

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST

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THE ABRAHAM ACCORDS:

THE DAWN OF A NEW MIDDLE EAST?

ALSO:

- Editorial: Wandering through the Sandstorm
- Local Antisemitism
- Israel's Foreign Relations, Political Analyses
- Lockdown, Isolation and Spirituality
- Book Review

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I would like to thank my fellow CIJR members Professor Frederick Krantz and Machla Abramovitz who continually give our Editorial group (*Students for a Just Middle East Peace*) invaluable guidance in writing, research and journalism. Working with them has proven to be a gratifying learning experience.
— Jacques Chitayat

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COVER: Signature of Abraham Accords at the White House



EDITORIAL

Wandering through the sandstorm, guided by resilience

JACQUES CHITAYAT

If one could make a vast assumption while remaining truthful and accurate, it would be that this has been a challenging year for everyone. That includes cancelled plans, trips and events, isolation, and often lost jobs. During these strange months, as numerous countries locked down, billions of people from across the world shared the same worries, experiences, and routines. Ironically, these last few months have also united different countries and continents around one common problem. A Canadian, a Spaniard, a Japanese, an Israeli, and a Qatari have never had more in common during this strange period.

Despite the limitations imposed by the virus, the CIJR team and *DateLine: Middle East* has expanded as we welcomed new student interns and contributors. We are thrilled to share these articles, which cover a broad range of topics and fulfill one of CIJR's key goals, giving Canadian Jewish students a voice and a platform.

Writing about a piece of good news amidst this year's bleakness, Jodi Mandelcorn, a new CIJR *Baruch Cohen Program* Intern, compares the recently signed Abraham Accords to Israel's previous peace accords, the first with Egypt in 1979 and the second with Jordan in 1994. Focusing on their specific contexts and America's role in making each deal possible, she explains what makes the Abraham Accords fundamentally different from the other two. She also offers a prediction on the success of this peace deal.

This peace deal came at the price of Israel giving up, at least temporarily, the extension of its sovereignty over the West Bank settlements. Backed by a great deal of research, Yacov

Amsellem leads the reader through the recent history of the settlements issue, beginning with the negotiations at the Camp David Summit, Ehud Olmert's peace offer, up to Israel's current annexation projects stance. He presents his opinion on how Israel should now proceed concerning the settlements.

In my article, I also discuss the recent peace agreement between Israel and the two Gulf States: the UAE and Bahrain. I begin by noting how it represents the monumental shift in attitude and mentality towards Israel in the Arab world. The article explains why the UAE signed a peace accord with Israel and its possible impact (given its concession on applying sovereignty over about 30% of the West Bank) and on Israel's ability to decide its policies independently. I argue that Israel should neither make too many concessions nor forget its historical claims, no matter how much it wants to achieve peace.

What about the Palestinians who have rejected peace continually, and who refused to negotiate the latest offer? If a two-state solution is not possible because of Palestinian rejectionism, what possibilities are left? Bernard Bohbot suggests some hypothetical political projects for Israel and Palestine's future. He describes the options and the risks of an Israel-Palestine confederation similar to the EU. He also discusses other possibilities for an eventual Palestinian State, again comparing their pros and cons.

Often finding friends in the unlikely places, Israel's diplomatic isolationism appears to be dissipating. The Abraham Accords are the most recent example. India represents another case in point: Ethan Ruben, in his article *From Foe to Friend*, explains the evolution of India-Israel re-

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lations since the State of Israel's creation. Examining political, cultural, historical, and religious factors, he shows the reader what caused the significant change in India's attitude towards Israel. From voting against the UN Partition Plan in 1947, India has become the world's most pro-Israel country, surpassing even the United States. Ending on an optimistic note, Ethan sees the ties between these two countries as only getting more robust, and considers India's case as an example of smooth international relations and real hope for positive change.

Antisemitism, both on a local scale and worldwide, is on the rise. The last *Dateline* issue focused on on-campus discrimination. During this pandemic, some have used the virus as an excuse for harassing Jews. David Anidjar analyzes the Hasidic Jews' situation in Quebec, eliciting often-negative portrayals in the media and tensions with other residents. David also examines why antisemitism in Quebec differs from antisemitism in the rest of Canada. Finally, he offers possible solutions to enable Quebecers to understand their Hasidic neighbors better. This article includes an interview with Outremont Borough Mayor Philippe Tomlinson and recommends initiatives to encourage dialogue and warmer relations.

Online antisemitism, studies show, is the most rapidly-growing exemplar in that it enables the rapid and extended spreading of conspiracy theories, lies, and hateful messages. New CIJR *Cohen Intern* Raphaël Uzan writes on how Canada can fight this new phenomenon. The methods currently used, Raphaël argues, are inadequate. Quoting Wiesenthal Center Vice-Dean Rabbi Abraham Cooper and CIJA executive Richard Marceau, he offers solutions to combat this escalating problem.

Defining antisemitism is an essential issue in itself, and we are yet to achieve a broad consensus in this regard. Mitchell Stein discusses Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante's refusal to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's broad definition of antisemitism. After describing the IHRA's mission and explaining what makes their definition particularly optimal for fighting antisemitism, Mitchell asks why Mayor Plante rejected this definition. He asserts that this refusal is incredibly awkward since 27 countries, including the Canadian Federal government, have already adopted it. He ends the article calling on the mayor to reverse this decision and show her and Montreal's support for combating hate.

Camille Yael Goutard, a double major in political science and religion, relates her personal antisemitism experiences, and then broadens the topic, focusing on the campus experience. She takes on intersectionality, a popular social categorization concept: By connecting race, class, and gender, it creates overlapping systems of discrimination and disadvantage. Noble-sounding terms such as "social justice" and "fighting discrimination," she argues, act as catalysts encouraging the rise of antisemitism. BDS movements recruit young students, including Jews, by using the

intersectional model. These movements demonize Israel as a colonizer and a murderous entity. By refuting many of these deceiving tactics, Camille explains the reality and complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Liora Chartouni, studying in Jerusalem, tries to make sense of her COVID lockdown experience in a personal piece. Faced with this sudden lifestyle change, she turned to religion and spirituality. She argues that we should all examine our inner selves to work on our flaws and focus on important goals that we had perhaps forgotten. Describing her months in lockdown and what she gained from experience, she shares insightful lessons we can benefit from hearing.

Finally, this issue includes my book review of French philosopher Pierre Manent's essay, translated to English, *Beyond Radical Secularism*. Displaying an impressive knowledge of France's history, religion, society, and modern culture of secularity, the author suggests new ways to integrate its Muslim citizens. He argues that the French government's current methods are counter-productive and only aggravate the issue of non-integration, and advocates that it abandon the project of secularizing Muslims. Referring to Jewish principles and classical European values, Pierre Manent offers new ways of building a more harmonious future for France.

As we all wander the current sandstorm, we must all – like the Hebrews have done so often before us – remain steadfast and resilient. CIJR and its Jewish students have not lost track, even in these uncertain and chaotic times, of the importance of defending Jews from discrimination and making sense of what is unfolding across the globe.

As the American November election grows ever closer, so also grow our worries about the future of America's Israel foreign policy. The stakes are incredibly high, since the candidates have entirely different views on the matter. The growing divide between the two parties on Israel, accelerated during Obama's term, has only gotten larger recently. Voters are now facing a choice between Donald Trump, arguably the most pro-Israel President in recent memory, and Joe Biden, powerless against the far-left anti-Zionist wave submerging his Party. This, however, makes voters' choice all the more easy. The Democrats are increasingly dominated by radical "progressive" anti-Zionist radicals like Ilan Omar and Rashida Tlaib while the Republicans recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and facilitated the recent Abraham Accords between Israel, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. Biden even claims he will revive the lapsed nuclear deal with Iran, which threatens Israel directly.

One can only hope that, given the evident disparities in the parties' positions, Jewish voters will recognize which side clearly supports Israel and real peace in the Middle East.

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A COMPARISON OF THE ISRAELI PEACE AGREEMENTS

JODI MANDELCORN

While the Israel-United Arab Emirates (UAE) peace agreement, reached on August 13, 2020, is a highly significant moment in Israeli history, it is not the first of its kind. Israel previously signed two peace agreements, the first with Egypt in 1979, and the second with Jordan in 1994.

While they all fall under the rubric of “peace treaties,” still, this most recent agreement – dubbed the Abraham Accords – is fundamentally different from the others. And, in its way, it can also potentially be the most transformative regarding Arab x- Israel relations.

Unlike the other two agreements, the purpose of the Abraham Accords was not to end a state of war between Israel and the UAE, which didn’t exist, but rather to counter a common enemy - a potentially nuclear Iran. It was also the natural consequence of Israel and the Emirates’ joint efforts to combat COVID-19, publicly acknowledging their cooperative relationship. Yet even before the viral outbreak, there were numerous instances of cooperation between the two countries, including joint training exercises involving both countries’ air forces in 2016 and 2017, and displaying the Israeli flag at a sporting event for the first time in October 2018.

In contrast, the Camp David Accords - Israel’s 1978 peace agreement signed with Egypt - ended decades of heated conflict. It assured Israel’s withdrawal from the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel had captured during the Six-Day War, and successfully achieved a longstanding – albeit cold —peace between them.

