Palestinian or actually, as it clearly appears, the obliteration of Israel. It is the wrong boycott in the wrong place at the wrong time.

7. BDS movement: Barbarians inside the Gates – Part II

As you doubtless know, many in Europe loathe the United States. Their invective down the years has been an assault on reason and emotional stability, whether directed against the Vietnam war, the response to 9/11 or to the Iraq war. Yet there is no boycott of the USA.

So, despite a hatred for America -- and a perverse love of Iran, Hezbollah, and the PLO -- we come back to the Israeli exception, to the singling out of just one country. However charitable we may try to be, it is hard not to detect the reek of anti-Semitism. Am I being unfair? To people who marched through the streets of European cities chanting, "Hamas, Hamas, Jews to the gas" (and at Dutch football matches) was that just simple folly -- or proof of intention?

The international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement [BDS] against Israel is so determined to hurt Israel abroad, that the boycotters also put pressure on performers who even consider holding concerts in Israel.

The pressure works. An endless stream of artists, mainly musicians, have cancelled concerts or simply turned down invitations to play in Tel Aviv or elsewhere in Israel.

Carlos Santana caved in to pressure from the BDS crowd, as did Elvis Costello, Gil Scott-Heron, Annie Lennox, Stevie Wonder, and writers such as Iain Banks and Alice Walker, a crusader against racism who flies the flag of anti-Semitism as though Jews are suitable victims. Five hundred artists from Montreal, Canada have joined the campaign. Actors such as Vanessa Paradis and her husband Johnny Depp stayed at home in 2011 -- under the threat that, if they turned up in Israel, they would face a boycott, too.

Roger Waters, former lead singer and lyricist for the rock band Pink Floyd, is a hardline anti-Israel activist who demands a boycott until Israel ends "the occupation" (presumably on Palestinian terms). He also demands that Israel grants full equality to Israel's Arabs -- notwithstanding that Israel's Arabs already *have* full equality both in law and in practice. Waters would also give all Palestinians the "right of return" -- a condition that guarantees the end of Israel should millions of Muslim non-refugees overrun it.

What Waters and his supporters fail to appreciate is that the exodus of Arabs in 1948 came about in the course of a *defensive* war: the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab Liberation Army ordered Arabs to leave the land to make it easier to kill the Jews. The Arabs who stayed now make up 20% of Israel's population; they have their own political parties, their own Members of Knesset, their own Supreme Court judgeships, professorships in universities, and so on. Those Arabs who did choose to leave what is now Israel made their beds -- or had them made for them -- and should now lie in them.

This bit of history does not even include the large number of Jews -- estimated at about 800,000, the same number as Arabs who left Israel -- who were forced to leave all their homes and property behind while fleeing onslaughts in Arab countries.

But while Israel took all the Jews in, built housing for them, educated them, and made them citizens, the Arab countries effectively kept their Arab brethren out, often packing them in rancid warrens known as "refugee camps."

By way of comparison, does the Republic of Ireland claim that it must displace all of England, and then allow the English to remain as subordinated citizens if they pay "protection"? Does the United States plan to return Florida to the Seminole or California to Mexico?

But not all the news is bad. Far from it. Many performers have chosen to play in Israel and have done so in great numbers. Artists who have voiced opposition to the BDS campaign include the outstanding Italian writer Umberto Eco, the film makers Joel and Ethan Coen, and musicians such as Elton John, Leonard Cohen, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Madonna, and Sir Paul McCartney. And one of the world's oldest and biggest bands, the Rolling Stones, plans to play in Tel Aviv this summer.

Not everyone is meek in the face of BDS pressure. The British musician John Lydon (the notorious Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols, an anti-establishment figure who actually might have been expected to join in the boycott), responded to criticism by saying: "If Elvis-Costello wants to pull out of a gig in Israel because he's suddenly got this compassion for Palestinians, then good on him. But I have absolutely one rule, right? Until I see an Arab country, a Muslim country, with a democracy, I won't understand how anyone can have a problem with how they are treated."

