ANNUAL ASSESSMENT
The Situation and Dynamics of the Jewish People

2017

The Rise of Nationalism vs. Globalization

Shifting Trends in the West
The U.S. Election and Inner Polarization
The Western Wall Controversy
The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) is an independent professional policy planning think tank incorporated as a private non-profit company in Israel. The mission of the Institute is to ensure the thriving of the Jewish people and the Jewish civilization by engaging in professional strategic thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry. Located in Jerusalem, the concept of JPPI regarding the Jewish people is global, and includes aspects of major Jewish communities with Israel as one of them, at the core.

JPPI's activities are action-oriented, placing special emphasis on identifying critical options and analyzing their potential impact on the future. To this end, the Institute works toward developing professional strategic and long-term policy perspectives exploring key factors that may endanger or enhance the future of the Jewish People. JPPI provides professionals, decision-makers, and global leaders with:

- Surveys and analyses of key situations and dynamics
- “Alerts” to emerging opportunities and threats
- Assessment of important current events and anticipated developments
- Strategic action options and innovative alternatives
- Policy option analysis
- Agenda setting, policy recommendations, and work plan design

JPPI's publications address six main areas of Jewish People challenges and well-being: Geopolitics Impacting World Jewry; Community Bonds; Identity and Identification; Demography; Material Resources; and, Intellectual and Cultural Achievement. A full set of major publications can be found on our website: www.JPPI.org.il.

JPPI is unique in dealing with the future of the Jewish people as a whole within a methodological framework of study and policy development. Its independence is assured by its company articles, with a board of directors co-chaired by Ambassadors Stuart Eizenstat and Dennis Ross — both have served in the highest echelons of the U.S. government, and Leonid Nevzlin in Israel — and composed of individuals with significant policy experience. The board of directors also serves as the Institute's Professional Guiding Council.
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The idea of doing an Annual Assessment of the state of the Jewish people was novel when JPPI first decided to produce it 14 years ago. While the scope of each year’s report has changed and the measures used to evaluate basic trends have been developed, the annual assessment has provided a good yardstick to judge how Israel and the Diaspora fared in the preceding year. Initially, at least, there was not an expectation that there would necessarily be dramatic changes from year to year – even though the metrics used to make judgments (geopolitical realities, demographics, identity and identification, inter-communal bonds, and resources) offered the possibility of identifying such changes or developments if they had taken place.

That said, 2016-2017 certainly stands out as a year of surprising developments. The backlash against globalization figured prominently in the Brexit and Trump votes. The reality of globalization – driven by technologies that continue to accelerate the pace of change, generate and exploit big data, create new supply chains, and shrink the planet – cannot be denied or wished away. But the social and economic dislocations created by globalization have not been sufficiently taken into account, particularly in the Western democracies. Not surprisingly, distrust of elites and populist, nationalist appeals to those most negatively affected by the impact of globalization have been the result.

Traditionally, the emergence of populism and its xenophobic companion have been accompanied by a growth in anti-Semitism. JPPI held a brainstorming conference to discuss the current international setting, the social, economic, political, and ideological shifts in the West, indicators of increased anti-Semitism, and how
Israel and the Diaspora could deal with potential new dangers and leverage possible opportunities. Six main areas posing policy dilemmas and challenges to decision-makers in Israel and the Diaspora communities were identified in the conference discussions and are included in this year’s assessment. One key factor that stands out is that the liberal international order is under threat, raising questions about whether the United States will continue to play the role it has in preserving that order, the need to take account of the rise of non-Western powers, the importance of formulating a policy toward the rise of far-right parties in Europe, and positioning Israel and Diaspora communities in light of increasing polarization in Western societies.

The recommendations in this year’s assessment reflect these considerations. For example, in the Trump administration one sees proponents of the U.S. continuing to fulfill its responsibilities internationally and those more prone to favor U.S. withdrawal from commitments – with Israel’s deterrence far stronger in a world where America remains powerful and willing to stand against aggression. Hence, one recommendation in the Assessment suggests that Israel encourage those voices in the administration “calling for the United States to reassert itself as the leader of the free world.” Similarly, given the intense political polarization in the U.S. today, another recommendation calls for preserving Israel’s strict bipartisan approach, ensuring that Israel does not become either a Republican or Democratic cause but remains an American interest. To that end, the Assessment suggests that Israel should “differentiate between developing a good working relationship with the Trump administration and projecting an ideological affinity to it.”

Other recommendations relate to particular developments in Israel and the United States. Given the pace of scientific change in today’s world – and the hard and soft power that accrues to Israel because it is seen as the “start-up nation” – it is essential that Israel continue to develop the human resources that keeps it developing cutting-edge technologies. To that end, it is essential that the State of Israel “fulfill governmental resolutions mandating all schools” include “a high level of core curriculum instruction.”

As for the United States, the Assessment points out that the demographic profile of the Jewish community is shifting in light of the “growing weight of the Haredi community.” Given that, the Assessment recommends that the Israeli government “encourage the leadership of this community to engage” far more with the mainstream Jewish organizations, and that those organizations seek to increase the involvement of the Ultra-Orthodox in communal life and leadership.

In this connection, increasing the involvement of the Haredi community in broader Jewish communal life could affect one of the key measures we use in the Annual Assessment. For example, the state of intercommunal relations is one of the barometers we use in evaluating how the Jewish people are doing – and in this year’s Assessment we have not changed our evaluation of it. However, the shifting demographic weight
of the Ultra-Orthodox has potentially major implications for the cohesion of the Jewish community in the United States, the relationship of major Jewish organizations and the broader Jewish community, and the relationship between the world’s largest Diaspora community and the State of Israel: the growing influence of the Orthodox communities in the U.S. and Israel, combined with the nationalist movement in Israel.

Although the 2013 Pew Research Center study of American Jews indicates that only about 10 percent of American Jews identify as Orthodox, that number is growing. The Orthodox community in the United States is becoming more numerous, due to higher birthrates and the attractiveness, in a troubled world, of an emphasis on tradition, and more influential, with growing prominence in the business, legal and political communities, especially in the greater New York area. They proudly emphasize their Orthodox way of life, its values and traditions. They are increasingly forming their own policy research institutions and consulting firms.

As the Annual Assessment notes, this is a sea change from the implicit liberal Jewish model that has guided much of the Jewish community, in which Jews were increasingly integrated into American society, but kept their Jewish identity more private.

The Orthodox community is generally more politically, culturally, and socially conservative than the majority of less traditional American Jews. This has encouraged a political and cultural identification and collaboration with Evangelical Christians and some Catholics on both controversial domestic issues, like abortion, same sex marriage and gay rights, and on foreign policy issues from the threat of Iran to support for Israel, including its settlement policy.

At a communal level, this has many advantages, and if they wished, the Orthodox community could help lead the broader Jewish community into a greater engagement with the Jewish religion and tradition, and with the State of Israel. But their greater numbers and influence also present Jewish Federations and other institutions with a challenge, because most Orthodox Jews stay within their own communities and institutions, and often do not become leaders and financial supporters of broader Jewish organizations. These institutions are already buffeted by more secular Jews, particularly younger Jews, who do not identify with Jewish organizations.

The dilemmas are most evident at the political level, with implications for the unity of the American Jewish community, and for Israel. In the last four presidential elections, Orthodox voters preferred Republican candidates, in contrast with non-Orthodox Jews who generally supported Democratic, more liberal candidates. This came into stark relief in the 2016 presidential campaign, when non-Orthodox Jews voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton, by over 70 percent, while almost 40 percent of Orthodox Jews supported Donald Trump. But in some Orthodox neighborhoods, he received over 50 percent support, and over 90 percent in some Haredi neighborhoods.
In the Trump administration, the Orthodox community is represented in his own son-in-law and senior adviser; his special representative for international negotiations, including the Middle East peace process; and the U.S. ambassador to Israel. As more appointments are made in departments and agencies, we can anticipate that of the Jewish appointees, there will likely be a disproportionate percentage of Orthodox Jews.

The Orthodox community is not only making common cause with socially and politically conservative Evangelicals and Catholics, but with the conservative coalition government in Israel, which combines Orthodox and nationalist parties, who support a one-state solution, and have less concern for minority rights in Israel and the Palestinians in the territories. The rise of the Orthodox segment of American Jewish society, is mirrored by a similar phenomenon in Israel, with the rise of the religious nationalist right. In 1990, the population share of Haredim in Israeli was a mere 3 percent; today it is 10 percent and rising.

This creates a challenge to the triangular relationship between Washington, Jerusalem, and the American Jewish community. Trump’s triumph and his support in Israel, and many of the actions by the Israeli government, are at odds with the views of the majority of American Jews. The problem is that the overwhelming percentage of American Jews are non-Orthodox and many do not share the same worldview as the Orthodox community in the U.S. or in Israel.

Among many, President Trump is highly unpopular, rightly or wrongly; there is a greater concern for minority rights, and for the two-state solution. These views are especially held by young Millennials. They must not be made to feel they have to choose between their own liberal, democratic principles and Israel. Likewise, they do not hold the views of the dominant parties in the Israeli coalition government.

This creates a dilemma for many major Jewish organizations. They should, and must, maintain positive relationships with the Trump administration, although many of their members may have other thoughts.

Likewise, the more the Israeli government is seen as implementing conservative policies and as being unwilling to implement the compromise Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky negotiated to open a third, egalitarian, section at the Western Wall (Kotel), or acting contrary to what many perceive to be liberal norms, the more it may alienate a significant segment of American Jewry.

Already for the more general American public, Israel for the first time in its history may become a partisan issue. Among the grassroots, the decline in support for Israel is troubling. As the JPPI Annual Assessment notes, the deepening divide between parts of the liberal Jewish community and a conservative Israeli government requires sophisticated responses.

There is no question that, in its early months, the Trump administration has been friendlier to Israel than the Obama administration had been perceived to be by many Israelis. That perception has permitted the administration to take steps
that have not drawn criticism from Israelis even though they reflect a continuation of Obama administration policies: the Trump administration recently signed a certification that Iran was complying with its nuclear obligations under the JCPOA; the president signed the necessary waiver to prevent the U.S. Embassy from moving to Jerusalem; and President Trump has not given Israel an open door to unlimited settlement expansion, though many within the Israeli government had expected him to do so.

One of JPPI’s broad objectives has been to promote policies that enhance acceptance of pluralism in Jewish life, and, in particular, to identify better ways of fostering tolerance and accommodation of all the different streams of observance. Readers of this year’s Assessment will see that theme figures prominently once again, especially as it relates to its emphasis on Jewish values.

Every annual assessment has offered insight into the direction of Israel and the Jewish world, and important recommendations to ensure that world Jewry thrives. In our view, this year’s Assessment may be one of the most important JPPI has produced. In a world where the basic rules of the game are now being questioned, in which the post-World War II institutions and global order are under siege, and the threat of boycotts hang over Israel, it is important that the Israeli government and American Jewish leaders act with sophistication to build bridges of cooperation between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities within the U.S., and between the American Jewish community, the U.S. government, and the Israeli government.

We believe that JPPI has the capability to help the Diaspora communities and the Government of Israel constructively consider these challenges and formulate action oriented policies to overcome them successfully.

Dennis Ross and Stuart Eizenstat
PART 1

Suggested Policy Directions
Integrated ‘Net’ Assessment
1. JPPI recommends Israel be committed to strictly maintaining bi-partisan support in North America. Considering the polarization trend in the United States, Israel is advised to differentiate between developing a good working relationship with the Trump administration and projecting an ideological affinity to it. It is highly recommended that Israel maintain close relations with both major political parties, and make a parallel effort to cultivate ties with liberal elements (minorities, millennials), in the general society and the Jewish community even if they have a critical view of its policies.

2. The Government of Israel is advised to weigh the implications of its decisions for Jews in the Diaspora and consider their concerns even when it seeks to advance its purely strategic and political interests. This recommendation also relates to advancing ties with foreign right-wing governments who tolerate anti-Semitic elements and even encourage such elements, as they make a distinction between Israel and the Jewish People in the Diaspora.

3. The beginning of President Trump’s presidency has evinced contradictory evidence concerning his determination to serve as the principal leader in the international arena. It is to Israel’s advantage to encourage those voices within the administration calling for the United States to reassert itself as leader of the free world (with a special emphasis on Iran, Syria and the Israel-Palestinian negotiations.). If America focuses on domestic affairs while neglecting its global leadership role, it could harm Israel, encouraging other international actors to replace the U.S. in leading the peace process and erode the Israel’s deterrent power.
4. Israel’s movement toward more market-oriented policies while also retaining several aspects of the prior centralized decision-making structure may uniquely position it as an exemplar of how it may be possible to shepherd modernizing change while maintaining social stability. The apparent discontinuity between systems may be converted into a strength. The government is advised to focus on human capital building as its main vehicle for fully effecting transition, especially in all levels of formal education.

5. Jerusalem constitutes the central bond between the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Israel should find a way to engage Diaspora Jews – including those who fear that Jerusalem is developing in “the wrong direction” – in shaping the future of the city so this powerful bond can be maintained.

6. Conservative and Reform Jewish groups worldwide should increase their investment in Israel with the aim of increasing the Reform and Conservative presence. The expanded funds should be invested in outreach and infrastructure, including expanding synagogues and community centers, high quality schools, kindergartens, and summer camps.

7. In recent years, the demographic profile of the Jewish community of North America is shifting in the light of the growing weight of the Orthodox and Haredi communities. The President of Israel, the Prime Minister and the Knesset should extend their best efforts to encourage the leadership of these groups to engage with the activities of the general organized Jewish community, and at the same time to encourage the major North American Jewish organizations to increase the involvement of the Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox in general communal life and leadership.

8. Concerns in the U.S. about Israel’s living up to liberal values (rule of law, liberty, justice, democracy, religious pluralism, human rights, and minority rights), should draw the attention of decision makers as these values are an important component of Israel’s special relationship with the United States.
A series of developments over the past year, chief among them the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States, join long-term trends currently underway that, to a certain extent, have improved Israel’s geopolitical position. However, this could change as a result of a possible problematic settlement in Syria, the uncertainty surrounding the Palestinian issue, regional instability, and the still unclear direction the emerging world order will take. In addition, President Trump’s contradictory actions and rhetoric and lack of a coherent foreign policy doctrine, have potentially negative implications for Israel’s interests.

The United States – Trump’s rise to power brings with it an American administration friendlier to Israel than its predecessor and enables “turning a new page” in relations with Israel’s most significant ally. After the strained relations of the Obama administration, Trump’s visit to Israel four months into his presidency and the warmth and friendship he expressed signaled a positive turning point. Despite the visit’s harmonious atmosphere, central
issues at the heart of Israel’s strategic interests – the settlement that is crystallizing in Syria, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran’s continual regional aggression and possible noncompliance with the nuclear agreement – could lead to frictions between Jerusalem and Washington down the road, and should not be ignored. Moreover, Israel faces other dilemmas, such as the degree to which it should publically embrace the new president and the sentiments and ethos that helped get him elected. The fact that most American Jews do not support this president only sharpens this dilemma. Given the polarization inside the United States, Israel’s problem of maintaining bi-partisan support grows, as does the need to guard the Jerusalem – Washington – American Jewry triangular relationship.

World Order – Ahead of the start of Trump’s tenure, there were growing suspicions that the United States, guided by a narrow definition of its interests, would further isolate itself internationally and limit its focus primarily to domestic matters. Some observers predicted that America would further relinquish the mantle of global leadership. The dozens of cruise missiles fired at a Syrian military base in response to the use of chemical weapons by Assad’s military forces in Idlib (April 2017), on the contrary, seemed to signal the new president’s determination to reestablish the American deterrence that had deteriorated during the previous administration, and to act as a leading power in the international arena. Yet, his announcement that the U.S. would pull out of the Paris Climate Accord (June 2017) only exacerbated uncertainty about Trump’s commitment to world leadership.

The United States faces many challenges across the globe, from the escalating nuclear threat posed by North Korea to Putin’s aggressions and subversions as he attempts to rebuild Moscow’s international standing. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, to this end, called for a “post-West world order” (February 2017). At this time, the relationship between Washington and Moscow, although increasingly strained, has yet to take a clear shape. Nonetheless, the U.S. – Russia relationship is an essential shaping factor of the to the emerging 21st century world order. So, too, is America’s relationship with China, which continues to assert itself internationally (One Belt, One Road initiative, South China Sea, etc.).

It is difficult to predict whether President Trump will continuously consider a priority in keeping the United States at the top of the international order. American isolationism would be harmful to Israel, possibly eroding its ability to project strength and deterrence. Europe’s internal cohesion crisis, aggravated by waves of migrants and deadly ISIS terror attacks, further fogs the future direction of the new order. Although ISIS is in decline, and has lost important territorial holds, it maintains its capacity to unleash terror attacks (in fact, it becomes more reliant on international terrorism to bolster its image as it suffers losses in Syria and Iraq).

The Peace Process – President Trump continues to express his aspiration for the “ultimate deal” that would settle the Israeli – Palestinian conflict and bring peace between Israel and the broader Arab world. Implementation of Trump’s promise to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was delayed so as not to hobble the chances
of advancing peace negotiations. Continued American leadership of the peace process creates an opportunity for Israel to advance an agreement with a more sympathetic interlocutor. But it could also pressure Israel into painful concessions that would result in friction with the Trump administration, supportive as it may be.

The Palestinians are split both geographically and organizationally, and a durable, genuine reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is not expected anytime soon. The governing systems in both Ramallah and Gaza dysfunctional (especially in Gaza). In the event that Abu Mazen (who is 82) resigns his presidency, a power struggle for succession would likely erupt, possibly imperiling security cooperation with Israel. Recent changes in the Hamas leadership and the revision of their charter do not yet signal a substantive change. The combination of these factors taken together with the chasm between Israeli and Palestinian positions, testify to the scope of the “ultimate deal” challenge President Trump has taken on himself.

Threats and Opportunities – At a time when the Middle East is wracked by turbulent violence, Israel is not, as in the past, facing conventional military threats from a neighboring Arab state’s regular army or a regional Arab coalition. However, this encouraging situation could change if Iran succeeds in establishing a military presence in the Syrian Golan and succeeds in its ambition to create a strategic corridor between Teheran and the Mediterranean. Such a corridor would constitute a space for direct Iranian influence and also enhance Hezbollah’s power as a military surrogate of Iran. Israel’s security relationships with Egypt, Jordan, and the moderate Sunni states are expanding. Israel is even seen as a partner and asset in the struggle against key threats: Iran’s regional subversion, and radical Islamic terror. Iran’s path to a nuclear arsenal has been put on hold, even pushed back, but the threat has not been totally eradicated. The nuclear agreement relieved some of the pressure on Iran and allowed it to deepen the reach of its regional activities and influence, and it has scored gains in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. Whereas Obama was willing to allow Iran a hand in shaping the new regional order, and questioned Saudi Arabia’s value as an asset, President Trump has demonstrably stood with the Sunni state against Iran.

The situation in Syria continues to present Israel with considerable challenges, especially because Iran has established itself as a key actor there – in such close proximity to Israel. With the help of Russia and Iran, Assad is expanding the territory under his control. This reality could bring Hezbollah and Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps very close to Israel’s Golan Heights border.

Israel will need to continue rebuffing these developments, including through enlisting the help of the United States and continued coordination with Moscow. Until now, Israel has managed to build an effective working relationship with Russia that allows it to protect its interests. Positioning the S-300 and S-400 air defense systems in Syria highlights the caution Israel must exercise as it continues to intercept arms shipments to
Hezbollah without coming into conflict with Moscow. Although Hezbollah, Israel’s most significant military threat, is mired in Syria, and Hamas is isolated and weakened, it is still possible that a round of conflict could break out with either of them. Moreover, the “Lone Wolf” Intifada has yet to fully subside and could take a new, more deadly turn especially as it has assumed a religious character (as seen on the Temple Mount in July 2017).

Israel’s relations with Turkey illustrate how volatile the Middle East is; it is imperative that Israel handles itself cautiously and with strategic acumen. The reconciliation agreement with Ankara (June 2016) and the possibility of deepening the relationship (including gas exports) did not prevent President Erdogan from verbally berating Israel, blaming it for the “Judaification” of Jerusalem and accusing it of apartheid policies (May 2017). Despite the possibility that regional actors will soften their approach to Israel, Jerusalem found the massive $110 billion U.S. arms sale to Saudi Arabia (May 2017) disconcerting. Israel express it concern that the deal could erode Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge. Indeed, the improvement of America’s relations with its traditional Arab allies in the region – a positive development from Israel’s perspective – could, in certain circumstances, come at Israel’s expense.

International Standing – Israel’s international standing draws from its military, economic, and strategic strength, as well as from its “soft power.” Israeli technologies (especially hi-tech, cyber, hydro and agricultural technologies) bring it international appeal. This has enhanced its relations with the rising powers of Asia and Africa. Narendra Modi’s state visit to Israel, the first visit ever of an Indian prime minister, was a watershed in these growing relations. Prime Minister Netanyahu’s visit to China (March 2017) reflected the same trend. Israel’s gas finds, including the expectation of discovering and developing additional reserves, have generated leverage for relations and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean (in early 2017 Israel began supplying gas to Jordan). Lastly, despite decreasing successes in eroding Israel’s standing through BDS and other de-legitimization activities, and Israel’s expanding capacity to rebuff them, Jerusalem remains vulnerable to such attacks. UNESCO’s decisions to disregard the historical Jewish connection to the Temple Mount (October 2016) and to name the Cave of the Patriarchs (Mearat HaMachpela) and the Old City of Hebron as Palestinian Heritage Sites under severe threat of harm (July 7, 2017) make it clear that the battle against de-legitimization is not yet won.

Alongside the challenges and threats, Israel also has considerable opportunities: to improve its relationship with the United States; to deepen its relationship with the moderate Sunni world; and to implement a diplomatic initiative that would prevent Israel from becoming a bi-national state and losing its Jewish identity. The fact that Israel is not facing military threats from a neighboring Arab state’s regular army, together with its strategic strength and a sympathetic administration in Washington, opens a window of opportunity for a strategic move that will ensure the character of Israel’s future as both Jewish and democratic.
In Western societies today, demographic events and processes tend to unfold slowly. Changes in the size of a population, scope of immigration, and fertility and mortality patterns aggregate and gain significant influence only after several years. Therefore, although Jewish demographic patterns are stable overall, reflecting very moderate trends of growth and improvement along a few key measures, we are leaving the demographic gauge unchanged.