Likewise, with the 1994 “Treaty of Peace Between The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and The State of Israel.” The agreement similarly resulted in a mutually beneficial relationship between Jordan and Israel. It ended the state of hostility between the two countries, restored to Jordan land captured by Israel during the Six-Day War creating an “administrative boundary” between the West Bank and Jordan, and defined Jordan’s western border. Jordan had abandoned its claims to the West Bank, leaving the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel to sort out the land dispute between themselves, which enabled Jordan to negotiate separately



U.S. President Bill Clinton (C) with PLO leader Yasser Arafat (R) and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (L) at the signing of the Israel-Jordan Peace Treaty.

with Israel. Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Jordan annexed land west of the Jordan River that was part of Mandatory Palestine. This land included Jericho, Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus, and eastern Jerusalem, including the Old City of Jerusalem.

Additional protocols established the framework for cooperation between the two countries regarding the Jordan Valley, the Arava-Eilat region, security, water, and refugees. Despite instances of conflict between Israel and Jordan, this peace agreement has endured and is considered a great success.

Another distinguishing factor of the Abraham Accords is the general normalization of relations between the UAE and Israel, which can benefit both countries economically,

“The economic potential [of the Accords] - beyond the importance of security - with the UAE is that within three to five years, I estimate the trade with the UAE will reach \$4 billion, something that will generate 15,000 jobs in Israel,” Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen told *Reshet Bet* radio. To achieve that goal, the Emirates officially ended its economic boycott of Israel.

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Compare this with the other two peace treaties. Even after years of peace, Israel's relations with Egypt and Jordan are still not normalized, while the Abraham Accords opens the door for Israel and the UAE to improve tourism, communication, security, and issues concerning the environment.

A common denominator in all three peace accords is the involvement of the United States' government. Although history credits President Jimmy Carter with brokering the Egypt-Israel peace treaty between President Anwar El-Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin, much of the real work took place between Israel and Egypt behind the scenes. President Carter initially persuaded the two parties to move towards peace, and later was instrumental in breaking an impasse in the final stages of the negotiations.

On the other hand, President Bill Clinton played a key and active role in pressuring King Hussein of Jordan to sign the peace treaty with Israel, offering to forgive Jordan's debts in return. On July 25, 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, King Hussein of Jordan, and U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Washington Declaration in Washington, DC.

As for the Abraham Accords, the Trump peace proposal certainly helped set the stage. It changed the paradigm for what constitutes a realistic peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. By postponing the application of sovereignty over parts of the West Bank, which the Trump peace deal allows, Israel paved the way for what will, hopefully, be a very warm peace between the UAE and Israel.

The elephant in the room was, of course, Iran. The UAE was extremely impressed with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's unwavering opposition to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), an agreement between Iran and the five members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany regarding Iran's nuclear power, and his courage in confronting President Barack Obama on this issue by presenting his case before the U.S. Congress.

More significant still was President Trump's opposition to the JCPOA, which directly addresses the Emirates and the Saudis' concerns. Should conflict with Iran escalate, the UAE will need Israeli military aid. Israel has one of the strongest armies in the Middle East and has strong relations with the U.S. According to the Global Fire Power (GFP), Israel's conventional military ranks 5th in the Middle

Compare this with the other two peace treaties. Even after years of peace, Israel's relations with Egypt and Jordan are still not normalized, while the Abraham Accords opens the door for Israel and the UAE to improve tourism, communication, security, and issues concerning the environment.

East in contrast to Iran, which ranks third. The GFP ranking, though, does not consider other criteria such as weapons range and available manpower. While Iran's army has more active soldiers, Israel invests more annually to ensure that its army is better equipped and better trained. Albeit well-funded and ranks sixth in the Middle East, the UAE's army is far smaller and less militarily significant than Iran and Israel.

But when it came to the nitty-gritty aspects of the actual negotiation, much credit goes to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo: He met with Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, Mossad Director Yossi Cohen, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to further negotiations between Israel and the UAE. According to *Al-Monitor*, Mossad Director Yossi Cohen played the most significant role in bringing about normalization between the Emirates and Israel.

While it is too soon to measure these different accords' over-all effects on peace between Israel and the Arab world, there is reason to hope that they will have positive and enduring results. Countries like Bahrain, Morocco, and Oman may eventually sign similar accords. Saudi Arabia's close ties to the UAE and their shared opposition to Iran also make it a significant country to watch. Boding well in this regard is Saudi Arabia's decision to open its airspace to Israel's flights at the Emirates' request.

Hence, despite their differences, the previous two peace treaties' success augurs well for this most recent one. And together, they demonstrate that when genuine partners exist, real peace in the Middle East is possible despite the region's long and often conflictual history.

Jodi Mandelcorn is a Baruch Cohen Israel Intern at the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research and a Political Science student at Concordia University

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YES, TO SOVEREIGNTY FOR ISRAEL'S SETTLEMENT BLOCS

YACOV AMSELEM

Recently echoes of a possible U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley have proliferated in the news. However, not everyone was pleased with this revelation. The European Union condemned such recognition on grounds that it jeopardizes the creation of a “viable” Palestinian State West of the Jordan River. Even President Trump (perhaps also with an eye already on the unfolding Abraham Accords) felt that carrying out such an ambitious policy in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic was not good timing.

Hence, Israeli officials proposed to apply Israel's sovereignty on a much smaller area as a preliminary stage, that would ultimately lead to the extension of Israel's sovereignty on the Jordan Valley as well. They argued that Israel should first annex only the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) settlement blocs of *Maaleh Adumim*, *Gush Etzion* and *Ariel*, which make up about 4 percent of the West Bank. That these territories will remain in Israel in any future peace agreement. Is a broad consensus in Israel, both among the left and the right.

Many on the Israeli left argue, however, that annexing even such a small area is premature, and can only be done in the framework of a final peace agreement. This argument holds no water, since it is pretty clear now that the Palestinian Authority – which has already rejected at least three peace plans that would have



allowed them to recover virtually all the territories lost to Israel in 1967—is not going to sign a peace agreement with Israel,

At the July 2000 Camp David summit, Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered the Palestinians 92% percent of the West Bank, the entire Gaza Strip with minor land swaps and the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, with shared sovereignty over the Temple Mount. Moreover, he accepted President Clinton's offer to contribute to a \$30 billion reparation-package fund for the descendants of Palestinian refugees.

Yasser Arafat, the former head of the Palestinian Authority, rejected the offer without making a counter-proposal. A few months later, in January 2001, he refused an even more gen-

erous offer calling for the creation of a Palestinian state on the equivalent of 100% of the West Bank –with a land swap.

Saudi Arabia's Prince Bandar urged Arafat not to miss this opportunity, and to accept the deal. He offered this stern remark to Arafat: “I hope you remember, sir, what I told you. If we lose this opportunity, it is going to be a crime against the Palestinian and Arab World at large.”¹ Disregarding Bandar's plea to accept the proposal, Arafat launched the Second Intifada against Israel, with waves of suicide bombers. During the negotiation Arafat had told Dennis Ross, heading the American del-

¹ Dershowitz, Alan: *The Case For Israel* 9. Bandar repeated this criticism after PLO rejection of the recent Abraham Accords between Israel, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain (see NYT, 7 Oct, 2020, p.15.)

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egation, that there has "never been" a Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

Yet, despite these *murderous* waves of attacks on Israeli cities, and Palestinian intransigence regarding signing a peace deal with Israel (which led to the downfall of Barak's government in 2001 at the hands of Israel's hawkish leader Ariel Sharon), Israel kept making concessions to the Palestinians. In 2005, right-wing Prime Minister Sharon delineated a unilateral separation plan aiming to disengage Israel from the Gaza Strip and Northern Samaria.

On September 16, 2008, Sharon's successor, Ehud Olmert (with whom he had resigned from the right-wing Likud Party, in 2005, to create the Centrist Kadima Party, that sought to evacuate the bulk of the West Bank), made the Palestinian Authority yet another a peace offer. This included the entirety of the Gaza Strip; 100% of the West Bank with acre-for-acre land exchanges for the main blocs; East Jerusalem as capitol of a Palestinian State; and an international consortium (lead by the Palestinian Authority) to run the holy sites of the Old City of Jerusalem.

To be clear: Olmert's offer meant relinquishing Jewish sovereignty over the most sacred Jewish religious site, the Western Wall, the *Kotel Ha'maravi*. Yet, despite such a remarkable offer, Arafat's successor, Abu Mazen (*aka* Mahmoud Abbas), who was supposed to respond to Ehud Olmert, never replied. At some point, Ehud Olmert sent the late Israeli negotiator Ron Pundak to ask the Palestinian Authority if it would accept his offer were he to make even more concessions—but again, to no avail..

Six years later, in February 2014, President Barak Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry delineated a proposal along the lines of their predecessors Clinton and Bush, and offered it first to Prime Minister Netanyahu. Netanyahu said yes, with a couple of reservations.—Abu Mazen, *however*, said no. On March 17, 2014, President Obama presented an even more generous offer to Abbas (with the tacit approval of Netanyahu's advisor, Yitzhak Molkho). But once again, Abbas did not even deign explicitly to reject this offer; he merely refused to answer.

