

Opinion and Analysis: Week ending 22 July 2013

(1) How to be supportive of Palestinians, and a Zionist

Debra Rubin, *The Times of Israel*, 19 July 2013

In discussing the global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, the booklet states that BDS “undermines progressive forces in Israel who are working for social justice and human rights” and plays into the hands of right wingers in Israel who cultivate an “us against them, Israel vs. the world” mentality. “They gain more, not less political influence, when they can lump all leftists into the same ‘anti-Israel’ category.”

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/how-to-be-supportive-of-palestinians-and-a-zionist/>

(2) Tomorrow there will be no more two-state solution – and then what?

Yuval Diskin, *Tablet Magazine*, 17 July 2013

To my regret, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has yet to reach a prominent place at the top of our list of priorities, nor has it become the second, even third most important issue. However this very subject has a place in our essence, in our identity, in our souls, in our security, and in our perception of morality—as a society or nation that has been chosen to rule another nation.

http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/138007/yuval-diskin-two-state-solution?utm_source=tabletmagazinelist&utm_campaign=48fd5e60ee-7_21_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_c308bf8edb-48fd5e60ee-206684373

(3) Boycotting a better future

Ron Prosor, *Foreign Policy*, 16 July 2013

Since when is the Arab world opposed to entrepreneurship? Since Israel started promoting it.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/07/16/israel_entrepreneurship_development_arab_boycott

(4) Damn it, Israel was right

Shmuel Rosner, *Jewish Journal*, 16 July 2013

In recent years, Israelis have been looking at the world and at the region with a gloomy eye. They have become a gloomy bunch, growing accustomed to seeing danger and enemies under every tree and around every corner, and constantly preparing for doom. What happens in the Arab world reinforces Israeli pessimism. And pessimism, while necessary and warranted at times, is not exactly an enchanting trait.

http://www.jewishjournal.com/rosnersdomain/item/damn_it_israel_was_right

(5) In Israel, no silver linings

Michael Gerson, *Washington Post*, 15 July 2013

Israel is the relatively quiet eye of the Middle Eastern storm. But there are vistas of conflict on nearly every side.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/michael-gerson-in-israel-no-silver-linings/2013/07/15/710d3102-ed72-11e2-9008-61e94a7ea20d_story.html

(6) The Pleasures of Antisemitism

***Eve Garrard, The Co-ordinating Forum for countering Antisemitism,
10 May 2013***

Antisemitism is much more than a cognitive error. It attracts by providing the deep emotional satisfactions of hatred, tradition, and moral purity

<http://antisemitism.org.il/article/79144/pleasures-antisemitism>

(1) How to be supportive of Palestinians, and a Zionist

As the president of the progressive Zionist Ameinu, Kenneth Bob often speaks to synagogue groups, bringing the message that support for Israel is not at odds with support for Palestinians and that criticism of Israeli policies is automatically anti-Israel. And he's often told, "You need to be at every dining room table when Jewish students come home from college" where they've been subject to anti-Israel messages

Since that's an impossibility, Bob and other Ameinu lay leaders instead developed The Third Narrative, an initiative launched this week and aimed at countering anti-Israel activity by the progressive far left. The initiative includes a [Third Narrative website](#) and a booklet, "The Third Narrative: Progressive Answers To The Far Left's Critiques of Israel," penned by Dan Fleshler, a media and publish affairs strategist. Fleshler wrote the book "Transforming America's Israel lobby – The Limits of Its Power and the Potential for Change."

"It's pretty clear that most of the attacks" on Israel, "but not all, come from the left," says Bob. "We felt that the way to deal with these attacks is to be viewed as a legitimate voice on the progressive side, which means in some cases agreeing with the criticism of Israel."

In discussing Israel as an "apartheid" state, for example, the booklet, which is available as a download or in hard copy, calls discrimination against Arabs "appalling," but says charges of apartheid distort reality and do not meet the international definition of the term.

The booklet calls discrimination against Arabs 'appalling,' but says charges of apartheid distort reality

In discussing the global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, the booklet states that BDS "undermines progressive forces in Israel who are working for social justice and human rights" and plays into the hands of right wingers in Israel who cultivate an "us against them, Israel vs. the world" mentality. "They gain more, not less political influence, when they can lump all leftists into the same 'anti-Israel' category."

The project is aimed at progressives, union members, students and Jews seeking ways to counter anti-Israel arguments. The website includes both reprinted and original articles, including one titled "Young Jews Need to Learn: Ending Occupation, Creating Palestinian State Is Win-Win" and another

by the Daily Beast's Peter Beinart, "Why Do People Keep Calling Israel an Apartheid State When It's Not?"

The initiative takes its title, The Third Narrative, from the notion that there are two narratives, one Zionist and one Palestinian, Bob says. The third narrative is not a zero-sum game, he says, but rather both a Zionist and a Palestinian one that recognizes "that Israel has made policy mistakes and the Palestinians have yet to engage."

Ameinu officials say that the organization's history of acknowledging Israel's flaws and criticizing its policies and of labor support give it credibility among the progressive left. "We can help Jews argue in the language that the left will understand," says new CEO Gideon Aronoff.

Ameinu, formerly called the Labor Zionist Alliance, is one of a number of organizations providing information to counter anti-Israel messages. Among them is the Israel Action Network, a project of the Jewish Federations of North America and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. Geri Palast, IAN's managing director, said she considers Ameinu's work "complementary to ours."

"There need to be multiple messengers to speak to people in a language, and from people, they're willing to listen to," she says.

Ameinu thus far has spent \$50,000 on the initiative, according to Bob, who calls it a "living project" that also will include outreach to Jewish organizations and Jewish campus groups.

The Third Narrative's launch comes just days after Aronoff joined the organization as chief executive officer. Until he quit last year, citing personal reasons, Aronoff had been executive director of HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society for more than a dozen years.

