



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

agency, Tawfik Tirawi, a member of the Fatah Central Committee, said: "Palestine stretches from the river to the sea... a Palestinian state in the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, is just a phase, as far as I am concerned."

Which is perfectly aligned with the 1974 "Plan of Stages" officially adopted by the PLO: "The Palestine Liberation Organization will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated. ... Once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory, and as a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity."

That's it. The dispute between Hamas and Fatah, then, is over what is most effective: suicide bombings or a Palestinian state? (And, of course, over who controls the billions of dollars flowing into the PA coffers from overseas.)

The way I see it now, the problem with the Fatah-Hamas accord is that they might stop throwing each other's activists in jail (or off rooftops) long enough to coordinate towards a strategy they both agree on: exterminating the Jewish State (and, to be fair to Sunni Islam's most trusted sources, the Jews as a whole). (Times of Israel Oct 20)

Commentary...

What's Really Wrong with the Hamas-Fatah Reconciliation

By Nissan Ratzlav-Katz

Hamas and the Palestine Liberation Organization-led Palestinian Authority (PA) reached an agreement to rule in a unified, brotherly kleptocracy. Wonderful.

As Hamas is a genocidal Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organization, Israel announced it would not negotiate with the Hamas-PLO hydra. The US was more patient, announcing that the PA has to disarm Hamas, Hamas has to recognize Israel, and they both have to adhere to all previous PA commitments, including negotiating with Israel.

Hamas responded as it must, if it is not to renounce its very raison d'être. The jihadist organization's spokesman said the United States was "blatantly interfering in matters that belong only to the Palestinian people. We have the right to choose a government that is suitable for the Palestinians."

Who can argue with that? Hamas and Fatah – like all dictators – give themselves the right to choose how they will dispose of their subjects. PA leader Mahmoud Abbas last faced elections in 2005, so he is now in year 12 of a four-year term. Hamas last ran for election in the PA in 2006 and, after throwing Fatah supporters from a few rooftops in Gaza, has not asked the Palestinians their opinion again.

On the other hand, the Palestinian people, such as it is, did in fact freely elect Hamas in 2006 in a landslide. That is, via elections deemed kosher by none other than Jimmy Carter, they overwhelmingly sided with genocidal Islamic fundamentalist terrorists.

One assumes they therefore approve of the response to the Trump Administration offered by Yahya Sinwar, the second-highest ranking frontline terrorist in Hamas: "The discussion now is about when we will wipe out Israel."

But how can it be otherwise? The preamble to the Hamas Charter states: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated others before it."

However, as the charter makes clear, it is not just Israel that is a problem for Hamas: "Israel, Judaism and Jews challenge Islam and the Muslim people. 'May the cowards never sleep.'" (Article 28) In line with this, the charter directly quotes Islam's founder, Muhammad, as per a solidly authoritative Islamic religious text (Sahih Muslim, "Kitab Al-Fitan wa Ashrat As-Sa'a", ch. 16, no. 6985): "The Day of Judgment will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews and kill them. Then, the Jews will hide behind rocks and trees, and the rocks and trees will cry out: 'O Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me, come and kill him.'" (Article 7)

How could the PLO-led PA – created in a paroxysm of peace-making in the 1990s – join these folks in a coalition?

Simple.

They are on the precisely same page when it comes to the end goal vis-a-vis Israel.

Sheikh Ibrahim Mudeiras, an official Palestinian Authority preacher, quoted the same text as appears in the Hamas charter and added: "Rejoice in Allah's Victory.... Everything wants vengeance on the Jews... these pigs on the face of the earth. And the day of our victory, Allah willing, will come."

So, if in matters of religious sources of genocidal hatred of Jews the PA and Hamas agree, then where do they differ?

The Hamas charter declares that "so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement [i.e., Hamas]..." (Article 13)

In contrast, the PLO's main faction, Fatah, to which Mahmoud Abbas belongs, published a manifesto in 2002 in which the group explains that "a legitimate Palestinian entity forms the most important weapon that Arabs have against Israel, the outpost of the imperialist powers." The celebratory article states, "Fatah believes that the Zionist movement constitutes the biggest threat against not only the Palestinian national security, but also against the security of the Arab world." Eliminating this threat, apparently, can best be accomplished through the establishment of a Palestinian state.