It should be clear to any non-dogmatic person, that the Palestinians refuse to sign any peace agreement that would put an end to all Palestinian claims. True, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) claimed to have recognized the state of Israel in 1988. But Western specialists and diplomats were fooled into thinking that all

"It should be clear to any non-dogmatic person that the Palestinians refuse to sign any peace agreement that would put an end to all Palestinian claims."

they wanted was a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, and East-Jerusalem. In fact, the Palestinians still insist on the "right of return" for all the descendants of the original 1948 Palestinian refugee (amounting today to close to 6 million people).

If Israel were to accept such a concession, it would negate the very essence of Zionism, and spell the end of its existence as a Jewish homeland. And even though the Palestinian Authority said that it would be "flexible" and "creative" in the implementation of the right of return, negotiating new quotas about whom will be allowed to settle inside Israel each decade will only postpone the demise of Israel's Jewish character. No Israeli leader, from the left or the right, can or will accept such a demand.

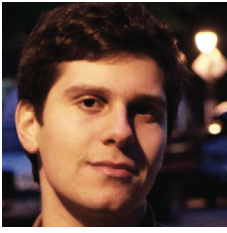
To sum up, even though Israel halted its annexation projects to secure a peace agreement with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, Israel should with all deliberate speed move forward with the annexation of the main settlement blocs (which represent only percent 4 per cent of the Territories), as soon as the opportunity to do so returns in the coming years.

Let us conclude with the words of Khalaf Al Habtoor, an Emirati, who wrote in an recent op-ed published in *Ha'aretz*: "We in our part of the world have all had our fair share of mutual hatreds and wars, spanning more than 70 years. And what have we gained? Nothing other than insecurity, mistrust and trillion-dollar war machines, most rusting in warehouses." At last, the Arab world is realizing that it has everything to lose by war and everything to gain with peace with Israel.

The Palestinians, however, clearly are not there yet—will they ever be?

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ISRAEL'S FUTURE PEACE DEALS: Exchanging Political Independence for Relations?

JACQUES CHITAYAT

A few weeks ago, politically-aware people across the globe woke up to pleasantly surprising news: the US-brokered normalization of relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and the latter's ending its economic boycott of Israel. The first regularly-scheduled Tel Aviv-Abu Dhabi flights are coming soon, meaning Israeli tourists will soon have their first Gulf State experience. Abu Dhabians will be able to discover the charm of Jerusalem and the energy of Tel Aviv. Normalization came on one condition for Israel: that it halt (or completely abandon) extending its sovereignty (or annexation, depending on one's point of view) over Judea and Samaria.

This deal is excellent news for Israel, as the country slowly emerges from diplomatic isolation, obtaining a much-needed partner in the Persian Gulf. Bahrain then joined the UAE in this peace deal, and in the same vein, other countries, like Morocco and Sudan, have hinted at making peace with Israel, meaning that the UAE deal might have started a domino effect. This repre-



Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald Trump and Minister of Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, signing the Abraham Accords at the White House, Sept. 15 2020

sents a monumental shift in mentality on the Arab world's part, one that a few years ago was unthinkable. Their leaders are probably realizing that, after 72 years, hating Israel simply for existing does not have many advantages, especially since the chances of the Palestinians accepting a peace offer, no matter how generous, are next to void.

In reality, were Israel to sign a new peace treaty with an Arab country, the Sunni UAE was sure to be the next one. Their interests are aligned thanks to a common threat, radical Shi'ite Iran. In fact, for over twenty years, Israel had already been cooperating with many Gulf States, including the UAE, sharing intelligence and private diplomatic efforts to counter Iran's influence in the region. Not only that, but the potential of normalized relations between the two countries is limitless: both are regional economic powerhouses, and will benefit from even closer trade, diplomatic, military and intelligence cooperation.

In the wake of the UAE deal, some observers are joking that Chabad is already planning on opening Dubai locations. Aside from this entirely

One can only hope that in its drive to establish normal relations and peace with many more countries, Israel's leaders will not accept deals that could ultimately restrain its political independence. Such a situation would make isolation in freedom seem preferable to building friendships in chains.

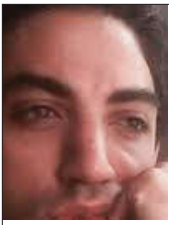
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possible development, what else might the UAE deal mean for Israel? This, and future deals, may lead to Israel completely abandoning any plan of integrating established settlements into the country. It may be that Israel's leaders will value emerging from their relative diplomatic isolation more than their ability to independently unify the country territorially. As with Israel's peace deal with Egypt, it is worth noting that this peace agreement has granted Israel recognition and peace – no small things – but on the basis of Israel yet again being the only side making concessions (whether giving up the Sinai, or halting projects to extend sovereignty on settlements).

Israel's claim to the areas it was planning on integrating before this deal, in Judea and Samaria, is fully legitimate, historically and politically, according to international law, as well as demographically, given the large Jewish populations currently living there. While

it remains to be seen if Israel will go through and apply sovereignty over this land in a year or two, one can assume it is off the table for the foreseeable future. Is this worth the normalization of relations with the UAE? Both sides of the argument are legitimate.

That said, the State of Israel was re-created as a country for Jews. No matter how much Israel wants to make peace and trade with Arab countries, it must not forget its historical purpose and claims, and that it has won wars, prospered and flourished while being much more isolated than it currently is. One can only hope that in its drive to establish normal relations and peace with many more countries, Israel's leaders will not accept deals that could ultimately restrain its political independence. Such a situation would make isolation in freedom seem preferable to building friendships in chains.



L'IDÉE D'UNE CONFÉDÉRATION ISRAËLO-PALESTINIENNE EST-ELLE RÉALISTE ?

BERNARD BOHBOT

Israël connaît en ce moment une période de prospérité et de puissance inégalée dans son histoire. Quant à sa situation diplomatique, elle n'a jamais été aussi bonne, comme en témoigne l'Accord de paix avec les Émirats arabes unis et le Bahreïn soutenu par la plupart des pays de la région.¹

Cela-dit, cette force s'accompagne paradoxalement d'une impasse politique dont on ne peut négliger l'importance. En effet, aucune solution au conflit opposant l'État hébreu aux Palestiniens ne semble réaliste. La gauche israélienne a longtemps défendu l'idée de diviser la terre

¹ <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-beinart-doesn-t-realize-that-the-israeli-palestinian-divide-is-too-wide-to-bridge-1.9016379>



Photo: Foreignpolicy.com

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d'Israël en deux États, l'un juif et l'autre arabe palestinien, dans ce qui ressemblerait plus ou moins aux frontières de 1967. Or, les Palestiniens ont rejeté trois plans de paix qui prévoyaient justement l'idée de deux États pour deux peuples sur la base des frontières de 1967 (en 2001, 2008 et 2014).

La droite israélienne a longtemps défendu l'idée du Grand Israël, soit un seul État juif sur l'ensemble de ce que fut la « Palestine mandataire » sous administration britannique. Mais cette idée aussi n'est plus inscrite au programme du Likud (le grand parti de la droite nationaliste), depuis les années 90, car les Juifs ne sont plus majoritaires entre la Méditerranée et le Jourdain.

Il existe certes, une solution mitoyenne, qui consiste à envisager la création d'un État palestinien sur une partie seulement de la Judée-Samarie/Cisjordanie, comme le prévoit le plan de paix du Président Trump, qui propose la création d'un État palestinien sur 70% de ce territoire. Or, il n'a aucune chance d'aboutir, car les Palestiniens s'y opposent avec l'appui de la communauté internationale.

Devant cette impasse, des personnalités politiques israéliennes, autant de gauche comme de droite, ont tenté d'envisager des solutions plus créatives, comme celle d'une confédération (deux États associés).

C'est notamment le cas du Président israélien Reuven Rivlin, issu du Likud, qui préconise cette idée depuis 2014 déjà. À gauche, l'ancien ministre israélien de la justice et négociateur des accords d'Oslo Yossi Beilin, préconise lui aussi cette solution.^{2 3}

On pourrait ajouter à cela une série d'ONG qui préconisent eux aussi cette idée. La plus en vue s'appelle « A Land of All » (une terre pour tous), fondée par le journaliste israélien Meron Rapoport et l'ancien activiste palestinien Awni Al-Mashni.⁴ Leur projet de confédération ressemble énormément au modèle de l'Union européenne (qui n'est pas officiellement une confédération qui en a tous les attributs). Ainsi, dans une telle configuration politique, les Palestiniens auraient leur propre État dans des frontières qui ressem-

L'idée est donc de séparer l'État de la patrie, afin de permettre aux Juifs et aux Palestiniens de conserver le lien qui les unit à leur patrie historique, même si certaines parties se retrouvent à l'extérieur des frontières de leur État.

bleraient plus ou moins à celles de 1967. Or, les frontières entre cet État et Israël, resteraient ouvertes, permettant aux Israéliens comme aux Palestiniens de circuler librement entre les deux États (à l'image de l'espace Schengen au sein de l'Union européenne, qui fait disparaître les points de contrôle aux frontières entre les États membres). Un nombre important mais limité (devant être négocié par les deux États), d'Israéliens et de Palestiniens seront autorisés à vivre de l'autre côté de la frontière. Ce chiffre serait à revoir régulièrement. Cela permettrait, aux colons israéliens vivant en Judée-Samarie/Cisjordanie, de demeurer chez eux.