'There need to be multiple messengers to speak to people in a language, and from people, they're willing to listen to'

At HIAS, he was instrumental in focusing the organization on non-Jewish immigration; at Ameinu, he's working to develop a domestic advocacy program. He said he sees a lot of similarities between HIAS and Ameinu in that "both are trying to build a holistic agenda where we combine our concern for Jews — in HIAS' case Jewish immigrants, in Ameinu's concern for Israel — and our concern for humanity."

By having a domestic agenda, we will be working arm in arm with progressive organizations to address labor, civil rights and other issues of concern," he says. "We will have a place at the table with them where we can share our progressive Zionist perspective on Israel."

(2) Tomorrow there will be no more two-state solution – and then what?

We are approaching a point of no return regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In fact, it may be that we have already crossed it. The issue may not seem as urgent to the Israeli public as the Iranian nuclear program, which has become, with the help of our leaders, a central focus of public discussion at the expense of other pressing issues. To my regret, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has yet to reach a prominent place at the top of our list of priorities, nor has it become the second, even third most important issue. However this very

subject has a place in our essence, in our identity, in our souls, in our security, and in our perception of morality - as a society or nation that has been chosen to rule another nation.

The relative security calm that we have recently enjoyed creates a dangerous illusion that our problems have been solved and maybe worse - that we have actually "frozen the situation": a kind of de facto strategy in the face of the "Arab Spring" that is raging all around us. But it is clear that it is impossible to truly freeze the situation as social, economic, political, and other processes are never frozen in time. Unfortunately we have yet to find a strategy or the technology that can freeze frustration. Look no further than at what's been happening in the Arab world in recent years, at what's been happening in Egypt in the last several days, what is happening simultaneously in Brazil, at what happened in Russia after Putin was elected, and at what happened in Iran in the latest elections - and even at what happened in the social protests that took place in Israel during the summer of 2011 - and you will understand that in the latest era, which is represented by the "Arab Spring", there is no way to freeze the frustration of a nation or of any public entity.

Among the Palestinians there is a growing sense of anger and frustration. The fading hopes for a real change in the situation haven't just lowered the Palestinian street's faith in a solution to the conflict through means of the negotiation, but it is also the reason why, at the end of the day, the Palestinians will take to the streets, leading to another round of bloody violence. And the construction of settlements (whether or not this is taken as a symbolic gesture toward Mahmoud Abbas) is not stopping; the number of settlers or "inhabitants" in the West Bank, outside of the main settlement blocs, is growing to (if they have not already arrived at) dimensions that no Israeli government will be able to dismantle in an orderly fashion, unless through willing consent - and it doesn't appear that the current government possess the will and/or the desire to buck the trend.

Just as troublesome - many of our friends in the world, whose support of the peace process with the Palestinians is critical, understand the powerless leaderships of Netanyahu and Abbas. They see the continued expansion of the settlements and are choosing to call it quits regarding the possibility of ever implementing the solution of "two states for two nations."

Until recently I believed with all my heart that there is still a chance for the "two-state solution." However, in the absence of true leadership willing to take real actions instead of making idle statements, I am convinced more and more that this option, which until recently was preferred by the Israeli majority according to surveys, is becoming increasingly unrealistic and is no longer feasible.

So, I now return to where we are in time, the "point of no return." It is possible to compare our situation to flying in a plane. When we fly, it's worthwhile to know if we have enough fuel to return home. There won't be any obvious signs that we have reached the "point of no return"; there won't be any exploding sounds, and it won't be possible to paint it on a poster to present during speeches made to the UNO or anywhere else. Even researches and reports won't be able to prove that we've crossed the line; it will be more similar to the picture of the cat that slowly turns into a dog. Except in this case, the dog will also be buried.

Considering all of the above, I will summarize my argument. In terms of the future, the identity, the nature and security of the state of Israel and the Jewish nation, it will be impossible to know when we have passed the point from which we will never be able to return home and retain our identity as a democratic, Jewish state.

The blame game taking place between Netanyahu and Abbas is foolish in my eyes, a useless game, dangerous on a strategic level, in which the real losers are not the leaders themselves - rather their nations and mostly Israel's Jewish, democratic state.

As for the Palestinians, I believe that in the long term they will not lose from the disintegration of the two-state option and the shift to a nearly inevitable outcome of the one remaining reality - a state "from the sea to the river" meaning in other words, "one state for two nations." When we get there, we will face an immediate existential threat of the erasing of the identity of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, and in a few years the reality of the country's demographics will become a Palestinian-Arab majority and a Jewish minority, along with all that entails.

Anyone who wants to can see the data of the Research and Information Center Committee (based on a study by professors Arnon Sofer and Sergio Della Pergola) suggesting that at the end of the year 2010, the proportion of Jews - if you add the total population between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River - was only 53%! If we study the issue of the geographical distribution of the various populations in the area between the sea and the river - we will understand that we will have created a state with a Jewish majority (temporarily) concentrated in small sections of its territory.

Meanwhile, the quiet on the security front creates the illusion of "everything is OK," mistakenly lulling us into believing that there is no reason to worry. But what else do we really need in order to recognize the fact that we are in a state of national emergency in every sense of the term, an emergency whose resolution should have long been at the top of the list of priorities?

One only needs to consider what took place in the largest political parties that supposedly support a two-state solution. When asked to comment on their positions during the election campaign, Likud chairman Benjamin Netanyahu, who for the most part was certain that he was en route to a crushing victory, said nothing of consequence about the subject or other matters. Yair Lapid continued to dazzle us with mediocre pronouncements that were designed to be well-received by all, shrewdly avoiding the need to commit himself either way as it relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Shelly Yacimovich has steadfastly refrained from any clear-cut statement on the topic, which has traditionally been a litmus-test issue for her predecessors in the Labour Party.

At the center of the Israeli political map and taking a clear stand were just Tzipi Livni, leader of Hatnua, a party that placed a solution to the conflict as the central item on its agenda; Meretz, headed by Zehava Gal-On; and the disintegrating Kadima Party.