These are the ironies of the whole BDS business. These politically correct activists are all supposed to be, as if it were the law of the jungle, anti-racists and multiculturalists. But when artists such as Riff Cohen and Ester Rada are banned just because they happened to be born in Israel, it tears apart the very basis of both anti-racism and multiculturalism.

Ban a black singer anywhere else, and you will be denounced as a racist. Ban a Jewish singer whose parents come from North Africa, and you will have made a mockery of the multicultural dream. Banned because you do not like the singer's government? Iran has a deeply dangerous government, but would you ban the extraordinary voice of Mohammed Reza Shajarian? Portugal once had a dictator named António de Oliveira Salazar; no one thought for a moment to ban the country's extraordinary singer, Amalia Rodrigues. Who would want to boycott a woman who was understood to be the embodiment of the soul of the Portuguese people, on whose death the state declared three days of public mourning?

But perhaps, after all, matters are changing. A friend just sent a long list of thirty-two items, part of which follows below. People are starting to boycott the boycotters -- probably the most fun you could have with your clothes on.

BDS Scorecard for 3rd Quarter 2013

- Tunisia Banished from Davis Cup for Boycotting Israeli Tennis deals a blow to the BDS Boycott
- A Massive Legal Win In France Against BDS over Jerusalem Rail Link
- Lockheed Martin is opening a subsidiary in Israel
- Shurat HaDin Files Racism Lawsuit against Sydney University BDS Supporter

- Beijing Businesses Looking For Products Labelled "Made In Israel"
- Israel overtakes France as the world's 4th largest exporter of arms in the world
- Kuwait buys arms from Israel, defends position on Al Jazeera
- Israel's Second Quarter growth exceeds expectation
- Facebook is opening its first office in Israel after acquiring app maker Onavo
- Germans advise BDS will not bring peace in article in *Algemeiner*, 4th Nov 2013
- The Irish *Independent* reports that entrepreneurs from five up-and-coming Irish high-tech firms are visiting Israel to learn how its businesses pulled off so many achievements.
- The Nigerian president is to lead 30,000 pilgrims to Israel, according to All Africa
- The richest man in Asia is giving \$130 million to the Technion to build a research centre in China.
- Israel is closing consulates in Europe and replacing them in China, where trade is increasing
- Apple Pays \$345 Million For Israeli Chip Manufacturer
- BDS Main Websites Built Using Israeli Software Wix – journalists accuse them of hypocrisy
- Tel Aviv Stock Exchange Top Index Hits All-Time High Nov 21

8. Happy 66th birthday, Israel!

For many nations, a 66th birthday may not generate much excitement. But if the country happens to be Israel, which celebrates its birthday this week, it's another story.

Israel has the dubious distinction of being the only UN member state whose right to exist is regularly challenged, whose elimination from the world map is the aim of at least one other UN member state (Iran), and whose population centres are deemed fair game by Hamas-controlled Gaza and Hezbollah-dominated Lebanon.

None of the countries that are serial human-rights violators--not Iran, North Korea, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Sudan, or any of the others--gets anything near the relentless, obsessive, guilty-till-proven-innocent scrutiny that democratic Israel receives from UN bodies, with their built-in, anti-Israel majorities, in New York and Geneva.

Indeed, Israel is the only nation in the world which has a permanent, separate agenda item at the UN Human Rights Council. All other countries in the world are lumped together under another agenda item.

No other country is the target of such non-stop, well-funded, and highly-organized campaigns to discredit, delegitimize, and demonize a sovereign state.

No other country faces systematic attempts to launch boycotts, divestment campaigns, and sanctions against it, not to mention flotillas and flytillas. All the while those behind the efforts, claiming to speak in the lofty name of human rights, studiously ignore places like Syria, where more than 100,000 have been killed in the past three years alone and numberless more wounded, homeless, exiled, and detained. Why this lack of interest in Syria? Presumably because no Israeli connection can be claimed.

No other country has its right to self-defence challenged as Israel does, even though it acts no differently than any other nation would if confronted by periodic terrorist assaults and deadly missile and rocket attacks.

And no other country is as microscopically examined in the media, from the BBC to the Financial Times, from CNN International to the wire services, leading to such typical whoppers as a New York Times headline - "Tensions Rise as Israel and Gaza Swap Strikes."