D'autres institutions similaires à celles de l'Union européenne telles qu'un Parlement commun, une Cour des droits de l'homme commune et même une police des frontières communes (qui n'existe pas encore en Europe mais qui, dans un tel scénario, serait indispensable à la sécurité d'Israël afin d'empêcher la militarisation du futur État palestinien) doivent être envisagées.

Il y a toutefois une différence de taille entre l'Union européenne et l'éventuelle confédération israélo-palestinienne qui doit être soulignée : l'Union européenne se conçoit comme une association d'États et non comme une patrie commune. Or, les concepteurs du projet de confédération israélo-palestinienne insistent tous pour que l'ensemble du territoire faisant partie de cette union soit considérée comme une patrie commune.

Ainsi, les liens entre le peuple juif et la Judée-Samarie/Cisjordanie de même que les liens entre les Palestiniens et l'État d'Israël (que les Palestiniens perçoivent comme faisant partie de la « Palestine historique ») seront reconnus noir sur blanc. L'idée est donc de **séparer l'État de la patrie**, afin de permettre aux Juifs et aux Palestiniens de conserver le lien qui les unit à leur patrie historique, même si certaines parties se

² <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/rivlin-confederation-of-two-states-the-only-solution-1.5430404>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/opinion/yossi-beilin-a-confederation-for-peace.html>

⁴ <https://www.alandforall.org/english/?d=itr>

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retrouvent à l'extérieur des frontières de leur État.

Sur le papier, cette solution semble prometteuse, mais elle n'est pas sans risque. Premièrement, advenant la création d'une confédération israélo-palestinienne, comment l'État d'Israël pourrait-il se protéger du terrorisme, puisque les extrémistes palestiniens pourraient se rendre en toute liberté du côté israélien de la frontière pour y perpétrer des attentats ? Sur les conseils du think tank militaire INSS (Institute for National Security Studies), les concepteurs de l'idée d'une confédération se sont mis d'accord sur l'idée de points de contrôles électroniques, sans douaniers afin de ne pas donner l'impression qu'il existera une frontière entre les deux États.⁵

Or, une confédération donnerait naissance à un nouveau problème : même si un nombre limité de Palestiniens est autorisé à vivre en Israël, si les frontières entre les deux États sont ouvertes, qu'est-ce qui empêcherait un nombre illimité de Palestiniens de s'installer et de travailler illégalement en Israël, ne serait-ce qu'en raison du fait que les salaires y sont beaucoup plus élevés que dans les régions sous contrôle palestinien (le PIB par habitant en Israël est de 40 000 \$, soit dix fois plus que dans les territoires palestiniens) ? N'y a-t-il pas un risque qu'Israël devienne comme les pays du Golfe où la majorité de la population est constituée de travailleurs étrangers et non de citoyens ? Cela créerait inévitablement un déficit démographique.

Enfin, il n'y a aucune garantie que les Palestiniens acceptent un accord qui n'offre pas de droit au retour en Israël pour **tous** les réfugiés. N'oublions pas que cette revendication constitue la pierre angulaire de leur identité nationale. Une solution confédérale ne leur offre que le droit de visiter librement Israël sans y élire domicile.

En clair, une confédération israélo-palestinienne apparaît idéale sur le papier, mais les obstacles qui risquent de rendre ce projet nul et non-avenu ne doivent pas être négligés.

Cela dit, cette solution (aucune autre d'ailleurs) ne semble pas être d'actualité à court ou moyen terme. Les Palestiniens ne semblent pas se précipiter pour mettre fin à l'impasse actuelle, tandis qu'Israël adhère au plan Trump et n'entend plus revenir aux paramètres Clinton auxquels les Palestiniens n'ont jamais adhéré. Chacun pense que le temps joue en sa faveur. Les Palestiniens sont de plus en plus nombreux à réclamer que le combat pour l'indépendance nationale soit remplacé par une



lutte pour les droits civils. Ils attendent ainsi le moment opportun pour réclamer le droit de vote en Israël, étant persuadés que dans un État commun, les Arabes deviendront à terme plus nombreux que les Juifs. C'est ce qu'ils appellent le « moment sud-africain ».

Or, l'Avantage démographique des Palestiniens n'est plus garanti. Le taux de natalité des Israéliens rattrape progressivement celui des Palestiniens. Ainsi, de plus en plus de membres de la droite israélienne, tels que l'ancien ministre de la défense qui vient de nous quitter, Moshé Arens ou l'actuel ministre de la santé Yuli Edelstein, défendent maintenant l'idée d'une annexion totale de la Cisjordanie/Judée-Samarie avec l'octroi de la citoyenneté israélienne pour les habitants de ce territoire. Ils estiment que si cela devait arriver, les Juifs continueraient à représenter 60 à 66 % (voire plus) de la population de ce Grand Israël (sans Gaza).⁶ Une intégration lente et graduelle de la Cisjordanie/Judée-Samarie (en commençant par la Vallée du Jourdain) constitue peut-être le but inavoué d'Israël, comme le dit Stéphane Amar, auteur d'une enquête portant sur ce thème intitulée *Le grand secret d'Israël : pourquoi il n'y aura pas d'État palestinien*, édition de l'Observatoire, 2018.⁷

Bernard Bohbot est doctorant à l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Son sujet de thèse, Phénoménologie de l'esprit juif en Mai 68, traite de la façon dont les militants radicaux juifs qui ont participé aux émeutes étudiantes de mai 1968 en France ont été influencés par leur propre origine juive, et examine leurs relations tortueuses (et parfois hostiles) avec l'État d'Israël.

⁶ <https://www.israelhayom.com/2020/01/02/in-first-for-israel-jewish-fertility-rate-outstrips-arab-one/>

⁷ <https://www.cjnews.com/en-francais/la-creation-dun-etat-palestinien-une-utopie>

<https://www.isranet.org/cijr/le-grand-secret-disrael-pourquoi-il-ny-aura-pas-detat-palestinien-selon-le-journaliste-stephane-amar/>

⁵ <https://www.alandforall.org/english/?d=ltr>

DATELINE: MIDDLE EAST



FROM FOE TO FRIEND: A Brief Review of India-Israel Relations

ETHAN REUBEN

India is one of Israel's foremost allies worldwide, and several significant collaborations demonstrate this, such as the July announcement of a partnership between Israel's Health and Defence Ministries and India's Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to test new coronavirus diagnostic techniques. Speaking on the joint venture, Israeli foreign minister Gabi Ashkenazi remarked, "I see great importance in cooperating with India to fight against [the virus]."¹

The two countries share a prosperous bilateral relationship: military cooperation, extensive economic ties, academic collaboration, and joint research initiatives. India is Israel's third-largest Asian trade partner and the largest buyer of Israeli armaments and spyware. Israel's exports to India grew by 9% in 2019, with bilateral trade increasing from \$200 million in 1993 to \$5.84 billion in 2018². They also share intelligence on terrorist groups^{5,6}

Opinion polls continually point to India as one of the most pro-Israel countries globally. A notable study found that 58% of Indians expressed sympathy with Israel, surpassing the U.S. at 56%⁷. Historically, India is one of the few places in the world that was a haven for Jews, with virtually no widespread antisemitism or persecution until the modern era.

However, despite strong ties between the two nations today, they share a complicated history. Relations have not always been favorable: India voted against the UN Partition Plan in 1947 and Israel's admission to the UN in 1949. As a newly formed post-colonial state, it saw Israel as a neo-colonial aggressor, given the displacement of local Arab populations and the successive Arab revolts. Additionally, the country's sizeable Muslim population held considerable sway on public opinion and the political climate; their sympathies were with the Palestinian cause, further distancing India from Israeli interests.

Despite recognizing the Jewish need for a homeland, Mahatma Gandhi, whose reputation is marred by racism and antisemitism, notably opposed the creation of Israel. Instead, he espoused sentiments of unity between the Jews and Arabs through his vision of a shared land¹⁰.



Others however approved of Israel's sovereignty and were disappointed that India had not recognized Israel, especially those within the Hindu Nationalist movement and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (the ideological precursor to the modern Bharatiya Janata Party, India's ruling political party). This included RSS leader Madhav Gowalkar and Hindu Mahasabha leader Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, both influential Indian politicians who admired Zionism and supported Israel's existence.

Despite initial hostilities, India officially recognized the State of Israel on September 17 1950, but did not pursue full relations. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, explicitly stated that Israel would have been recognized by India "long ago because Israel is a fact. We refrained because of our desire not to offend the sentiments of our friends in the Arab countries"⁹.

India relying heavily on Arab nations for its oil supply, it risked compromising those networks if it associated with Israel. Therefore, the Nehru administration refrained from establishing full relations with Israel in the 1950s. Instead, India openly supported the Palestinian cause and had strong economic ties with Israel's neighbours.