For 2016, approximately 100,000 individuals were added to the Jewish population of the world, which stands today at 14.5 million. Changes in the size of the Jewish population worldwide highlight the growth of the number of Jews in Israel and the numerical stability of Jews in the United States (the two largest Jewish communities today). Indeed, according to Absorption Ministry statistics, the number of new immigrants to Israel in 2016 was 4000 individuals fewer than in 2015, but higher than in either 2013 or 2014.

The fertility rate among Jewish women in Israel continues to rise: from 3.09 in 2014 to 3.11 in 2015. The migration balance of Israelis, namely...
the number of those that leave minus the number of those that return after spending more than one year abroad, rose from 6.8 thousand in 2014 to a loss of 7.8 thousand in 2015. Even the rate of emigration, that is the number of those that leave relative to the size of the Jewish population in Israel, climbed from 1.9 for every thousand residents in 2014 to 2.5 in 2015).

It is noteworthy that, the Pew Research Center recently published an update and expansion of its demographic projections, including in regard to the world Jewish population. For Israel, the projection employed the halachic definition of who is Jewish, whereas for Diaspora Jews the criterion was self-definition. Assuming a continuation of the recently prevailing patterns, the global Jewish population is expected to grow to 16.1 million by 2050. The bulk of this growth will take place in Israel, where the Jewish community is expected to increase to 8.2 million during this period. The number of U.S. Jews will, until mid-century, shrink by about 300,000 (to 5.4 million), and is expected to remain stable throughout the rest of the Diaspora at about 2.5 million Jews.

Endnotes

Donald Trump’s election, and trends such as rising anti-Semitism bring a dimension of uncertainty to Israel–Diaspora relations because their long-term influence is unclear. Israeli government decisions regarding the Kotel and conversion have sharpened Israel–Diaspora tensions. In light of these decisions and their reactions, we are moving the needle in a negative direction.

The dynamics of Jewish bonds have changed in the last year. Long-term trends recognized in previous years are still in place in Israel and the Jewish world, but there have been a few major developments in the last, the three most notable are: 1) The election of Donald Trump. 2) The crisis in Israel-Diaspora relations in the wake of Israeli government decisions regarding the Kotel and conversion, which were perceived as provocations, especially by non-Orthodox Jews worldwide. 3) Unusual expressions of anti-Semitism in North America and the outrage they set off among American Jews. These developments are impacting the relational dynamics, especially between Israel and U.S. Jews.

The most immediate and dramatic impact, at least in the short term, was the June 25, 2017 Israeli cabinet decision to freeze the Kotel Compromise Agreement that had been struck in January 2016. At the same time, a new, more
onerous conversion law was proffered – a decision that has since also been frozen. Many Jewish leaders, especially but not exclusively in North America, interpreted these government actions as evidence that Israel does not give adequate consideration to their needs and perspectives. As a result of the Kotel decision, a discussion was ignited throughout the Jewish world on the very nature and character of the bonds between Diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel.

The most immediate impact Trump’s election has had is the reduced pressure on Israel from the U.S. administration. It also created a set of circumstances that caused the U.S. Jewish community to focus primarily on domestic American affairs. The polarization within the general American society following the results of the November 2016 presidential election has not subsided, and is diverting more political energy toward domestic U.S. affairs. However, a Trump administration decision to focus its attention on an Israeli-Palestinians peace process could alter that dynamic in the coming months in one of several possible directions: It could focus the spotlight again on Israel; it could enter Israel into a peace process that would improve its image. or difficulties in the peace negotiations could perhaps cause damage to Israel if she would be perceived as responsible for their failure.

2017 and 2018 provide Israel with opportunities to educate Jews around the world about its creation (70th anniversary) and great victory (50th anniversary) – and hence attempt to recover some of the sentiments that made Israeli and Diaspora Jews partners in building the Jewish state. Yet persistent problems remain: Israel’s political stance concerning its relations with the Palestinians is anathema to many liberal Jews. Its impotence in resolving the Western Wall controversy continues to anger non-Orthodox Jews. A triumphalist undertone of Orthodox Jews who feel that they grow in power both in Israel (as the current political coalition maximizes their influence) and in other communities (notably in the U.S., where Orthodox Jews have more access and ties to the new administration) have also contributed to heightened tensions between Jewish communities. Demographic trends in Diaspora communities widen the gap between traditionally committed Jews – who see strong ties with Israel as an essential component of their identity – and more distant Jews who do not have the same instinctive need for keeping ties with Israel strong.

The following table briefly describes developments in 2016-17 that have contributed to either the strengthening or weakening of bonds between Jewish communities worldwide – with an emphasis on Israel-Diaspora bonds.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Developments Strengthening Bonds</th>
<th>Developments Weakening Bonds</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Donald Trump’s election makes criticism of Israel less a focal point perhaps because of the overriding focus on the President himself.</td>
<td>Trump’s election puts Israel and majority of U.S. Jews at odds: Israelis can work with Trump, liberal U.S. Jews find it hard to fathom.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2 Growing expressions of anti-Semitism, including in the U.S., strengthen the sense of shared destiny, and dependence on global Jewish unity.</td>
<td>Anti-Semitic incidents make public identification with Israel/ Jewish community less appealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 The increase in the political power of the Orthodox community in the US, which has strong ties to Israel (and to the Trump Administration).</td>
<td>The strengthening of the Orthodox community, both in Israel and the U.S. causes estrangement among non-Orthodox Jews. This was brought into sharp relief in the wake of the government decisions regarding the Kotel and conversion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Israel’s two milestone anniversaries – 50 years since the Six-Day War and 70 years since its establishment – provide an educational and emotional opportunity for bonding.</td>
<td>Israeli policies on many issues, including those related to the Palestinians, do not line up with views of many Diaspora Jews (hence the Six-Day War anniversary could also an occasion for dissent and controversy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Continued Israeli excellence in different fields (particularly hi-tech) contributes to its positive image among Jews.</td>
<td>Some political developments in Israel seem alien to many Diaspora Jews. Notably its legislation against NGOs that “delegitimize Israel”</td>
</tr>
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As a result of these factors we are moving the needle in an unfavorable direction toward “troubled.”
In the past year we have witnessed, in regard to Jewish identity among Jews of the United States, both the intensification of existing trends and the emergence of new trends.

One trend that seems to have intensified is the declining Jewish middle. That is, non-Orthodox Jews who are affiliated with synagogues, religious denominations and Jewish organizations. This trend is expressed in declining numbers of Jews who belong to non-Orthodox denominations. According to a recent study by PRRI, “America’s Changing Religious Identity,” since the Pew Center’s study of American Jews published in 2013 (“A Portrait of Jewish Americans”), The number of Jews belonging to the Reform movement has declined by 7 percent – from 35 percent in the Pew Study to 28 percent in PRRI – and for the Conservative movement, a decline of 4 percent. The Conservative Movement now constitutes 14 percent of American Jews, just 4 percent more than the Orthodox (10 percent). At the same time, the number of Jews who identify as having no denomination is growing. The number of Jews who answered that they are “just Jewish” was 37
percent as opposed to 30 percent who answered in that fashion in the Pew study.

This trend is especially pronounced among younger Jews. In the 18-29 age cohort, just 8 percent identified as Conservative. In contrast, 15 percent identified as Orthodox, almost as many as Reform (20 percent). The large number of younger Orthodox Jews can be attributed to the much larger Orthodox birthrate – “More than six in ten (62 percent) Orthodox Jewish parents say they have at least three children living in their household, compared to 17 percent of Jewish parents who identify as Reform who say the same.” At the same time, Reform and Conservative numbers are much stronger in the 65+ age group. Thirty-five percent of this cohort identify as Reform and 20 percent as Conservative.

The corollary of the declining Jewish middle is growth at the “poles” of Jewish identity and identification. The Orthodox seem to be growing, at least in the younger cohorts. At the other end, the PRRI study indicates that Jews PRRI identifies as “cultural Jews” also seem to be growing. In the Pew report, Jews of No Religion constituted 22 percent. If the PRRI study reflects a similar group they are about a third. Here again the trend is much more pronounced among younger Jews (a majority – 53 percent).

As the Pew study showed, Jews of No Religion are much different from Jews by Religion. They are much less engaged – as a group they do not belong to synagogues or Jewish organizations, they do not contribute to Jewish organizations, nor are they very attached to Israel or to Jewish communities around the world. As written in JPPI’s 2014 Annual Assessment, Jews of No Religion accept their Jewishness as a matter of fact. It does not enjoin much of a sense of solidarity or any normative commitment to the welfare or continuity of the Jewish people or to Jewish culture. Other researchers have argued that this population, and populations that overlap with it, such as children of intermarriage, respond to targeted educational programs and as a result become more Jewishly engaged. They cite studies showing that the very youngest cohorts of such Jews, who were the beneficiaries of such programs (conducted since the Pew study), evince more Jewish engagement. It seems too early to draw firm conclusions in this regard. Furthermore, it is not clear what brings about such engagement. Is it the provision of Jewish meaning or the re-drawing of social boundaries between Jews and non-Jews? Perhaps it is a combination of the two.

One of the new trends might be termed the “Rise of Orthodoxy.” Just as Jews of No Religion are different from what used to be the mainstream of American Jewry, so are the Orthodox. They are different, first politically and culturally. In the last four U.S. presidential elections they tended to vote Republican as opposed to other American Jews who overwhelmingly voted Democrat. A much higher percentage say that they “lean Republican” (55 percent according to Pew) than other American Jews, and they have much more conservative political and social views. (See chapter “The Rise of Orthodoxy and the Political-Cultural Polarization of the American Jewish Community.”)
The rising predominance of Jews of No Religion, who are basically disconnected from Jewish life and engagement, is a critical challenge for the Jewish community. The rise of Orthodoxy poses a different set of challenges. On the one hand, they are among the most committed and engaged Jews. However, they are less engaged with the organized Jewish community and with the general American society. It also increases political and cultural polarization between them and the vast majority of liberal non-Orthodox American Jews, which weakens the Jewish community overall. As a result of these contrasting trends we are leaving the needle in the Jewish Identity gauge unchanged.

Endnotes

1 The following is a quote from the PRRI’s study "America’s Changing Religious Identity", Daniel Cox, Ph.D., Robert P. Jones, Ph.D., 09.06.2017: “To identify culturally affiliated Jews, we asked all respondents who claimed no formal religious affiliation the following question: ‘Do you consider yourself to be Jewish for any reason?’ Any respondent who said ‘yes’ or ‘half’ was classified as culturally Jewish.” https://www.prri.org/research/american-religious-landscape-christian-religiously-unaffiliated/

Positive Factors

- Israel’s economic growth is steady, aided by domestic demand and improved export performance at the end of 2016 while maintaining a sound macroeconomic balance.

- Israel’s hi-tech sector continues to be a world leader:
  - With more than 3,500 high-tech companies and start-ups, Israel has the highest concentration of high-tech companies in the world (apart from the Silicon Valley).
  - Israel is ranked #2 in the world for venture capital funds right behind the United States.
  - Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and technicians in the workforce, with 145 per 10,000, as opposed to 85 in the U.S., over 70 in
Japan, and less than 60 in Germany. With over 25 percent of its work force employed in technical professions. Israel places first in this category as well.

- Israel produces more scientific papers per capita than any other nation by a large margin – 109 per 10,000 people – as well as having one of the highest per capita rates of patents filed.

- Indicators of Arab participation in Israel’s work force and in skill training continue to increase.

- Increases in perception of anti-Semitic currents surrounding large Diaspora communities do not appear to have affected wealth creation within those communities nor affected allocation toward Jewish community institutions and interests.

- Similarly, despite indicators of generational change also affecting the natures of Diaspora community philanthropy, large changes in giving toward Jewish causes have not yet appeared.

### Negative Factors

- Strong consumer demand in Israel may have been occasioned by impending changes in regulations with resulting indications of declining consumer confidence.

- Israel’s hi-tech sector remains its principal engine of growth but is limited by the supply of adequately trained personnel, thus raising concerns about its sustainability.

- Educational access and achievement, differentials in wealth, and protectionism in domestic markets remain areas of policy concern.

- Israel’s continuing housing crunch puts a squeeze on the young and those in the lower and middle portions of the income distribution, with effects going beyond issues of housing alone.

### Factors to Watch

- Israel and major Jewish communities have been substantial beneficiaries of globalization over the past few decades. Changes in trends and sentiments toward more nationalist and protectionist economic policies should be monitored for their potential impact on both.

- Last November, Israel’s Haredi leadership achieved massive government funding for their community institutions. This was intended to keep Haredi youth in full-time study. Nevertheless, the trend toward increased Haredi professional, academic, and military integration does not appear to be significantly slowed, (Haredi IDF officers increased from 97 in 2016 to 113 in 2017 (75 in 2015)). Opinions are divided within the community; it is still unclear whether the conservative or the pro-integration trend will prevail.
Although Diaspora Haredi communities possess wealth and have leaders in business, real estate, and law (especially in the New York City area), a significant portion of Haredi Jews are poorer than other Jews, some living below the poverty line. Demographic shifts may have a future effect on wealth and income disparities within Jewish communities outside Israel as well.

The Material Resources indicators associated with “Progressing” (moderate Israeli economic growth; relative growth in Diaspora community resources; leadership in technical fields) accord most closely to current circumstances. While the aggregate indicators of Israel's economic activity, especially relative to other developed economies, are strong, this is offset by OECD-leading rates of poverty and other troubling indicators of economic segmentation. Particularly troubling is the continued non-participation of Arabs and Haredim in the work force, despite the recent progress that has been made on these issues.

Israel's economy continues to provide rates of growth that, while not of the same magnitude as its most dynamic recent period, are none the less solidly based, apparently sustainable, and compare well to most others in the developed West. Israel's macroeconomic management has been, on the whole, good. As will be true into the foreseeable future, however, the questions facing Israel are how much is the access to the economic opportunity resulting from this economic performance available across socioeconomic groups and will the wellsprings of this economic dynamism continue to provide for future growth. The nexus for both concerns may be found in education. Although Israel's 2015 PISA performance improved from its 2012 scores, they still remain below the OECD average. While the OECD average share of low achievers in all three tested subjects (science, mathematics, and reading) was 13 percent (similar to the U.S. score), in Israel the share was more than 20 percent. This is only one indicator among many to be considered in weighing future economic dynamics. Yet, given the increasing importance of innovation-led growth and knowledge-based industries as sources of national wealth, it is one that bears watching.

As in the Sherlock Holmes story of the dog that did not bark, perhaps the headline regarding Jewish communities abroad is that there have been no large discontinuities. Despite generational change, the dizzying dynamics of industry growth and decline, and the haunting specter of resurgent anti-Semitism the story has been one of continuity. Jewish institutions and activities are weathering the transition to new patterns of Jewish giving, and Jewish communities are continuing to concentrate in and play active economic roles in the most developed economies. This could all become subject to change. Those forced to make significant changes through emigration or curtailment of participation, either in direct response to anti-Jewish pressures or through fear
of possible changes to come, may find themselves subject to considerable dislocation. This is far from being a major prospect at this time, even in some of the communities hardest hit by recent violent incidents and vociferous defamations, but is none the less a possible game changer in what would otherwise be a continuing ability by Jewish communities to surmount the dynamics of change.
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Sources:
- Website for the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Economic Outlook for 2014. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) based on Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), per capita (world currency).
- According to population projections from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (medium alternative), by the year 2025, Israel’s Jewish population will grow to 7.3 million Jews, the Pew Jewish People Survey from 2013 found another one million people (660,000 adults and 400,000 children) who are partial Jews.

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PART 2

Dimensions of Jewish Well-Being

Geopolitics
Demography
Bonds Within and Between Communities
Identity Formation and Expression
Material Resources
People of the Book
Introduction

The strategic challenges facing Israel are largely unchanged from the previous year. The Middle East remains volatile. The cornerstones of the old regional order are crumbling, and a new, more stable order has yet to take its place. The international arena, as it applies to the Middle East and to Israel’s strategic resilience, is also enduring shockwaves and is far from projecting stability.

Israel faces a geopolitical map filled with “moving parts” that mutually affect one another. These create a range of scenarios, each of which contains different, and at times conflicting, challenges for Israel. This includes the entrance of a new and significant actor with great influence over the geopolitical equation: U.S. President Donald Trump. The trends that led to his election are significant in and of themselves, but his personality and unpredictability add a unique dimension to the international arena’s already great uncertainty, especially in areas related to Israel’s resilience. Decisions made in Jerusalem, including not to decide, can influence a limited part of the total strategic picture, but could also be fateful for Israel and the Jewish people.

Key developments from the past year that stand against the backdrop of the main strategic challenges and dilemmas facing Israel include:

- The implications of Trump’s election for the international arena, particularly the Middle East.
- The possibility of cultivating and leveraging Israel’s relationship with a sympathetic American administration alongside the emerging threats to the vitality of the triangular relationship: Jerusalem – Washington – U.S. Jewry.
• The emerging strategic reality in the wake of the nuclear agreement with Iran (JCPOA), characterized by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu as a “mistake of historic proportions.”

• The implications of the efforts to reach an agreement on Syria and how they reflect on the standing of Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, the United States, Turkey, and others.

• The possibilities open to Israel to advance its relations with the region’s moderate Sunni states, who are, at this time, showing greater openness in light of the threat Iran and radical terror groups pose to them.

• The threat of a security deterioration – on the northern front (Hezbollah and possibly Iranian forces in the Golan and in Lebanon), and the southern front (Hamas and terror elements in the Sinai).

• The threat of escalating violence in the West Bank, due to a flare-up over religious issues (Temple Mount), or as a result of the continued “Lone Wolf Intifada.”

• The Trump administration’s efforts to examine restarting Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

• Efforts to harm Israel through BDS and de-legitimization measures.

• The emerging opportunities for Israel to further develop its relations with new rising powers like China and India alongside the potential to nurture relations with countries across Africa.

These challenges are growing across a number of strategic circles that interact with each other: a) the international system and the global standing of the United States, specifically in the Middle East, b) U.S.-Israel relations and the strength of the triangular relationship: Jerusalem – Washington – U.S. Jewry, c) the threats and opportunities the regional system places in front of Israel, d) the Palestinian system.

These circles exert a great influence on Israel’s strategic resilience, and the analysis that follows will explore them.

A. The International System and U.S. Standing

Israel’s strategic might is significantly influenced not just by its relationship with Washington but also by the global standing of the United States, including the role it chooses to play in the international arena, the strength and influence of rival powers, and the characteristics of the emerging world order.

An erosion of U.S. standing internationally – the superpower whose friendship and assistance to Israel is critical and which is also home to a prosperous Jewish community that constitutes almost half the Jewish people – could lead to an erosion in the deterrence power and strength attributed to Israel itself. If the perception that the U.S. is in a process of decline and is abandoning the Middle East takes hold, it could deepen the strategic vacuum in the region (which demands U.S. involvement as a stabilizing power). This would attract additional forces that are
problematic from Israel's perspective and may exacerbate the existing instability.

**President Trump and the role of the U.S. in international affairs** – The election of Donald Trump as president adds formidable uncertainty to the position of the United States in the international arena. Trump inherited a geopolitical reality in which the U.S. remains the strongest world power even though the “American moment” created after the breakup of the Soviet Union, when the U.S. enjoyed hegemonic status in a unipolar system, has passed.

The lack of a stable, functioning world order leads to weakened international institutions, diminishes the ability to navigate global challenges, and contributes to destabilizing the central authority in different countries (which terror and criminal organizations exploit). This further increases the risk of escalation in simmering conflicts in the various flashpoints around the world (Syria, North Korea, South China Sea, Ukraine, Balkans, India-China border, and more).

Ahead of Trump’s inauguration, there were growing fears that the U.S. intended to withdraw from global affairs and focus on domestic matters, act according to a narrowed definition of interests, rely on expected U.S. energy independence, and be reluctant to exhibit a commitment to global leadership and to shaping a functioning global order. Trump’s actions and rhetoric thus far have communicated contradictory messages making it difficult to discern a coherent guiding doctrine for U.S. role in international affairs. It is not yet clear the extent to which the defining campaign slogan, “America First,” will shape U.S. foreign policy. Will the Trump administration neglect American leadership and focus on domestic affairs? Will the business world’s principles of profit and loss, which are devoid of ideological considerations, guide U.S. actions?

Trump’s meetings with European leaders evoked acute concern as to his commitment to the trans-Atlantic alliance. German Chancellor Merkel proclaimed that once again, “Europe cannot fully depend on anyone else” (May 25, 2017). Despite the haze, it seems that – at least on a rhetorical level – a Trump Doctrine is taking shape, one markedly different from the Obama Doctrine. Compared to President Obama’s “Cairo Speech” (June 4, 2009) in which he stressed the importance of democratic values and human rights and proposed turning a new page in U.S. relations with Iran, Trump’s “Riyadh speech” outlining his worldview before the leaders and representatives of 50 Muslim nations, differed significantly.¹

Trump mollified his audience and stated in no uncertain terms that he sees Iran behind the instability and terror in the region: “It is a government that speaks openly of mass murder, vowing the destruction of Israel, death to America, and ruin for many leaders and nations in this room.” Trump vowed to support U.S.
allies and stipulated that this support would not be conditioned upon meeting standards of human rights, democratization, etc. “We will make decisions based on real-world outcomes – not inflexible ideology... And, wherever possible, we will seek gradual reforms – not sudden intervention.”

These words reflect a significant shift – at least on the rhetorical level – from President Obama’s position, which saw the potential of developing relations with Tehran, and urged Saudi Arabia to find an “effective way to share the neighborhood and institute some sort of cold peace” with Iran. This had further fostered Sunni concern that the U.S. was planning a grand bargain that would grant Iran significant regional status and allow it to deepen its subversive activities and achieve regional hegemony.

Trump’s inner circle, National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster and National Economic Council (NEC) Director Gary Cohn, articulated the president’s foreign policy principles in a jointly written article asserting that the president’s May 2017 trip to the Middle East and Europe signified a “strategic shift.”