More recently, in a 2016 interview with the PA-controlled Ma'an news

Civil War at Our Door By Stewart Weiss

I am not an alarmist. Anyone who has read my column over the years knows that, at least when it comes to the State of Israel, I am supremely optimistic about our future. We have a marvelous, miraculous country that grows larger and more successful each and every year, eagerly gathering the Jews of the world back to their natural habitat.

Even in times of war, God forbid, we band together and bravely meet whatever challenge is hurled at us. But the menace that now faces us may be the greatest threat we have ever encountered.

We are on the verge of a civil war in this country, between a large and growing segment of the haredi population and just about everyone else, from the outright secular to the moderate Orthodox. Anyone who had the misfortune of going to Jerusalem last week during their massive anti-draft demonstration – one of several held throughout the country – saw firsthand the venom and the vitriol directed against the government and, by extension, the nation.

Not only was traffic illegally disrupted, inconveniencing thousands of travelers for hours, there was a palpable air of hatred permeating the event. Signs held up with slogans like, "Zionism equals Amalek" and "We will die rather than serve" indicate just what this war is all about. It is a direct challenge to the authority of the state and to the rule of law and order, a demand for a "state within a state" that would set its own rules and essentially answer to no one.

Ostensibly, the protest was over the arrest of two yeshiva students who – despite their having been generously granted release waivers from serving in the IDF – refused to appear at the induction center to sign those releases. But in reality, this was a declaration of defiance that they will not abide by many of the same laws which bind everyone else – serving in the army, studying the basics in school, joining the work force, etc. – and they will not recognize the government's authority.

In the supposed name of Torah, they are fomenting a revolution. This is against an Israel that has advanced the cause of Torah learning, politically and financially, more than any other country in history.

This is not to say that every ultra-Orthodox Jew, appearances aside, is cut from the same cloth. The haredim I know – both rabbis and the rank and file – are for the most part gentle, polite, law-abiding, peaceful people with high moral standards and respect for others. I have no doubt they share many of my same sentiments and are embarrassed by their aggressive colleagues.

But a violent, vocal minority has the unfortunate ability to taint a whole community, unless and until that same community – particularly its leaders – come out strongly against them.

Sadly, we are not hearing words of condemnation from the rabbinic leaders of the haredi world. I haven't seen any public proclamations by those who head yeshivot or sit in the Knesset condemning unequivocally, and banning from every yeshiva, any person who attacks an IDF soldier in uniform, as has happened numerous times in Mea She'arim and Bnei

Brak.

I haven't seen the call to the haredi public to disassociate from any protester who calls policemen Nazis, or young women whores or shikskes. Lots of shoulders have shrugged and lots of lips have remained closed, as the threat intensifies daily.

One of the greatest casualties of this crisis is that the Torah and the name of God become irreparably sullied. Why would hard-working, secular parents of soldiers want to come closer to a religion that seemingly divides people into the elite and privileged few, and the "worker bees" who hold the country together?

Are these the "ways of pleasantness" which the Torah espouses, the derech erez (good-mannered behavior) which precedes mitzva observance? Or is it an obscene act of Hilul Hashem (the desecration of God's name), which is one of Judaism's four cardinal sins?

Israeli prime ministers have always had a soft spot in their political hearts for the haredim. Why not? They make ideal coalition partners. Basically "one-issue" parties, they are willing to go placidly along for the ride on economic, defense and foreign policy matters, as long as they receive funding for their institutions and are "left alone" to pursue their lifestyle.

And so they sit in virtually every Knesset, literally minding their own "business" and separating from the general public. But, like an untreated sore, eventually the wound bursts forth and threatens the entire body. Unless this problem is addressed, and discipline returns to the dispute, the schism will only become worse and engulf the entire country.