Domestic concerns were also significant factors: Politicians were afraid of offending the country's sizeable Muslim voter base by treating Israel favorably, and feared for the safety of the large number of Indian nationals working in the Arab Gulf States. Hence, from 1950 to 1991, relations remained

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informal and distant, a far cry from today.

However, the lack of formal relations did not stop the countries from holding meetings and conferences involving influential Israeli leaders such as PM Ben-Gurion and Defence Minister Moshe Dayan¹².

In 1991, following a financial crisis due to poor monetary policies, the Indian government transitioned from a socialist to a mixed market economy¹³. Reforms included expanding foreign relations and trade networks. Subsequently, after 44 years, India finally established full relations with Israel in 1992 as it opened an embassy in Tel Aviv. Since then, relations have steadily improved and flourished, changing India's public perception of Israel.

Despite improved relations, India remained mostly critical of the IDF's actions in the Palestinian territories. It criticized Israel in the UN while maintaining strategic and economic ties, a tactic employed by The United Progressive Alliance, India's coalition of left-leaning parties, to retain the Muslim vote while maintaining favorable relations with Israel. However, following Narendra Modi's rise to power as India's PM in 2014, his re-election in 2019, and the subsequent decline of India's left, India became more supportive of Israel in the UN, even refraining from voting against Israel on several UN resolutions.

Indian support will persist for decades to come, given the extensive ties between both countries and numerous joint developments planned for the foreseeable future.

The ties between Indian and Israel were primarily based on similar geopolitical circumstances and shared foreign interests. However, Modi's 2014 landslide victory as PM has led to a significant expansion of bilateral relations, including a "strategic partnership" based on enhanced developmental and technological cooperation.

In 2017, Modi made history as the first Indian PM to visit Israel, a widely televised event. Netanyahu returned the gesture by visiting India in 2018 to commemorate 25 years of formal relations between the two States. The two PMs share a deep friendship borne out of shared political and ideological values. Their relationship reflects the strong bond shared between their countries.

India's favorable attitude toward Israel is not only strategic, but also ideological: Many Indians are interested in the antiquity of Jewish culture and heritage which, much like Hinduism, pre-

dates Christianity and Islam. The left-leaning National Congress Party mostly ruled India since its independence. Still, with the rise of India's Hindu nationalist right, there has been a surge of Indians' interest in Judaism and Zionism. They now view the once maligned Jewish country positively.

Some maintain that Israel's popularity among Indians is temporary and fleeting; however, this is unlikely considering Israel's favorable and deeply entrenched reputation among most Indians. They, like Americans, do not see Israel as an aggressor, but as a strong country in a challenging situation. Indian support will persist for decades to come, given the extensive ties between both countries and numerous joint developments currently in the works, including a comprehensive free trade agreement.

India's friendship is very promising for the Jewish State's future. Israel continues to build bridges with former enemies like Egypt, Jordan and now the UAE and Bahrain. India and Israel's dynamic relationship is proof of how fluid international relations can be and how a change for the better can issue from seemingly irreconcilable conditions.

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TIME TO TELL A DIFFERENT STORY ABOUT QUEBEC'S HAREDI JEWS

DAVID ANIDJAR

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio were sued for religious discrimination by two Catholic priests and three Orthodox Jews. The claimants allege that the Governor and Mayor used a double standard in imposing restrictions against religious communities and their secular counterparts. While thousands were permitted to assemble in large groups for political protests in recent weeks, authorities rigidly enforced the prohibition on religious gatherings in places of worship.

In Canada, as well, Orthodox communities, especially Haredi Jews, are receiving a disproportionate amount of attention since the start of the corona pandemic. In addition to excessive scrutiny by governments, affected Jewish communities are subject to extensive, unreasonable, and possibly even exploitative, media coverage. There is a distinction between informing the public of relevant facts concerning the pandemic, and publishing content that plays on people's prejudices against a minority group.

These prejudices particularly victimize Montreal's Outremont district's Hasidim. Montreal police raided three synagogues within a week there due to tips that prohibited gatherings were taking place there, all of which turned out to be false alarms. Meanwhile, Hasidic Jewish residents of the borough were told to stick to their "Jewish stores" and denied entry into local shops.



Unfortunately, hostility toward the Hasidim of Outremont is not new, but has a history of conflict spanning decades. More recently, in 2016, in a direct response to the Hasidim's plan to build a synagogue on Bernard Street, the Outremont borough council passed a zoning law that prohibited places of worship there. And in 2018, residents protesting the supposedly intrusive use of Hasidic school buses wore yellow protest badges, reminiscent of the yellow stars worn by Jews under Nazi rule. These are only a sample of how Haredi Jews have been on the receiving end of intolerance.

Meanwhile, the Tosh Hasidic community of suburban Boisbriand recently garnered media attention when public health authorities and

police placed them under a strict lockdown for the coronavirus. While the Tosh community solicited this intervention, they didn't welcome the notoriety issuing from the swarm of reporters and ensuing media coverage: One article described Tosh as seemingly exotic beings relatively isolated from "the outside world," reinforcing a "them" versus "us" gap.

Insensitive portrayals of vulnerable groups can embolden bigots and create more prejudice. In the 2018 *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*, published by B'nai Brith Canada, Quebec reported the highest percentage of antisemitic incidents in the country, at 34.7%, for the first time surpassing Ontario. Within this climate, media depictions

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of visibly Jewish individuals as a nuisance, or strangely exotic, or even as a public health threat, is greatly disconcerting.

Moreover, media portrayals of religious people can aggravate existing tensions in the province. Since the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, Quebec has rejected its Catholic roots in favour of building a more diverse secular society. A study published in the journal *Nations and Nationalism* in 2018 showed that, relative to other Canadians, Quebecers were almost three times more likely to oppose religious accommodations.

This gap suggests that within the Canadian context, Quebecers are particularly susceptible to feelings of religious intolerance. Heated public debates over ethnicity and religion across the past decade have divided the province and created a climate of hostility and mutual mistrust between supporters and critics of new measures favouring secularism.

In one scenario, people fail to distinguish between religion and ethnic or cultural identity: a Jew is only a Jew, not a “Quebecer”—such prejudices, therefore, negatively categorize people as a whole. In a second, more insidious scenario, bigots tolerate those who subscribe to their secular way of life and redirect their hatred toward those who are alien to them. Antisemitic feelings do not disappear altogether, but take a different form.

So, what can be done for Quebecers to better understand their Haredi co-citizens? In an exclusive interview, Outremont Borough Mayor Philippe Tomlinson proposed shared activities to ease tensions between Jewish and non-Jewish residents. The way the mayor sees it, mutual

understanding is achieved by bringing different people together in a positive and educational context. “People should go to a public Sukkah. It’s all happy,” he says.

Another possibility is to inform people through other platforms. A 2019 documentary by creator Eric R. Scott, entitled *Outremont and the Hasidim*, takes a step forward. It chronicles the history of conflict between the

Initiatives such as these give hope that even Jewish groups which might seem to others to be “fringe” elements, can garner understanding and respect, rather than be subjected to harsh and unfair judgment. That said, representatives of the media can ease this uphill battle by resisting the urge to sensationalize.

Hasidim of Outremont and their neighbours, in order to generate dialogue and, as Scott puts it, to “bring about a deeper conversation”.

Pop culture can also have a beneficial influence and change attitudes. Television shows like *Shtisel*, which sympathetically follows a young Hasidic man in Israel’s ultra-Orthodox Mea Shearim neighbourhood, who wants to be an artist, allow viewers to identify with characters based on their shared human experience.

Initiatives such as these give hope that even Jewish groups which might seem to others to be “fringe” elements, can garner understanding and respect, rather than be subjected to harsh and unfair judgment. That said, representatives of the media can ease this uphill battle by resisting the urge to sensationalize, instead giving readers and viewers more objective, and even sympathetic, information.

(David Anidjar, a Canadian Institute for Jewish Research Baruch Cohen Intern, is a graduate student in political science at Concordia University in Montreal).



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FIGHTING ONLINE ANTI-SEMITISM IN CANADA

RAPHAEL UZAN

Hate speech online has been spreading at an alarming rate on social media platforms. In an increasingly digital world, it's time to adapt our policies to meet the challenge.

In April 2020, B'nai Brith Canada published its annual antisemitism audit. From the 2,207 antisemitic incidents reported, more than 1,832 happened online. These incidents violated the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition that includes denying the Holocaust and Jews' right to self-determination.

These alarming figures follow global tendencies. In 2016, a census by the World Jewish Congress recorded a staggering 4.2 million antisemitic tweets for that year alone. "Tweets are the fastest growing form of online antisemitism," Ran Ukashi, National Director of B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights tells the *Canadian Institute for Jewish Research (CIJR)*.

Tragically, these online incidents have resulted in egregious offline activities. A heartbreaking example is the 2018 *Tree of Life* synagogue shooting that took place in Pittsburgh. Robert Bowers, the perpetrator of these attacks, had no criminal record. Still, he had been radicalizing on *Gab*, a notorious social media platform known to host hate speech. On his page, Bowers would claim that "Jews are the chil-



dren of Satan."

Recently, conspiracy theories blaming Jews for the coronavirus pandemic have emerged online. About one in five people in England believe that Jews created the virus in order to gain financially, according to a survey by the University of Oxford.