McMaster and Cohn promised that the United States would no longer “lead from behind” (as attributed to President Obama) and that the slogan “America First” does not mean “America alone.” Rather, in their view, “America First’ signals the restoration of American leadership and our government’s traditional role overseas—to use the diplomatic, economic and military resources of the U.S. to enhance American security, promote American prosperity, and extend American influence around the world.”

The pair explain President Trump’s remarks as the ideological base of his foreign policy: “The president embarked on his first foreign trip with a clear-eyed outlook that the world is not a “global community” but an arena where nations, nongovernmental actors and businesses engage and compete for advantage. We bring to this forum unmatched military, political, economic, cultural and moral strength. Rather than deny this elemental nature of international affairs, we embrace it.”

Although these articulations shed greater light on a real-politick worldview devoid of illusions, it is not enough to definitively assess how it will translate into actual policy when the rubber hits the road. The first months of the Trump presidency provide conflicting indications as to how the U.S. intends to interact in world affairs.

Thus, for example, as opposed to President Obama who avoided a military response even after the Syrian regime crossed his “red line” by using chemical weapons, Trump responded to a similar incident by launching 59 cruise missiles at a Syrian air base in eastern Syria (April 7, 2017). Trump did not flinch from the expected Russian criticism during the attack (Russia condemned the attack and cautioned that it might harm the relations between the countries). This response pattern was reiterated when Trump did not hesitate to drop, the “Mother of All Bombs” for the first time – on an ISIS target in Afghanistan (April 13, 2017). Ostensibly, these steps should clear the fog as to whether President Trump views the U.S. as a proactive leader in the international arena.
However, in other instances, the message has been markedly different. Thus, for example, Trump's decision (June 1, 2017) to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord to fight global warming, which 195 countries signed, noting: “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris.” Similarly, there were hard feelings among the G-20 summit participants in Hamburg (July 7-8, 2017) when Trump announced that he was not thrilled to shoulder the burden of international commitments, and that he had few warm sentiments for the alliance with Europe. (It was difficult to extract a willingness from Trump to mention Article 5 of the NATO charter, which requires member countries to come to the defense of any attacked member state).

The international arena presents President Trump with challenges that require tough decisions. The manner in which he decides these will be formative milestones that further influence administration policy on other foreign policy issues. Chief among these are the future of the JCPOA nuclear agreement with Iran (discussed later), and the North Korea crisis. The latter is conducting provocative tests that bring it closer to possessing a ballistic missile fitted with a nuclear warhead capable of targeting the U.S. (On July 28, 2017, North Korea launched an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), apparently capable of hitting the West Coast of the U.S., and on September 3, 2017 it conducted an underground test of what it claimed to be a hydrogen bomb.) Based on warnings from American intelligence experts that North Korea is expected to gain the capacity to fit nuclear warheads on these ICBM’s within a year, President Trump’s commitment to preventing this emerging threat is expected to be tested.

In light of Kim Jong Un’s threats, Trump promised to respond with “fire and the fury like the world has never seen” (August 8, 2017). War with North Korea would affect the interests of other powers (China and Russia) and could lead to hundreds of thousands of casualties. Pyongyang has a massive military (the fourth largest in the world), nuclear capability, thousands of tons of chemical weapons, and over 20,000 artillery pieces, many of which are pointed at Seoul, the South Korean capital, and could cause mass devastation. (North Korea missiles could easily hit Tokyo, not to mention U.S. naval base in Guam). Trump's handling of the situation so far does not allow us to assess with great confidence how the U.S. will respond to Iran or how it will deal with the North Korean threat. The decisions made regarding these two situations could have great impact on the character of the emerging world order.

Undermining the values at the base of the Western world order – The geopolitical question marks are not confined to the structures of the prevailing world order, but also to the values at its foundation. Certain forces asserting themselves on the global stage today do not draw their values from the liberal-democratic legacy that guided American actions after WWII in shaping the world order in a way that increases stability, encourages freedom and allows free trade. The appeal of these values weakened as a result of the 2008 financial crisis, the deepening socio-economic inequality brought on by globalization, the dashing of hope
that had been sparked by the Arab Spring, the crisis washing over Europe, all of which found expression in the Brexit referendum results in the UK (June 23, 2016). We are now witnessing the rise of reactionary forces at odds with the humanistic values of the modern Western order: isolationism and national seclusion, bolstering borders, economic protectionism, anti-globalization, an erosion of liberal norms, populism, xenophobia, and the rise of the radical right.

Europe, which largely embodied the liberal values at the base of the Western world order in its actions and experiences, is undergoing a simultaneous crisis of identity, structure, and values. The continent’s discomfort with the inability of traditional politics to deal with various challenges — including economic crises, migration waves (affecting other continents as well), and terrorist attacks — undercut the concept of open borders, the cosmopolitan sensibility, and sense of personal security, fomenting political radicalization on both the right and the left.

The countries of Europe are finding it difficult to agree on a plan for absorbing a million migrants from the Middle East and the possibility that many more will arrive. The momentum of the right in Europe and its push to dissolve the European Union weakened following Emanuel Macron’s defeat of Marine La Pen in the French presidential elections (May 7, 2017). Right-wing populists were also defeated in Holland and Austria. However, doubts surrounding the liberal and humanistic values that stood at the base of the EU founders’ vision remain.

This phenomenon has not skipped over the United States. Many commentators see Trump’s election as an expression of the empowerment of considerable groups in the U.S. who feel that the existing political structure and world order (with a focus on globalization), harms and deprives them. Therefore, these groups are devoid of any commitment to those liberal values at the foundation of the existing order.

Russia and China’s strategic assertiveness — Russia and China do not accept the logic of a world order that does not reflect and respect their power and capabilities. They are acting with growing assertiveness on the global stage and expressing their aim to bring a new multi-polar order based on inter-power competition, in which the legitimacy of their status and interests are not subordinate to those of the United States.

While China leans on its economic power, Russia compensates for its weaknesses with aggression and by projecting its military power and sophisticated cyber-warfare capabilities. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov’s calls to bring an end to the Western-led world order, which took shape after the Cold War, and bring about a new world order that is not West-centric. 

Russia is taking advantage of U.S. reticence and Europe’s
weakness and the challenges it faces in defining a unified and committed policy. Russia is increasing its involvement in Syria, completing its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and continuing its destabilization efforts in eastern Ukraine. With this behavior, Moscow is proving that a nominal summation of military capabilities is not enough in measuring actual power. A critical variable is how willing one is to actually use force.

The strategic vacuum created by the U.S. during President Obama’s tenure, who preferred to “lead from behind,” sent a clear signal not just to Moscow. China is offering autocratic leaders around the world an alternative guiding model to follow: rapid and consistent economic development without the need for democracy. In 2015, China became the largest oil importer in the world, most of which comes from the Middle East. China is set to establish its first foreign naval base at the end of 2017, in Djibouti, which will allow it to secure maritime routes around the entrance to the Red Sea and Suez Canal, an area critical to Chinese trade. China is Africa’s largest trade partner and sees the Middle East as a promising market for its goods (in the decade between 2004 and 2014, China’s trade with the Middle East grew six-fold). It is not for naught that China includes the region in the framework of its “One Belt One Road” initiative intended to connect China with Europe and Asia encompassing a giant marketplace of 4.4 billion people in 26 nations. The Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was established by China to facilitate this regional integration program.

At the same time, China is raising serious concerns among its neighbors as it challenges international law through vigorous efforts to assert sovereignty over disputed islands in the South China Sea. China is building artificial islands in the area and positioning missile batteries and military forces there (the South China Sea is rich in minerals and fishing resources, and hosts an important maritime route for trade amounting to $5 trillion annually). Although, in 1992, Chinese premier Deng Xiaoping clarified that his country needed “to maintain a low profile and never lead”; today’s Chinese leader, Xi Jing Ping, does not shy away from the challenge of leading the global economy and declared (January 17, 2017) that China should be the one to “guide economic globalization.”

Israel has an interest in developing its relations with China and Russia, but in both cases, it must navigate these relationships cautiously given the inter-power rivalry and the preeminent interest of not harming its strategic relationship with the United States.

China is offering autocratic leaders a guiding model – rapid and consistent economic development without the need for democracy.

The agreement renewing U.S. military assistance to Israel (MOU) – 38 billion dollars over the next decade, starting at the end of 2018 – was signed in the closing days of the Obama administration. Despite this profound testimony to the depth of relations between the two countries, the Obama years also included worrying trends vis-a-vis the future of U.S.-Israel relations, in regard to the depth of bi-partisan support for Israel and the changes brought by a foreign policy doctrine that could harm Israel’s interests.

Unlike his predecessor, President Trump is seen by Israel as a loyal and warm friend. Thus, Israel has an opportunity to correct the problems that arose during the Obama presidency and “turn a new page” in its relationship with the United States – its most significant and only true ally.

Trump’s visit to Israel very early in his presidency, and the level of friendship he exhibited, signaled a genuinely positive turn. However, despite the warm atmosphere during the visit, it is hard to ignore that the main points of strategic interest for Israel – the nuclear agreement with Iran, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the future of Syria – could spark disagreements down the road. This is due to both conflict interests and the president’s unpredictable nature. An increase in tensions between the two countries could weigh heavily on American Jews, 70 percent of whom voted for Hillary Clinton and reject Trump’s policy path. This puts them between a rock and a hard place, and could erode the resilience of the Jerusalem – Washington – U.S. Jewry triangular relationship, a bedrock of Israel and the Jewish people’s strength.

Israel also faces a dilemma as to how much it should openly identify with the new president and the sentiments and ethos that brought him to power. The American Jewish community’s reservations about the president sharpen how sensitive this dilemma is. Given the polarizing trends within the U.S., the challenge for Israel to maintain bi-partisan support and its connection with American Jews only increases. Relatedly, one cannot ignore the warnings issued by some of Israel’s best friends within the American Jewish community following the Israeli government’s decisions regarding the Western Wall (Kotel) and conversion bill. According to these voices, Israel could alienate many of its Jewish supporters, erode their commitment to Israel, and thus cause great long-term harm to Israel’s strategic interests.

The geopolitical reality presents President Trump with a series of strategic dilemmas, some directly relating to Israel’s security interests:

- **The Regional system:** Will the understanding that the Middle East is of dwindling importance to the U.S. also define the Trump administration’s foreign policy? Will the U.S. allow Russia to become a key player that fills the vacuum it created in the Middle East? Does the U.S. intend to rebuild the trust it lost with many in the region, and if so how? Will the U.S. invest resources in order to step up the momentum of the relations forming between Israel and the moderate Sunni states?
• **The Iranian challenge:** What will the fate of the Iran nuclear agreement (JCPOA) be? Despite his campaign promise to “rip up” the agreement, Trump authorized (July 17, 2017) Iran’s compliance with the terms of the agreement and, therefore, allowed the continued easing of nuclear program related sanctions. Will the U.S. continue in this direction given Iran’s growing regional subversion and the strong public positions Trump has taken against Iran? How will Washington respond to Iran’s provocative activity in areas not mentioned in the nuclear agreement: regional subversion, support for terror groups, and continued development of ballistic missiles?

• **The future of Syria and Iraq:** Will the U.S. be dominant in shaping Syria’s future so that it does not become a forward base for Iran and anti-Israel jihadists? Will the U.S. play a lead role in determining what the day after ISIS will look like? Will the U.S. allow Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Hezbollah to shape the future of Syria and Iraq? Will the U.S. allow Iran to establish a land corridor through Syria to the Mediterranean? Will the U.S. allow those forces beholden to Iran to take up positions on Israel’s border in the Golan?

• **The Israeli-Palestinian conflict:** Will the U.S. continue to take the lead in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, or will it recoil from the difficulties it encounters and acquiesce to “internationalizing” the efforts to find a solution to the conflict? And if it does persist, what sort of diplomatic process will it shape and lead? Will President Trump’s ambition to broker the “ultimate deal” bring pressure to bear on Israel should there be disagreements over core issues of a final status agreement? How will the American administration prepare for the expected leadership change within the Palestinian Authority?

The list of challenges mentioned (a more detailed discussion follows below) is, of course, partial. The inability to assess the American president’s moves as the logical outcome of a thought out and coherent foreign policy doctrine frustrates even the best analysts. Some claim that Trump’s interest in foreign affairs will wane, particularly with respect to the Middle East. They believe that U.S. involvement in the international arena will rise and fall according to businesslike considerations of profit and loss. Trump, who they predict will become increasingly disappointed by the lack of quick results on the global stage, may prefer to direct his energies to more domestic challenges: gaining legislative achievements at home, and fending off the repeated attacks against him.

Other commentators dismiss this forecast and argue that Trump cannot disconnect from international affairs, especially the Middle East, due to the inherent potential it would have to create global instability, harm U.S. interests, instigate war, or cause a global economic crisis.

The coming months will show the extent to which Trump’s approach to issues of importance to Israel differs from that of his predecessor. Despite the friendship and warmth Trump has exhibited toward Israel, the true test will likely have less
to do with mere rhetoric but rather on practical matters. Jerusalem’s ability to manage an ongoing strategic dialogue with the Trump administration that produces positive practical results will largely depend on Israel’s willingness to fulfill Washington’s expectations, even if only partly.

In this regard, one cannot underestimate the impact of the polarizing processes and changes underway in the United States, and how they may affect American public opinion vis-a-vis Israel. In recent years, Israel has become an increasingly partisan issue. The Pew Research Center determined that the American public largely supports Israel in the Palestinian conflict, (54 percent versus 19 percent for the Palestinians). However, support for Israel decreases significantly within the liberal wing of the Democratic Party where 40 percent support the Palestinians versus 33 percent for Israel. Support for the Palestinian side within the Democratic Party has nearly doubled since 2014 (a jump from 21 to 40 percent) – and is gaining steam. 12

C. The Regional System: Threats and Opportunities

Israel cannot expect a quick improvement in the violent and unstable region in which it must operate. Two-thirds of the region’s residents are 29 or younger. The unemployment rate among those capable of work stands at 30 percent (twice the global average). The regional economy is crawling, tribal and clanship affiliation is rising at the expense of civil commitment to the state. Central rule is failing and the nation-state system is weakening. The phenomenon of “failed states”, where sovereignty over territory is nominal at best (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Yemen), is increasing.

The harsh disillusionment that resulted from the failure of the “Arab Spring” has yet to subside. Regional shifts have created a power vacuum that allows for the rise of radical armed and violent non-state actors – local militias, terror organizations, and movements guided by radical Islamist ideology. These forces, which at times form new alliances, erode the power of the central authority, destroy economies and infrastructure, and render some national borders irrelevant.

The civil wars in Syria and Yemen and the murderous terror of ISIS have created millions of refugees: Over 2.5 million have found shelter in Turkey, 1.4 million in Jordan, and a million in Lebanon (a quarter of its population). The problem-laden reality of the Middle East – social, economic, political, and religious – has not improved. In states without central rule capable of enforcing its authority in the territory under its
sovereignty, even more murderous groups than ISIS could arise in the wake of the severe setbacks it has suffered.

Despite the Middle East’s violence and instability, Israel does not face any immediate military threat from a neighboring country or coalition of Arab countries, as it has in the past. However, this encouraging situation could change if Iran succeeds in establishing a military presence in the Syrian Golan Heights, and actualizes a strategic land corridor between Tehran and the Mediterranean.

This corridor would open a space of direct Iranian influence and empower Hezbollah as a military surrogate of Iran. Egypt, Jordan, and the Sunni camp view Israel as a partner that can assist in pushing back these key threats, and are increasing their security cooperation with Jerusalem. However, one cannot ignore the fact that the advanced weapons systems Arab governments who fear Iran have purchased from the United States for very large sums of money could one day pose a threat to Israel’s Qualitative Military Edge (QME). These arms, theoretically, could one day be turned on Israel in the event of policy or regime change.

Israel’s immediate security threats emanate primarily from terror organizations that operate from ambiguous territorial realities (Hamas) or from the territories of failed states (Lebanon, Syria). These terror organizations employ an asymmetric strategy and operate from within dense civilian populations. The IDF must therefore contend with a reality in which its capacity to project deterrence differs from when the opposite side is a functioning country. Even though Assad’s forces are exhausted from years of a continuing civil war, Hezbollah is deeply mired on Syrian battlefields, and Hamas is isolated and weakened, there is still the possibility that a conflict with any of these could occur.

The Palestinian “Lone Wolf” intifada has yet to fully subside. The wave of violence that began in October of 2015 has claimed over 50 Israeli lives so far. The Temple Mount shooting attacks (July 14, 2017) and the violent escalation that ensued after Israel installed metal detectors there illustrate the potential for an even more violent escalation, especially if fueled by religious fervor.

Israel also must prepare for threats arising from the 1400-year-old Sunni-Shia conflict and as well as those that result from new technologies and cyber warfare.

Syria

After six years of fighting, the death toll from the Syrian civil war stands at around half a million. Five million have fled and an additional seven million are internally displaced. The average life expectancy in Syria dropped from 70 to 56. With assistance from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah, Assad was saved from the jaws of defeat and his status has been reinforced since.
This reality caused the U.S. and the West to modify their policy vis-à-vis Assad. They have come to terms with his continued tenure in power and the inevitability of including him in any political talks regarding Syria’s future. Given the anarchy that would likely ensue if he were deposed, Assad is now regarded as part of the solution, the best of several bad options. Assad’s growing self-confidence may trigger a possible change in his attitude toward and response to Israeli air force strikes on Syrian territory (Syria’s air defense command launched a number of missiles at Israeli planes on March 17, 2017).

Currently, hundreds of armed factions, organized according to regional, tribal, ethnic, ideological or religious affiliations, are operating in Syria. Regional powers (Iran, Hezbollah, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia) and outside powers (Russia and the U.S.) are also playing roles in Syria. Russia’s intervention significantly swayed the battle in favor of Syrian government forces and halted the rebels’ momentum, a favorite target for Russian airstrikes.

The fall of the rebel stronghold in Aleppo (December 2016) – after repeated shelling of civilians, instituting a state of siege, starving the population, and creating a humanitarian catastrophe – was a milestone of the war. President Putin surprised everyone when he announced (March 14, 2016) that his forces had completed their mission in Syria and were pulling out. However, in actuality, Russian jets are still targeting rebel forces and Russia continues to maintain a naval base in Tartus and an air force base in Latakia.

Despite warnings that Putin would “drown in the Syrian swamp,” the Russian leader has managed to achieve his main goals, at least for the time being. These include bolstering Assad’s position and creating a reality in which Russia, as the dominant actor, sets the tone and has the defining role in resolving the Syrian crisis. Moreover, Russia is now perceived in the Middle East as an actor that is prepared to use force, loyal to its allies, and therefore cannot be ignored. Russia has leveraged its position in Syria to sign a 49-year agreement giving it exclusive and autonomous use of its naval base at Tartus. Russia can dock submarines and large nuclear-powered battleships there, and can also deploy a comprehensive and independent defense system over the port facilities.

Israel has managed to develop an effective working relationship with Russia, even convincing Moscow to respect its “red lines” vis-à-vis Syria (especially preventing Iran from transferring strategic arms to Hezbollah and allowing Hezbollah and Iran to establish bases in southern Syria). Russia, so far, has not obstructed Israel as it enforces these lines. However, it would be a mistake to interpret this as a sign of the depth of relations: Russia cooperates with Israel’s enemies in Syria (Assad, Iran, and Hezbollah) and is engaged in a great power rivalry with Israel’s key ally, the United States.

Russia’s positioning of S-300 and S-400 air defense systems in Syria highlights the caution Israel must exercise in continuing to intercept arms transfers to Hezbollah without creating friction with Moscow. However, Russia has its own interests, and summoned the Israeli ambassador for a
reprimand after IAF jets struck targets deemed too close to Russian forces.

A key Israeli concern is that Iran will succeed in creating a land corridor between Iran and the Mediterranean controlled by Iranian troops and Shia militias under Iranian command. Undoubtedly, if Iran establishes itself as Israel's neighbor, putting it in a stronger position to back Hezbollah, there will be friction. Iran signaled its intentions and capabilities when it fired ballistic missiles against ISIS targets 600 km from its border, even if they were not all that accurate (June 18, 2017).

Israel does not deny the fact that it takes military action in Syria from time to time. The outgoing air force commander, Maj. Gen. Amir Eshel, revealed that in the last five years, Israel attacked weapons convoys in Syria intended for Hezbollah and other terror organizations nearly 100 times. Prime Minister Netanyahu noted: “We are operating in Syria from time to time, working to prevent Syria from becoming a front against us.” Israel fears a ceasefire agreement that will strengthen the Iranian camp in Syria, but its ability to influence the content of any agreement is limited.

On May 5, 2017, an agreement was struck at the Astana Summit, the capital of Kazakhstan, to establish four de-escalation zones; Russia, Turkey, and Iran were signatories. This was the fourth attempt in the past year to achieve a cease-fire in Syria. The plan could hold the framework for a future agreement that would end the fighting in Syria and define the areas of influence within Syria. The zone nearest the Golan Heights is especially sensitive for Israel and Jordan, not to mention that Iranian forces would be involved in enforcing the de-escalation under the Astana agreement.

In response to these fears, a separate agreement was reached between Washington, Moscow, and Amman for a cease-fire in southern Syria (July 7, 2017) intended to ensure that Iranian forces stay away from the area. However, this agreement caused Israeli concern because it does not preclude Iran from entrenching itself in Syria, which could eventually lead to the presence of Syria, Iran or Tehran's surrogates, like Hezbollah, very near Israel's border.

Despite Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's attempts to dispel Israeli fears by promising that Russia and the U.S. would do everything possible in consideration of Israel’s security needs, Israel does not trust Russian oversight on the ground (Russian military police battalions are already deployed in southern Syria to oversee the agreement), not to mention that their presence will limit Israel's ability to act. Prime Minister Netanyahu expressed Israel's complete opposition to the agreement arguing that it does not take Israel's security interests into account, which demand pushing Iran and Hezbollah back from Israel's Ramat HaGolan border, preventing a permanent Iranian presence in Syria, and deterring Hezbollah from arming itself with accurate missiles.