Rockets were fired from Gaza at Israel, Israel responded to defend its citizens, and to the newspaper of record, it's an antiseptically 50-50 equation between the attacker and the attacked.

I have enormous admiration for Israel - for its resolve, resilience, courage, and ingenuity.

What it has achieved in the past 66 years is breath-taking: the rebirth of a state with a rock-solid democratic foundation; the ingathering of millions of refugees and immigrants from just about every corner of the world; the creation of a world-class economy; the building of a first-rate army; and a determination to overcome one seemingly insurmountable obstacle after another.

Other nations might have succumbed, after 66 years of uninterrupted hostility, to enemies trying everything under the sun to destroy them, and short of that, to demoralize and isolate them. But Israel has not flinched. It refuses to cave. It keeps confounding its foes.

Its commitment to a two-state accord with the Palestinians, polls repeatedly reveal, remains unshakeable, even as many Israelis can't help but wonder if the Palestinians, given one chance after another for sovereignty, truly share Israel's aim of Jewish and Palestinian states living side by side in peace and harmony.

Moreover, in global surveys Israel comes out among the "happiest" countries in the world; Tel Aviv ranks as one of the top "go-to" destinations for young people; and Israelis' life expectancy exceeds that of Americans'.

How can it be, Israel's adversaries ask, that these "sons of monkeys and pigs," as radical Muslim preachers openly refer to the Jews (and as ousted Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi declared four years ago, while a Muslim Brotherhood leader), manage to stand tall, strong, and, yes, optimistic? How can it be that this nation of just eight million, grown from only 650,000 at its birth in 1948, repeatedly defeats far more populous Arab foes that have arrayed themselves against it? How can it be that these Jews, seemingly led to slaughter like sheep by the Third Reich, suddenly learned how to defend themselves and vanquish larger Arab armies, within three years of V-E Day? And how can it be that Israel, with no natural resources to speak of until recent natural gas findings, could achieve a first-world economy, catapulting it into the OECD; double-digit winners of Nobel Prizes; top-three ranking in new NASDAQ listings; and global recognition as a leader in innovation and entrepreneurship?

Too often, Israel's adversaries have come up with misguided if self-satisfying answers, usually elaborate conspiracy theories inspired by anti-Semitic tropes.

In reality, though, the answer is much simpler. It derives from an age-old connection among a land, a faith, and a people. Many have tried to sever the link. All have failed.

Consider the words of Ezekiel, expressed some 2,700 years ago:

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel... And the desolate land shall be tilled... And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden.

Or, to fast forward from the ancient prophet Ezekiel to the prophetic Winston Churchill:

The coming into being of a Jewish State in Palestine is an event in world history to be viewed in the perspective not of a generation or a century, but in the perspective of a thousand, two thousand or even three thousand years.

Churchill added that the state's establishment was "one of the most hopeful and encouraging adventures of the 20th century."
Indeed, so it continues to be in the 21st century.

To be sure, Israel, like all democratic societies, is a permanent work in progress. Much remains to be done.

From grappling with a less-than-ideal electoral system to dealing with religious zealots who invoke a "higher authority" than the state, from addressing a yawning gap between rich and poor to balancing the Jewish and democratic nature of the country, from the decades-long pursuit of peace with its neighbours to the defence of the country in an ever more turbulent region, Israel has no shortage of challenges.

But, above all, Israel is a wondrous "adventure." I feel privileged daily to see the fulfilment of the prayers of generations longing for a return to Zion from forced exile.

Witnessing Soviet Jews arriving at Ben-Gurion Airport even as Saddam Hussein's Scud missiles came raining down, while Israel did not miss a beat in welcoming the newcomers, reveals the country's character.

So, too, being in Rambam Hospital in Haifa during Hezbollah missile attacks. One minute, a siren would sound and everyone would calmly go, or be moved, to the bomb shelters. The next minute, after the all-clear signal, the scientists would return to their labs to continue cutting-edge research in cancer, diabetes, and stem-cell therapy.

Or visiting Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon, where victims of Hamas strikes against Israel were taken for medical care, and seeing Palestinian patients from Gaza in rooms adjoining the Jewish wounded.