The current system in place to fight these new forms of hate can use an update. In Canada, there are criminal laws that prohibit hate speech online. Such laws are hardly effective. Enforcement officers can remove the content with a warrant, but the procedures are rather lengthy. Hate messages may have already reached a wide audience by then.

Whatever does not fit into the definition of hate-speech recognized by criminal law may be removed by social media platforms such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* at their discretion.

They set "community standards," which are guidelines used to monitor online posts. These "standards" are often ignored. Those fighting to eliminate online hate find this frustrating. "The question we ask [social media providers] is, 'Why not simply enforce your guidelines?'" Mr. Ukashi says.

Moreover, there is no accepted definition of antisemitism to help people discern what posts are not acceptable. Mr. Ukashi is part of an international coalition demanding that *Facebook* adopt the *IHRA* definition of antisemitism, which has already been adopted by 27 governments worldwide, including Canada. The *IHRA* defines antisemitism as "a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or

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their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

When pressed on the issue during an antitrust hearing before the U.S. Congress, Mark Zuckerberg, *Facebook* founder and CEO, reported that 89% of hateful content was removed from his website before users saw it. He pledged to do better in the future. *Facebook* has reportedly hired 30,000 content moderators, who monitor everything from hate to misinformation. However, some companies, especially smaller players, are often reluctant to adopt and enforce clear guidelines, for fear of drawing away users and profits.

“We fight tooth and nail so that everybody who’s making millions should not be making it off our [Jewish people’s] backs and so that they remain good citizens,” Rabbi Abraham Cooper, Associate Dean and Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Global Social Action Agenda, tells *CIJR*.

In Canada, Jewish organizations are tackling the inadequacies of the system politically. In 2018, the *Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA)* started advocating for policy changes. This initiative resulted in a report by the Parliament of Canada’s Justice Committee in June 2019.

The Committee recommended training law enforcement officials about online hate and preventing it through education. It also urged the establishment of platform requirements, which include mechanisms that enable readers to report on what they find, and that that are easily accessible to users, and data-driven reports to evaluate their effectiveness.

According to Richard Marceau, an executive at *CIJA*, much additional progress has been made. He explains that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prioritized this issue and mandated several members of his cabinet to address the matter thoroughly. The Jewish advocacy organization has since noticed an increased awareness amongst elected officials.

“Lorsque nous avons lancé cette campagne il y a trois ans, il n’y avait pas encore de discussion sérieuse sur le sujet. Deux ans après nous sommes à quelques mois d’un politique nationale pour combattre la haine en ligne” [When we launched the campaign, no serious discussion was taking place on the subject. Two years later, we are a few months away from the filing of a national policy to combat online hate], says Mr. Marceau.

What that policy will look like is still unclear. No doubt, raising awareness is of the utmost importance, especially among law enforcement officers, elected officials, and the public-at-large. But beyond that, what can social media platforms and governments realistically do?

Social media companies can start by better clarifying what constitutes antisemitism and set policies accordingly. These standards are especially significant for content moderators and technicians who develop the algorithms that review posts before they reach wider audiences.

No doubt, raising awareness is of the utmost importance, especially among law enforcement officers, elected officials, and the public-at-large. But beyond that, what can social media platforms and governments realistically do?

Once clarified, these policies must be enforced by platforms, governments and the public. Users should not fear reporting and calling out violations. “Try to make a record of it, take a screenshot and make sure you complain about it [to social media platforms and appropriate government agencies.] Encourage others to do so, as well,” Mr. Ukashi suggests.

Other flaws in the current system will be harder to fix. Antisemitic blogs from other countries could still make their way to Canadian teenagers. The “dark web”, a part of the worldwide web only accessible through special software, overflows with bigoted content.

“Should we push extremists off the powerful platforms?” Rabbi Cooper asks. “The answer is an unqualified ‘yes.’ Social media is so powerful; It makes it cool for young people to join in. [...] We followed these hate groups before the internet: We must follow them now online”.

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MONTREAL SHOULD ADOPT IHRA WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTI-SEMITISM

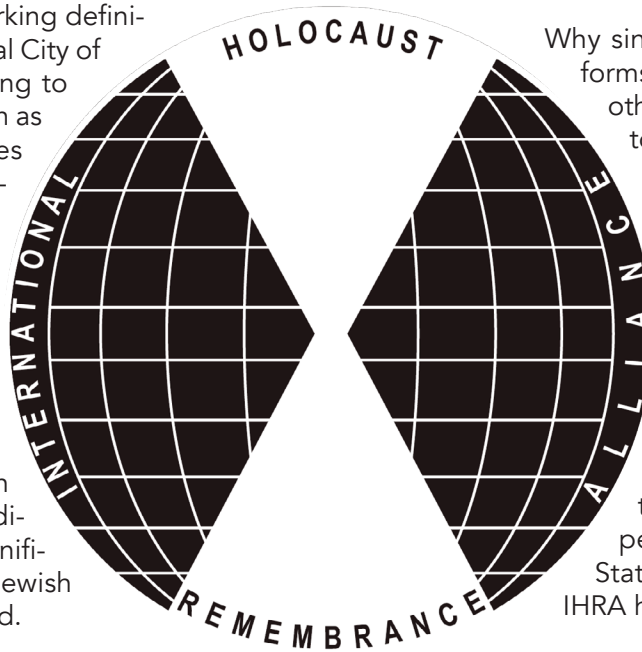
MITCHELL STEIN

In January of 2020, the City of Montreal's opposition party, Ensemble Montreal, filed a motion to adopt the globally-recognized International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism as the official City of Montreal legislation. Succumbing to pressure from fringe groups such as Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) and the Canadian-Palestinian Foundation, Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante and her Projet Montreal party rejected the motion. The city, she said, may create its own definition at some further point. Subsequently, Ms. Plante missed an opportunity to stand up against hate and reach out to Montreal's vibrant and diverse community, dealing a significant blow to Montreal's Jewish community's fight against hatred.

Since the founding of the IHRA in 1998, the organization that today consists of 35 member states, has been committed to combating antisemitism and establishing significant Holocaust education, research, and remembrance. With the escalation of incidents worldwide, the IHRA's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial created a "Working Definition" as a guide for governments and individuals to identify antisemitism in the current era. The IHRA defines antisemitism as *"a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities"*. Accusing Jews of society's problems and blaming Jews as a collective for one individual's actions fall within this definition.

A key element in the IHRA definition concerns the State of Israel: It includes denying Jews the right of self-determination, blaming Jews worldwide for actions taken by the State of Israel, and excessively singling out Israel for

criticism while ignoring other countries' wrongdoings. The IHRA definition does not, however, include legitimate criticism of Israel or its policies.



Why single out antisemitism from other forms of hate? Because it is unlike any other. It assigns unwarranted powers to Jews, who are said to control governments, media, and finances. Unfortunately, Jewish communities are quite familiar with the lethal consequences of rampant antisemitism. Sadly, many people worldwide, including those in positions of power, seem to struggle with its definition. As time went on, it became harder to identify blatant Jew-hatred, especially within the context of the State of Israel - precisely what the IHRA hoped to change.

Today, the definition of antisemitism continues to confuse and deceive. Its "official" definition, arguably, does not encompass antisemitism in all its forms. For example, *Merriam Webster* defines antisemitism as "hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group." This definition is too simplistic; it fails to describe how antisemitism often crosses over into seemingly harmless criticism of Israel, and how anti-Zionism, far more than mere political opinion, seeks to deny Jews their right to self-determination.

As of the article's writing, 27 countries adopted this definition, Serbia being the most recent, with Kosovo, a majority Muslim country, waiting in the wings. On June 25th, 2019, the Government of Canada passed the IHRA definition, a significant achievement in identifying and combating hate. Despite this, the City of Montreal did not follow in the federal government's footsteps. With antisemitism on the rise across board, such a move is counterproductive and denies the issue's importance. Last year saw 2,207 incidents of antisemitism occurring in

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Canada. These incidents marked an eight percent increase since the previous year, according to Bnai Brith Canada's Annual Audit of Anti-semitism.

Had Mayor Plante adopted the IHRA definition, it would have established a blueprint for identifying anti-semitism in the City of Montreal. Instead, its rejection opens her and Projet Montreal up to uncomfortable speculation regarding their underlying motivations. Do they believe that blaming Jews worldwide for controversial Israeli actions is not anti-semitism, or that Jews, apart from all peoples in the world, are not entitled to a national homeland? If so, are the mayor and her party hiding behind the false assertion that the definition stifles Israel criticism while rejecting the IHRA definition out of veiled antisemitism?

Today, the definition of antisemitism continues to confuse and deceive. Its "official" definition [...] is too simplistic; it fails to describe how antisemitism often crosses over into seemingly harmless criticism of Israel, and how anti-Zionism, far more than mere political opinion, seeks to deny Jews their right to self-determination.

Plante's decision is an opportunity missed. Especially today, when anti-semitism is rising at an alarming rate, we need our leaders to show their support for combatting hate in all its forms. Although Valerie Plante may have failed to confirm this commitment earlier this year, there is always time to reverse this decision and ensure that Montreal stands against hate, alongside the many governments and municipalities that have adopted the IHRA definition worldwide. On the other hand, if the Plante government takes no concrete action in this direction, the matter may possibly become an election issue for Jews in the upcoming municipal elections.