Israel’s discomfort could bring a change in its policy, which until now has been to avoid involvement in the fighting, except for limited assistance to moderate militias near its border that formed a buffer between Israel and the fighting in Syria.
Israel’s ability to protect its security interests in Syria depend in large part on the United States. However, the U.S. has yet to articulate clear positions on the end game it envisions there, or the strategy it endorses to deal with Iran’s ambition to create a strategic corridor and base itself in Syria. Nor has it delineated the scope of the resources it is willing to invest over time in addressing these issues. Recent reporting on President Trump’s orders to stop training rebels raises doubts that Washington will take the lead in defining Syria’s post-war future, or whether, as it seems now, it will allow Syria to be divided up into Russian, Iranian, and Turkish zones of influence. 16

During Obama’s presidency Iran felt a surge of self-confidence to increase its drive for regional hegemony

U.S. policy on Iran. The nuclear agreement (JCPOA, July 14, 2015) delayed Iran from becoming a nuclear power, but, at the same time, granted it legitimacy as a threshold nuclear power and permitted it to maintain its nuclear production capacity.

After 15 years, Iran will be able to reduce its “breakout time” to a military nuclear capability to a critical threshold of weeks, or even days. The nuclear agreement further allows Iran to increase funding to its armed forces. It continues to develop its ballistic missile array and conducts missile tests. As such, it has breached the terms of UNSC Resolution 2231, at least in spirit. Furthermore, the nuclear agreement did not put an end to Iran’s regional subversion.

It seems that during the Obama presidency, Iran even felt a surge of self-confidence to increase its drive for regional hegemony, taking advantage of Obama’s reluctance to use force and his penchant to “lead from behind,” if at all.

There was a widespread perception that Obama was prepared to tolerate Iran’s problematic regional behavior as long as it didn’t abrogate the nuclear agreement, which he regarded as a key legacy achievement. On the eve of Trump’s inauguration, Iran exercised significant influence in four Arab capitals: Beirut, Sanaa, Damascus, and Baghdad.

Iran’s influence in Iraq is growing, and Saudi Arabia cannot seem to achieve a decisive victory in Yemen against the Shia tribal Houthi militias Iran supports. The IDF is preparing for the day when Iran’s efforts to deepen its influence in the region will intensify. Iran will continue to act through terror and proxy militias.

Indeed, Iranian military officers are in Syria commanding combat systems, and Tehran continues to fund terror groups, transfer advanced arms to Hezbollah, and smuggle arms into the Gaza strip.

The coming months will show whether Trump’s declarations turn from rhetoric into an actual strategic turning point. In stark contradiction to his predecessor’s policy, Trump is totally in line with the Saudi-led Sunni camp and has clearly blamed Iran for the terror and instability in the
region. Trump has not canceled the nuclear agreement, and has allowed its continued implementation. The terms of the agreement require the president to certify Iran’s compliance every 90 days. However, critical decision points are expected down the road, and Trump’s original intent to cancel the agreement could still materialize.

In parallel to this dilemma, Congress is moving ahead with additional sanctions against Iran in response to its role in regional terror, its support of Assad, and its continued development and testing of ballistic missiles.

The question as to whether the timeout created by the agreement, 10-15 years, will allow the moderate in Iran camp to defeat the radical camp and pave the way for a more moderate regime remains open. Sixty percent of Iran’s population is under the age of 30 and the religious Islamist revolutionary ideology does not appeal to many of them. The re-election of President Hassan Rouhani (May 20, 2017) and the fact that he defeated Ebrahim Raisi, a more conservative opponent, highlights the influence of less radical elements.

However, Israel cannot base its security policy on such hopes. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot described Israel’s challenge clearly: “Pushing Iran back and limiting its influence in the immediate circle around Israel is no less an important challenge than defeating ISIS, and for Israel perhaps the most important challenge.”

There are two main, interconnected questions regarding Trump’s Iran policy that have strategic implications for Israel: Will Trump steer the U.S. out of the agreement with Iran and will he formulate and implement a strategy to block Iran from filling the void left in the region after ISIS is defeated? Each of these carries considerable escalatory potential. Passivity from the Trump administration in the face of Iran’s efforts to establish itself in Syria could cause tension in the U.S.-Israel relationship (see Israel’s public criticism of the de-escalation agreement in southern Syria, of which the U.S. is a party).

Hezbollah

The IDF considers Hezbollah the most serious military threat to Israel. The Iran-backed organization has an annual budget of around one billion USD. Hezbollah’s support for Assad eroded its standing in the Arab world and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) even designated it a terror organization (March 2, 2016). However, Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah’s success in defeating the rebels and leaving Assad in place, put Hezbollah on the winning side. At least 5000 Hezbollah soldiers are fighting alongside Assad’s troops; it is estimated to have suffered at least 1500 dead thus far and around 5000 injured, significant numbers for an organization with an estimated 30,000 full time fighters (and around 25,000 reservists).

The Arab world views Hezbollah’s standing alongside the hated Assad as joining the Shia front against the Sunnis, which contradicts the image
Hezbollah head Hassan Nasrallah has tried to cultivate over the years, as defending the interests of all Lebanon against Israel. However, Hezbollah’s involvement in Syria has not slowed its growth within Lebanon. Lebanese President Michel Aoun said (Feb 12, 2017) that there is a need for Hezbollah as “a complement to the Lebanese army’s actions.” 18

Although Hezbollah is shedding its blood in Syria, it is, at the same time, gaining valuable military experience fighting in a complex war. From many standpoints, the IDF will face a foe with the operational capabilities of a modern military force in the next conflict. Hezbollah has been deterred from opening another front against Israel, as it has been for the past decade since the Second Lebanon War. The group even refrained from significantly responding to IAF attacks against its strategic arms convoys from Iran through Syria. However, Hezbollah’s continued efforts to arm itself with advanced weapons and base itself in southern Syria, together with Israel’s tenacity to thwart these efforts, could escalate to revenge attacks against Israel and Jewish targets abroad, and eventually another direct armed conflict.

Hezbollah is currently deployed in around 240 Shia villages in southern Lebanon. It has an array of over 120,000 rockets, some of which can strike deep into Israel and with greater accuracy than those Hamas launched in Protective Edge (August 2014). Nasrallah even threatened (February 16, 2016) that in the next conflict, his forces, by launching missiles at the chemical facilities in Haifa Bay, will have the effect of a nuclear strike on Israel. It was reported recently that in order to avoid dispatching weapons convoys vulnerable to IAF attacks, Iran is establishing underground arms production facilities in Lebanon to supply rockets and advanced arms for Hezbollah. IDF Military Intelligence (AMAN) Chief Maj. Gen. Herzi HaLevi stated: “We see that Hezbollah is establishing an arms industry on Lebanese soil with Iranian know how,” and warned “Israel will not remain apathetic to such a development.”19

Israel is preparing for the possibility that Hezbollah will try infiltrating Israeli territory to conquer areas near the northern border in the next escalation, and strike at critical infrastructure such as Israel’s maritime gas platforms. However, intelligence analysts agree that Hezbollah has no interest in opening a second front against Israel in the near future. The group is still fighting in Syria and has suffered heavy casualties. Of course, one cannot exclude the possibility of an unintended escalation that could lead to a war, even against the interests of both sides.

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot noted, “The effort to prevent Hezbollah from upgrading the accuracy of its missile and rocket array is one of the top operational priorities for the IDF.” 20 It is not unfounded to imagine a security escalation in the wake of one of these IDF pre-emptive operations. Experts assess that the next war in the north will be harder on the Israeli home front than any war in the past.
ISIS

ISIS was not able to withstand the onset of the coalition of forces allied against it in recent months. The group lost 50 percent of the territory it had captured in Iraq and Syria, including its stronghold in Mosul, the most significant city it controlled in Iraq. The expected fall of its Syrian capital, Al-Raqqa, would signal a final defeat, but will not end the organization’s ability to continue to wreak havoc. In any case, the defeats ISIS has suffered broke its halo of invincibility, and eroded the force of attraction it held for young Muslims around the world. It will likely try to increase its murderous terror attacks abroad – outside the Middle East and within it in – to compensate for these losses. ISIS-inspired terror elements are still operating in Sinai. Although focused on fighting the Egyptian army, they have conducted some attacks on Israel and could attempt more. Even in southern Syria, an ISIS presence could turn its guns on Israel if pressed.

Washington has identified ISIS as a main threat. U.S. bombers strike ISIS targets and provide intelligence to coalition fighters (which has created a sort of indirect cooperation between the U.S. and Iran, which also considers the Sunni ISIS a dangerous threat). Achievements in the fight against ISIS do not guarantee the destruction of its social and religious infrastructure, the network through which its ideology spreads. Even if its territorial bases in Syria and Iraq fall, ISIS – or its heirs – could continue to prove a practical threat and significant ideological challenge. After all, there is still a core of significant support for the ideas and spirit ISIS represents – in the Middle East and beyond. Many ISIS fighters in Syria and Iraq are expected to return to their countries of origin where ISIS’ message still resonates for many Muslims. As the demise of ISIS nears, so does the question mark around the day after: Who will fill the void left in Syria and Iraq, and will they be able to impose order and stability? Fulfilling this challenge seems almost utopian.

We will likely witness additional shocks to regional stability. For example, the Kurdish decision to hold a national referendum (September 25, 2017) in northern Iraq on secession and independence could exert a destabilizing effect that energizes the central government in Baghdad’s resolve to keep these oil rich territories. Other countries fear that this move could encourage separatist demands in their own countries, especially Turkey and Iran where there are considerable Kurdish populations.

Saudi Arabia

The crowning of the Saudi King Salman (January 23, 2015) has brought significant changes to the kingdom. Muhammad bin Salman, the 31-year-old son of the king who is simultaneously Defense Minister and Chair of the Economic Development Council, and who was recently named first crown prince (June 21, 2017), is leading these changes.

Saudi Arabia has adopted a more assertive foreign policy and has become more aggressive toward Iran and its allies. Based on current low oil prices and the sense that the country requires comprehensive reforms, the crown prince
launched (April 25, 2016) a long-term plan, “Saudi Vision 2030,” to diversify the Saudi economy’s revenue sources – to free it of its dependence on oil and place it on a development and modernization path.

Saudi Arabia is exhibiting its determination to block Iran from achieving regional hegemony. Riyadh was taken aback by President Obama’s comments that it would have to get used to a reality that offers Iran a legitimate space for regional influence. Riyadh sees Iran’s moves to broaden its reach with the aid of Shia militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen as an existential threat, and it is determined to block that threat. The Saudi air force is conducting an air campaign in Yemen, and Saudi financial aid is backing rebel forces in Syria.

Inspired by Prince Muhammad bin Salman, Saudi Arabia is not deterred from taking aggressive action, most recently against Qatar, the tiny kingdom that possesses some of the biggest gas fields in the world. Riyadh seems to have lost all patience for Qatar’s double game.

Qatar, which hosts the giant U.S. air force base Al Udeid with its 11,000 troops, is developing its relations with Iran while also providing sympathetic media coverage of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas through Al Jazeera. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, together with Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen, have severed diplomatic ties with Qatar and enacted a boycott on air, sea, and land transportation between them and the kingdom. They are demanding Qatar significantly decrease its ties with Iran, halt its support for terror groups, label the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah terror organizations, shut down Al-Jazeera, and put a stop to Turkey’s military presence there.

While Iran, Turkey, and Russia are waiting to exploit the crisis to deepen their grasp on the rich kingdom, the U.S. is trying to mediate between the parties. It is safe to say that the aggressive line Saudi Arabia is taking was reinforced by President Trump’s official visit to the kingdom (May 21, 2017) and his sweeping support of Riyadh in its conflict with Iran. This visit helped secure a massive 110 billion USD arms sale from the United States, which has the potential to threaten Israel’s QME.

Muhammad Bin Salman is seen as more open to the possibility of advancing relations with Israel than his predecessors. However, he is reluctant to take official steps to publically normalize cooperation with Jerusalem as long as there is no real progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue (see below).

Egypt

Egypt continues to struggle with difficult security and economic challenges. Unless there is a drop in its birthrate (2.6 percent), Egypt’s population is expected to reach 180 million by 2050. Half of Egypt’s population subsists on less than 2 dollars a day. The IMF conditioned aid to Egypt (12
billion USD) on significant economic reforms. The Egyptian government, which agreed to float its currency and cut subsidies for basic goods, faces difficult dilemmas. If it moves to privatize its economy, it would harm the military, which controls considerable parts of the economy. Therefore, the Egyptian government is required to harm its greatest source of support.

At the same time, lifting subsidies – a key requirement of the IMF – would lead to skyrocketing prices of basic goods and could result in public unrest, a public already living under a regime whose record on democratic principles and human rights is perhaps worse than under Mubarak. The Egyptian government continues to hunt the Muslim Brotherhood, which it regards as a grave threat. It has, further, yet to defeat terror groups either loyal to ISIS or inspired by it, or Islamist elements from the fringes of the Brotherhood who became radicalized and violent. They have struck sensitive targets, such as the double attack on Coptic churches in Tanta and Alexandria in which 45 were killed (April 2017), or the suicide bombing in northern Sinai (July 7, 2017) which killed 27 Egyptian soldiers.

The threats from terror and Islamist actors, the chaos in Sinai due to ISIS, and the danger emanating from Iran’s growing regional presence, create a situation that invites greater cooperation with Israel.

Jordan

Jordan absorbed 1.4 million Syrian refugees, 13 percent of the kingdom’s population. These refugees are draining Jordan’s already fragile economy and are a source of instability. These are in addition to the hundreds of thousands of refugees already there from Iraq. Together, they use up almost 20 percent of Jordan’s budget. King Abdullah II warned that his country could reach a “boiling point... sooner or later as the dam could burst.”

The Jordanian economy further suffers from trade limitations with its neighbors who are mired in violent domestic conflicts – Syria is in a civil war and Iraq is fighting ISIS. Tourism has decreased due to security concerns. Its supply of subsidized gas from Egypt has been cut off because of pipeline attacks in Sinai, which has caused Jordan to turn to more expensive alternatives. These problems come on top of preexisting difficulties undermining the Jordanian economy: just 36 percent of working age Jordanians are employed, only 15 percent of women are in the labor force, and the youth unemployment rate is 40 percent.

The Jordanian regime must prepare for outside security challenges such as ISIS attacks and spillover from the Syrian Civil War into Jordanian
territory. A ceasefire agreement in Syria could harm Jordan’s security interests as it would place hostile forces on its border, either ISIS or Iran loyalists.

Additionally, the Jordanian regime must contend with domestic radical Islamists (about 2500 Jordanians joined the jihadi ranks in Iraq and Syria, and many are expected to return home) as well a reality in which over half the population is of Palestinian origin and influenced by the upheavals of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In an interview in the Washington Post (April 6, 2017) King Abdullah spoke about incidents in which his forces killed 40 terrorists, 96 percent of whom were of Palestinian origin. The king’s conclusion: “So if we don’t move the Israeli-Palestinian process forward, that is a major recruiting [opportunity] for disenfranchised and frustrated people.”

The foreign media have reported on widespread security cooperation between Israel and Jordan. Israel came to Jordan’s rescue and provided a solution to its crippling water shortage. In addition to the 50 million cubic meters Israel transfers each year to Jordan according to the peace accords, Israel has transferred an additional 50 million cubic meters of water from the Galilee. In exchange, Jordan agreed to transfer a similar amount to Israel from a desalination plant north of Aqaba. The two counties are cooperating in planning the water conveyance system from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea, and have signed an agreement for a 15-year gas supply from Israel valued at 10 billion USD. When the first gas supply began flowing from the Tamar gas field to the potash plant in Jordan in the southern Dead Sea area (January 2017), it was a moment of great significance in the relationship of the two neighboring states.

Despite the mutual interest Jordan and Israel have in closer relations, especially in security matters, there is also a fragility due to the Palestinian context. Disturbances on the Temple Mount, and the killing of a Jordanian attacker and bystander by an Israeli embassy security guard (July 23, 2017) exposed this fragility. King Abdullah issued a warning (July 27, 2017) that the way Israel deals with the embassy guard will directly impact relations between the countries.

Turkey

The failed coup attempt (July 15, 2016) allowed President Erdogan to declare a state of emergency (which he has yet to lift), to get rid of opponents and to shore up his rule. In his extensive purge campaign, some 50,000 people were arrested and 100,000 lost their jobs. Erdogan also achieved his goal of switching the regime from a parliamentary system to a presidential one in which he has the key powers. The decision was reached with a slim majority in a national referendum (April 16, 2017), Erdogan lost in Turkey’s three main cities – Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir.

Erdogan’s personality and demeanor have led to sharp polarization within Turkey and widened existing divisions with the West. During the campaign prior to the vote, Erdogan called Germany and Holland “Nazi remnants” when they refused to allow his ministers to disseminate election propaganda in the Turkish immigrant
communities in their countries. Despite whatever aversion to Erdogan, the West cannot ignore the strategic importance of Turkey, its membership in NATO, significant involvement in Syria, and as the gatekeeper controlling the flow of refugees into Europe.

Turkey has suffered a series of terror attacks, some perpetrated by ISIS and others by Kurdish separatists. But the bulk of Turkey’s concerns lie in the threat posed by Kurdish nationalism. Turkey fears that pressure from its Kurdish citizens to secede and declare independence will rise if an independent Kurdish state is established on its border. These form the background to Ankara’s opposition to the referendum on Kurdish independence in Iraq, and tensions with the United States as it supports the Kurdish forces in Syria (YPG) in its fight against ISIS. Even its relationship with Russia, although remediated from the plummet that followed the downing of a Russian jet in its airspace (end of 2015) and despite cooperation to de-escalate Syria, is mired in mutual suspicion and conflicting interests.

Relations with Turkey show how mercurial the Middle East is and demands that Israel conduct itself with caution and strategic acumen. The rapprochement deal with Ankara (June 28, 2016) and the possibilities it opened for deepening relations (including gas exports) did not prevent President Erdogan from sharply rebuking Israel, accusing it of the “Judaification” of Jerusalem and conducting an apartheid policy: “Each day Jerusalem is under occupation is an insult to us.”23 After the Temple Mount terror attack and Israel’s installation of metal detectors in response, Erdogan warned Israel from trying to wrench Al Aqsa from Muslim control: “The Israeli soldiers defile the ground of Al Aqsa with their combat boots...”24 This was the same Erdogan who justifying the rapprochement agreement to journalists argued the utility of normalized relations with Israel: “This normalization process has a lot to offer to us, to Israel, to Palestine and also to the region. The region needs this.”25

On the Israeli side, there are no illusions that relations will return fast, if at all, to the high levels of security and intelligence cooperation that existed before the crisis. Indeed, in the wake of this diminished cooperation with Ankara, and in light of the need to secure the gas fields and prepare for marketing their output, Israel has been working to strengthen relations with Greece and Cyprus.

D. The Palestinian System

President Trump once again stated his aspiration to achieve the “ultimate deal” and broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. He called for Israel to restrain settlement construction and delayed his campaign promise to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem so as not to hobble chances to advance Israeli-Palestinian negotiations (June 1, 2017). Continued American leadership over the peace process grants Israel the opportunity of working with a sympathetic interlocutor, but American pressure to make painful concessions could eventually sour relations with the Trump administration, supportive as it may be.
Trumps steps, thus far, reflect a strategy to involve the Sunni moderates in a regional deal that includes the Palestinians. Arab League members stepped up to the president’s challenge, and reiterated, in the summary statement issued by the League summit in Jordan (March 30, 2017), their commitment to peace with Israel based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative. The Saudi king, during Trump’s visit, committed his country’s help in these efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (May 20, 2017).26 However, the Arab world is in no hurry to publicly show signs of normalization with Israel, and demands real progress with the Palestinians as a precondition. The harsh anti-Israel responses of the Arab states after the Temple Mount incident (July 2017) illustrate the limits the Palestinian conflict places on advancing relations with Israel.

Continued settlement construction raises doubts about the sincerity of Israel’s intentions

At this stage, the Trump administration has yet to formulate a path to success; all its predecessors failed. Formidable gaps between Israeli and Palestinian positions show just how daunting the challenge really is. The passing time does not increase mutual trust, and both sides doubt the sincerity of the other’s intentions. Prime Minster Netanyahu has demanded that the PA prove its commitment to peace by stopping payments to the families of terrorists and security prisoners held by Israel.27 (Netanyahu’s stance could help push American legislation that would withhold a significant portion of aid to the PA.)

At the same time, the right-wing faction of the governing coalition is working to obstruct any final status negotiations. HaBayit HaYehudi’s proposed amendment to the Basic Law on Jerusalem passed a first ministerial vote (July 26, 2017). The bill stipulates that a minimum of 80 Knesset members (two-thirds) must vote affirmatively before any transfer of Jerusalem territories to a foreign entity. The Israeli political right is even pressing limitations on the prime minister’s power to enact “confidence building measures” with the Palestinians. The cabinet decision to freeze the September 2016 plan to build 6000 housing units for Palestinians near Qalqilya is an example of this. (A positive development in Israel’s relationship with the Palestinians was the joint announcement (July 13, 2017) of an agreement that will allow the Palestinian Authority to purchase 32 million cubic meters of water at a discounted rate, as part of their participation in the pipeline project, transferring water from the Red Sea to the Dead Sea.)

Continued settlement construction is the issue that draws the most international criticism and raises doubts about the sincerity of Israel’s intentions. The Israeli government is maneuvering between Trump’s demands to restrain settlement construction in Judea and Samaria and domestic political pressures to build. Thus, when the government authorized planning and construction of 2500 units in Judea and Samaria, and the prime minister announced, “We build – and will continue to build,”28 the White House released
a statement saying that settlement expansion could interfere with the peace process. The EU responded to the construction and to The Judea and Samaria Settlement Regulation Law (intended to retroactively legalize the status of settlements built on private Palestinian lands) by delaying a planned diplomatic summit with Israel. In protest of the Regulation Law, Chancellor Merkel cancelled a planned Israeli-German government summit. Pressure brought by President Trump forced the Israeli government to limit construction as much as is possible to within existing settlement blocs. As Netanyahu explained to his cabinet ministers: “This is a very friendly administration and we need to take the president’s requests into consideration.”