The reasons for this disappointing and disconcerting state of affairs could be found in a misunderstanding of the gravity of the situation as well as in discomfort from meeting this issue head-on, a discomfort motivated by narrow political interests. Then there is the populist stance taken by leaders who prefer uncontroversial, palatable sound bites that appeal to the widest possible audience. They take this stance while avoiding the task of dealing with a fateful, weighty, and unpopular issue that is still on the national agenda.

Whoever is adept at constantly drawing "red lines" for the Iranians would be better off taking a look at his next-door neighbors rather than those on the other side of the far-off, darkened hills, for doing so would reveal to him that it is here, right here, where we are nearing the point of no return. The problem is that our planes that will take off toward the unknown will also be of no use in solving the problem.

If our leaders in Israel and the Palestinian leadership both lack the necessary willpower to lead us to a two-state solution, then it would be best to begin thinking about the bi-national alternative in realistic terms. This isn't because I necessarily support the bi-national model, but rather because it is gradually turning into the only alternative that is on the table. If the situation remains as is, then it would be best to begin preparing for the inevitable.

This alternative entails addressing some serious concerns. What status will be conferred upon the Palestinian citizens in this "from the river to the sea" state that we have created with our own hands? Will they have full voting rights like those enjoyed by Israeli Arabs? Will they be given equal rights as residents with the exception of the right to vote? Will we grant the Palestinians autonomy that will allow them to manage their own affairs? And what of the Arab citizens of Israel? Won't they demand autonomy of their own? Will the security situation improve in such a setting? Will the Palestinians really relinquish their demands once this "river to the sea" state arises? Will we remove the separation wall in such a state? How will we sort out our identity as a Jewish and democratic once we turn into a minority? Will our status in the eyes of the family of nations improve as a result? We cannot simply brush off these questions as nothing more than "shrapnel in the buttocks," in the words of Naftali Bennett of Bayit Yehudi. Indeed, in the eventuality of a "river to the sea" state, one of the most difficult questions that need to be addressed is who is the shrapnel and who is the buttocks? These are questions that cannot be evaded by means of "bypass routes" or highway junctions, nor can they be sidestepped by annexing pieces of Area C or establishing Palestinian autonomous zones in line with the "progressive" vision propagated by Bennett and others. There really is no way to avoid these issues.

If we don't wish to continue ruling over another people and thus turn into an ostracized apartheid state, there is no alternative but to grant full rights, including the right to vote, to Palestinians. In such a scenario, there is no need to hold further discussions about the future of the Jewish and democratic vision as put forth by our founding fathers, the same vision on which we were reared and educated. It will melt and disappear.

Lapid and Yacimovich must help Netanyahu. Yes, on the surface this issue is quite simple, yet at the same time there is no more complex conundrum. It seems simple because everyone knows what the parameters of a settlement will inevitably entail: the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state along the 1967 lines with territorial swaps that will allow Israel to keep large settlement blocs; a symbolic right of return for refugees, with financial compensation being paid to Palestinians in the diaspora; dismantling settlements that are beyond the agreed-upon borders and compensation to those who will be evicted from them; a political partition of Jerusalem that would be in line with our interest to avoid ruling over a large Palestinian population; a creative solution regarding sovereignty over the holy sites in the Old City (internationalization, perhaps?); a resolution of the future status of the Temple Mount and the Western Wall; and a diplomatic solution over the contours of Israel's eastern border and the Jordan Valley.

This alternative is also extremely complex for a number of reasons.

There are the enormous psychological gaps and lack of faith between those who are charged with leading the negotiations; the fact that apparently neither Netanyahu or Abbas has what it takes to lead their peoples to such a solution; the fact that Abbas has no solution to the serious rift that has been created between his Fatah-led West Bank and the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip; the fact that it is impossible to solve this conflict without Hamas; and - let's face it - the fact that Netanyahu has no

realistic solution to the federation-like network of settlements that has grown out of control in the West Bank.

There is no way to solve this conflict without involving our brothers (and this is said without a hint of cynicism) the settlers.

There are those who say the conflict is insoluble. I believe there are many strategic and tactical risks involved, but the alternative - a "river to the sea" state and continued occupation of another people, with all that it entails - is far worse. As such, the problem is unavoidable. It cannot be put on hold or contained.

This is Netanyahu's moment of truth. He can prove to all of his most vociferous naysayers and critics (me among them) that he is not just a politician passing his - and our - time in the prime minister's office, but a leader who is capable of grasping the gravity of the situation; a leader capable of freeing himself of his trepidations, fears and secret advisers; a leader capable of understanding the critical need to rise above himself and establish a proper set of priorities; and, most important, a leader capable of shepherding the nation (or, at least a majority of it) to the right path. I have huge doubts as to whether Netanyahu is such a leader, but I will be the first one to praise him if he proves otherwise.

This is also a moment of truth for Yair Lapid, who has a chance to liberate himself from the image of a Facebook-centric, shallow politician, and for opposition chief Shelly Yacimovich, who can restore the soul of a party gone awry. Together, these two individuals can help Netanyahu rise above himself. There's no need to worry about Tzipi Livni and Hatnua not extending their support for such a move, and I am convinced that Zehava Gal-On of Meretz will also back it, as will what remains of Kadima and other parties.

This is also the moment of truth for another key figure - Naftali Bennett - who can prove he possesses the maturity of one who understands the strategic significance of this point of no return as it relates to the future of the state and this nation.

This is not a matter of Right versus Left, or who is in the political Center. This is a matter that requires national responsibility of the highest order.

It requires taking advantage of what may be the last opportunity to extricate ourselves from the deadly clutches of our conflict with the Palestinians, clutches that we have tethered to ourselves.

I, too, believe that the risks are considerable, and success is not guaranteed because this is a very deep conflict, with dimensions that are religious, nationalistic, and territorial. In the Middle East, blood doesn't turn into water. The two sides are also separated by deep economic, cultural, and psychological gaps, and the wounds are still fresh. We are still more likely than not to experience moments of crisis, disappointment, and failure, and there will be further need to readjust our expectations amongst ourselves as well as with our Palestinian interlocutors.