Mitchell Stein, a student at Concordia University, is a Baruch Cohen Intern at the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research.



L'infiltration de BDS dans l'intersectionnalité

CAMILLE YAEI G.

La première fois que j'ai été victime d'antisémitisme, j'avais 17 ans. Je suis allée dans un café dans le centre-ville de Montréal en portant fièrement mon étoile de David sur laquelle on peut lire « Zion » écrit en hébreu, et le barista m'a regardé avec un air de dégoût. N'ayant pas fait le lien, j'ai rapidement passé à autre chose jusqu'à ce que je prenne ma commande sur laquelle il avait écrit le mot « juive » à côté duquel il avait dessiné une flamme. J'étais outrée, déconcertée.

C'est à la suite de cet incident que j'ai découvert que je n'étais pas la seule à avoir été confrontée à un antisémitisme flagrant. Une de mes amies s'est faite cracher au visage et la personne commettant cet acte lui a crié « sale juive ». Une autre amie, qui vit en Suisse, s'est faite dire qu'elle est raciste parce qu'elle est sioniste, qu'elle est une tueuse d'enfants et qu'elle a du sang sur les mains. La personne qui lui a crié ces inhumanités s'est approchée



d'elle et a allumé la flamme de son briquet et s'est placée à côté de son oreille pour qu'elle entende le bruit du gaz sortir. Je crois que nous comprenons tous ce qu'il essayait de lui dire.

Mais aujourd'hui, lutter contre l'antisémitisme et les in-

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Plutôt que de s'unir afin de trouver un juste milieu, les médias et le mouvement BDS continuent de nous diviser.

tolérants ne suffit plus, car même des juifs hostiles tiennent des discours à caractères antisémites, d'une part à l'égard d'Israël et d'autre part, contre les sionistes.

Le mouvement BDS est l'une des organisations responsables de cette hausse d'actes antisémites. Ils utilisent la méthode d'intersectionnalité, catégorisée comme constructivisme social, afin de recruter de nouveaux membres. L'intersectionnalité tente d'englober toutes les supposées formes de discrimination, non seulement comme injustices en soi, mais aussi comme si elles étaient toutes liées les unes avec les autres. En effet, ses adeptes instrumentalisent ces discriminations et en les combinant, construisent une échelle de l'oppression, presque comme si la discrimination pouvait être quantifiée. Par exemple, une femme blanche hétéro serait considérée comme opprimée à un certain degré, mais une femme noire, handicapée et lesbienne, X fois plus que cette première. Loin d'aider à avancer vers une société plus harmonieuse, l'intersectionnalité ne fait qu'accentuer les différences de chacun et de créer une espèce de compétition pour la pitié des autres, chacun se voulant plus « opprimé ». Alors qu'ils disent lutter contre l'oppression, leurs discours et la propagation qu'ils font est paradoxale aux valeurs qu'ils prétendent appliquer.

Toutefois, comment se fait-il que des juifs rejoignent le mouvement BDS et s'opposent contre le seul État dans lequel ils ne seraient pas victimes d'antisémitisme? Quels sentiments incitent ces personnes à se désunir contre leur nation et approuver les discours de BDS et d'intersectionnalité? D'abord, d'un point de vue politique ils se catégorisent dans un parti d'extrême gauche et ils considèrent Israël comme le « colonisateur » qui réussit à construire son système politique sur l'oppression des palestiniens. De plus, l'information qu'ils ont au sujet d'Israël est souvent incomplète, voire fausse, car ils sont manipulés par la propagande de BDS et aussi par les médias qui « omettent » de partager certaines informations au sujet du conflit. Par exemple, lorsque l'armée israélienne envoie des missiles sur Gaza, pourquoi ne mentionnent-ils pas que le Hamas avait envoyé des missiles sur les villes d'Israël dans le but de tuer des civils? Pourquoi les médias ne disent-ils

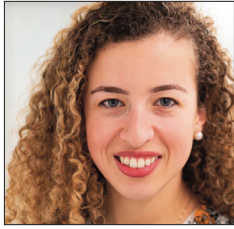
pas qu'avant toute attaque, Israël prévient les civils palestiniens qu'ils visent leur bâtiment et qu'ils doivent évacuer dans les cinq prochaines minutes? À cause de cette propagande, ils sentent qu'ils sont du bon côté de l'histoire, car leurs valeurs « morales » concordent avec la majorité de ces gens et ils ont l'impression qu'ils réparent le monde. Ils ont ce sentiment d'être ce que l'on catégorise de « bon juif » aux yeux des occidentaux qui luttent contre toute forme d'oppression. Ceci met en lumière non seulement leur distanciation de la culture juive, de leur héritage, mais aussi du sionisme puisqu'ils se définissent le « bon juif ».

Pourtant, on peut être sioniste et militer contre l'oppression. L'un n'empêche pas l'autre et c'est ce que les gens devraient savoir. Plutôt que de s'unir afin de trouver un juste milieu, les médias et le mouvement BDS continuent de nous diviser. Si notre opinion au sujet du conflit est divergente de la leur, nous ne serons pas les bienvenus. C'est ironique sachant qu'ils luttent contre l'oppression alors qu'eux-mêmes continuent à faire ce contre quoi ils prétendent se battre. Ils continuent de diaboliser Israël comme si l'État hébreu était l'unique responsable des problèmes palestiniens. Cependant, l'Accord d'Oslo n'a pas été tenu par le gouvernement palestinien et le Hamas. Même après que le traité fut signé en 1993 et finalisé en 1994, cela n'a pas empêché les terroristes du Hamas de commettre des attentats suicides qui visaient des civils dans les villes comme Haïfa, Jérusalem, Tel-Aviv et d'autres encore. Alors, ceux qui crient qu'Israël ne souhaite pas la paix et qu'il tue des civils sont les terroristes palestiniens qui revendiquent ces attaques. Si le gouvernement palestinien souhaitait sincèrement un changement, il aurait, d'une part, empêché le Hamas de commettre ces attaques terroristes et ils essaieraient de trouver une façon pour que les deux partis soient gagnants.

Or, cette manipulation et cette désinformation de la part des médias et de BDS rendent difficile toute tentative de dialogue pacifique ou même de simple explication de notre point de vue. Notre société a rendu ce sujet tabou au point où si nous essayons d'en parler, on nous dévisage et nous traite souvent de racistes, d'opresseurs et autres étiquettes du genre. Pourtant, on ne cherche que la paix, tant chez un côté que chez l'autre. Afin d'obtenir cette paix, il faut être prêt à écouter les opinions diverses et accepter la critique. De notre côté, nous devons engager la conversation et ne pas être effrayé à l'idée de se faire critiquer. C'est en éduquant et en sensibilisant, tant chez la population générale que les activistes de BDS que, petit à petit, ce tabou disparaîtra un jour.

Camille Yael G. fait un double spécialisation en science politique et religion à l'Université Concordia.

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THE STRUGGLE

LIORA CHARTOUNI

The famous King David, the author of the book of *Psalms*, and one of the greatest Kings of Israel lamented: "There is no longer a prophet; there is none among us who knows why" (Psalms: 74:9)

In these times of sorrow, solitude, and disruption of lives, we face an immense struggle against an invisible enemy. COVID-19 turned our lives upside down, and although we may ask many questions as to the WHY of it all, we do not always have the answers, as alluded to in King David's quotation.

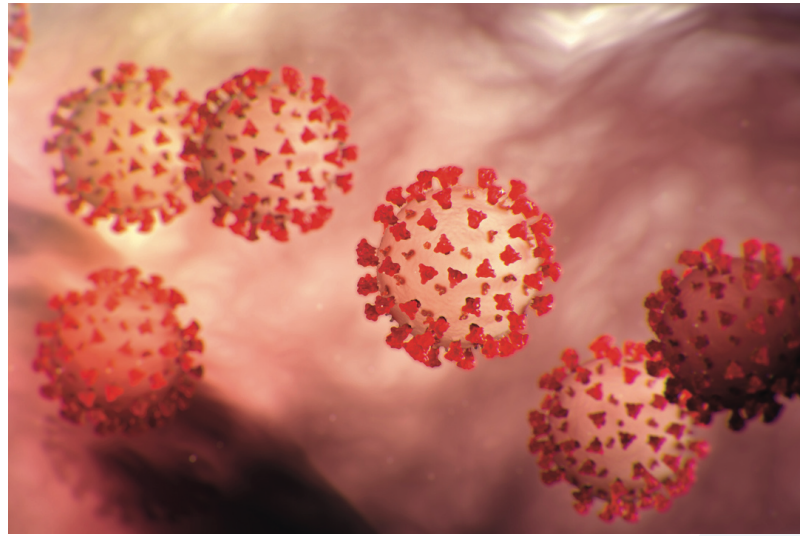
As an observant Jew, I try to make sense of it all and use it as an opportunity for personal growth. Quarantined like many, I feel compelled to ask basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is expected of me? It is my humble attempt to try to make sense of these difficult circumstances and to draw some possible lessons from them, if only for myself.