At this stage, the sides are waiting until the Trump administration initiates a diplomatic plan. It is still unclear what the plan will look like, how it will involve the regional actors, and how insistently the White House will be in light of the considerable gaps between the two sides. Jared Kushner, Trump’s son in law and senior adviser, expressed doubt in a leaked conversation with White House interns (July 31, 2017): “We’re trying to work with the parties very quietly to see if there’s a solution. And there may be no solution...”

If the U.S. demurs from advancing an Israeli-Palestinian agreement and abandons its leadership of the peace process, Israel could be at risk as it would allow less sympathetic international actors to take control in America’s stead. On the Palestinian side, there are growing calls to drop demands for an independent state, insisting instead on full rights and equality in one state. The lack of mutual trust between Israel and the Palestinians is not the only hurdle the American mediator will have to overcome. The Palestinians are split both geographically and organizationally, and a reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas is not on the horizon (although there may be some cosmetic unification steps taken, as in the past). The American side is debating a basic question about the viability of a “two-state solution” if Gaza functions as a separate state. In practice, the Palestinian centers of government, split between Ramallah and Gaza, function poorly (especially in Gaza). A regime change (Abu Mazen is 82 and seems to be nearing the end of his reign), could spark succession struggles and might harm security cooperation with Israel. The West Bank Palestinian public is disappointed in the Palestinian Authority’s performance and is doubtful that the current leadership can effectuate an end to the Israeli occupation.

The title of an essay by two Palestinian professors (August 6, 2017), Hussein Agha and Ahmad Khalidi, who were for many years involved in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, illustrates the level of frustration: “The End of this Road: The Decline of the Palestinian National Movement.” This atmosphere of frustration – especially among younger Palestinians – set the stage for the outbreak of the “Lone Wolf” intifada. The violence
that erupted in Jerusalem in October 2015 and spread to the West Bank and then other parts of Israel has yet to fully subside. Israel must contend with spontaneous outbreaks of violence that occur without prior warning. The perpetrators are not connected to known terror organizations, and the organizational challenge of obtaining early intelligence is difficult. But diplomatic stagnation is not the only element behind this violence. Among younger Palestinians, there is deep frustration with their own shaky social reality, the high levels of corruption and general failure of the Palestinian leadership and its governance.

The Palestinian prisoner hunger strike, initiated on April 15, 2017 by senior Fatah member Marwan Barghouti, ended without sparking a new uprising, as many feared. This fear was renewed by the gunning down of two Israeli police officers in a Temple Mount terrorist attack (July 14, 2017). In response, Israel placed metal detectors at the site entrances. The Palestinians claimed the move was meant to entrench Israeli sovereignty over the holy site and responded with violent protests that led to the deaths of three Palestinians. Abu Mazen then announced that he was cutting ties with Israel (July 21, 2017). In accordance with the Palestinian Waqf’s demands, Israel relented and removed the metal detectors and security cameras (July 21, 2017) it had installed, allowing the Palestinians to celebrate what they viewed as a major victory over the Israeli government.

**Hamas** – Since the end of “Operation Protective Edge” (August 26, 2014), Hamas has worked to rebuild its capabilities, especially its rocket arsenal and the tunnels that lead into Israeli territory. Special forces that can infiltrate Israel have been trained, and the manufacture of arms locally – of rockets, mortars, and UAVs – has become more sophisticated.

Hamas’ ground forces commander Yahya Sinwar was elected to head the movement in Gaza in place of Ismail Haniyeh (February 13, 2017), an indication of the growing strength of the most militant line within the organization. Haniyeh himself was elected to replace Khaled Mashal as head of the Hamas Political Bureau (May 6, 2017). These developments illustrate the dominance of the “domestic” leadership in Hamas over its “foreign” leadership. Due to growing pressure from Egypt – and possibly to try to appease the US, Hamas even published a modification of its charter (May 1, 2017), according to which it will accept the establishment of a Palestinian state within 1967 borders, but not recognize Israel. The document does not portend a change in Hamas policy anytime soon, and its charter still maintains the commitment to an armed struggle to free all of Palestine. President Trump was also not impressed by Hamas efforts to project moderation. In his speech in Saudi Arabia (May 21, 2017) he mentioned the group in the same breath as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Hezbollah.

Egypt sees Hamas as a branch of the hated Muslim Brotherhood and, although highly suspicious of it, is prepared to reach understandings with it. The Egyptians are taking advantage of Hamas’ weakness and its dependence on the Rafah Border Crossing as its only connection to the outside world. They deal harshly with it, demand it cut ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, and extradite
Sinai terrorists taking shelter in Gaza, and those suspected of abetting them. The Egyptians created a buffer zone on the Egyptian side of the Gaza border, flooded the smuggling tunnels with seawater, and succeeded in significantly diminishing arms smuggling into Gaza through Sinai. In order to appease the Egyptians, Hamas has also begun establishing a buffer zone on its side of the border in order to deny terrorists free passage and to prevent arms from flowing from Gaza into Sinai.

Hamas, which is under heavy external pressure (from Israel and Egypt), is also the object of domestic criticism and unrest over the ruins that remain from Protective Edge in 2014, the poverty and continued siege, the harsh economic conditions, and high unemployment (in the 20-24 age cohort, unemployment in Gaza stands at 67 percent while it is 30 percent in the West Bank). Gazans have access to electricity just a few hours each day, and the quality of their water is getting worse. At the same time, Hamas rewards its cronies with housing and jobs, and siphons off part of the international humanitarian aid coming into Gaza for its own uses. The situation is dire and leaves a fertile ground for the rise of more extremists Jihadist groups.

The difficult situation in Gaza has been exacerbated in the months since Abu Mazen decided to take advantage of Hamas’ strategic weakness and pressure it into accepting his terms for a reconciliation. He presented this to the Trump administration as evidence of his efforts in the war against Islamic terror.

Abu Mazen is fighting against Hamas with economic pressure on Gaza. He cut the salaries of PA employees in Gaza, stopped payments to Gaza’s health system, and aggravated the existing electricity crisis by withholding payments to Israel for the power it supplies to Gaza (30 percent of Gaza’s electricity comes from Israel).

Egypt and Muhammad Dahlan, Abu Mazen’s political nemesis, brokered a deal with Hamas, in which Egypt will help ease the electricity and medicine shortages and reconstruct the Rafah Crossing with an aim to reopen it. In exchange, Hamas agreed to establish a buffer zone on its border with Sinai (mostly to cut off ties between Gaza and ISIS in Sinai). To Abu Mazen’s dismay, this allowed Dahlan to deepen his involvement in Gaza’s affairs. Hamas’ readiness to accept this deal is also partly the result of Saudi Arabia’s efforts to isolate Qatar, which has the side effect of causing the Gaza Strip and Hamas harm through the drying up of an important funding source.

Hamas generally works to maintain quiet on its border with Israel, but at the same time encourages terrorist acts from the West Bank. Recent rocket fire from Gaza has usually been launched by rebel jihadi groups, but the danger of an escalation leading to a military conflict with Hamas hovers in the air. The IDF assesses that a military conflict is a possibility given the harsh economic situation in the Gaza and the comprehensive Israeli program to uncover and block terror tunnels into Israel, which deprives Hamas of a strategic asset.
Summary

Israel is currently in the midst of an uncertainty laden strategic environment, in both the global dimension relevant to Israel’s security and, perhaps more urgently, the regional dimension. The injection of President Trump as an influential actor into global and regional affairs only compounds the uncertainty.

Israel’s growing might does not solve the underlying lack of security stability in the Middle East. Regional stability could be disrupted at any time, even if the parties involved have no interest in a violent escalation in the foreseeable future. It is easy to imagine scenarios that lead to a new intifada in the territories, or another war with Hezbollah, or even war with Syrian and Iranian forces in the north, or against Hamas in the south. The threat of a rapid and violent escalation requires Israel to carefully consider each move it makes.

Alongside these troubling challenges, the past year offered evidence of Israel’s improved international standing. This is the result of Israel’s military, economic, and strategic prowess, as well as its “soft power.”

Israeli innovation (especially in hi-tech, cyber, hydro, and agricultural technologies) has garnered a world-class reputation. Based on this, Israel is fast developing relations with the rising powers of Asia and Africa. Headlining this trend was the first ever state visit of an Indian prime minister – Narendra Modi – to Israel (July 2017). Prime Minister Netanyahu’s visit to China (March 2017) reflected the same trend. These two giants, whose combined populations constitute a third of the world’s total population, recognize an interest in cultivating relations with Israel and have not been deterred by pressure from the Muslim world, as in the past. However, despite a certain decrease in efforts to wear away at Israel’s international standing with boycotts and de-legitimization campaigns, Israel is still vulnerable to the damage such efforts could inflict. A case in point are the recent UNESCO resolutions ignoring the historical Jewish connection to the Temple Mount (October 13, 2016), and which designated the Cave of the Patriarchs and Hebron’s Old City Palestinian as heritage sites in grave danger of being harmed (July 7, 2017).

Along with the challenges and threats, Israel has considerable opportunities ahead of it: to develop its relations with the United States; to deepen cooperation with the moderate Sunni states; and to make use of its assets to further develop its network of international connections (including in Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet Union). Israel’s strategic strength and the existence of a sympathetic president in Washington open a window for diplomatic activity that would block the danger of Israel moving toward a bi-national reality that would threaten Israel’s Jewish identity. Israel can act now, under relatively favorable conditions, to ensure its future as a strong and attractive Jewish and democratic state. Israel should not dally in taking advantage of this strategic window of opportunity; there is no guarantee it will remain open.
Endnotes

1 Delivered on May 21, 2017
2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Wall Street Journal, May 30, 2017
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 New York Times, July 28, 2017
9 Guardian, August 8, 2017
10 Independent, February 18, 2017
11 Thus, Russia spent 68 billion dollars on military expenditures in the previous year while NATO’s European members spent a combined 265 billion. Russia’s population is shrinking and stands today at 144 million, while Europe passed the half billion marker. Total Russian GDP is 2 trillion dollars while Europe’s stands at 16 trillion.
12 Pew Research Center, 5 facts about how Americans view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, May 23, 2016
13 Haaretz, August 16, 2017
14 Haaretz, December 1, 2015
15 Haaretz, July 17, 2017
16 New York Times, July 19, 2017
17 Haaretz, July 5, 2017
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23 Haaretz, May 8, 2017
24 Haaretz, July 25, 2017
26 Haaretz, May 20, 2017
27 According to the PA’s criteria, a prisoner sentenced as a terrorist by Israel for over 30 years earns a monthly stipend of 3000 USD. This is four times the average salary within the Palestinian territories
28 Haaretz, January 24, 2017
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Introduction

JPPI’s 2017 Conference on the Future of the Jewish People (Feb. 28 – March 1, 2017) assessed the social, political, economic, and ideological shifts taking place in the Western world that could influence the future of the Jewish people. In addition to identifying key trends and gauging their possible ramifications, the Conference framed policy dilemmas and formulated potential policy recommendations to help mitigate negative trends and leverage new opportunities. The following paper is a summary outlining the Conference’s main insights. Since the shifts taking place in the West are surrounded by uncertainty, it must be noted that the possible avenues of influence are at times contradictory. As developments taking place within Israel itself affect the Western world’s approach to Israel and the Jewish people, this issue was discussed as well and its relevant trends are included in Part 2 of this report. Part 3 lays out a set of policy challenges and dilemmas generated in Conference discussions and offers decision makers some key policy recommendations. (The original report was updated ahead of the publication of JPPI’s Annual Assessment of the Jewish People.)

Shifts in the West – Challenges and Dilemmas that Call for Policy Measures in Israel and the Diaspora

Shifting trends in the West may have significant implications for Israel and the Jewish people. These developments require shaping policy measures to both mitigate potential negative effects and leverage new opportunities.
Part 1
A. Upsetting the Existing International Order

It is clear that in recent years there has been a weakening of the cornerstones at the base of the world order as we have known it since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. This order was based on American dominance (even while the international system tilted toward multi-polarity), institutions of “global governance” (such as the UN, World Bank, IMF, IAEA and others), trans-Atlantic cooperation between the United States and Europe, expanding globalization and international trade and free markets based on liberal values.

In the framework of this world order, the United States was the dominant external actor in the Middle East, and Israel benefited from its close relationship with America. A number of elements led to the destabilizing of these cornerstones: American “exhaustion” from being the global policeman (including investing in expensive wars in the Middle East); the Obama Doctrine which limited the intervention of American forces while prioritizing dialogue and acting within multi-lateral frameworks; “the Putin Doctrine” which took advantage of the diminished U.S. role (seen as a show of American weakness) and strengthened Russia’s global position; China’s rising power; Europe’s weakening and the growing doubts over its collective identity and future; and the upsetting of the domestic-political order.

The Middle East provided an important contribution to this trend as the old order collapsed, turning Syria into a blood-soaked catastrophe, sending waves of terror and refugees to Europe, testing both the Obama and Putin
In the emerging international reality, we are witnessing rising nationalism and populism and a growing critique of globalization; the aggressive moves of Moscow in Eastern Europe and the Middle East; strategic Chinese assertiveness (South China Sea, penetrating deep into Africa, establishing a naval port in Djibouti, and its economic infrastructure initiative framed as its “One Belt One Road” policy (a modern Silk Road)); cracks in the EU (Brexit) which is also under the heavy strain of terror and refugees; the strengthening of right-wing nationalist parties in Europe (despite their losses in France, The Netherlands and Austria); the rise of alternative regional institutions (the Chinese Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Shanghai Europe Asia Alliance); and the rise of Turkey and Iran’s weight as regional powers.

The ascendance of the Trump administration is the most conspicuous expression of how the domestic-political order is being upset and how it can dramatically influence the current world order. It is not yet clear how the United States will navigate between an isolationist trend and possible impulses for international aggression. The dozens of cruise missiles fired at a Syrian military base (April 2017) in response to Assad’s use of chemical weapons in Idlib sent a clear message as to the new president’s intention to reestablish American deterrence that had deteriorated during the previous administration, and act as a leading power in the international arena. That said, it is difficult to assess at this time to what extent President Trump will persist with this policy. Trump’s decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord (June 1, 2017), and the reasoning he presented: “I was elected to represent the citizens of Pittsburgh, not Paris”, can be interpreted that he is not rushing to shoulder the burden of global leadership.

It’s possible that Trump will try to reach a grand bargain with Putin to implement a new world order. This will not be a simple task given the many areas of contention between the two powers. The range of possibilities as to the future of Washington-Moscow relations is wide: tight cooperation at one end and a new Cold War on the other. As for the United States and China, there is the possibility of an escalation into a trade war. The Trump administration could also weaken the UN, NATO, and other American alliances. (That is, in the framework of a general American trend of moving away from a sense of American exceptionalism and responsibility for world peace and to maintaining it, which has characterized American foreign policy in the past.)
Possible Implications for Israel and Diaspora Jewry

Israel

The disruption of the established world order and the possibility that a new order will coalesce presents challenges but also opportunities for Israel:

- In a world in which nationalist and isolationist tendencies seem to be on the rise, the inclination to intervene in Israel’s affairs could diminish. On the other hand, this development may also erode the inclination to come to Israel’s aid in times of need.

- The growing influence of nationalism over cosmopolitanism could lead to greater acceptance in the West of Israel’s position: a state seeking to maintain and assert its Jewish national identity.

- It is reasonable to assume that the relationship with the American administration will strengthen and maybe even become a force multiplier for improving relations between Israel and key countries in the Middle East.

- If the United States’ tendency to decrease its commitment to a moral global vision grows, while employing a narrow test of what falls within the “American interest”, it could decide not to support Israel on issues that it deems to be in contradiction with its material interests.

- The U.S. focus on domestic issues while neglecting its role as global leader, especially in the Middle East, would harm Israel and even erode its deterrent force.

- American-Russian understandings could limit Israel’s maneuvering room. At the same time, an American-Russian or American-Chinese conflict could generate new risks and dilemmas for Israel.

- Presently, it is difficult to assess how the emerging international reality will influence the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At this stage, the U.S. continues to take a leading role in achieving a settlement; however, only time will tell if Washington will maintain its leadership role or relinquish it to other actors.

- The continued American leadership of the peace process creates opportunities for Israel to advance an agreement under a sympathetic interlocutor. However, it could also invite pressure to offer painful concessions that would eventually cast a shadow over the relationship with the Trump administration, as supportive as it may be.

- In a world that increasingly relies on scientific and technological innovation, Israel has the potential for significant achievements. In addition to the economic benefits, meeting this potential will strengthen Israel’s “soft power” in the West (and in the world generally) and strengthen Israel’s image as the “Start-up Nation.”

- Cutting-edge technologies could help close the qualitative gap between Israel and its enemies, who could equip themselves with advanced arms that do not require a special infrastructure of quality education and training (which is required today to operate an advanced military force).
Diaspora Jewry

• Innovative technologies engender social atomization and could thus further imperil Jewish solidarity ("the end of the community campfire"). Alongside the erosion of the role of veteran organizations, closed virtual dialogue groups are developing that isolate them from society at large.

• New technologies – those that make intercontinental travel more efficient and affordable as well as social networks – allow a strengthening of connections between Diaspora and Israeli Jews. Virtual Jewish dialogue communities are expanding. At the same time, individuals have greater exposure to alternative identities. The deepening of “leisure culture” reinforces the potential for such developments.

• A dynamic world characterized by scientific and technological innovation tends to reward excellence. This opens new horizons for the Jewish people, which has a long record of achievement and excellence in these areas.

B. Upsetting the Existing Domestic Political Order in the West

Alongside the upheaval in the existing world order, in recent years we have also witnessed an erosion of the stability of the political order in the West as the doubts surrounding the validity of its foundational values grow: the liberal-capitalist economic system based on free markets and globalization.

The continued effects of the 2008 economic crisis, combined with free-market capitalist forces and globalization trends, new technologies and robotics, have diverted many blue-collar jobs overseas, hurting mostly the working class and leading to growing economic polarization. Migration, from Latin America to the United States, and from Africa and the Middle East to Europe, including illegals, has exacerbated frustrations as many fear these immigrants will compete for scarce jobs. Beyond this, the immigration and resulting demographic trends have fed into a sense of cultural displacement among white Christians, who feel increasingly like a minority "in their own country." As Muslim minorities expand demographically and become more assertive and integrate into local politics, so does the fear and concern in Europe. The wave of refugees, the largest since the end of World War II, is seen in Europe as a demographic, cultural, and security threat. At the same time, the wave of terror rooted in radical Islam is striking at the heart of Europe and adding to a sense of fear and disorientation. The formation of ISIS, and the thousands of young Muslims from Europe who have gone off to join its ranks, signaled to many Europeans the failure of the open border, multicultural system, and the failure of current political structures to deal with the threat.

These issues have strengthened “fear based politics,” turning people against the other, those who are different (nationally, socially, economically or religiously).

The social media discourse encourages short, blunt and violent messages that attract attention. In many cases, information reaching the public is biased or twisted to serve a specific agenda. Even
worse, the lines between “real” and “fake” news have been blurred and “alternative facts” are widely disseminated and often left unchallenged. Social media based information sources and partisan news outlets do not allow adequate filtering, fact checking, or balanced reporting. Dialogue has become over simplified. Nuanced discourse has been replaced by simple messages powered by emotional rather than intellectual forces. Political rhetoric has evolved into a repetition of black and white slogans aimed at the lowest common denominator.

There is a feeling in the West that traditional elements of governance – the political system, parties, parliaments – do not represent the interests of a significant segment of the population that feels alienated from political elites and traditional political structures, and powerless to effect change, even through elections. The fact that political leaders can speak to tens of millions instantaneously and gauge their responses immediately, contributes to a weakening of the institutions of representative democracy.

This, combined with a general frustration and disappointment with the traditional ruling classes, seen as corrupt or out of touch, has fueled the rise of populist parties and politicians seeking to take on the ruling elites. One trend we are watching is the rise of nationalistic right-wing political figures and parties espousing – with an Islamophobic soundtrack – populist economic, immigration, and security policies.

Potential Impacts on Israel and Diaspora Jewry

Israel

- Israel’s strategic standing improves due to the rise of the new U.S. administration, which publicly proclaims its support of Israel and expresses hostility toward Israel’s enemies.

- At this stage, the U.S. has blocked the political impulse of some of Israel’s right wing elements to take advantage of what they consider a “window of opportunity” opened by Trump’s election: to annex West Bank territory – in part or in its entirety – and foreclose the possibility of a two-state solution. However, only time will tell if Washington keeps this “window” shut.

- Rise in support for Israel given the strength of right-wing populist parties in Europe that mostly support Israel (not Le Pen’s party, which lost the presidential elections, and supports banning, for example, external Jewish symbols such as the kippa from the public sphere).

- Increased support for Israel based on the growing fear of Islamic terror and immigration. Increasing openness to Israel’s claims that there is no difference between terror aimed at Israel and terror aimed at the West.

- Increased legitimization of nationalistic trends in Israel.
• Radicalization among the most liberal elements of the Democratic Party in the U.S. (minorities, millennials) accompanied by a negative approach to Israel. It must be noted that this group increasingly includes many young American Jews likely to choose their allegiance to liberal democratic principles over a commitment to Israel.

• Continued erosion of Israel’s bi-partisan support in the United States (based on domestic polarization in the U.S. on one hand, and the strengthening Israeli right on the other).

Diaspora Jewry

• Societies that shy away from liberal and cosmopolitan values, tilting instead toward nationalism and the development of their internal identity, could evince hostility toward minorities including the Jewish community.

• Economic pressures on the middle class (in the U.S. and Europe) could strengthen anti-Semitic outbursts and turn the Jews, who are relatively successful economically, into scapegoats.

• The preferential treatment Jews have received in Europe since the Holocaust (additional rights, direct access to political leaders, increased economic support) could be threatened.

• The continued undermining of Israel’s bi-partisan support, and the growing gap between Democrats and Republicans with respect to Israel, could further erode the influence of American pro-Israel organizations (despite this, support for Israel continues to remain one of the few bi-partisan issues).

• The deepening the divide between parts of the liberal U.S. Jewish community and Israel, which is becoming more right-wing, nationalistic, and religious.

• A decline in the political power of American Jews, given their lack of unity and the internal Jewish polarization with respect to Israel.

• A potential decrease in the power of U.S. Jewish organizations – on both the local and national levels – given the general disappointment with the current leadership and systems. Alternatives posed by social media help propel this trend and create space for virtual dialogue communities, which tend to self-isolate.