Or getting to know Save a Child's Heart, an Israeli program that provides life-saving pediatric heart surgery. Many of the children come from Arab countries that deny Israel's very existence.

Or seeing the scrawling on a Tel Aviv wall shortly after 21 young Israelis were killed at a discotheque -- "They won't stop us from dancing."

Or watching an Israeli Arab Supreme Court justice -- who, incidentally, refuses to sing Israel's national anthem -- sit on a panel that upheld the conviction of an Israeli ex-president on charges of rape.

Or imagining the role Israel could one day play in the region in helping advance food security, water security, energy security, environmental security, public health security, and knowledge security, all of which will be towering issues in the 21st century.

No, this Israel may not now feature prominently in the media, I'm sorry to say, but it is the Israel that pulsates daily with a love of life, of freedom, and of the land.

Happy 66th Birthday, Israel!

9. The right way to press Iran

The United States and its allies have finally begun to work out the terms of a nuclear deal with Iran. That's hopeful because an agreement that forecloses Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons would be enormously beneficial.

Such a comprehensive accord would build on the Joint Plan of Action signed last November. That was a preliminary deal in which Iran agreed to pause its nuclear program in return for some modest relief on sanctions. The deal is set to expire in July, but can be renewed for another six months.

Washington seems focused on limiting the numbers and types of centrifuges that Iran would be allowed to possess, as well as the quantities and qualities of uranium it would be allowed to keep. But those issues are not the keys to getting the best deal with Iran. They are important, but they should not be the White House's highest priority.

Instead, the Obama administration should focus on three other factors: conducting intrusive inspections, designing a mechanism to easily re-impose sanctions if Iran cheats, and extending the duration of the agreement.

International inspectors must be a constant presence at Iran's nuclear sites and they need to be able to go anywhere and see anything — immediately and without being blocked by the government. Iran has already agreed to abide by the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which does establish somewhat more expansive inspections and monitoring, but given Iran's history of lying about its nuclear program, America needs what it had in Iraq: the right of the inspectors to have completely unfettered access.

As important as highly intrusive inspections are, they can only be as effective as their enforcement mechanism. The history of arms control and arms limitation agreements suggests that states abide by them when they believe it is likely that they'll get caught and might pay a heavy price for getting caught.

In Iraq, Libya and Iran today, that punishment has taken the form of powerful sanctions. And it is worth noting that the 1994 nuclear agreement with North Korea didn't work because it was predicated mostly on offering Pyongyang carrots that could be withheld, while the threatened sticks were ephemeral and inadequate.

The biggest diplomatic obstacle America is likely to face after signing a comprehensive agreement with Iran would be getting the UN Security Council (and the European Union) to re-impose sanctions if Iran were to ever restart its prohibited nuclear programs — especially if the evidence of cheating was ambiguous.

That's why it's not enough just to have intrusive inspections. America also needs a "snap-back" mechanism to be able to quickly and easily re-impose the sanctions if the United States and its allies decide that Iran is violating the agreement.

The best way to create such a mechanism is to suspend the United Nations and European sanctions rather than lifting them outright. In both cases, a new resolution could be passed every six months that would suspend all of the effects of the sanctions for six months, renewable in perpetuity.

This would avoid the difficult process of going to the Security Council and getting a new sanctions resolution passed by a majority of the 15 members without any (Russian or Chinese) vetoes. As we have seen with Iraq, North Korea and elsewhere, that can be diplomatically impossible no matter how convincing the evidence.

Finally there is the question of duration. Although no one knows for sure, there is considerable evidence that Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, is sincere in his desire for a nuclear deal. But Mr. Rouhani will be president of Iran for another seven years at most and it is impossible to know who will succeed him. In 2005, the reformist Mohammed Khatami was replaced by a zealot, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. America must therefore seek an enduring deal, one that will last beyond Mr. Rouhani's term in office.

Although the terms are still being negotiated, the inevitable rumours suggest that Washington may be ready to agree to as little as 10 years. Twenty years would be better. And 30 or 50 would be better still.