Of all the many wars fought in American history, the worst by far was the Civil War, in which almost twice as many Americans perished than in World War II. We Israelis have no shortage of enemies surrounding us; to see brother fighting brother is a sight I fear more than Iran, North Korea and the Palestinian terrorists combined. As Abraham Lincoln famously warned, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

The Talmudic statement that the Second Temple was destroyed because of *sinat chinam* (baseless hatred of others) adds that this occurred in a generation that was "engaged in Torah, mitzvot and acts of kindness."

How is it possible, you may ask, for those who excel in spiritual matters to exhibit hatred so pervasive that it sent us into exile for 2,000 years?! A complex question, indeed, but the answer is as obvious as the difference between black and white. (Jerusalem Post Oct 26)

The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

(JPost ed. note: Since this article was written, haredi leader Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky has publicly condemned the actions of the "Jerusalem Faction.")

Even Economic Peace Requires PA Reform By Owen Kirby

The Palestinian economy is struggling. Youth unemployment is as high as 30%; twice that in Gaza. A visit to Ramallah might suggest otherwise with – among other outlets catering to local middle class tastes a Cinnabon recently opened downtown. But with 70% of the population under 30 and jobs the number one concern of Palestinian society, according to a September poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, appearances are misleading, and the donor community is searching for solutions.

In some quarters, the convenient remedy to Palestinian economic woes, and their potential implications, is the full realization of Palestinian national objectives. Even marginal improvements in access to land, resources and transportation links could have a significant effect on the economy, according to a September 2017 World Bank report. But as a Palestinian private sector participant commented in a recent focus group, "Not all our problems are related to the occupation, some of our problems are more related to the representatives of our society and the decision makers."

According to the World Bank, in addition to specific measures by Israel and the donor community that could spur economic growth, there are steps not requiring complementary external actions that the Palestinian Authority (PA) should be taking to tackle unemployment and strengthen the internal foundations for economic development. These include addressing regulatory gaps and licensing challenges in order to boost investor confidence; investment in vocational training to address labor force deficits; and measures to address reversals in institution building and governance. With respect to the latter, the World Bank cited a steady decline since the 2003-2010 period; arguably the last time the donor community prioritized PA internal reform.

While Palestinian leadership may find excuses to ignore the World Bank's latest recommendations, they cannot easily dismiss them as academic or bureaucratic prescriptions. On the contrary, the bank is merely reflecting the very real concerns and practical demands of a Palestinian private sector all too familiar with internal constraints to economic growth including an opaque policy making process in which the public, not to mention the private sector, is largely absent.

10 years since the elected Palestinian Legislative Council ceased functioning – a decade during which rule by presidential decree became the norm – Palestinians find themselves today without domestic channels for policy input and few, if any, checks on the PA executive. The general public today fears speaking out, according to the PCPSR poll; is concerned

about overall civil liberties; and perceives PA institutions as corrupt. The private sector view of the prevailing situation in the PA is no more favorable. "All of the civil and governmental institutions make life harder for businessmen, and they treat us all as if we're thieves," another focus group participant lamented.

Excluded from internal economic policy debate and perceiving themselves as merely a source of extraction for the PA ("the only thing they're good at is chipping money away through VAT"), the result is a Palestinian private sector – most notably its small and medium sized enterprises – both hesitant and constrained in fulfilling the role envisioned by donors in underpinning peace, and demanded by staggering local unemployment statistics.

While World Bank reporting has provided a valuable vehicle for Palestinian private sector input into how the donor community can best support local economic development, such efforts have had little leverage over actual decision making in the PA. In much the same way, Palestinian public opinion polling provides the public periodic opportunities to voice its concerns and frustrations, but ultimately has proven ineffective in keeping the PA's authoritarian tendencies in check over the past decade.

At the end of the day, current donor efforts to prop up the Palestinian economy, while well intentioned and much needed, are no substitute for the internal participatory systems of transparency and accountability that the private sector – as well as the general public – seeks, which sustainable Palestinian economic growth demands and the donor community needs to once again prioritize if longer-term goals are to be achieved.