• Given the general increased political and social polarization, the potential exists for a similar polarization within the U.S. Jewish community.

• A widening divide between parts of the American Jewish community and the Jewish organizational leadership that must cooperate with the Trump administration.

• Most of American Jewry (about 70 percent)
has historically been affiliated with the liberal Democratic base and the values of human rights, equality, and opposition to racism and discrimination. This means that most American Jews are firmly on the losing side of the last election cycle. This creates a double dilemma for some Jewish leaders: first, how to oppose Trump and his ideas but maintain the identity of a loyal minority; and second, how to oppose Trump and his ideas without harming the interests of the State of Israel, which sees him as a close friend.

- The 20-30 percent of U.S. Jews – mostly Orthodox – that supports Trump are offering a new strategy for Jewish American integration into the larger society. For the last 200 years, the model was based on the internalization and affirmation of civic values – pluralism, tolerance, and egalitarianism – while erasing outward cultural markers that had signified the Jewish community (today identified with Orthodox Judaism). The changing characteristics of the new American Christian right and the growing population proportion of the Orthodox change the rules of the game: rather than the civic creed these add a new moral, religious component, which is thicker. Conservative Judeo-Christian morality, which to Orthodox Jews includes such principles as fairness (reward and punishment), loyalty, sanctity, and authority, which are generally less emphasized by liberal America and liberal Jews. (Interestingly, this development has led to potential alliances on specific issues between Jews and Muslims in the U.S.).

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Part 2
Shifts in Israel that Could Influence the West’s Approach to Israel and the Jewish People

A. The Rise of the Religious Nationalist Right in Israel

In recent years, we have seen the rise of right-wing religious nationalism in Israel. This trend is growing due to several factors: demographic trends in Israel; the crisis of the Israeli left; growing doubts over the legitimacy of ruling elites; the collapse of the Oslo peace process; the increasing solidification of the notion among Israelis that “there is no Palestinian partner for peace”; an erosion of the self-confidence of Israeli secularism; and the general violence raging throughout the Middle East, which is seen by many as reaffirming the right’s worldview.

In this sense, developments in the National-Religious sector are especially interesting. This sector’s leadership has in recent years focused on openly and aggressively seeking to provide moral and political leadership for the state and for Israeli society. The National-Religious sector adheres to a nationalistic version of Zionism with some prominent characteristics: it sees the return to Zion and the establishment of a Jewish state not necessarily in Herzlian terms (as an answer to the Jewish problem) as its goal, rather as the necessary fulfilment of National-Religious ideals. It believes that the State of Israel should reflect Jewish interests. The National-Religious sector seeks to
reshape the normative intellectual and moral basis of authority on which the Israeli legal system rests. In this framework, they imbue a greater authority to values that draw from the religious world and Jewish legacy, rather than from the secular-liberal-cosmopolitan world.

The National-Religious sector seeks to implement this goal – its push for the moral and political leadership of the country – through the Jewish Home Party, prominent religious figures in the Likud Party, and through its attempt to garner influence in the ranks of the civil service, the press, and the military leadership where National-Religious officers are increasingly prominent.

The National-Religious worldview is expressed, first and foremost, in trying to settle and annex West Bank territories. With its current control of the justice and education ministries (Ministers Ayelet Shaked and Naftali Bennett respectively), it is advancing policies and legislation that emphasize Jewish identity and the interests of the state as the nation-state of the Jewish people. There are those who see these initiatives as anti-liberal and a threat to the principles of equality and civil rights. In the educational sphere, they are advancing curricula that emphasize Jewish identity and nationalism, and weaken the commitment to liberal and universal values. Although only a fifth of the entire population considers itself as “belonging” to the National-Religious camp, broad segments of the population identify wholly or in part with National-Religious policies on issues of politics, security, and education. What distinguishes religious Zionism is that it provides a complete ideological vision and intellectual anchor that posits a coherent alternative to the ideology of secular Zionism that has ruled the country since its founding.

Possible Implications for how the West Relates to Israel

- As the West itself is highly polarized, dynamics in Israel could lead to contradictory results. For liberal segments in the West, Israel could be seen to be moving away from the shared values it was once thought to have. However, this is not necessarily the case with conservative elements in the West, who stress nationalism over cosmopolitanism and are averse to the existing order.
- We can expect increasing criticism from liberal voices in the West over Israel’s perceived lack of commitment to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-state solution; its attempts to push legislation seen as illiberal, and ever increasing demands to include religious content in the education system (there is a greater sympathy for such efforts among Republicans in the United States and right-wing elements in Europe).
- Among liberal groups in the United States, there may be growing perception that the principles that traditionally formed the foundation of the special relationship between Israel and America are eroding in Israel (equality under the law, personal freedoms, social justice, ethics, democracy,
religious pluralism, human rights, and the fair treatment of minorities).

B. Strengthening Israel’s Jewish Characteristics

Demographic, social, and cultural trends in recent years have led to a deepening of a range of phenomena and world-views that stand under a unified umbrella: the strengthening of Israel’s Jewish character. These are long-term structural trends; signs of them can be found in public opinion polls and in data relating to behavior and lifestyle. These trends take on different forms in different populations – usually according to religiosity level – and are not distinct to any single group. The easiest to explain are those coming from the demographic increase of the “religious” and “Haredi” sectors in Israel. In recent decades, the number of Israeli Jews we can identify as having a strong connection to Jewish culture/religion, in the cognitive and the practical sense, has grown. The percentage of Haredim within Israel’s Jewish population has increased from three percent in 1990 to ten percent today.

High birth rates among the Haredim continue to strengthen their ability to influence the Israeli agenda and political power of these groups and their ability to influence and shape the Israeli agenda and its societal characteristics.

A more complicated trend relates to a growing realization, especially among traditional elites and secular Israelis, of the need to “take ownership” over Israel’s Jewish character – after years in which this was neglected and left to Orthodox religious groups. A clear majority of Israeli Jews (90 percent according to the latest Pew survey) say that being Jewish is “very important” (54 percent) or “somewhat important” (36 percent). Thus, it is not surprising that in recent years there has been a noticeable expansion and deepening of the “Jewish renewal” discourse. This discourse connects various sub-groups: secular and Reform, liberal Orthodox, the formerly religious, participants in various pre-military courses, and those exposed to programs such as Taglit Birthright during their military service. All these are active to some degree in an expanding effort to shape Judaism in a manner that is not specifically religious and is more suitable for Israel in the 21st century. These groups take a sympathetic approach to aspects of religion and tradition in the public sphere, yet are wary of religious coercion and claim the freedom to decide personally on religious matters.

Accordingly, the number of Israelis seeking new approaches to the Jewish holidays and the number of pre-military seminaries merging Jewish studies with a pluralistic approach is growing.

Despite trends of Jewish renewal, and expansion of Jewish learning among secular Jews, Orthodox Judaism still defines many aspects of the Jewish state up to a point that some say that Israel is the
only democracy in the world in which Jews do not have freedom of religion. Israeli Jews grew up in Jewish state, and do not know any other way of life. They do not fully understand what it means to live as a Jewish minority, which deepens the gap between Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

Possible Implications for how the West Relates to Israel

The inclination of many Israelis to create a fusion of Jewish and Israeli culture could have contradictory outcomes:

• The formation of a unique Jewish-Israeli culture could further widen the gap with Diaspora Jewish culture. As this trend unfolds, it will weaken the connection between Israeli and Diaspora Jewish identity in the eyes of the West (and thus also the power attributed to the Jewish people generally).

• It may distance non-Orthodox Jews from Israel if they are excluded from the formation of a unique Jewish-Israeli culture.

• It may reinforce Israel’s image as pluralistic, i.e. able to include under an updated Jewish cultural umbrella various Jewish streams in a non-coercive manner. This process could strengthen the connection between the mostly liberal Diaspora and Israel.

C. Shifts in Israel’s Strategic Position and Power

From an historical perspective, Israel is something of a strategic miracle. At its founding, 650,000 Jews lived in Israel; today there are ten times that number. Israel is ranked 11th on the World Happiness Index, its birth rate is the highest among developed countries, and life expectancy is the fifth highest in the world for men and ninth highest for women. Israel’s per capita GDP ($37,000 a year) is higher than those of Italy and Spain. Israeli hi-tech is world class and several multinational corporations maintain R&D centers in Israel. The natural gas fields discovered off Israel’s shores promise energy security for years to come and have turned Israel into an energy exporter. Iran’s attempts to produce a nuclear weapon have been pushed back, at least for the near future. Exports to Asia have grown significantly. Moreover, the peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt are stable despite the regional turmoil. As a result of Iran’s regional subversion, jihadi terror, and the rise of ISIS, the mutual interests between Israel and the moderate Sunni countries in the region have grown and security cooperation with Egypt is better than ever. Given the collapse of Syria and Iraq, there is no longer a conventional military threat to Israel (Iran’s efforts to establish a land corridor to the Mediterranean, and the possibility of an Iranian presence, or that of militias subordinate to it on Israel’s Golan border, raise doubts as to the validity of this claim).

Despite such encouraging statistics, it is possible to draw contradictory assessments when examining

The exclusion of non-Orthodox Jews from the Jewish-Israeli culture could distance them from Israel
Israel’s strategic power. This is due to the strategic uncertainty that characterizes much of the world, and certainly the region. The Middle East remains turbulent. The cornerstones of the old regional order are crumbling, and a new reality has yet to emerge that can promise stability of any sort. The international arena relevant to the Middle East and to Israel’s strategic resilience is undergoing significant shifts as well and is far from radiating stability.

Meanwhile, Israel faces significant strategic challenges: the nuclear agreement achieved between Iran and the international community, described by Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu as a “mistake of historic proportions”; The emergence of a new order in Syria that threatens Israel’s security and brings Iran-led forces close to Israel’s border, the danger of a security escalation in the north (Hezbollah, ISIS, and other radical Islamist actors in Syria, or retaliatory strikes by Assad’s forces over Israeli actions intended to intercept arms shipments to Hezbollah) and in the south (Hamas or terror cells in Sinai); the danger the “Lone Wolf Intifada” continues to pose, and the outbreak of tense violence with religious underpinnings (similar to the July 2017 events on the Temple Mount)); the uncertainty regarding continued U.S. willingness to maintain a presence and leadership role in the Middle East; the impulse to transform the model for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (from direct negotiations under American leadership to a coercive solution pushed on Israel by the UN and led by a multinational coalition); that could increase if the US decides to abandon leadership of the peace process; the attempt to harm Israel through boycotts and de-legitimization efforts.

Alongside these various challenges, which hold considerable risk, there are also considerable opportunities for Israel: opening a “new page” in relations with the United States following the election of President Trump; deepening relationships with the Sunni moderates who are showing increased openness to Israel given the Iranian threat and radical terrorist groups: implementing a strategic plan that would stymie the threat of losing Israel’s Jewish character as Israel may head toward a bi-national reality.

Implications for how the West Relates to Israel and the Jewish People Jewry

- If Israel’s strategic stature is seen in the West as strong and it remains a close ally of the U.S., it diminishes the West’s appetite for forcing diplomatic solutions on Israel that it opposes (an agreement with the Palestinians and other strategic issues).
- The failure of renewing the peace process that Trump initiated could drag Israel into a diplomatic and security escalation with the Palestinians and negatively influences Israel’s international standing as well as its relationships with Arab states.

D. Demographic Shifts

The population of Israel has grown steadily. Recently, it has overtaken the United States as the largest Jewish population in the world. By the middle of the 21st century, most of the world’s
Jews, more than half, will live in Israel. At the same time, the composition of Israeli Jewish society is also changing. Most Jews in Israel today are native-born. The significance of this is that they are raised in a common environment, learn in the Israeli education system, have compulsory military service (for the most part), and are exposed throughout their lives to the cultural, social, and political advantages of the state.

At the same time, the composition of Israeli society is also shifting according to religiosity. The Haredi and National-Religious sectors are growing while the traditional center and, to a lesser extent, the secular are weakening. To compare: The Diaspora is largely characterized by demographic stability with a slightly negative trajectory due to low birth rates and an aging population. In the United States, as in Israel, the proportion of Haredim in the Jewish population is also growing. High intermarriage rates in the Diaspora distances some Jews from Jewish institutions and from Jewish expressions in the personal and familial spheres. On the other hand, mixed marriages expand the circle of non-Jews who have some familiarity with someone Jewish, and through them familiarity with Judaism and Israel.

Implications for how the West Relates to Israel and the Jewish People

• The West takes a particular interest in issues related to the demographics of Jews and non-Jews in the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. That is, regarding the significance of continued Israeli control over the West Bank, and potential future Israeli decisions to annex territories or parts of such, and their impact on Israel’s Jewish and democratic nature.

• There is some interest in the shifts of the relative weight of various groups in Israeli society as well. Especially, there is much attention given to the growth of the religious and Haredi sectors of society given the tendency of these groups to hold right-wing political positions. Moreover, given the lack of separation between religion and state in Israel, these sectors’ desire to strengthen the religious nature of the Israeli public sphere, could be perceived negatively by considerable segments of the liberal West.

• Another demographic focal point that draws the West’s attention is the influence of immigrants from the former Soviet Union on Israeli politics and society. On one hand, this large wave of immigration has had a moderating effect on processes that threatened to erode Israel’s Jewish majority; on the other hand, these immigrants are largely right-wing in their political positions. Moreover, as a Russian diaspora, they influence and can help improve Israel’s diplomatic relationship with Russia.
Part 3  
Challenges and Dilemmas that Call for Policy Measures

Shifting trends underway in the Western world may hold significant implications for Israel and world Jewry. These developments demand shaping policies to both mitigate negative consequences and leverage new opportunities. We present here insights and recommendations expressed during JPPI’s 2017 Conference on the Future of the Jewish People irrespective of the views and positions of the Institute.

In light of the polarization trend inside the US, Israel should tread cautiously and strive to maintain bi-partisan support

Conference discussion groups highlighted six areas that pose policy dilemmas and challenges for decision makers in Israel and the Diaspora:

Formulating Israel’s policy vis-à-vis the Trump administration on diplomatic and ideological matters

The election of President Trump carried the promise of a friendlier, more sympathetic administration than its predecessor. Alongside the possibility of turning a “new page” in U.S.-Israel relations, there are also some dilemmas as to how much Israel should publicly identify with the new administration’s ideology and the sentiments and ethos that helped Donald Trump take the White House. The majority of American Jews disagree with the president’s views, which brings the sensitivity of this diplomatic dilemma into sharp focus.

- Given the polarization trend inside the United States, Israel should tread cautiously and strive to maintain bi-partisan support. Israel should differentiate between developing a good working relationship with the Trump administration and projecting an ideological affinity to it. It should not neglect relations with the Democratic Party, especially its more liberal elements (minorities, millennials) who currently tend to have a negative view of Israel.

- Given the ability to improve the relationship with the American administration and given its interest in advancing an Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Israel should utilize this strategic advantage to counteract the threat of its sliding into a bi-national reality, and as a force multiplier to the improving relations with the moderate Arab states in the region.

- The initial stage of Trump’s presidency is characterized by steps and rhetoric that lead to conflicting conclusions as to his determination to rehabilitate American deterrent power and take a lead role in international affairs, Israel should exercise caution in its geopolitical conduct due to the possibility that the U.S. could decide to isolate itself and decrease support for Israel on issues that do not line up with its own material interests.
Formulating policy toward Europe’s far-right nationalist parties

Shifting trends in Europe include rising populism, sharp polarization, and the strengthening of right-wing political elements, who sometimes express their support of Israel. This phenomenon is reinforced by the growing fear of Islamic terror and new (mostly Muslim) immigration waves. There seems to be a greater acceptance of the Israeli claim that there is no difference between terrorism that targets Israel and terrorism aimed at the West. At the same time, there is a growing legitimacy granted to the political rise of the Israeli right.

- Israel should be wary of granting legitimacy to the radical far-right parties gaining currency in Europe. Even though they may seek the support of Israel and Jews, and at times express pro-Israel positions, Israel should be careful not to “take the bait” and must not express its support of these parties.

- Israel should stand against Islamophobia in the international arena, and in so doing express its values and loyalty to its own Muslim citizens.

Shaping a strategy that considers disruptions of the current world order and the rise of new non-Western powers

The disruption of the existing international order and the possibility that a new order will emerge presents Israel with both challenges and opportunities. For example, certain American-Russian understandings could limit Israel’s maneuverability with respect to some issues and, at the same time, favor Israeli interests with respect to others. In a world where nationalistic and isolationist trends seem to be on the rise, the impulse to intervene in Israel’s affairs could diminish. On the other hand, this might also weaken the inclination to come to Israel’s aid in times of need. The growing influence of nationalism over cosmopolitanism could lead to greater acceptance in the West of Israel’s predicament: a state seeking to maintain and assert its Jewish national identity.

- Israel should encourage those voices within the administration that call for the United States to reaffirm and fulfill its role as leader of the free world. America’s focusing on domestic affairs while neglecting its global leadership role, in general and in the Middle East in particular, could harm Israel and erode the might and deterrent power attributed to it.

- Israel should encourage Washington to continue taking a leading role in mediating the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. A lack of American leadership would create a vacuum for other international actors, who are not as sympathetic to Israel, to fill.

- Developing relations with the rising non-Western powers (China, Russia, India) should proceed with care and transparency vis-a-vis...
the United States. Israel’s diplomatic moves should be undertaken with the fundamental understanding that there is no alternative to its strategic alliance with Washington.

• Israel should increase its investment in cutting edge science and developing new technologies. In a world in which these fields are highly regarded and rewarded, Israel has the potential for significant achievements. Alongside the economic benefits, realizing this potential will strengthen Israel’s “soft power” in the West (and in the world writ large) and reinforce Israel’s image as the “startup nation.”

Improving Israel-Diaspora relations in light of trends of polarization and alienation in the West

Polarizing trends in the West have not bypassed Israel or Diaspora Jewry. Much of American Jewry (about 70 percent) historically identifies with the liberal-Democratic base recently trounced in the U.S. elections. Right wing, nationalistic and religious tendencies in Israel are also growing. As these trends continue, liberal Diaspora Jews may become more alienated from Israel. If these gaps widen within the Jewish people, its political power will diminish accordingly.

• In this time of polarization, Israel should focus on its potential as a unifying force. It should increase its investment in strengthening connection with the Diaspora and make a special effort to assist in healing divisions among polarized Diaspora communities.

• The Israeli government should be aware of and sensitive to the double bind facing the Jewish American leadership: on the one hand – how to contend with ideologies of the Trump administration while maintaining the status of a loyal minority. On the other – how to maintain the liberal values objectionable to the more radical elements of the administration without harming the interests of the State of Israel, which considers the new administration a dear friend.

• Israel should differentiate between “love” of Israel and “blind support” of its government’s policies. Many young Jews in the Diaspora feel deeply connected to Israel, but reject some of its policies. Israel needs to be able to accept them as they are, as the real threat is that younger Diaspora Jews may become apathetic and disconnected from Israel.

• Israel should strive to be more pluralistic on personal and family matters, and work to be more open to the non-Orthodox streams. Jewish communities in Israel and abroad need to adapt to a new reality of greater diversity, multiplicity of views, complex identities, conflicting narratives and acknowledge a broader array of organizations that reject the hegemony of any single organization.

• Israel should initiate direct and constant connections with Jewish groups and organizations, even if they are not usually considered part of the current establishment.

• Israel should support joint projects with the Diaspora based on Jewish values (such as a Jewish Peace Corps).
• Israelis should be encouraged to get better acquainted with the Jewish communities of the Diaspora.

• The trend of forging a new Jewish-Israeli culture could widen the gap between Israel and Diaspora Jewry (and thus erode the power of the Jewish people). Therefore, Diaspora involvement in such “renewal” efforts should be encouraged as much as possible.

• As many Jews consider leaving Europe, Israel must work to improve its absorption infrastructure (including employment opportunities). At the same time, Israel must avoid loud and conspicuous Aliyah persuasion campaigns so as not to draw negative pushback from certain governments.

• Diaspora Jewish institutions should focus on renewal and reinvention initiatives, with a primary focus on educational programs, in order to halt the erosion of their centrality and reinvigorate their currency in the communities they serve.

• The Jewish community should be aware of and discuss the implications of a relatively new trend in the United States – an ideological connection between Orthodox Jewish communities and (mostly Christian) social conservatives (characterized by the trends and sentiments that helped bring Trump to power). The building blocks of this bridge are not the classical liberal values once thought to be the common base between the Jewish community and the American ethos.

• Jewish organizations need to enlist state authorities to actively counter anti-Semitism. They should demand that their various governments deal effectively with anti-Semitic incidents.

• Jewish communities should promote Jewish-Muslim dialogue initiatives based on their common status as minority groups.

• Given the significant demographic growth of the North American Haredi and Orthodox communities (and the growing involvement of some of their members in public and economic positions of influence), there is a growing need to appeal to the spiritual and rabbinic leaders of these communities to convince their members to take a more active role in ensuring the future of the Jewish communities.

Steps to strengthen Diaspora Jewry given the trends challenging the centrality of communities and institutions

Polarization in the West is among the shifting trends that may erode the power of Diaspora Jewish communities and institutions. Social media contributes to this trend by stimulating personal atomization and weakening social cohesion, which endangers Jewish solidarity. Closed virtual dialogue groups that self-isolate from the larger society are also on the rise. All this is happening while voices opposed to liberal values and advocating greater nationalism and hostility to minorities grow louder – at times, hostility toward Jews seems to be increasing.
people. At the same time, leaders of the major Jewish organizations should encourage Haredi participation and leadership in the broader Jewish community.

• There should be a special effort focused on bringing Russian-speaking Jews and Israeli expats living in the West into the fold of the established Jewish community.

• New technologies should be harnessed – including those that allow more efficient and affordable intercontinental travel as well as social networks – in order to strengthen connections between Israeli and Diaspora Jews.

• An effort should be made to strengthen the political influence of European Jewish communities in light of a possible erosion of the special status granted them in the decades following the Holocaust (direct access to political leaders, increased financial support, etc.).