Of course, the Iranians will probably object to all of this. They will protest that intrusive inspections violate their sovereignty. They will argue that last year's Joint Plan of Action specified the lifting of sanctions, not merely their suspension. And they will complain that Western officials suggested to them in private that the agreement would only last for 10 to 12 years.

But the US will have both legal and practical leverage with which to push back. The Joint Plan stated that in the final, comprehensive agreement, Iran would be treated as a normal nuclear power after the terms of that treaty had ended. That was an implicit acceptance by Iran that it would not be treated as a normal nuclear power until then.

More importantly, the Iranian government desperately needs to rid the economy of the burden of the sanctions. Suspension serves all of Iran's real needs: It removes the impact of the sanctions as a practical matter, preserving only the West's ability to re-impose them quickly if Iran is caught cheating. That creates exactly the kind of deterrent that has made the difference between success and failure in previous nuclear deals.

Iran's leaders have already demonstrated that they are willing to sacrifice principles for practical benefits. There is no reason to believe that they cannot be convinced to do the same in a comprehensive agreement. Intrusive inspections coupled with sanctions suspension will grant them the economic revival, even prosperity, that they crave while giving America and its allies the greatest assurance that a future Iranian leadership won't resume a prohibited weapons program.

10. The Muslim Brotherhood and terrorist organisations

A new terror group, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis [ABM], just officially entered the scene. Both the

U.S. State Department and the British government included it, at the beginning of April, in their list of proscribed terrorist organizations.

The United Kingdom justified its decision as follows: "ABM is an Al Qa'ida inspired militant Islamist group based in the northern Sinai region of Egypt. The group is said to recruit within Egypt and abroad and aims to create an Egyptian state ruled by Sharia law. ABM is assessed to be responsible for a number of attacks on security forces in Egypt since 2011. The attacks appear to have increased since the overthrow of the Morsi government in July 2013. The group's reach goes beyond the Sinai, with the group claiming responsibility for a number of attacks in Cairo and cross-border attacks against Israel. ABM has undertaken attacks using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and surface-to-air missiles. Examples of attacks for which the group has claimed responsibility include: an attack on the Egyptian Interior Minister in which a UK national was seriously injured (September, 2013); an attack on a police compound in Mansoura, killing at least 16 people, including 14 police officers (December 24, 2013), and an attack on a tourist bus in which three South Koreans and their Egyptian driver died (January 16, 2014)."

The decision taken by the British government against Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis came almost at the same time as the decision to start investigations on the activities of Muslim Brotherhood [MB] and its possible links with terrorism.

There is however a link between ABM and the Muslim Brotherhood: the justification of *jihad*, based on the Koranic text.

Although in January 2014, after the December 24 attack -- linked by the British government statement to ABM -- the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood issued a declaration in which it denied any connection with ABM, Refaat Saïd, the leader of the Socialist Party, Tagammu', said otherwise.

Saïd pointed out, during the visit of Catherine Ashton to Egypt on the eve of its presidential elections, that Ashton "wants to open channels for a reconciliation with the Muslim Brotherhood despite knowing perfectly well that Dr. Mohammed Morsi himself imported the organization of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis and placed it in the Sinai. Morsi released many of its members from prison so they could carry out terror attacks in the Sinai region to take him back to power."

Saïd bluntly added that "the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood is a terrorist organization, and anyone who asks either to reconcile with them, to join them or to ally with them is himself a terrorist."

Saïd, previously a close friend of Mahdi Akef, the former MB Supreme Guide, knows the Brotherhood closely.

In September 2013, after an attack on the Egyptian Minister of the Interior, Major General Ahmad 'Abd al-Halim explained that "Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is an organization including 15 organizations acting and working in Gaza and belonging to the sphere of al-Qaeda and Hamas."

Colonel Farouq Hamdan -- an aide to former Egyptian Interior Minister -- also commented that "the attack was carried out with the blessing of, and consultation between the organizations of the Muslim Brotherhood and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, which was funded by the Brotherhood."

The connection between Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, al-Qaeda and Hamas -- already on the official lists of proscribed terrorist organizations in the West -- and the Muslim Brotherhood -- which is already presently on the proscribed terror organizations of Russia (February 2003), Syria (21 October 2013), Egypt (25 December 2013), Saudi Arabia (7 March 2013) and the United Arab Emirates (9 March 2014) -- is sometimes a direct one, and sometimes an ideological link.