The author is a project management consultant who has overseen numerous survey research initiatives in the West Bank and Gaza, including a summer 2017 focus group study. Previously, he served as senior adviser in the US State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative. (Jerusalem Post Oct 24)

The Way to Build A Relationship With the Israeli People

By Gilad Segal

Diplomacy is tough. Every Israeli who has ever traveled to Italy knows that the Israeli gesture asking kindly for patience would be interpreted as an offensive dismissal in Italy. A thumbs-up in many parts of the Middle East is the very opposite of, well, a thumbs-up. These examples could open an introductory course to basic diplomacy, where understanding local narratives and trends constitutes the most basic prerequisite for successful engagement.

So, if Europe is genuinely interested in effectively implementing its "soft power" doctrine and playing a leading political role in the region, it must know Israeli society inside out. It should be familiar with every nuance and what is and isn't "the done thing."

The European foreign service should know, for example, that despite our tendency to turn every minor difference into an emotional debate, there is one thing, perhaps one thing only, that is truly sacrosanct for us – the Israel Defense Forces.

Here, respect for the IDF is the consensus on which our society is built. It is above every possible political disagreement. We all served. We all know the stories. We all remember Lt. Hadar Goldin and his team, who were killed by Hamas terrorists in a surprise attack an hour after a UN-mediated cease-fire entered into force. We all heard about the medic Dror Dagan, who attended to a Palestinian woman who pretended to faint so her husband – a senior Hamas militant – could shoot him in the back, leaving his lower body paralyzed for life.

I personally remember very vividly how, while fighting in Gaza, I had an armed terrorist in my sights but couldn't get permission to fire, despite the serious risk he was posing to my friends and me, for fear of harming civilians in his vicinity. As an Israeli who served as a combat soldier and educated two cycles of new infantry recruits, I cannot ever be convinced that the IDF is inherently evil.

But perhaps Israelis are not really the target audience of such efforts.

When Dana Golan of the organization Breaking the Silence (BtS), who receives her salary largely through EU support, told the European Parliament's Human Rights subcommittee that Israeli soldiers are war criminals who "throw [their] moral code out the window" shortly after the summer of 2014 when thousands of Hamas rockets rained down on millions of Israelis, she convinced us of one thing – that her group is dangerous.

This is not about "fake news" or a difference of opinion to us, it strikes at the very glue that binds us together.

Following that, in a television interview, the interviewer told BtS's CEO that she probably heads "the most despised organization in Israel at the moment." His comment reflected the massive public outrage resulting from their "work" abroad, which generates hate and misunderstanding toward Israel and the IDF.

Let me reiterate: this is not a partisan matter. The few exceptions to BtS's "testimonies" that were not anonymous, and were verifiable, were eventually exposed as at least highly doubtful. Far from black and white.

This made almost everyone in Israel distance themselves from BtS and question its motives. Even the kibbutzim, the conventional stronghold of

the Left, keep their distance. In June, Kibbutz Ma'ale Gilboa refused to allow BtS to use their shared facilities, and Kibbutz Tlalim informed it in July that its propaganda is not welcome in their community. Later in July, after facing some hard and inconvenient questions in Kibbutz Mizra (of the socialist movement "Hashomer Hatzair"), a BtS speaker posted on his Facebook account that it was "the worst and most difficult event I ever had." Kibbutzim Neve Or, Yagur, Shefayim and others followed suit.

My Truth was founded out of this grassroots movement to provide a voice to Israeli soldiers who are deeply dissatisfied with the political manipulation being done in their names. The organization is comprised of volunteers, who are committed to education and dialogue of the kind that Europe and Israeli society must develop.

Israel is probably the only democracy the values of which are tested every day. In its 69 years, it has stood against full-scale wars of annihilation, ongoing terrorism against its civilians at home and abroad in all forms, as well as psychological and political warfare. Reality has presented many dilemmas along the years. When the Supreme Court sets a precedent, many times it is because no comparative law sources existed to consult due to the exceptional legal questions that were laid before it.

Europe's evolving challenges are becoming increasingly similar to those Israel has faced for decades, in many fields – security, immigration, stability and more. Europe now realizes that in order to have peace, security and prosperity at home it must strive to stabilize and promote its "ever closer" neighborhood, through political and physical means.