I still believe that genuine leadership that charts a clear path toward a defined goal could propel forward a process that if undertaken in a truly positive spirit (and I emphasize a truly positive spirit) could instill hope and create the momentum and positive atmosphere on the Israeli and Palestinian streets, thus leading to the crystallization of strong majorities on both sides that will support the process. Such a process would have to be devoid of pettiness and intrigue, and it would have to

entail generous, confidence-building gestures by Israel. It would have to gradually establish a relationship of trust between the leaders, a relationship that just may form the basis of fruitful negotiations.

As part of this effort, a complete, immediate cessation of all construction in the settlements (with the exception of some building within the large blocs) for an indefinite period is critical to keeping alive the chances of creating a positive atmosphere conducive to re-launching negotiations. Even acceding to the Palestinian Authority's request for the release of "pre-Oslo" prisoners and bolstering Fatah's credibility in the eyes of the Palestinian street is, in my view, a worthy gesture. It is far more preferable than capitulating to the dictates of a terrorist organization that abducted an Israeli soldier and agreeing to the disproportionate release of murderers in prisoner swaps that will only encourage more abductions.

Perhaps we will fail. One cannot discount this possibility, which would most likely lead us to begin entertaining all sorts of interim alternatives that some have bandied about, most prominent of which is a unilateral Israeli move in which we exit most of the territories that we control today without coordinating it with a partner or delineating an agreed-upon border.

It would also be done most likely without summoning significant public support for the evacuation of outposts and settlements that lie outside of the large settlement blocs.

Such a move may partially - and temporarily - improve Israel's image in the eyes of the world, though this is doubtful. It will not, however, solve the problem. Obviously I would recommend against giving this alternative any sort of preference at this stage. I do not believe in the utility of such a move or in the ability to implement it.

Given the complexity and the gravity of the situation, I would recommend that Prime Minister Netanyahu, famous for his admiration for Winston Churchill and wont to quote him, make it a point to internalize this quote from the latter: "Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." This is true leadership in a nutshell. It is a leadership that adheres to a determined path, one that is determined to realize the goals that it has established.

There is no alternative but to enter into a diplomatic process with the Palestinians, here and now, despite the anxieties and the numerous risks. Without such a process, we will certainly cross the point of no return, after which we will be left with one state from the river to the sea for two peoples. The consequences of such a state for our national identity, our security, our ability to maintain a worthy, democratic state, our moral fibre as a society, and our place in the family of nations would be far-reaching.

(3) Boycotting a Better Future

Abba Eban, Israel's first ambassador to the United Nations, famously [guipped](#) that the Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. It's been 40 years since Eban made his wry observation, but the Arab states have once again proved him right.

In December 2012, Israel introduced a UN General Assembly resolution titled "[Entrepreneurship for Development](#)" as part of its broader initiative to promote growth in the developing world. The resolution encourages governments to invest in entrepreneurs and create policies that can enable new businesses to take root and flourish. It passed with over 70% of member states raising their

hands, including many countries without diplomatic ties to Israel. Not only did the entire Arab bloc vote against the measure, however, it waged a determined effort to undermine it from Day One. Arab states first tried to convince other member states to oppose the measure and then, when that failed, they sought to introduce politically charged and detrimental language into the resolution.

Most recently, on June 26, a group of Arab states boycotted a UN conference, co-hosted by the Israeli delegation, based on our December resolution. One would think that it's hard to find fault with bringing entrepreneurial innovation, creativity, and ingenuity to bear on some of the world's most pressing problems. Yet, the Arab bloc sought to undermine this event for one simple reason -- Israel was one of the co-hosts. It appears the Arab states would sooner keep their citizens shackled by hardship than accept the key to unlocking progress -- so long as Israel is the locksmith.

Few countries know more about reaping wealth from entrepreneurship than Israel. We are a tiny nation with few natural resources, difficult farming conditions, and persistent adversity. Yet in just 65 years, Israel has become a recognized leader in innovation, with the most startups and the third-highest number of patents per capita in the world. Today, thousands of products enjoyed by millions of people throughout the world -- from drip irrigation technology to flash drives to driving navigation systems -- were born in Israel.

Israel is eager to demonstrate that its evolution from a relatively poor country to a prosperous member of the OECD can be replicated by other states. While most nations welcomed this prospect, Israel's closest neighbors have stubbornly turned their backs.

Ironically, few regions could benefit more from entrepreneurship than the Arab world. According to the World Bank, roughly 20% of the population of the Middle East and North Africa lives on less than \$2 per day, and income inequality is widening. The Middle East is dripping in oil wealth, but millions of people are starved of basic sustenance -- to say nothing of basic rights and freedoms.

People across the region are crying out for democratic reforms and freedoms; they are hungry for change and have taken to the streets demanding better lives, better economies, and better governance. They are willing to risk their lives to bring an end to the rampant corruption, discrimination, and economic stagnation plaguing the region.

Despite the boycott imposed on our entrepreneurship conference, two Arab countries were in attendance. Their presence proved that it's difficult, but not impossible, to navigate the rough waters of politics in the Middle East. We hope their colleagues will follow suit. For so long as the majority of the Arab world continues to put politics before their own people, both peace and prosperity will remain a distant dream.

(4) Damn it, Israel was right

Israel was an early skeptic about the so called "Arab spring". In February of 2011, an eternity ago in 21st century Middle Eastern time, Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke to the Knesset about the situation in Egypt. The hopes of people in the region and of observers in other places "are understandable", Netanyahu said. This was at the time when President Mubarak still believed that he could remain in power by promising not to seek another presidential term. "All those who cherish human liberty, including the people of Israel, are inspired by genuine calls for reform and by the possibility that it will take place", Netanyahu added. But

as he was speaking about promises and hopes, democracy and liberal institutions, we could all see the looming “however” that was coming.

“However, this is not the only possible scenario”, Netanyahu continued, attempting to make the story of Egypt a part of the only story Netanyahu wants to tell – the story of Iran.

“Because far away from Washington, Paris, London - and not so far from Jerusalem - is another capital in which there are hopes”. He was talking about Tehran.