The link between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas is clear and straight, and confirmed by Article 2 of the Charter of Hamas, which reads: "The Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood Movement is a world organization, the largest Islamic Movement in the modern era. It is characterized by a profound understanding, by precise notions and by a complete comprehensiveness of all concepts of Islam in all domains of life: views and beliefs, politics and economics, education and society, jurisprudence and rule, indoctrination and teaching, the arts and publications, the hidden and the evident, and all the other domains of life."

It would appear rather more difficult to demonstrate the link between the Muslim Brotherhood and some markedly jihadist movements such as Al Qaeda, Gamaat al-Islamiyya -- also internationally recognized as a terrorist organization -- and Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis.

In 2005, Sylvain Besson published, for the first time in a Western language, a document in his book, *The Conquest of the West: The Secret Project of Islamists*, often referred to as "The Secret Project."

The document, "Towards a global strategy of Islamic politics (starting points, elements, essential conditions and missions)," was found in 2001 by Swiss authorities in the house of Youssef Nada, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West

A similar version of the "Secret Project" was also aired in 2012 in a documentary film about the MB in the West by American journalist Glenn Beck. What is strange is that no one has given due importance to the contents of both documents.

"The Secret Project" explains the twelve starting points of the strategy of the Brotherhood in the West. For example:

"Step 5: Work to establish the Islamic state, in parallel make progressive efforts aiming at controlling the local centres of power through institutional work.

"Step 6: Work with loyalty alongside Islamic groups and institutions in various fields by agreeing on a common ground in order to cooperate on points of convergence while putting aside the points of divergence.

"Step 7: Accept the principle of temporary cooperation between Islamic movements and nationalist movements [...]"

In Step 9, jihad is finally mentioned: "Build a permanent force of the Islamic preaching and support movements engaged in jihad in the Islamic world, in different ways and within the limits of the possible....Get in touch with any new movement engaged in jihad wherever in the planet, with Islamic minorities, and create walkways, according to requirements, to support and establish a partnership. Keep the jihad on alert in the umma [Muslim community] [...]"

"The Secret Project" calls for a bond, a better collaboration with jihadi movements and it would seem that strategically, leaders and members of the MB consider both jihad and jihadi movements fundamental to achieve their goals.

Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1936, issued a call to "kings and princes, members of legal organizations and Islamic societies, to those who own judgment and sense of honour in the Muslim world," to the so-called "Fifty requests" to return to a true Islamic society.

The third request reads: "Reinforce the army, multiply sections of young people and inflame them on the grounds of Islamic jihad."

Jihad appears always to have been part of MB ideology. Sayyid Qutb, possibly the most important MB ideologue, in his commentary of Koran, *In the Shade of Qur'an*, defines jihad: "Islam gives the name jihad to such cumulative efforts. This includes efforts to change people through verbal advocacy. It also includes the possible armed struggle to end an oppressive system and establish justice. [...] among the radical concepts of the revolutionary party named "Muslim" the most foundational is to engage every rebellious force that comes in Islam's way: fight them, muster everything possible to replace them."

Sayyid Qutb's books and his theory of *jihad* have been fundamental in building the foundation of Al-Qaeda ideology as Ayman al-Zawahiri clearly states in his book *Knights under the Prophet's Banner*.

In 1978, a Sudanese reformist and political leader, Mahmud Muhammad Taha, who was sentenced to death for apostasy in 1985, wrote, in the first part of his reflection, *These are the Muslim Brothers*: "In this age when humanity was predisposed to spread Islam at the scientific level based on persuasion, on reconciliation and peace, when the world opinion was inclined to renounce violence and not to resort to war to solve problems, here came the organization of the Muslim Brotherhood calling Muslims to jihad! Here is the shaykh Hasan al-Banna, the founder of their preaching, consecrating a letter of his to jihad, 'The Letter of jihad.' He quotes many Koranic verses calling for jihad [...] He concludes the document with the following invitation: 'Brothers, the umma is a factory of death [...] and Allah reserved you the precious life on earth and eternal bliss in the afterlife, what a fragility leads us to love this life and hate death, be ready for an important action and long for death since it will give you life.'"