5. Monitoring illiberal internal Israeli trends and curbing initiatives negatively affect the image and values of the Jewish state

As the West itself is highly polarized, dynamics in Israel, where right wing, nationalistic and religious tendencies are on the rise, could lead to conflicting influences. Western liberals tend to perceive Israel as abandoning some of the core values it has traditionally shared with the West. But this is not the case for conservative elements in the West, who prefer nationalism over cosmopolitanism and are dissatisfied with the prevailing order.

• Growing doubts among left-wing groups about Israel’s commitment to liberal values (rule of law, liberty, justice, ethics, democracy, religious pluralism, human rights, minority rights, and fighting racism), should worry Israeli decision makers on two levels: one relates to the ideological essence of the Jewish state and the other relates to the values at the foundation of Israel’s special relationship with the United States and liberal American Jewry.

• Israel, which has faced the challenge of striking a balance between its “Jewish” and “Democratic” characteristics since its founding, can offer the West a model for a successful coexistence between nationalism and liberalism.
The Need for an Integrated Index

In light of both a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe and the efforts of EU member country governments to redress it, there is a need for an integrative Anti-Semitism Index that can provide Israeli policy-makers and the leaders of Jewish organizations worldwide with a policy tool to monitor developments, facilitate decision-making, and assess the efficacy of implemented interventions.

Existing measurement tools have been limited to discrete aspects of the phenomenon, single pieces of the anti-Semitism puzzle. Some examine public opinion while others count and verify incidents of violence against or harassment of Jews. Occasional field studies have examined how Jews themselves perceive anti-Semitism.

JPPI’s Anti-Semitism Index for Europe is presented here for the third consecutive year. Prior to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, anti-Semitism seemed to be primarily a European problem. Economic malaise, fear of immigrants, and the ghosts of the 20th century had combined to produce a particularly toxic resurgence of nationalism. This year, we start to provide a framework to apply the same three-dimensional methodology to address the anti-Semitism in the United States.

Attempting to use the index for American Jewry is challenging in two ways, one fundamental and the other technical.

1. First and foremost, it is essential to point out that European anti-Semitism is of a different magnitude – both the threat and the discomfort it induces – than anti-Semitism in the United States. North American Jews, on the whole, are more “openly Jewish” within their professional and social circles than their European counterparts. In Europe, being
Jewish is an often freighted biographical element that evinces a self-conscious discretion of disclosure. Some of what is regarded as anti-Semitism in America, such as jokes about Jews, goes unnoticed in Hungary or Poland (countries with high expectations of cultural conformity where many of those with Jewish roots are reluctant to divulge their ancestry). These differences complicate the compilation and comparison of statistics from the two different continents.

2. While there is quantitative data regarding anti-Semitism as perceived by Jews in Europe, no such data exist for America. Therefore, our anti-Semitism index for the United States is based upon indirect indicators, such as anecdotal reports, survey questions relating to the comfort levels of Jews within their professional and social circles, and the number of references to anti-Semitism in both the general and Jewish press.

Part One – A Three-Dimensional European anti-Semitism Index

This integrated index aims to measure the discomfort of European Jewry and the threat levels against it. It is meant to be a tool for policy-makers that relates to three complementary dimensions of anti-Semitism affecting individual Jews and communal Jewish life. JPPI’s index integrates data from the Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) Global 100 survey of attitudes toward Jews, compiled in cooperation with various research institutes, anti-Semitic harassment figures collected by local Jewish organizations entrusted with security (such as CST in the UK and SPCJ in France), and research findings regarding perceptions of anti-Semitism among Jews.

As summarized in the Kantor Centre’s Annual Report on Anti-Semitism in the world, Anti-Semitic incidents in 2016 reflect two parallel yet contradictory trends. On one hand is the continuing decrease in the number of incidents, especially violent ones, in most European countries with large Jewish populations. On the other is a continuing widespread increase, sometimes dramatic, in verbal and visual expressions of anti-Semitism on social media and during demonstrations. Beyond precise quantification, the internet has become the main platform for the trafficking of bigotry and hate, a not-so-virtual reality where anti-Semitism is unleashed in abusive, unhinged language.

France

On March 30, 2017, the French National Consultative Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) published its annual report on racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in France, which showed a 58 percent drop in anti-Semitic incidents in 2016. According to the CNCDH the total number of anti-Semitic incidents in 2016 was 335 compared to 808 the previous year — the sharpest year-to-year drop recorded since 2001. At the same time, they report, “Anti-Semitic biases persist, linking Jews to money and power and condemning them for their attachment to their community and to Israel.”
JPPI's Anti-Semitism Index

Attitudes towards Jews

Anti-Jewish Attitudes in 2016

- Europe's Muslims
- Average Europe
- France
- Germany
- UK
- USA

Change from last year

Anti-Jewish Incidents in 2016

- France
- Germany
- UK
- USA

Number of incidents per 1,000 Jews and % of change compared to last year

JPPI's Anti-Semitism Index

Perceptions among Jews

Anti-Semitism is a Serious Problem in My Country in 2016

Source: FRA, AJC.
The decrease in attacks on Jews “is primarily due to security measures applied by the authorities as part of the Vigipirate plan, to protect Jewish institutions and neighborhoods in France” [initiated in 2015, following the murder of four Jews at the Hyper-Cacher kosher supermarket near Paris by an Islamist]. It should be noted that 800 Jewish buildings — from synagogues to schools and other institutions — have been under constant army protection since the January 2015 attacks. As of July 2017, a total of 10,000 soldiers have served in enforcing the state of emergency. Jews emerged in the CNCDH report as the most accepted minority in France (with 81 percent acceptance), compared to Muslims and Roma.

Table 1. Anti-Semitism in Western Europe 2016-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD JEWS</th>
<th>Trend</th>
<th>Europe average</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harbor anti-Semitic attitudes (%)²</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>24 (26)</td>
<td>17 (37)</td>
<td>12 (8)</td>
<td>16 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-- as above, among Muslims (%)³</td>
<td>▼</td>
<td>62 (55)</td>
<td>49 (83)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54 (62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ANTI-SEMITIC BEHAVIOR (number of incidents as reported to official agencies) | | | | |
| Increase/Decrease (%) | -58 | +36 | -13 |
| Violent assaults | 2 (32) | 11 (41) | 3 (4) |
| Total incidents (extreme violence, assaults, damages, desecrations and threats) | ▲ | 335 (808)⁴ | 1,309 (960)⁵ | 644 (740)⁶ |
| Number of physical attacks per 1,000 Jews | ▼ | 2 (5) | 6 (8) | 5 (7) |
| Per cent of attacks that are not reported⁷ | 77 | 72 | 73 | 72 |

| ANTI-SEMITISM AS PERCEIVED BY JEWS⁸ | | | | |
| Have been personally assaulted (%) | | 11 | 5 |
| Anti-Semitism is a very or fairly big problem (%) | (67) | (86) | (48) | (25) |
| Have considered emigration because they do not feel safe in their country (%) | (32) | 49 (80) | (19) | (26) |
| Avoid places in their neighborhood because they would not feel safe there as a Jew (%) | (27) | (20) | (35) | (28) |

Note: Latest available data. Numbers in parenthesis are from 2014.
We can mention two main reasons for the decreased anxiety of French Jews, which is vividly expressed in the sharp decrease in French Aliyah in 2016 and the first half of 2017:

1. In France, anti-Jewish assaults have traditionally been almost exclusively perpetrated by resentful youth of Maghrebian descent. The government’s visible commitment to protect Jews and severely punish their attackers has proved, thus far, to be an effective deterrent.

2. In 2016, although there was no terror attack motivated by anti-Semitism per se, Jews were killed alongside non-Jews in the Bataclan theater massacre in Paris and the weaponized truck that plowed into a group of pedestrians in Nice. One can conjecture that these incidents contributed to making French Jews feel less singled out and relatively less anxious.

United Kingdom

British Jewry recorded 1,309 anti-Semitic incidents in 2016, a 36 percent increase from the 960 incidents recorded in 2015 and the highest annual total the Community Security Trust (CST), the communal organization charged with protecting British Jews from anti-Semitism and terrorism, has ever recorded. Despite this significant increase, the CST also noted a 13 percent decrease of violent incidents and an 11 percent decrease in acts of vandalism. In Britain as many other countries, we have observed this year less violent incidents and more rejection feelings.

In previous years, record highs stemmed from sudden, specific ‘trigger events,’ particularly between Israel and its neighbors. The 2016 high comprised consistently high monthly figures and reflected no obvious connection to the Middle East. Instead, domestic events appear to have fomented an atmosphere ripe for anti-Semitic incidents, which were also more likely to be reported. These included high-profile allegations of anti-Semitism within the Labour Party; a perceived increase in racism and xenophobia that resulted in and followed the Brexit referendum, including an increase in recorded racial and religious hate crimes; and regular, high-profile discussion of anti-Semitism, racism, and hate crimes in the mainstream media, the political discourse, and on social media. The CST stressed that the number of anti-Semitic incidents rose and remained at a high level in 2016 despite the fact that there was no military conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

In Britain, attacks on Jews are mostly committed by white ethnic Europeans motivated by a radical right-wing racist ideology. Despite the excellent working relationships between CST and various government agencies, an appropriate response to deter anti-Semitic crime has yet to be found.

Germany

In Germany, official sources pointed to a decrease from 740 cases in 2015 to 644 in 2016, yet a non-governmental monitoring agency reported higher numbers, especially in Berlin where a 16 percent rise was detected.
According to the European Union, more than 2.5 million refugees entered Europe during the last two years, 1.7 million of whom landed in Germany, and fear of the newcomers is still lingering. So far, it seems that the new immigrants have not effected an increase of anti-Semitism acts, even though they came from countries with deep anti-Semitic views. These new immigrants are busy surviving, finding ways to make a living, acquiring language skills, and acclimating to a new environment and culture.

The perpetrators continue to be from the radical circles of previous waves of Muslim immigration or from the extreme right. The 16 percent increase of anti-Semitic activity in Berlin, for instance, was not attributed to the newcomers despite the fact that most physical attacks on Jews were perpetrated by Muslims. Acts of desecration against Jewish cemeteries and monuments were mostly attributed to far right vandals. Violence perpetrated by the extreme left remained low.

However, the presence of the immigrants has had a notable albeit indirect influence: the strengthening of the extreme right does not seem to have been accompanied by stronger or more frequent public anti-Semitic statements. Still, the growing atmosphere of xenophobia and populism has a constant potential of becoming anti-Semitic.

The concern expressed in liberal circles is that such an atmosphere is endangering Europe's democratic values. As the refugee crisis continues, the discourse around it becomes increasingly virulent and violence against them, and minority groups in general, grows.

The Reaction of the Jewish Communities

The decrease in the number of violent incidents against Jews has not resulted in a feeling of security within the Jewish communities. On the contrary: the conspicuous police and military presence along with other stepped up security measures, welcome and necessary as they may be in the fight against terror, also contribute to the prevailing anxiety — if those measures are necessary, there is good reason for alarm.

Even though the wave of immigrants, most of whom come from countries with embedded anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli ideologies is not the source (at least for now) of an increase in anti-Semitism, it has brought some Jews, both individuals and communities, to see a storm gathering over Europe and rethink the viability of Jewish existence on the continent. In addition, the decrease in the number of violent incidents does not compensate for the ongoing increase in verbal and visual expressions of anti-Semitism and the hostile atmosphere they engender. In parallel, as a people that knows what it means to be a refugee, the Jewish communities feel an obligation to reach out to the newcomers. Therefore, some Jews find themselves between the proverbial rock and hard place.
Part Two – A Three-Dimensional American anti-Semitism Index

JPPI’s Annual Assessment this year addresses the tension between nationalism and globalization. In the Assessment’s various chapters, we have examined the implications of the nationalist backlash in the economic, geopolitical, and cultural arenas.

Although still a marginal phenomenon of the conservative backlash, the so called alt-right is a noteworthy cause of Jewish concern. One primary question and two secondary ones have fueled debate:

1. Is the emergence of the alt-right a transitory fringe phenomenon or the beginning of a cultural backlash that will imperil 70 years of Jewish prosperity and successful social integration in America?

2. Can the white supremacists imprint their anti-Semitic rhetoric on the white, blue-collar disenfranchised masses who view themselves as having suffered from economic globalization and may be susceptible to scapegoating the Jews and other minority groups?

3. Is President Trump’s relatively complaisant attitude toward this movement a sign of support, or only lip service to one of his most ardent bases of political support?

The events in Charlottesville on August 12 were symptomatic of a century-long cultural war that pits two visions of America against each other – the vision of the immigrant friendly “melting pot” with its attending notions of equality and tolerance versus the nativist ideal of an America free from foreign entanglements abroad and foreign influences domestically. It will not be easily resolved, and no one currently knows the answer to the three questions asked above. Unable to determine absolutely the validity of differing views concerning these questions, our role will be to provide a similar integrated methodology for measuring American anti-Semitism. Given the inherent differences from European anti-Semitism, we will keep these analyses separate and provide Jewish professionals and organizational leaders with a tool to assist their decision-making.

Although still a marginal phenomenon of the conservative backlash, the so called alt-right is a cause of Jewish concern

The JPPI integrated anti-Semitism index relates as mentioned to three dimensions:

**Dimension 1:** Public opinion and attitudes toward Jews.

**Dimension 2:** Anti-Semitic incidents of different sorts (extreme violence, assault, vandalism and desecration of Jewish property, threats, abusive behavior, literature), including harassment in the cyber sphere.

**Dimension 3:** Anti-Semitism as perceived by Jews.

Data exist for both the first dimension (ADL and Pew reports) and the second one. Systematic data for the third dimension, which relates to the degree
Table 2. Anti-Semitism in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC OPINION TOWARD JEWS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harbor anti-Semitic attitudes (%)(^{10})</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase/Decrease (%)</td>
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<tr>
<th>ANTI-SEMITIC BEHAVIOR (number of incidents as reported to official agencies)(^{11})</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase/Decrease (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
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<td>Harassment</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<th>ANTI-SEMITISM AS PERCEIVED BY JEWS (according to AJC)(^{12})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is anti-Semitism currently a very serious problem in the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is anti-Semitism a somewhat of a problem in the United States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is anti-Semitism currently a very serious problem or somewhat of a problem the American college campuses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is anti-Semitism currently a problem in Europe?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of anxiety about anti-Semitism among American Jews, is definitively lacking. We will, therefore, utilize indirect information sources and our key recommendation will be to produce systematic data, possibly inspired by the work of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

**Dimension 1: Public opinion toward Jews**

According to ADL findings, 9 percent of American adults in 2014 and 10 percent in 2015 harbored anti-Semitic attitudes. According to the Pew Research Center (2014), half of U.S. adults rate Jews “very warmly” (over 67 percent on the Pew “feeling thermometer”). Only 9 percent of U.S. adults rate Jews “very coldly” (under 33 percent on the Pew thermometer). Assuredly, the Pew data and the ADL data converge.\(^\text{13}\)

**Dimension 2: Anti-Semitic incidents**

Data from an ADL audit show that Anti-Semitic incidents in the United States surged in 2016-17.\(^\text{14}\)

**Dimension 3: Anti-Semitism as perceived by Jews**

We cite below findings from an AJC poll conducted late this summer. It seems likely that poll responses reflect the perception among Jews that after years of total unacceptability of anti-Semitism in the public discourse, a new space, how ever marginal it may be, has opened to countenance it. This concern has become heightened in the wake of the polarization that emerged following the U.S. presidential election. The events in Charlottesville with the media storm of torch bearing neo-Nazis shouting “Jews will not replace us,” fomented a spike of disquiet.

AJC’s August 2017 Survey of American Jewish Opinion included two questions related to the issue.\(^\text{15}\) To the question: “Is anti-Semitism currently a problem in the United States?” 84 percent of respondents answered affirmatively (it is a very serious problem [41 percent]; or somewhat of a problem [43 percent]).

To the question: “Is anti-Semitism currently a problem on in the American college campus?” 69 percent of respondents answered affirmatively (it is a very serious problem [29 percent] or somewhat of a problem [40 percent]). In the survey of August 2015, there was no general question about anti-Semitism in the United States (the fact that a general question was added in 2016 and 2017 may indicate that the anxiety is on the rise), but it did include the question regarding campuses as well as two questions about anti-Semitism in Europe. In 2016 the anti-Semitism on the American college campus question was answered affirmatively (23 percent said it was a serious problem, and 34 percent that it was somewhat of a problem, for a total of 57 percent). In 2015, the total was 74.2 percent (53.8 and 20.4 percent respectively). As this counterintuitive decrease (from 74.2 in 2015 to 57 percent in 2016) occurred without any noticeable structural change, we may suppose that the more concrete emergence of alt-right anti-Semitism eclipsed the campus issue. In 2015, anti-Semitism was a less acute issue for American Jews, addressed through the wide-angle campus lens, and through the telephoto lens trained on distant Europe. Indeed, in 2015, 89.9 percent of respondents were worried about developing anti-Semitism on the old continent.\(^\text{16}\) As the main anti-Semitism on campuses has traditionally been attributed to a relatively small number of activists
on the political left and from the BDS movement, the decrease may indicate that the greater visibility of alt-right anti-Semitism worries respondents more than the familiar leftist anti-Semitism.

The integrated index illustrates the fact that both anti-Semitic incidents and anxiety among American Jews about anti-Semitism seem to be on the rise. As we will follow the evolution of the index and obtain reliable data on anti-Semitism as perceived by American Jews, we hope to be able to elaborate concrete directions for action.

Discussion of Implications

1. Downturn of anti-Jewish violence in France versus its rise in the United Kingdom and Germany

As we integrate the data of the three dimensions, an aggregate picture emerges. While the number of anti-Semitic incidents and the resultant anxiety are on the rise in both the United Kingdom and Germany, they are decreasing in France. Despite similar economic and geopolitical trends throughout Europe, we observe a major difference between the three West European countries examined here. A government’s commitment to combatting anti-Semitism is the single most important factor in the decline of anti-Semitism. As mentioned as a supposition in last year’s Assessment, and more fully confirmed this year, it is thanks to French government’s unambiguous statements and concrete actions that, in 2016, the number of anti-Semitic incidents decreased and French Jews began to regain confidence in the French government’s resolve to protect them.

2. Strong condemnations of anti-Semitism by top-level political leaders matter

One interesting element we can identify in Europe and the United States is that the actions of top-level political leaders are of utmost importance. As we have mentioned, the far right comprises diverse sub-groups (white supremacists, extreme nationalists, neo-Nazis and other racist anti-Semites) in Europe and the United States the anxiety the far right engenders is more than everything else related to the disposition of those in power toward these xenophobic and reactionary forces. The more toleration they are shown by those in power, and the more space they are allowed to hold in the public sphere, the more anxious Jews rightly become. When top-level decision makers react loudly and unequivocally to anti-Semitism, as shown in the French case, anti-Jewish behaviors decrease and Jewish comfort increases.

Drawing on the European case study, we can elaborate a recommendation: Israeli and Jewish political figures should encourage political and top-level civic leaders to take a clear stand against anti-Semitism and demonstrate their commitment to the security of Jews. Declarations backed by visible actions are useful with respect to the three components of the index: (1) Anti-Semites get the message that expressions of Jew hatred are unacceptable; (2) Commitment to stand by the Jews and to vigorously pursue perpetrators deters anti-Semitic acts; (3) Jews regain trust in their country’s commitment to their security and feel comfortable as full citizens.
Endnotes

1 See in this 2017 Annual Assessment, our analysis of Jewish developments in Europe. “Re-Emergence of a Diasporistic Jewish Identity in Europe,” pp. 120-130. ???


4 Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme (CNCDH), Rapport 2016 sur la lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie, March 2017,


6 Source: Kantor Center - European Jewry and Antisemitism Database http://kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/general-analysis-2016


8 FRA, op. cit.

9 See Prof. Dina Porat, 2016 Kantor report, p. 9.


16 The explanation presented here can be questioned, and the surprising decrease is certainly worth further investigation. A first guess would be that there were methodological problems or a shift in how surveys were conducted from one year to the next. A second guess would be that something did change structurally on campuses. Perhaps administrators at more universities made firmer statements, analogous to the statements by elected governmental leaders in Europe. Perhaps a few key BDS motions were defeated. This gap illustrates the need strenuously stressed by JPPI for a consistent, widespread and policy-relevant measurement of anti-Semitism.
1. Introduction

This chapter discusses and analyzes one demographic phenomenon among the many issues mentioned in the demographic dimension of the Integrated Net Assessment of the Jewish people: emigration from Israel. This phenomenon does not operate in a vacuum; rather, it involves many ideological, social, and identificational components. Likewise, it has important policy implications.

More specifically, and similar to many other Western societies, Israel has a diaspora of people who have moved their permanent residence to another country. The departure from Israel (sometimes called yerida i.e., descend) is driven by various considerations – from rejection of the economic, cultural, or political conditions in Israel, to the pull factors of professional opportunity or lifestyle in other places. Often there is no single reason for migration. People weigh the advantages and disadvantages, both individual and familial, in many realms that lead them to the decision to move, as well as the choice of a specific destination. Israeli emigrants do not necessarily set out having decided to leave permanently; many move to another country for a few years after which some will settle permanently, others will move to yet another country, and still others will return home. Many of those who remain abroad will continue to define themselves as Israeli.

A salient development of recent years is changing attitudes, of the Israeli public and the Israeli establishment, toward both emigration per se and the Israelis who live abroad. After many years of negation and condemnation, there is, today, a greater openness to, and understanding of, the right and desire of individuals to choose where they live. This acknowledgement is part of the process of normalization of the Israeli society.
after laying the foundation for nation building. Likewise, the Israeli leadership has become aware of the potential asset of Israelis abroad as a resource for advocacy, political lobbying, and fundraising. Hence, the attitude toward them is more sympathetic than before. For example, at the February 2015 conference of Israeli Leadership in the Diaspora held in Israel, President Reuven (Rubi) Rivlin sent his greeting to the participants in a letter he wrote “in the name of the State of Israel” where he noted the challenge facing Israelis abroad to maintain their Israeli and Jewish identity. He expressed his appreciation for their efforts to maintain ties to the State of Israel and its culture. In his letter, President Rivlin emphasized the communal and political significance of the Israeli community abroad for the bonds between Jewish communities in the world, and between the State of Israel and those countries with Israeli communities. He referred to Israelis abroad as “relatives” who are overseas. As Israel softens its stand vis-à-vis its citizens abroad, local Jewish communities in their places of settlement are more comfortable opening their doors to Israeli newcomers.