Ultimately, the story of Egypt didn’t unfold in the exact manner Netanyahu was talking about. But he was still more right than wrong in his measured, cautious, and- well- pessimistic view of the developing crisis. “We are in a turbulent situation”, he said. “In such situations we must look around with our eyes wide open. We must identify things as they are, not as we’d like them to be. We must not try to force reality into a preconceived pattern. We must accept that a huge change is taking place, and while it is happening - keep a watchful eye”.

More than a year ago, the Spiegel reported about how “the majority of Israelis and their government [that] are not welcoming” the Arab upheaval. “Although they want democratic neighbors, they are afraid of the democratization process, especially its uncertainties, as well as the instability and loss of control. No one knows yet what the new Middle East will look like, but the government has already decided that it is better to curl up into a ball than explore its options”. Fast forward to current Egypt and its unresolved – irresolvable – crisis. Fast forward to bloody Syria, still under the clouds of war. Fast forward to the “spring” that turned into a “winter” and later into chaos: Israelis – the leadership and the people – can look in the mirror and say: yes, we were afraid and for a good reason.

And as for exploring the “options”, just read this article by two Israeli experts from three weeks ago, and see how foolish the idea of such explorations can become in no time. In “5 Arab spring opportunities for Israel” the number one advice is engaging with Morsi’s Islamist government in Egypt. “Interestingly”, they wrote, “under an Islamic regime, Egypt has more leverage than did the previous Hosni Mubarak regime, to exert on Hamas in its dealings with Israel. No less important is the fact that a treaty honored by the Brotherhood sends a message across the Muslim world that peace with Israel is not anathema”. Sensible lessons, reasonable analysis – if only the Morsi government were still there.

Thomas Friedman had similar misgivings about Israel’s reluctance to cease opportunities amid the stormy water. “What I can’t understand is doing nothing. Israel has an Arab awakening in its own backyard in the person of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. He’s been the most radical Arab leader of all... His focus has been on building institutions... Israel’s best defence is to strengthen Fayyadism”. Yes - maybe, possibly, if only “Fayyadism” were still there. I don’t want to be misleading: Fayyad left his post a year and a half after Friedman’s article. Does anyone believe, though, that an Israeli attempt at “strengthening Fayyadism” eighteen months ago would have made a difference, would have altered the course of a Middle East tsunami?

In other words: for ‘options’ to be explored and ‘opportunities’ to be taken, viability is a precondition. If, like sub-nuclear and unstable particles, these ‘opportunities’ barely materialize before they disappear, if chasing these options is like chasing a ghost, then the government of Israel understandably prefers to wait a bit, to pass until real opportunity emerges.

My point: Israelis – not the experts, the leadership – can feel vindicated. They knew better than most. They were right to be skeptical and dismissive when others were still elated by the first wave of street revolutions. But this shouldn’t make them too happy.

First, because if things had turned out differently it would have been better for everyone. Arab democracy truly would be better for everybody; and the current suffering is heartbreaking; and because the current uncertainty bodes future developments that are dangerous for the region and for Israel. Put differently: Being correct about a reality that is bad for you is better than being wrong about it, but it's hardly a consolation.

But there's also another reason not to celebrate Israeli soberness: the impact that such soberness - and the accompanied acknowledgment of it being justified - has on us Israelis. In recent years, Israelis have been looking at the world and at the region with a gloomy eye. They have become a gloomy bunch, growing accustomed to seeing danger and enemies under every tree and around every corner, and constantly preparing for doom. What happens in the Arab world reinforces Israeli pessimism. And pessimism, while necessary and warranted at times, is not exactly an enchanting trait. Not even when looking in the mirror.

(5) In Israel, no silver linings

The abandoned Circassian village of Zureiman provides a vantage point across the fortified Israeli border into Syria. Regime forces hold an area from the crossing at Quneitra to Ruheineh. Elements of the rebel Free Syrian Army are attacking from both north and south, attempting to close the corridor. A slow artillery duel - thud, thud - proceeds in the near distance. Farther south in Syria, global jihadist groups predominate.

A few miles back from the border, traveling between minefields that cover 30 percent of the Golan, you come to an Israeli winery serving samples and lunch à la Napa Valley. It smacks of symbolism: Ten minutes from the Syrian civil war to a nice sauvignon blanc.

Israel is the relatively quiet eye of the Middle Eastern storm. But there are vistas of conflict on nearly every side. The triumph of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, according to Sallai Meridor, the former Israeli ambassador to the United States, would "not be the devil we know, but a much worse devil, an agent of Iran and Hezbollah." Israel's cold peace with Egypt is fragile, and a distracted Egyptian military could allow jihadists to cause trouble in the Sinai. "We look at Jordan," says Meridor, "and pray."

Not all the consequences of regional chaos are immediately bad for Israel. The Syrian military has been decimated as a fighting force. Hezbollah, by joining Assad's anti-Sunni holy war, has lost its luster in the Arab world.

But the general Israeli attitude is worry and wariness - the understandable attitude of a people with a long history of heroism but not much experience with happy endings. "Everything looks worse," says Meridor. "There is a feeling that we can be prepared, but there is nothing proactive we can do about it." So Israeli foreign policy is reactive. It focuses on disrupting short-term threats (such as arms transfers to Hezbollah) rather than developing long-term strategies. And Israeli politics has turned inward toward domestic concerns.

Many Israeli political figures share a concern: That the United States has also become reactive. That it is focused on disrupting short-term threats rather than developing long-term strategies. And that U.S. politics has turned inward toward domestic issues. "There is a sense you can count less on America," according to Meridor, "that it is weaker, or has chosen not to act, or that events are out of control, or a combination."

The United States, much to Israel's chagrin, has adopted a more Israeli approach to foreign policy. In the most favorable interpretation, Washington is rebalancing burdens between a reluctant superpower and its free-riding allies. Or it is pivoting to Asia. But it is accompanying this shift with an impression of political paralysis, rising debt and growing public skepticism about global engagement.