In a letter about "teachings" (*Risalat al-ta'alim*), in "Point 7," the paragraph dedicated to action, Hasan al-Banna wrote: "We must be the masters in spreading the Islamic preaching in every place, 'And fight them until there is no *fitnah* [upheaval] and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah' (Surat al-Anfal, VIII:39) [...] and I want jihad as an obligation of the past that will continue until the Day of Judgment and that has as its main purpose the hadith of the Messenger of Allah -- upon him the greetings and blessing of Allah: whoever dies without having fought and without having any intention of fighting is as if he had died in the era of ignorance."

The importance of jihad in the history of MB is further underlined by the title of an essay that Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of its main theologians: "The Muslim Brotherhood. Seventy years of preaching, education and jihad" (Beirut 2001).

Al-Qaradawi states that, "the movement engaged in real jihadi battles against the Zionists in Palestine and the British in Egypt and the movement sent the best of its sons to sacrifice." (page 235)

It should come as no surprise, then, that the motto of Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis is also the verse singled out by Hassan al Banna: "Fight them until there is no *fitnah* [discord], and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah." [Qur'an, Sura VIII, verse 39].

As stated in "The Secret Project" of the Muslim Brotherhood, the MB and Islamist movements are merely different but complementary ways to implement the goals of jihad.

Whereas the Muslim Brotherhood preaches jihad with pragmatism and "moderation," the ABM, Hamas and al-Qaeda preach and practice it bluntly and with no delay. But whenever the Brotherhood enters what could be perceived as resistance, then open violence becomes permissible, as now in Egypt.

Recent statements to the *Sunday Times* by Ibrahim al-Mounir, whom many regard as the leader of the Brotherhood in Europe, sound as if they are a veiled threat: "If this [ban] happened, this would make a lot of people in Muslim communities think that [peaceful] Muslim Brotherhood values ... didn't work and now they are designated a terrorist group, which would make the doors open for all options." When asked if he meant that the group was open to violence, he replied: "Any possibility."

There can be no doubt about the ideological link between ABM and MB: both believe in jihad, in the conquest of power by Islam. The most important thing the West has to understand is the blunt pragmatism of MB, that is what Mohammed Charfi, former Tunisian minister of education, wrote in his essay, *Islam et liberté*: "Today the observers call a "moderate" Islamist the person who, with Westerners, uses reasonable language and who does not choose an openly violent action. However even though his style is calm and the rejection of violence seems sincere, since the movement is always linked to sharia and the sacralisation of history, his moderation remains provisional and indicates a strategy of waiting, because the ingredients of radicalization have not disappeared."

11. Why it is hypocritical to boycott Israel

We're not normally called upon to justify a decision to travel abroad. Few people would challenge me if I were visiting China, despite that country's appalling human rights record, repression of free speech, and colonisation of Tibet. If I was travelling to America, even though Predator drones kill hundreds of innocent people each year, and even though Guantanamo Bay still holds 154 detainees, nobody would complain.

I would not be criticised for travelling to Egypt, which has become a police state that imprisons journalists, attacks protesters, and sentences political opponents to death. Nobody would suggest that I boycott India; or Pakistan; or Venezuela; or Saudi Arabia; or indeed Britain, which – I seem to recall – ignored the United Nations and attacked Iraq.

I could go on. But later this month, I am planning to travel to Israel to appear in the Jerusalem literary festival. As surely as night follows day, I have received an "open letter" from a group of 71 activists calling themselves the British Writers in Support of Palestine (BWIP), led by a poet and "professional Tarot card reader". They were, I was informed, "extremely disappointed" by my decision, and "respectfully encouraged" me to boycott the event. But I am honoured to have been invited to Israel, and will be proud to attend. Here's why.

It is my strong belief that Israel is, relatively speaking, a force for good in the world. I'm not saying that it is free from controversy, and I'm not saying that I have no sympathy with

Palestinians. But every country that abides by the democratic process, enshrines in law the rights of women and minorities, and conducts itself with compassion both in war and in peace – or at least aspires to do so – deserves our support and respect.