We know very well that the challenge is a difficult one, and overcoming it will not be easy or swift, but we are stronger working together, based on our shared values. Unfortunately, the current dialogue hinders collaboration and tears us apart where we need to be united. Our task in the weeks, months and years ahead is to work on these points of unity, and yes, to also work on the basic diplomatic faux pas that some of the ill-intentioned will try to throw our way to undo our efforts. The new EU ambassador to Israel, Emanuele Giaufret, who took office this Monday after having already served in Israel should be the right partner with whom to meet the challenge. (Jerusalem Post Oct 24)

The is the European outreach coordinator at My Truth.

The Zionist Uncle Who Changed the World By Meir Y. Soloveichik
His Majesty's government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.
—Arthur Balfour, November 2, 1917

As Jews in England and around the world prepare to mark the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, let us pause to ponder the respective legacies of Edwin Montagu and Lewis Dembitz. The names of these two Jews are largely unknown today, but they were, each in his own way, central players in the saga of the declaration, and therefore in one of the seminal moments in Jewish history. The former, a dedicated anti-Zionist, did everything he could to prevent this moment from occurring; the latter made his home thousands of miles from Britain and went to his grave surely unaware that the honorable way he lived his life, every day, would one day help bring the Balfour Declaration, and thereby the Jewish State, into existence.

Edwin Montagu was born into the one of the wealthiest Jewish families in England. He was the son of Samuel Montagu, who had been raised to British peerage but was known first and foremost for his zealous observance of Jewish law and for his sympathies to Zionism. Edwin's life was lived in rebellion against his patrimony; like many members of the Jewish aristocracy known as "The Cousinhood," he hated Zionism and its notion that Jews all around the world were one people and bound to one another. This, he believed, was not only false, but also raised the specter of dual loyalty for Jews seeking assimilation and aristocratic elevation in Britain. To Britain's prime minister, David Lloyd George, Montagu complained, "All my life I have been trying to get out of the ghetto; you want to force me back there."

In 1917, Montagu received the India portfolio in George's cabinet; he was known for his sympathy for the nationalist aspirations of the Indians but not for those of other Jews. As the only Jewish member of George's cabinet, Montagu participated in a public anti-Zionist statement asserting that Zionism "regards all the Jewish communities of the world as constituting one homeless nationality," a notion that the statement "strongly and energetically protests." Zionism, argued the statement, "must have the effect of stamping the Jews as strangers in their native lands."

There were prominent British Jews favorable to the Zionist project, including Montagu's cousin Herbert Samuel. Yet as the British writer Chaim Bermant notes, Montagu was a "particularly formidable opponent, arguing both from the standpoint of the assimilated Jew and as Secretary of State for India." If the efforts of Montagu were ultimately in vain, it was because the most politically powerful Jew in England was foiled by the most politically powerful Jew in America: Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

Brandeis had been raised with no Judaism at all and for much of his life approached Zionism in the same manner as Montagu. In 1905, he informed

a Jewish audience that there was no place in the United States for "hyphenated Americans," adding as late as 1910 that "habits of living or of thought which tend to keep alive differences of origin or classify men according to the religious beliefs are inconsistent with the American ideal of brotherhood, and are disloyal." Yet he did know of one Jew who clearly saw no contradiction between public Jewishness and patriotic Americanism. That was his mother's brother, a lawyer by the name of Lewis Dembitz.

Like Brandeis, Dembitz lived in Louisville and was revered there for his achievements in the law and for the way he lived his life. Yet he was also admired by Gentiles for his dedication to Judaism. "Business and pleasure never interfered with the lawyer-scholar's religious obligations," a gushing obituary in the Louisville Courier Journal reflected, adding that "Mr. Dembitz's doctrine prohibited work on the Sabbath day, and he never was known to violate the teaching." Brandeis very much admired his uncle and changed his middle name from "David" to "Dembitz" in memory of the man who had helped shaped his choice of career.