The results are becoming obvious. The Obama administration, according to Meridor, "tried a different approach, with resets and accommodations. But is the United States today more loved, respected or more feared? With sorrow, it is not." U.S. passivity and confusion have left a trail of missed opportunities. During the Iranian Green Revolution of 2009, the administration remained fixed on a strategy of regime engagement. In 2011, it hesitated in supporting Syria's civil uprising. Since 2011, it has managed to convince every side in Egypt that the United States has betrayed them.

It is increasingly difficult to argue that America is shaping the agenda in the Middle East. But little positive actually gets done in the region without active U.S. leadership. Unless the United States coordinates the arms shipments of Turkey or Qatar to Syrian rebels, those shipments go to very disturbing people. Unless the United States effectively leads the opposition to Iranian ambitions, other nations are tempted to lose heart or to cut self-serving deals.

A regional power such as Israel might be able to afford a reactive, short-term approach. If the United States does not proactively shape the security environments in which it operates, it is left to respond on progressively less favorable terms. The collapse of, say, Jordan, or the collapse of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty system would have profound, unavoidable implications for U.S. security.

The United States, of course, is not abandoning the Middle East, just creating an impression of tired ambivalence. Nearly every Israeli politician, legislator and think-tank scholar seems to be debating whether the United States has really drawn a red line on Iranian nuclear weapons or is leaving some strategic ambiguity - which means the administration is leaving ambiguity.

Such debates, conducted over a glass of wine, eventually become less theoretical, as the storm gathers strength.

(6) The Pleasures of Antisemitism

Antisemitism is much more than a cognitive error. It attracts by providing the deep emotional satisfactions of hatred, tradition, and moral purity.

There is something strangely ineffective about many of our attempts to combat antisemitism. We treat it as involving various cognitive errors – false beliefs about Jews or about Israel, the application of double standards to the assessment of Jewish activities, the one-sided focus on things which can be criticised and the neglect of things which might be praiseworthy. We try to combat these cognitive failures (of which there certainly are plenty) by pointing out the errors involved, listing the relevant facts which correct those errors, and revealing the logical inconsistencies involved in, for example, the use of double standards. And when these attempts prove to be totally fruitless, as they so often do, we're puzzled and dismayed. Don't people want truths which would enable them to abandon their hostilities to various aspects of Jewish existence?

The answer, of course, is very often that no, they really don't want these truths. They prefer the errors, with all their dramatic fears and hatreds, and the excitement of conspiracy stories, to the unremarkable truth that Jews are on the whole just like everyone else, a mixture of good and bad, strong and weak, but with a history which has very real and terrible implications for the present. Why is this? We can't explain it just in terms of cognitive error, since part of what we want to know is why the cognitive errors are so immune to alteration, why they appear and reappear so very persistently. We have to look outside the cognitive domain to the realm of the emotions, and ask: what are the pleasures, what are the emotional rewards which antisemitism has to offer to its adherents?

Antisemitism is fun, there's no doubt about it. You can't miss the relish with which some people compare Jews to the Nazis, or the fake sorrow, imperfectly masking deep satisfaction, with which they bemoan the supposed fact that Jews have brought hatred on themselves, especially by the actions of Israel and its Zionist supporters, and that they have inexplicably failed to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. (The Holocaust was not, of course, an educational exercise; and if there are lessons to be learned from it, we might think that the weakest pupils are those who once again wish to single out Jews above all others for hostile attention.) Like other forms of racism, antisemitism provides a variety of satisfactions for those who endorse it, and it's worth trying to analyse these pleasures, so that we may better understand and combat the whole phenomenon. In what follows I will be mentioning and briefly describing various Antisemitic attitudes, all of which I believe to be deeply and often culpably misguided. But I won't be discussing their errors, nor will I be distinguishing the circumstances in which criticism of Jews and Israel is legitimate and accurate, and circumstances in which it is not. Much has been written on just those topics; here I will simply take it for granted that some such criticisms are accurate, but that others, often many others, are false, and constitute a form of racist discrimination against Jews – in short, antisemitism. My concern here is not with the falsity of antisemitic discourse, but with the pleasures which it offers to those who engage in it.

There are (at least) three principal sources of pleasure which antisemitism provides: first, the pleasure of hatred; second, the pleasure of tradition, and third, the pleasure of displaying moral purity. Each of these is an independent source of satisfaction, but the three interact in various ways, which often strengthens their effects. No doubt the different sources of pleasure appeal to different individuals and groups, so that the appeal of tradition may resonate most strongly with those who are politically on the Right, and the attraction of displaying moral purity may be most strongly felt by those on the political Left, but both varieties can be detected in most political groupings, and the pleasures of hatred are well-nigh universal.

The pleasures of hatred

The satisfactions which hatred has to offer us are regrettably familiar to most people. Most of us know only too well the surge of self-righteousness, the thrill of condemning others, the intense bonding with a like-minded hater, which we feel when a good jolt of vicious hostility has risen within us. Of course there are some situations in which hatred is justified – there are some actions and attitudes to which hatred is the proper response, and anyone who is broadminded and tolerant at the building of an Auschwitz needs to clean up his moral compass. But the pleasures which hatred provides are just as available when the hatred is entirely unjustified, as most of us also know, at least in retrospect. Hatred and its cognates – contempt, rancour, and detestation – offer the seductive satisfaction of feeling our own superiority to the hated object, and feeling also a sense of deep justification and indeed righteousness in taking steps to punish or otherwise hurt him (or her, or them). Hurting others is also fun, for more people than we would normally like to believe (see for example the notorious Zimbardo experiments, and the evidence from those involved in the genocidal killing in Rwanda; but also the ubiquitous phenomenon of playground bullying, and its

various adult analogues such as workplace bullying and the kind of political hostilities that sometimes break out in small ideologically overheated groups). So where antisemitism takes the form of Jew-hatred, it's not hard to understand that it offers psychological rewards which are nothing to do with the truth or falsehood of people's beliefs about Jews. Nor is it hard to see that people would prefer not to be deprived of these pleasures, especially if, as is often the case with those who are formally committed to anti-racism, they don't recognise themselves to be antisemitic, and hence pay no inner price in damage to their own self-esteem.