But what about Israel's flouting of international law, I hear you ask? Very well: but has Britain always been squeaky clean? I have already mentioned the example of Iraq. Britain intentionally bombed civilian targets during the Second World War, which was the last time we were under existential threat (the Area Bombing Directive ordered the RAF to attack the German workforce and destroy morale). Moreover, the Army's Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre, based in Kensington Palace Gardens, London, between 1940 and 1948, carried out systematic torture on enemy prisoners. If we were at war again, against an enemy that was able to strike at the heart of our civilian population centres, how would we behave?

Would we, perhaps, be tempted to react as we did when the IRA were terrorising the streets of London? Would we reprise the British Army's Operation Demetrius of 1971, which allegedly included detention without trial, beating, starving, hooding for long periods, harassment with dogs, placing nooses around prisoners' necks, forcible head shaving, denying prisoners clothes, forcing them to run barefoot behind Army vehicles, burning them with cigarettes, dragging them by the hair and pressing guns to their heads? Would Bloody Sunday, in which 26 protesters and bystanders were shot by British paratroopers, happen again?

These examples are particularly relevant when you consider the geographical, topographical and historical context in which Israel exists. The Jewish state is roughly the size of Wales, with a ridge of high ground running along the middle of the West Bank. If Britain were surrounded by hostile neighbours at such close proximity, some of which contained terror groups bent on the destruction of the country, would we be doing any better? And would a fearful British public be outraged at the Army's brutality? Or relieved that it was keeping us safe?

It is significant that a man who knows war, Colonel Richard Kemp – the former commander of Britain's armed forces in Afghanistan – testified to the UN Human Rights Council that the Israeli military does "more to safeguard the rights of civilians in a combat zone than any other army in the history of warfare". It is right that every instance of military abuse should be treated gravely. But this does not justify a boycott.

From a historical point of view, Israel has been attacked repeatedly by an enemy bent on its destruction (when the Arab world attempted to liquidate the Jewish State in 1967, the settlements had not yet been built). The country has suffered terror attack after terror attack, tragedy after tragedy. Clearly, whatever the boycott activists may say, to draw a parallel with pre-1994 South Africa is ludicrous.

Of course, Israel presents many areas of concern. In particular, the situation on the West Bank is disturbing, as are the societal disadvantages that confront minorities in Israel, particularly Israeli Arabs. The army has been guilty of heavy-handedness many times. And it is sad to witness the tit-for-tat violence that plagues the region, not to mention the heavy civilian losses that are sustained by Palestinians in warfare.

Again, I could go on. But to boycott Israel alone reveals a deeply partisan approach to the conflict, and a ridiculously naïve and even hypocritical one.

By the standards of the pro-boycott activists, should the Palestinians not also be boycotted? Their society is severely intolerant of homosexuals, many of whom go to live in Israel rather

than face oppression at home. Both on the West Bank and in Gaza, the authorities regularly harass and imprison journalists who criticise their leaders; last year, 26-year-old Anas Said Awwad was sent to prison for one year for "insulting" President Mahmoud Abbas by depicting him as a member of the Real Madrid football team on Facebook.

Moreover, the Palestinian government has signed a reconciliation deal with a terror organisation, and within weeks they may form a unity government. And as I reported in the Telegraph last week, the Palestinian leadership pays huge financial rewards to those convicted of terror offences, and cold-blooded child killers are celebrated as heroes when they are released.

If all of this does not merit a boycott, I don't know what does.

While we're on the subject, shouldn't the BWIP have called their group "British Writers In Support of Palestine *and Israel*"? And if not, why not?

For these reasons I am proud to be travelling to Israel later this month. As a journalist I value objectivity above all, and am not interested in closing my ears to one side of any story, particularly a story as complex as this. And as a novelist, my concern is with the human condition; attending a festival with fellow writers and artists who are not afraid of challenging ideas can only be a good thing.

And given that according to a YouGov poll, three-quarters of Britons "see no reason why British performers should not travel to Israel" – and fewer than one in five Britons believe that Israeli artists should be barred from the UK – I travel in the knowledge that I have public opinion on my side.