In 1914, Brandeis was visited by Jacob de Haas, former secretary to Theodore Herzl, ostensibly to be interviewed about insurance law. De Haas offhandedly inquired whether Brandeis was related to a "noble Jew" by the name of Lewis Dembitz, who was an ardent Zionist. As the writer Rick Richman has documented, this meeting alerted Brandeis to the possibility that Zionism was not irreconcilable with Americanism. Thereupon he rose in Zionist leadership in America even as he was elevated by President Wilson to the Supreme Court in 1916. The following year, when Montagu made his opposition to the declaration known, Chaim Weizmann cabled Brandeis to ask "if President Wilson and yourself would support [the] text." Brandeis, Richman writes, "wired Weizmann that, based on his talks with Wilson, the President was in 'entire sympathy' with the draft declaration and in mid-October, Wilson himself passed a private message to the British supporting the declaration. It was issued two weeks later. The message was, Weizmann wrote later, 'one of the most important individual factors' in breaking the deadlock. Nahum Goldman, later president of the World Zionist Organization, wrote in his autobiography that without Brandeis's efforts, the Balfour Declaration 'would probably never have been issued.'"

Yet issued it was, and Montagu was crushed. "It seems strange," he reflected, "to be a member of a government which goes out of its way, as I think, for no conceivable purpose that I can see, to deal this blow at a colleague that is doing his best to be loyal to them, despite his opposition. The government has dealt an irreparable blow to Jewish Britons and they have endeavored to set up a people which does not exist."

The irony—or perhaps the providential nature—of this moment is difficult to miss. One of the most important Jews in England had done all he could to deny Jewish peoplehood, only to be foiled by one of the most important Jews in America, who had only just ceased to think about his own Jewishness in the exact same way.

Montagu died in 1924, at the age of 45, never achieving the apex of political power, and with his assault on Zionism a failure. Yet Montagu's legacy lives on in the many Jews today who seem concerned for the nationalist aspirations of all other peoples except their own, and who raise the specter of dual loyalty. In this, Montagu brings to mind the criticism of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, who once wrote that the "emancipated modern Jew has been trying, for a long time, to do away with this twofold responsibility...the universal and the covenantal, which, in his opinion, are mutually exclusive." This was true in the age of Edwin Montagu, and, alas, it remains true today.

Meanwhile, Dembitz may be as unknown as Montagu, if not more so. But one can rightly say that millions of Jews enjoy the fruits of his labor and his life, every day, in a vibrant and miraculous Jewish state. It is important that his legacy inspire Jewish Americans, that we be known for our dedication to this country and simultaneously for exercising our freedoms in defense of Jews, and in dedicated observance of the faith of our fathers. If we do so with integrity, we cannot fully imagine the extraordinary fruits that our lives, like that of Dembitz, might bear. May the memory of Lewis Dembitz be a blessing. On November 2, may we honor the full legacy of the man as we mark the hundredth anniversary of a day that his life helped bring about. (CommentaryMagazine.com Oct 27)

Why Israel Is a Light Unto Nations for Some, a Pariah for Others

By Moshe Arens

"Ours is the best of countries," said the taxi driver who took me from Tel Aviv to my home, as I sat down next to him. I suppose he felt this needed an explanation, so he went on to tell me his story.

"My family arrived from Iraq with only their clothes on their backs. They took the rings from the fingers of the women before they let them leave Iraq. For two years they lived in a tent in an immigrant camp near Netanya. From there they moved to a prefab and lived with six children in one room. For some years I have been self-employed, running a diamond-polishing firm. When business turned bad recently I decided to start driving a taxi. We have two sons. One is a doctor, the other an engineer in high-tech. Ours is the best of countries," he repeated. "I don't know what

they're complaining about," he concluded.

There must be hundreds of thousands like him in Israel, I thought to myself. Immigrants from Iraq, Yemen, Iran, Egypt, Libya, other Maghreb states, from the former Soviet Union, no doubt also many of Israel's Arab citizens who feel that Israel has given them the opportunity to take a giant step to advance themselves and their families professionally, materially and in their social standing. In another generation the immigrants from Ethiopia will surely join their ranks. Israel is truly the best of countries.