The pleasures of tradition

Since the pleasures of hatred are universal, why, we must ask, do they get realised in Jew-hating in particular, here and now? At this point we can turn to the second main source of the pleasures of antisemitism: tradition. There is a Jew-shaped space in Western culture, and the shape is not a pleasant one. Long centuries of tradition have constructed the Jew as a being who is both contemptible and dangerous, the purveyor and transmitter of evil; and various tropes have been deployed to flesh out this picture – in particular the blood libel, according to which Jews use the blood of Christian children for their terrible ceremonies of machination and control, but also tropes about uncanny power, in which Jews are depicted as the puppet-masters of the rest of the helpless non-Jewish world. (There's a version of this trope in which tentacles, rather than puppet-strings, figure most prominently. Being classified as killer octopi rather than as puppet masters isn't noticeably an improvement for the Jews.)

As has often been pointed out, the tradition of antisemitism is very flexible, and it generally gets expressed in terms of the preoccupations of the period: so mediaeval Jew-hatred was religiously based; 19th and, even more 20th, century hostility was given a scientific top-dressing in terms of the now discredited theories of 'race science'; and late 20th century and early 21st century prejudice is generally cast in terms of human rights violations. (I speak here primarily of antisemitism in the West. antisemitism in other parts of the world, while undoubtedly deriving large parts of its force from Western examples, is an even more complicated matter.) Although an antisemitism which was proud to speak its name became unfashionable on the liberal left after the Second World War, for reasons which are too obvious to mention, it's a remarkable feature of the persistence of Antisemitic tropes that they have survived relatively unaltered through these cultural changes. Recent cartoons expressing profound hostility to the Jewish state, on the grounds of supposedly outstanding human rights-violations, reproduce fantasies of sinister control and bloodthirstiness which earlier antisemites would have recognised without difficulty.

The weight of tradition, which makes it feel comfortable, perhaps even natural, to fit living Jews into the space created for them by so many centuries of hostility, may help to explain one of the many failures of logic infecting contemporary antisemitic discourse: where the Jewish state does bad things, these are taken to reveal its true inner nature; where it does good things, these are interpreted as deceitful, as mere propaganda designed to cover up its vile motives and actions. (The relative freedom which is afforded to gay and bisexual people in Israel, as witnessed by the Gay Pride marches there, has been described as 'pinkwashing' – that is, as a mendacious attempt to persuade people that Israel is a tolerant respecter of human rights, instead of the colonial imperialist baby-killing oppressor which many anti-Zionists declare her to be. It will be interesting to see whether the selection of a very beautiful black woman of Ethiopian descent to be Miss Israel gets described as 'black-washing'.) The suggestion by the Lib Dem peer, Baroness Jenny Tonge, that Israeli medical aid to Haiti was a cover for organ-stealing by Israeli medics was perhaps the crudest and most egregious of such examples, though people trying to defend Israel against such criticisms have become accustomed to being told again and again that they only mount these defences as a way of covering up Israel's crimes.

Why are people so ready to make these hostile moves, in a way which they wouldn't tolerate with respect to other forms of racism? Anyone who announced that the political and economic troubles of African countries were the result of low intelligence in black Africans, or who drew a cartoon of President Obama as an ape, would be committing social and political suicide among those members of the bien-pensant classes who so often display the forms of prejudice against Jews and the Jewish state with which we're here concerned. The availability of the traditional picture of the Jew as sinister and controlling and duplicitous may make these moves against living Jews, right now, seem comfortably familiar, and perhaps even freshly revealing of an age-old wisdom. There has been a distinctive tradition on the Left, going back to the 19th century and beyond, of what might be called rich-Jew Antisemitism, where the basis of the objection to Jews was that they were rich, and hence exploitative and oppressive. It is easy to see how that can be picked up today. To that we might add the consideration that Jews have intermittently been treated appallingly, and sometimes genocidally, in the West; and as Tolstoy and others have noticed, we often hate people in proportion to the injustices which we have done them. It's very hard for Europe to forgive the Jews for the Holocaust, and seeing Jews as hateful makes life easier – people needn't worry about whether they're treating Jews quite fairly if they believe them to be lying, bloodthirsty and oppressive. But the main difference between resurgent hostility to Jews on the part of sections of the Left, and the absence of any such resurgence towards people of colour, is probably the result of the rise of anti-imperialism as the political hate object of the post-Marxist Left. Israel can be cast, though only at the expense of an enormous distortion of historical facts, into the role of imperial coloniser, and hence hostility towards Israel and the Jews who support her existence can be legitimised as part, sometimes a leading part, of the global fight against imperialism. This construal of Israel's geo-political position permits those people who are hostile to her to see themselves as warriors against the great evil of colonialism, a role which many on the Left find very gratifying to contemplate themselves as occupying.

The pleasures of moral purity

This takes us to the third source of satisfaction which antisemitism provides: the desire for moral purity, especially a purity which is readily visible to others, and can count as a ticket of entry to socially and politically desirable circles. This source of satisfaction is in many ways the most interesting of them all, partly because it seems to be the motive du jour of antisemitism coming from sections of the Left, which might have been expected to be hostile to all forms of racism and sadly isn't; and partly because it's so supple and flexible, it can accommodate and explain away a very wide range of facts which tell against it. (I say that these things are interesting to contemplate and analyse, which indeed they are. But in no way do I want to underestimate the extent to which meeting them in the flesh, so to speak, is primarily disgusting, and also in many cases exhausting and sometimes frightening.)