Back to the Source

Distractions of all kinds appear to characterize our modern world, whether from iPhones, iPads, and all else that occupies what I believe is an inflated sense of self. Many of us—especially us younger people—arrogantly think that we are in control of our lives and that nothing can get in our way. But these times reveal the exact opposite. Our hectic routines were abruptly interrupted from one day to the next. I believe there is a profound message here; that G-d is telling us to come back to Him.

G-d is also forcing us to return to the core of our being by

There is a humorous quotation that reads: "I cleared your schedule. Now talk to Me." Perhaps these disruptive times, as difficult as they are, will ultimately benefit us, as individuals and as communities. Maybe this is a time to talk to the Creator that we have perhaps ignored for so long?



reconnecting with family and our inner selves, as well as by exploiting our potential for greatness by focussing on what is truly important. I believe that He purposely removed all distractions so we can no longer find excuses for escaping (in a broader, more encompassing way) our responsibilities to ourselves and others.

There is a humorous quotation that reads: "I cleared your schedule. Now talk to Me." Perhaps these disruptive times, as difficult as they are, will ultimately benefit us, as individuals and as communities. Maybe this is a time to talk to the Creator that we have perhaps ignored for so long? Getting back to our roots, to our real being, can only benefit us, as many of us have come to realize.

Confronted with the Inner "Self"

Before COVID-19, many of us obsessively focussed on a "Self" enveloped by gadgets we depended on, as well as on our self-absorbed harried lifestyles.

That "Self" has now transformed. The person we genuinely are has slowly emerged through humility, and thoughtful reflection spent contemplating our innermost beings.

This quieter, and in many regards, less stressful life, enables us to reacquire ourselves with our positive qualities, with our flaws, and on perfecting ourselves. When else would we have had the strength or time to ask where we stand in our lives and, more importantly, who we ought to become? The current outbreak offers us a unique opportunity to become better people, and to strive to achieve higher goals – by living in harmony with ourselves, family, friends, and community.

I've watched these kinds of changes taking place in me.

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Born and raised in Montreal, I made *Aliyah* three years ago and reside in Jerusalem. Living there is an incredible experience. Whereas I returned to Canada often to visit family, these visits were far too short. This last visit was different: A holiday that was supposed to last two weeks has now lasted three months!

About to catch the last flight back to Israel, I extended my stay to remain with family during these uncertain times. In this regard, I, too, have come back to what I consider my "source," physically and metaphorically. It's been years since my parents, and I spent so much meaningful time together. As much as I miss Israel and the life I've established there, being close to family now seems far more significant.

If I were to pinpoint the greatest lesson I've gained from this experience, it is greater self-awareness of my strengths, my weaknesses, my desire to utilize both for the greater

good, as well as the depth of my connection to my Creator, my parents, and my environment.

But as we slowly return to our "normal" lives, what will we take back with us from this experience? Will we move forward and forget "higher" resolutions? Will we learn from our past mistakes? Or, returning to our ego-absorbed selves, will we continue to allow the external distractions of every-day life to sabotage our relationships and lead us away from the pursuit of more emotionally and spiritually meaningful pursuits?

It is ultimately up to us to decide.

Liora Chartouni has a BA in Political Science from the University of Montreal and an MA in Human Rights and Transitional Justice from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She works in marketing, translation and content-writing for Torah websites.

BOOK REVIEW

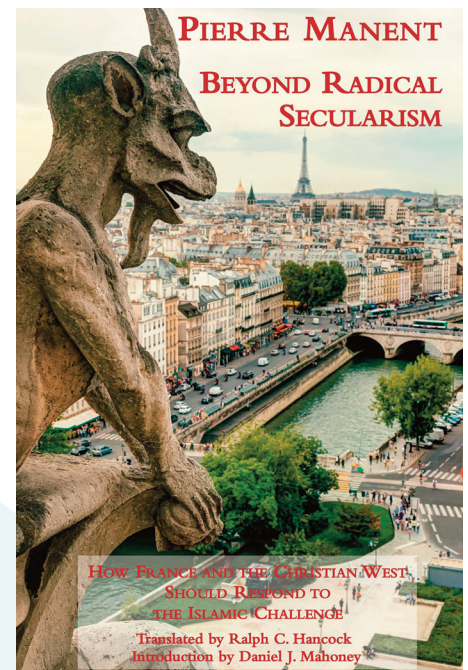
Pierre Manent, *Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge*, translated by Ralph Hancock (USA, St. Augustine's Press, 2016, 124pp.)

JACQUES CHITAYAT

In 2016, Pierre Manent, a renowned French political scientist and philosopher, published a short and intense essay on achieving better coexistence between Muslims and Christians in France. The fact that its publication arrived shortly after the double terrorist attack in France of January 2016 at the headquarters of *Charlie Hebdo* and at a kosher supermarket made it all the more relevant and urgently necessary. Its original title in French was sober, perhaps appropriately so: *Situation de la France*. Thanks to an American publishing house, St. Augustine's Press, Manent's book is now accessible to the anglosphere, and millions more can get a peek at France's relationship with Europe's largest Muslim population.

While the translation is satisfactory, bilingual readers will notice that the style retains sentence structures better attuned to the French. The translator could have taken more liberty in adapting the writing style. That said, the essay remains clear, concise, and easy to grasp. Its twenty short chapters help the reader follow and identify each step of the author's logical sequencing. The book is academic in tone yet does not get lost in excessive political and philosophical jargon.

The greatest strength of Manent's essay resides, first of all, in his deep understanding and knowledge of the fabric of French society. To understand the present, one must know the past: At the start of the essay, he draws a detailed picture of France's



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relationship with religion, going back centuries to extract what has left a mark on today's French society. He describes in great detail the characteristics of France's unique culture of *laïcité*, which translates in this version as "secularity." His explanation of this key component of French society, now converted to English, will enlighten many readers as regards the country's issues. Whereas, the original idea of the secular state was to separate the Church's influence from State affairs; this principle, he argues, was stretched out of proportion so as to eliminate all presence of the Church in French society.

Manent then compares the condition of France's Christian population to its Muslim one, exposing their differences, and explaining what hinders their harmonious coexistence.

For example, he argues that in France, as in the rest of Europe, human rights, individual freedom, and the importance of the individual represent paramount values, while at the same time, religion was practically erased from public life.

On the other hand, in Islamic societies, religious law and God still occupy the highest level of importance, which hinders the influence of the State, especially among Muslims living in the West. He argues that this difference, among other issues, is why Christians and Muslims living in France today cannot live together harmoniously:

"Living with the immanence of their moral practices, they will look at France rather as a foreign body, more or less pleasant, more or less convenient, sometimes inconvenient. [...] If they are to enter into public life as Muslims, they must succeed in the operation that I have tried to describe, by which the group gives itself and receives itself as a whole. For this to succeed, the group must take real political and religious conditions into account [...] It is, therefore, in a country of a Christian mark that French Muslims must find their place."

The author refers to Judaism and the Jewish people in many instances. He explains Judaism's influence on Western society, and how they progressively integrated into French society is presented as a model of assimilation. He also addresses the antisemitism they have faced, both in the past and today, whether coming from the 19th-century French aristocracy or France's new Muslim population, as examples. Interestingly, while Orthodox Jews live according to religious law just as do observant Muslims, they accept State secularism; according to Jewish law, one must follow Jewish law, as well as the law of the State

where one resides. Manent fully acknowledges the mark Jews have left on French society, religiously, culturally, and socially.

Most importantly, Manent argues, for Europeans to reconnect with their civilization's roots, they must take into account the Jewish principle of the Covenant, which he describes as "a certain way of understanding human action in the world and the Whole, of understanding at once its greatness and its precariousness. [...] [It] opens up a history of freedom, it authorizes and so to speak motivates the greatest human enterprises, while inscribing these deeds in a relation in which humanity gathers itself to be tried, to know itself and to submit itself to judgment". As noted in the book's foreword, this principle provides a powerful reminder of the ultimate ground of democratic self-governance and of deliberation and action that respect limits while acknowledging the full range of human possibilities.

As the title indicates, this essay argues that France must look beyond the idea of trying to secularize France's Muslim population, which the author considers neither possible nor the right way to address the problem. In response, he suggests different and original ways of better integrating Muslims into the French nation. Manent focuses not only on what the French State has the power to do and how it should change its integration methods but also how France's Muslims must change their mentality to find their place in France better. For example, to properly face the Islamic challenge, France should reaffirm its faith in its Judeo-Christian heritage, rather than in secularizing French society. In better acknowledging its heritage and reaffirming its principles, France would gain a stronger backbone it requires to face this challenge and regain a certain moral compass that Manent says the country needs. This new approach, he argues, must replace the project of secularizing the Muslims. He argues that Muslim citizens, in turn, must accept that they live in a Christian nation, accept the French tradition of freedom to criticize, forgo funding from the Arab States and extremist movements, and make an effort to integrate fully as new citizens.

Pierre Manent displays an impressive knowledge of the history and culture of Christian France, Islamic societies, and Judaism and a solid grasp of political philosophy. In this short and well-paced essay, Manent explains what hinders peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in France, and identifies Europe's ideological flaws, and new ways to work at building a more harmonious future.