So who is complaining, and what are they complaining about? They come mostly from the wealthier, more educated segments of Israel's population. Their hearts go out to the Palestinian population in Judea and Samaria, and the "occupation" keeps them awake at night. They are joined by those who don't give a hoot about the Palestinians but simply want to separate them from us and they believe that an end to the "occupation" will bring that about. "Build a wall and keep them away from us" is their slogan.

To them, Israel is the worst of countries. As far as they are concerned, nothing here is right. Their dream is to bring down the Likud-led government, but they don't seem to realize that electoral support for this government comes from those of us who believe that ours is the best of countries. Unless these critics can reach out to them, that government will remain in power.

Are the millions who have benefited from living in Israel insensitive to the fate of the Palestinians? You would need a poll to answer that question. It would seem they assign a much lower priority to the fate of the Palestinians than to Israel's security and the danger they believe the Palestinians and their aspirations pose to it.

And those who consider themselves liberals, who worry about the Palestinians, are they not aware of the good Israel has done for millions of Israelis? To them, so it seems, that does not compare to the suffering they believe Israel has caused the Palestinians.

So there you have it. It's all in the eye of the beholder.

The concern of liberals for the suffering of others is natural and fully justified. It is they, generally affluent and educated, who brought Barack Obama to the White House and who enthusiastically supported his policy favoring the underprivileged – blacks, Mexican immigrants, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. But it is also they who ignored the families living in the industrial heartland of America who had lost their jobs and felt they had been moved down the social scale and saw in Hillary Clinton a successor to Obama. They elected Donald Trump.

It is a social phenomenon not dissimilar to what has happened in Israel. But there is one big difference – most Israelis are aware of the security threats facing Israel, and it enters their political calculus. (Haaretz Oct 23)

The Enemy of my Enemy By Isi Leibler

The dramatic swing to the right in the recent Austrian elections is likely to have widespread repercussions throughout Europe. It will also oblige Israel to reconsider its current approach to far right-wing groups.

While many readers may strongly disagree with my views, I feel that the time has come to face reality. Israel is stronger today than at any time since it was founded. But the fact remains that despite a currently friendly U.S. administration, most of the world continues to discriminate and apply double standards toward Israel. No other nation is confronted by adversaries of fanatical cultures that extol evil and death and repeatedly and publicly bay for the destruction of their neighbor – to the indifference of most of the "civilized" world, which merely watches and at best remains silent.

In this environment, it is time for us to overcome inhibitions and intensify efforts to actively seek out alliances, with nondemocratic states or even those whose viewpoints on various issues we strongly oppose. Some would condemn such an approach as hypocritical and amoral realpolitik.

Yet almost all Israelis are encouraged that our leaders have forged a positive relationship with an authoritarian Russia ruled by Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent who currently displays philo-Semitic sympathies.

In general, Israelis are optimistic – and with good reason – about our relationship with Egypt headed by President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi. Yet, anti-Semitism still dominates much of the state-controlled media as Egyptian society has been conditioned over the years to hate Israel and the Jews. This may change in time but the reason for the current rapprochement is primarily because we face common enemies.

The covert, albeit somewhat schizophrenic, new relationship with Saudi Arabia is even more bizarre. Fanatical Saudi Wahhabism is the fountainhead of Islamic terrorism and continues to promote it throughout the world. Its hatred of Israel and the Jews knows no bounds and is an integral component of the current Saudi educational curriculum and textbooks and its mullahs are notorious for calling on the faithful to murder Jews, "the descendants of apes and pigs." Yet the emerging Iranian threat to impose regional hegemony induced the Saudi leaders to covertly cooperate with Israel. Confronting an aggressive common enemy also created this alliance.

Israel has likewise been cultivating relations with India and China as well as other Asia, African, and Latin American states, many of which are

not even remotely democratic.

By and large, despite some of the problematic attitudes shared by these new allies, the clear majority of Israelis – across the political spectrum – consider these developments positively.