Moral goodness and purity is of course genuinely desirable and admirable – it's good if people have deep moral insight, and the ability to judge correctly what's the right thing to do in complicated circumstances, and the strength of character and will to carry out their decisions, and the understanding and factual knowledge and courage and kindness and sympathy to judge others fairly, and to fight for justice where need be. But one look at that list is enough to remind us of how hard it is to be good, and how much easier it is to pursue the appearance rather than the reality. Israel as the Jewish state is a real opportunity for people who want to display their supposed moral purity, and harvest a suitable quantity of admiration from like-minded others, without having to deliver on the exacting demands of genuine moral probity. So we find people declaring that Israel is an apartheid state, thus allying themselves to the righteous fight against apartheid half a century ago, but omitting to notice the huge moral, social and political differences between Israel and apartheid South Africa; they declare that Israel is a colonial settler state, thus displaying their hostility to colonialism without having to ask who the colonising power is, and where else the survivors of the

mid-century horrors should have gone, and why the UN decided that the Jews of the world should have the opportunity for self-determination, and why they were so clearly in need of it; we have people publishing in the broadsheet press complaints about how their hostile views about Israel have been silenced by powerful unnamed forces, without noticing the performative contradiction in what they say; we have people explaining that they do of course completely condemn the Holocaust, and this shows that they can't be Antisemitic, but, they go on to declare, it's appalling to find Jews behaving in the same way against the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank that the Nazis did in the Warsaw ghetto. And so on, and on.

However, my concern here is not with the factual and logical errors in these various charges; I want rather to point out the emotional dividend they provide to those who deploy them. Such people can present themselves as the champions of the weak against the strong, of the colonised against the supposedly imperialist colonisers, of wholly innocent Palestinian victims against bloody and heartless Jewish oppressors. They can also present themselves as being victimised, both by the way in which powerful forces have imposed silence on them (albeit one of the noisiest silences ever heard), and also by the charge, deeply offensive to their moral purity, that their extraordinarily selective hostility towards Israel and its supporters might constitute discrimination against Jews. Indeed so offensive is this charge that it amounts, so it is claimed, to a further victimisation, of a kind which can only be explained by the deceitful and manipulative nature of those who raise the concerns about alleged antisemitism. So people who deploy these tactics against Jews can see themselves, and can hope to be seen by others, as being not only on the side of morally pure victims against morally vicious villains, but also as having the coveted status of victims themselves, slandered by people who are determined to exploit their own past sufferings in order to oppress others. Furthermore, since in this narrative Jews are cast as the powerful oppressors, those who single them out for hostile attention can see themselves as 'speaking truth to power'. And paradoxically, focussing on Jews for singular criticism can also be presented as subversive and transgressive, flouting the conventions of polite discourse, and thus conferring on the hostile critic the accolade of being untrammelled by convention, excitingly edgy, possibly even outrageous. All in all, that's an awful lot of moral bang for your Antisemitic buck.

The reason that it's plausible to construe these various claims and attitudes as being driven by a concern to display moral purity, rather than simply as showing honest moral commitments, is that the hostile attitudes displayed towards Israel and Zionists are rarely directed against other malefactors, including those who have committed far more, and far more serious, violations of human rights than any that Israel has managed. Furthermore, the charges made against Israel are often simply false, and demonstrably so. These two considerations together suggest that what's in play is not serious moral concern, but rather an easy simulacrum of it, along with a conviction of moral rectitude which, though misplaced, offers distinctive pleasures of its own.

The various sources of pleasure which antisemitism provides interact in diverse ways. Sometimes the effect of this interaction is simply to reinforce the rewards on offer: tradition plus hatred is a natural pairing, as is tradition plus the desire for moral purity – these relations are simply multipliers. But other relations look at first sight as if they might involve a certain tension: tradition plus transgressiveness, or hatred and condemnation plus the desire for moral purity. However these tensions can be and often are resolved in antisemitic discourse in ways which leave the discriminatory drive undisturbed. The claim of transgressiveness can be asserted with respect to the post-war convention of being polite about Jews, arising understandably from their sufferings at the hands of Nazi Germany, but now, it is suggested, exploited by Jews to cover up their wrongdoings. And in the description of such alleged wrongdoings, the rich seam of traditional Jew-hatred can be drawn on without embarrassment, indeed with a delicious frisson, because the transgressiveness defuses in advance any objections based on more conventional concerns about racism. The defusing

of such concerns is expedited where the transgressor uses the device of claiming that he himself is not antisemitic, but he can understand those who are, since the Jews bring hostility on themselves by their behaviour. The tension between the pleasures of hatred and those of moral purity can also be reconciled, allowing them to co-exist and even reinforce each other. Hatred, it can be suggested, is an excusable and perhaps even appropriate response to the bloodthirsty acts of Israel; the hatred supposedly arises out of an overwhelming sensitivity to injustice, and is a sign of the extreme moral purity of the hater, who selflessly struggles for justice for the innocent victims of a tyrannical state and its supporters. It's easy to see the attractions of this self-serving self-image to one who wishes to claim moral rectitude, and also to enjoy the pleasures of hatred. It's a terrific opportunity both to have your moral cake, and to eat it up in huge and satisfying gulps.

Conclusion

The factual, logical and moral errors in the various forms of antisemitism under consideration are legion, and have been discussed extensively elsewhere (for example in the work of David Hirsh and Norman Geras, both in their contributions to previous issues of *Fathom* and in many other places). In trying to account for the prevalence of these errors, and also to combat them, we shouldn't overlook the pleasures, sometimes very intense ones, which they provide. With the increasing normalisation of antisemitic hostility in many parts of the Left as well as the far Right, we can expect these pleasures to be more widely disseminated and enjoyed. What can be done about this state of affairs isn't immediately obvious – the fact that some pleasures are vile doesn't stop them being pleasurable, or prevent some people wanting to taste them again and again. In order to do so these people must bolster up their image of the Jewish state as oppressive and illegitimate, and the Zionists who support her as lying, manipulative, and hostile to human solidarity and justice. Here the devil frequently does have the best tunes, and the thin and reedy voice of rational argument is often quite drowned out by their brassy insistence. But we'll do better in the combat, however we conduct it, if we realise that the views which we're struggling against provide deep emotional satisfactions to those who hold them, satisfactions not easy either to overcome or to replace.