However, the one region in which we seem to have made scant progress is Europe. The EU has in fact been pouring huge sums of money into NGOs that have actively undermined the Israeli government and shamelessly apply bias and double standards in all their dealings with Israel. For example, at a recent seminar in the European Parliament, a political group uniting leftists invited as one of its keynote speakers, Leila Khaled, the notorious Palestinian terrorist who hijacked two civilian aircraft.

Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, some of the Baltic states and now the Czech Republic, are pro-Israel and distance themselves from the EU policies. Yet these are mainly right-wing nationalist governments bitterly opposed to the flood of Muslim immigrants that Germany and the EU seek to impose upon them. Accusations have been leveled that they are supported by neo-Nazis and Holocaust deniers and, in some cases, that is probably true.

Likewise, in Western Europe, we are now also confronted with a host of right-wing populist opposition groups that are emerging in protest to the immigration. These populists are likely to grow stronger, gain influence and may alter the entire political spectrum in Europe.

Needless to say, no responsible Jew could contemplate any association or alliance with neo-Nazis or Holocaust deniers. But the fact that a percentage of such undesirable scum support a particular party should not disqualify that party any more so than the U.S. Republican Party, which is supported by some fringe racists, or the Democratic Party, which is the political home of some vicious anti-Israel and anti-Semitic elements.

Israel cannot simply distance itself from all of these right-wing groups and must review and weigh each case individually. It is clear that if leaders of governments include apologists for Nazis or outright Holocaust deniers, we can have no truck with them. However, the reality is that despite extremists and even anti-Semites supporting the emerging right-wing parties, many of these groups are overall less hostile to us than leftist governments that support the Islamists and are also becoming increasingly overtly anti-Semitic.

In France, Marine Le Pen's National Front achieved 34% of the vote in the recent presidential runoff; in Italy, the Northern League has 19 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 12 in the Senate; Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom became the second largest party in the Dutch Parliament; and Alternative for Germany created an upheaval by emerging as the third-largest party following the September federal election. The latest shock was in Austria where the hard-right Freedom Party became the third-largest party and will become a coalition partner to the winning conservative Austrian People's Party.

All these parties, except for the Dutch, at one time had fascist elements actively supporting them. Although there are problematic components in the German and Austrian parties, by and large most continue to purge anti-Semites from their ranks, certainly more so than the British Labor Party under Jeremy Corbyn. Significantly, Heinz-Christian Strache, head of the Austrian Freedom Party, has been an enthusiastic supporter of Israel, as have most populist parties.

There are of course boundaries and sometimes this is a gray area but the Holocaust is too deeply ingrained in our psyche to even contemplate an alliance with pro-Nazi politicians.

This is not a simple issue but as long as anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers are condemned and expelled, Israel must consider each case on individual merits, applying equal standards to the Right and the Left. There are very few left-wing political parties that do not incorporate substantial anti-Semitic and rabidly anti-Israel elements. For example, unpalatable though it may be for some, it is questionable whether the Austrian Freedom Party, whose former leader Jörg Haider in 1999 was considered a Nazi sympathizer, is more dangerous to us than the British Labor Party under its current leadership.

We live in a world where we should seek out allies from all sectors but draw the line with those that harbor outright anti-Semites, irrespective of which side of the political spectrum they are situated.

Diaspora Jewish leaders should not become involved in these issues as Jews unless the parties concerned are anti-Semitic. This applies to Hungary's Jobbik Party, the Golden Dawn Party of Greece, Croatian apologists of the genocidal Nazi Ustasha regime and Ukrainian nationalists who today sanctify pogromists or pro-Nazi collaborators.

The Israeli government and especially the Foreign Ministry should analyze the situation carefully and avoid the double-standard mentality that calls for boycotting extremists on the Right but buries its head in the sand when leftist anti-Semitism emerges.

When in doubt, we should consider our relationship with Saudi Arabia, which I support despite the knowledge that its society remains riddled with hatred against the Jewish people. There are occasions when it is acceptable to collaborate on specific issues with nations or political groups that do not share our outlook and in some cases even despise us, in order to overcome common enemies. (Jerusalem Post Oct 23)