More recently, we have also witnessed initiatives by Israeli expats to establish and institutionalize various activities in their places of residence. Along with social and cultural events around major Jewish holidays and Israel’s Independence Day, the publication of Hebrew newspapers in both written and electronic versions, and activities in Israeli Houses (sponsored by the Jewish Agency), several independent Israeli organizations operate in major Diaspora countries today. One, especially large organization, is the Israeli-American Council (IAC) which has ten branches in the United States.

This chapter first describes the Israeli diaspora by looking at its size and geographic distribution, its demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and analyzing the Jewish identification of Israeli expats and their attachment to Israel. Based on fresh data from JPPI’s Pluralism Project, we then describe the attitudes of Israelis toward their peers living abroad. Finally, we offer some policy recommendations aimed at strengthening ties between Israel and its citizens residing outside the country.

2. Numerical Data

Despite a lack of uniformity in the definitions of who is an Israeli emigrant, the use of different sources, and regional variations in data quality and comprehensiveness, there is a significant consensus among scholars and official institutes alike that approximately half a million Israeli Jews are living abroad permanently (Table 1). This estimate includes native-born Israelis as well as Jews who were born abroad, immigrated to Israel, and later either returned to their country of origin or moved to a new country. In addition, there are several tens of thousands of children born abroad to Israeli citizens.
Similar to other immigration absorbing countries, some immigrants to Israel do not adjust to their new society. In fact, slightly more than half of the Israelis abroad were not born in Israel, but rather are immigrants who returned home or re-migrated to a new country. The rate of native-born Israelis who reside abroad out of the total native-born Israeli population is about 6 percent. This rate is only slightly higher than the average for OECD countries, but lower than that of countries such as New Zealand, Switzerland, Austria, and the UK. Emigration rates for the foreign-born are significantly lower than that among immigrants in the United Kingdom or the United States.

Despite some fluctuations, emigration rates (number of emigrants relative to the size of the Israeli Jewish population), until recently tended to decline from 2.1 per thousand inhabitants in 2010 to 1.9 in 2014. In other words, the rate of emigration was slower than the pace of population growth in Israel. Likewise, in those five years, the migration balance i.e., the differential between the number of Israelis who moved abroad and lived there continuously for a year or more and the number of Israelis who returned after an uninterrupted stay abroad of a year or more, was significantly lower as compared to the previous quintile (Figure 2.1). However, data released by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics just a few days before this publication went to print, show that in 2015 migration balance of Israelis (differential between departures and returns) once again increased to 7.8 thousand which is the highest since 2008. Likewise, emigration rate of “Jews and Others” in 2015 was rather high of 2.5. Notably, about one-fourth of the recent emigrants who are defined “Jews and Other” belong to the “Other” group, namely people who are not Halachically Jewish. Overall, given the composition of the Israeli population (high proportion of foreign-born) and the tense security conditions in the region it can be asserted that the rate of Israelis leaving their country is rather low.

According to different estimates, between one-half

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>480,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>542,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>575,000</td>
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Sources: Cohen, 2011; The Knesset, Center for Research and Information, 2012; CBS, Statistical Abstracts.
and two-thirds of Israeli emigrants have settled in the United States. Other major concentrations of Israelis are found in Canada, Australia, the UK, France, and more recently also in Germany (Figure 2.2). Likewise, several tens of thousands of the Soviet Jews who moved to Israel and hence hold Israeli citizenship, returned to their countries of origin.9

The extent of emigration is strongly tied to Israel’s security and economic situation. This is reflected in jumps in periods such as after the Yom Kippur War or during the peak of the Second Intifada (Palestinian uprising) at the beginning of this century. However, looking at their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, it is revealed that Israeli emigrants are not spread evenly across their areas of settlement.

Figure 2.1: Departures and Returns of Israelis Staying Abroad Continuously for One Year or More and Migration Balance (In Thousand)

Source: CBS, Statistical Abstracts, various years.
3. Affinities

3.1 Demography

Israeli emigrants are not a representative segment of the Israeli Jewish population. Despite their demographic and socio-economic diversity, it can generally be stated that they are a positively selected group. First, they are young. In 2014, among those who were continuously abroad for a year or more, 41 percent were aged 20 to 39 while the share of this group among the total population in Israel (“Jews and Others”) was only 27 percent.10 Insights into the composition of native-born Israeli populations in OECD countries shows that the proportion of those aged 25-54 is higher by 14 percent than the proportion of this age group among the native-born Jewish population in Israel – 69 and 55 percent respectively. If classified by major geographical areas, the rate of Israelis aged 25-54 varies from a low of 61.6 percent among those who settled in East Europe to a high of 72.8 percent in Scandinavia (Figure 3.1). The share of those aged 25 to 54 varies even more by country of residence: from 55 percent of those aged 25-54 in New Zealand to as high as 84 percent in Norway.11

In Germany, Israelis are a relatively new group who attracted much public attention. Among adult Israelis there, approximately 80 percent are aged between 18 and 35 while this group constitutes only about a third of the adult Jewish population in Israel12. In other words, among Israelis abroad there is an overrepresentation of young people.
Also, among young Israelis who recently emigrated from the country there is a high proportion of men than women: 59 and 41 percent respectively (as opposed to gender parity among the young Jewish population in Israel). For native-born Israelis in OECD countries, the gender ratio is 55 percent male and 45 percent female (Figure 3.2). A significant surplus of men over women was observed in Scandinavian countries (perhaps reflecting a known phenomenon of marriages between Israeli men and Scandinavian women) and among Israelis in East European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. In contrast, the gender ratio in Germany is even. It is interesting to note that about 2 percent of Israelis in Germany indicate their gender as “other.”
3.2 Citizenship

Some two-thirds of native-born Israelis in OECD countries hold citizenship of their countries of residence (Figure 3.3). Especially high rates were found in English-speaking countries and in West Europe (including Scandinavian countries). Rates of citizenship range from as low as one-fifth in Luxemburg, one-fourth in Germany, approximately one-third in Spain and Portugal, one-half in Austria and Denmark, and reaches eight out of every ten Israelis in Australia, Canada, and Poland.\textsuperscript{15} We propose three explanations for inter-country variation in citizenship: (1) differences in tenure, whereas a higher proportion of veteran immigrants increases the likelihood of having local citizenship, and vice versa; (2) inter-country differences in criteria for citizenship; and (3) family background, i.e. the offspring of people born in the specific country have an easier process of receiving citizenship.
3.3 Education and Employment

On average, Israelis abroad are well educated. Further, educational attainment improves with prolongation of time in the destination country. In 1980, Israelis aged 20-29 in the United States had an average of 12.4 years of education; a decade later, when they were already 30-39, they had a score of 13.3 years of education; and by 2000, when they were 40-49, their level of education was 14 years. This increase partly attests to post-secondary studies in the United States. However, it can also be the result of selective preference to stay in the US of people with higher education which is likely to determine their economic attainment. In contrast, those with lower educational attainment may have preferred to return home and take advantage of their acquaintance with the local labor market, as well as their roots in informal social networks, to find a job and get along financially.

Israel’s so-called brain drain has strengthened over time; the proportion with academic education among more recent immigrants is significantly higher compared to their earlier counterparts. For example, although a 2011 study by Cohen, which relied on data from 2000, found that half of the Israelis in the United States had a bachelor’s degree or higher, findings from the 2013 Pew survey of

![Figure 3.3: Native-Born Israelis Abroad by Citizenship (Percentages)](chart)

Jewish Americans showed that 72 percent of the native-born Israelis in the United States had a university diploma (JPPI’s data analysis of the Pew survey). The increasing tendency of Israelis with university education to move abroad is especially salient in respect to destination countries where there is a significant economic premium for the highly educated.\(^{17}\)

Israelis abroad are more educated than those remaining in Israel. For example, in 2000, the average years of education of Israelis in the United States was 13.1, as compared to only 11 years among the Jewish population in Israel. Similarly, while 60 percent of the Israelis in Germany have a university diploma this was true for about a quarter of their counterparts in Israel.\(^{18}\) Another figure suggests that 3.7 percent of the native-born Israelis in OECD countries hold a Ph.D. versus less than one percent of the native-born Jewish population in Israel (in similar age cohorts).\(^{19}\)

Variations in educational attainment exist by areas of settlement. High levels are particularly prominent among Israelis in English speaking countries including the United States and Canada; in East Europe; and Germany. On the other side, the educational profile of Israelis in Scandinavia and France is low in comparison to Israelis elsewhere in the diaspora.
Also of interest is the high proportion of immigrants with doctorates in Switzerland (one-third of all native-born Israelis there), Italy (12.3 percent), and East Europe (10.4 percent). We raise the possibility that this group of Israelis includes a large number of physicians; many Israelis who cannot find places in Israeli medical schools study in countries such as Italy, Romania, Hungary, and perhaps some stay put. However, others are likely to be working as researchers in other scientific fields.

Consistent with education, Israelis abroad are heavily concentrated in white collar occupations. About half of the Israelis in OECD countries work in professional, technical, or managerial occupations. Higher rates than the average were found in Canada, the UK, Australia, France, Switzerland and Germany, while the rates are below the average in the United States (with a small differential) and the Scandinavian countries. The rate of Israelis abroad working in white collar positions is about 20 percent higher than among their general host society; this is true for almost all countries, with the exception of Scandinavia. Occupation largely corresponds with earnings, which jointly attest to the economic achievement of Israelis in their new countries.
4. Group Identification

4.1 Jewish Identification

The Jewish identification of Israelis abroad is weaker than that of Jews in Israel. This is especially so in regard to ongoing religious behaviors such as keeping the dietary laws, synagogue attendance, and lighting Sabbath candles. The differences between Jewish Israelis abroad and those in Israel are much less pronounced with respect to the intermittent rituals of fasting on Yom Kippur and Passover Seder attendance (Table 4.1). One major explanation for these differences is the low rate of religious and ultra-Orthodox (Haredim) Jews among Israelis abroad.22

Substantial variations in Jewish identification exist according to country of settlement. High levels were found among Israelis in the United States and South America. Jewish identification of Israelis in the FSU, many of whom are return migrants (i.e., Jews who immigrated to Israel and later returned to the origin country) is slightly lower. Jewish identification is especially weak among Israelis in Germany. This can be attributed, among other things, to their socio-demographic profile: young, unmarried, of secular familial background, and left-leaning political attitudes.23
Jewish identification strengthens with the prolongation of time abroad. Insights into Israelis in three large U.S. communities (Boston, Miami and Los Angeles) show that among those who are in the United States for more than ten years the Jewish Community Center (JCC) membership rate is 75 percent higher than for their counterparts with a tenure of less than a decade. The proportion of synagogue membership and of those who keep the Jewish dietary laws is 25 to 30 percent higher among veteran Israeli emigres than the more recent Israeli arrivals. The differentials by tenure for lightening Sabbath and Chanukah candles is 12 and 10 percent, respectively (Figure 4.1).

**Figure 4.1: Ratio of Percentage of Jewish Ritual and Communal Affiliation among Veteran Israelis (More than 10 Years) and Recent Israeli Immigrants (10 Years or Less) in the United States**

Source: Rebhun and Lev Ari, 2010
4.2 Israeli Identification

Israelis abroad have various ways of maintaining contacts with Israel. The major and most common one is through family: between two-thirds of Israelis in Latin America to as high as 98 percent of Israelis in the UK maintain ongoing contacts with relatives in Israel. Contacts with friends in the home country are less frequent, albeit quite intensive: approximately half of the Israelis in the United States and close to three-fourths of Israelis in the United Kingdom reported that they have constant contact with their friends in Israel.

About eight out of every ten Israelis residing in the UK pay a visit to Israel at least once a year; this is true for about two-thirds of the Israelis in the United States and France. Among Israelis in other countries, less than half travel to Israel on a yearly basis (Table 4.2).

Approximately half the Israelis in the United States belong to informal Israeli social networks. Among Israelis in the United Kingdom the rate is slightly lower, about 40 percent. In other countries Israelis mainly integrate either into local Jewish social circles or the general non-Jewish society. Between one-third and one-half of Israelis abroad regularly surf Israeli websites with only slight variations between Israeli communities (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Israeli Identification among Israelis Abroad (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>FUSSR</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contacts with family in Israel</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>81.6</td>
<td>67.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacts with friends in Israel</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visits to Israel (once a year or more)</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli friends (most/all)</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf Israeli websites (a lot)</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Rebhun and Pupko, 2011; Rebhun, Sunker, Kranz (in preparation)
As time abroad elapses, ties to Israel weaken. While about 85 percent of Israelis living in the United States for ten years or less indicated that they are strongly attached to Israel, this was true for only 79.1 percent among the more veteran immigrants with a tenure of 11 years or more. The respective rates for familiarity with the social and political situation in Israel are 92.3 and 69.8 percent respectively; and for defining oneself as Israeli – 88.5 and 62.8 percent respectively. Similarly, among Israelis in Germany, the intensity of contacts with family and friends in Israel declines over time as does the frequency of visiting Israel (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Israeli Identification among Israelis in the U.S. and Germany by Tenure (Percentages and Ratio)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0-10 Years</th>
<th>11 Years +</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US: Attachment to Israel</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>79.1</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US: Acquaintance with situation in Israel</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.: Israeli identity</td>
<td>88.5</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany: Contacts with family</td>
<td>93.0</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany: Contacts with friends</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany: Visits to Israel (twice a year+)</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Rebhun and Pupko, 2011; Rebhun, Sunker, Kranz (in preparation)

5. Attitudes of Israelis toward their Peers Abroad

A complementary perspective on Israelis abroad can be gained by examining the attitudes of the Israeli public toward them. To this end, we present findings from a survey on Israelis attitudes on pluralism conducted in the winter of 2017 by JPPI in the framework of its broader pluralism project. We focus on three major aspects: attachment to Israelis who live abroad, assessment of the contribution(s) of Israelis abroad to the State of Israel, and granting Israelis abroad the right to vote in the Israeli elections.
One of every ten Israelis feels attached to Israelis abroad, another 25 percent feel somewhat attached, and the remaining 65 percent feel no attachment at all (Table 5.1). Attachment to Israelis abroad varies by religious identity. Ultra-Orthodox are the most strongly attached while Modern religious Jews express the weakest attachment to Israelis abroad. This can be interpreted vis-à-vis the Zionist orientations of these two groups in Israel: weak among the Ultra-Orthodox and very strong among the religious. Accordingly, sympathy toward those who choose to leave the country and settle elsewhere is inversely proportional to Zionist orientation. Likewise, it is possible that the Ultra-Orthodox take an inclusive and embracing approach to any Jew regardless of his or her specific characteristics, such as place of residence. We may further speculate that the Ultra-Orthodox denominations, especially Chabad, have emissaries abroad, hence they may be thinking of them when asked about their attachment to Israelis abroad.

Attachment to Israelis abroad also depends on political orientation: those who define themselves on the right side of the political spectrum exhibit stronger attachment to Israelis abroad as compared to those on the left of the Israeli political continuum (12.4 and 5.5 percent respectively).24

Table 5.1: Attachment of Israelis to Their Israeli Peers Abroad (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Identity</th>
<th>Attached</th>
<th>Somewhat Attached</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haredi</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Orientation</th>
<th>Attached</th>
<th>Somewhat Attached</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>62.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The majority of Israelis (58.2 percent) hold the view that Israelis abroad make a positive or somewhat positive contribution to the State of Israel (Table 5.2). Among all sectors of the Israeli Jewish population i.e., secular, traditional, religious, and the Ultra-Orthodox – more than half perceive the contribution of Israelis abroad to the state as positive or somewhat positive. However, somewhat surprisingly, religious Jews have the strongest appreciation while the Ultra-Orthodox have the lowest appreciation, perhaps reflecting their general anti-Zionist stand. In any event, there is a wide consensus among Israelis of different political camps regarding the extent of the contribution of Israelis abroad to the State of Israel, with very small variations between left and right.

Despite the positive appreciation of the contribution of Israelis abroad to the country, less than one-third of the Jewish population in Israel favors granting them voting rights in Knesset elections; a clear majority of 61.4 percent oppose this, and 10 percent have no opinion on the matter (Table 5.3). The distribution of attitudes among the secular sector pretty much resembles that of the general national profile. Among traditional Jews, the proportion in support
of granting voting rights to Israelis abroad is slightly higher than the national average, but the proportion is slightly lower among the religious and the Ultra-Orthodox. It is possible that the differences between secular and traditional on one hand, and religious on the other reflect a (correct) perception that most Israelis abroad are secular and traditional, and hence could increase the electorate of the non-religious and non-Ultra-Orthodox parties. Yet, when taken as a practical “political” consideration, i.e. the possibility of strengthening the weight of the Jewish electorate (vs. the non-Jewish electorate), and given the assumption that Israelis abroad lean toward the political center or even right, a higher proportion of Israelis on the right, compared to those on the left, support allowing Israelis abroad to participate in elections (30.6 and 26.7 percent respectively).

Finally, it should be noted that data not presented here attest to a strong and consistent relationships between the three attitudes toward attachment, contribution, and voting rights. The stronger the attachment to Israelis abroad, the greater the appreciation for their contribution(s) to the State of Israel and the stronger the support of granting Israelis abroad voting rights in Knesset elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Favor</th>
<th>Oppose</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>67.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haredi</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>63.7</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Granting Israelis Abroad Voting Rights in Knesset Elections (Percentages)
6. Discussion and Policy Recommendations

This chapter analyzed and discussed major affinities of Israelis who live abroad. We focused on the size of this population, its demographic and socio-economic characteristics, as well as patterns of Jewish identity and attachment to Israel. We also provided insights, to the best of our knowledge never before researched and certainly most up to date, on the attitudes of Israelis toward their peers abroad, including with respect to the highly disputed issue of granting Israeli expats the right to vote in Knesset elections.

The empirical observations have five major implications for policy:

1) The cumulative number of Israelis abroad has increased over time. This means that there are more Israelis leaving the country than Israelis returning after being away for a significant duration (at least one year). Israel’s emigration rate – the number of emigrants relative to the size of the population – is not exceptional compared to other developed countries.

Notably, about half the emigrants are people who were born outside of Israel, immigrated there, and later left – either returning to their country of origin or relocating to a third country. This figure has two important aspects. The first is that among native-born Israelis the number of emigrants is rather small. The second is that the number of foreign-born Jewish immigrants, who failed to acclimate to Israel and left the country, out of the number of total immigrants, is small, certainly in comparison to other immigrant receiving countries such as the United States.

These observations show that Israelis are often attached to their country, wish to stay, and that new immigrants are well absorbed. Still, given what we know about the major push factors for emigration, there are three areas of possible governmental intervention that might somewhat diminish the volume of emigration from Israel: improving the security situation and personal safety of the country’s inhabitants, limiting the involvement of the religious establishment in the daily life of Israelis, and increasing employment opportunities, especially for young people in white collar occupations.

2) Despite the relatively small overall number of emigrants, there is an over representation of young people. This age cohort is a major reservoir of Jewish population growth and generational replacement in Israel. It is likely that many of them will marry abroad and raise their children in their new country. Hence, the demographic loss for Israel is not only reflected in the number of those who left but also their children. Moreover, young people are the most productive sector of the workforce and constitute a major part of the army reserves. It is also likely that they have parents living in Israel who, when elderly, would like to have their children and grandchildren close by; with their absence, the burden of caring for their elderly parents increasingly depends on local welfare services. The young profile of Israeli emigrants requires special attention to the needs and expectations of this age cohort in Israeli society, in areas such as higher education,
employment, housing, and the educational system for their children in order to diminish the push factors of their emigration from Israel.

3) Many Israelis abroad are highly educated. Hence, they are concentrated in jobs in areas such as high-tech, research and development, and academia. Some acquired their human capital in studies and internships abroad. This group has a special potential to contribute to the prosperity of Israel. Concerted efforts should be made to stem the brain drain. For example, the budgets of Israeli institutions of higher education should be increased, allowing them to expand faculties. Similarly, positions for medical doctors in Israeli hospitals should be increased. Similarly, ways to increase investment in Israel’s high-tech industries should be explored in order to create additional jobs.

4) Israelis abroad are concentrated in large cities. They increase the local Jewish population there and the potential for expanding Jewish communal activities. Communal institutions, on their part, should be more open to embracing Israeli immigrants and involving them in organizational activities. At the same time, ways to prevent the erosion in their attachment to Israel should be explored. Such efforts, should be supported by the Israeli government (Ministry for Diaspora Affairs) and major institutions like the Jewish Agency and should include, among other things, ongoing social and cultural events, educational activities in Jewish pre-schools and day schools with strong Israeli orientations, dissemination of information about Israel, and engaging Israeli expats in Israel advocacy.25

But the focus should not just be directed at Israelis who are already abroad. Careful attention should be given to providing infrastructure and support for the elderly whose children live far away, as well as to their children who return to Israel. Obviously, this would also strengthen the attachment of Israeli expats to the country.

5) From time to time, proposals to grant Israelis abroad the right to vote in Israeli elections are raised. Some reject the idea outright, others suggest limiting voting rights to the first four or five years of being away, and still others advocate conferring voting rights irrespective of duration abroad.26 It appears that the majority of Israeli Jews are against providing Israeli expats with the right to vote. This objection crosses different segments of the Israeli society and crosses religious and political orientations.
Endnotes

1 President Reuven (Rubi) Rivlin letter, 26 January 2016 to the participants of the conference on Israeli leadership abroad.


4 Cohen, 2011.

5 Cohen, 2011.


7 Central Bureau of Statistics. 2015. Announcement to the Media, 14.8.2017

8 Cohen, 2011.


11 Cohen, 2011.


14 Rebhun et al. (in preparation).

15 Cohen, 2011; Rebhun et al. (in preparation).


17 Cohen, 2011.

18 Rebhun et al. (in preparation).

19 Cohen, 2011.

20 Cohen, 2011.

21 Cohen, 2011.

22 Noted that there are, indeed, religious and ultra-Orthodox Israelis abroad, especially in the US. However, their relatively small sample in surveys carried out among Israelis abroad prevent from assessing the size of these two sub-groups.

23 Rebhun et al. (in preparation).


25 See also: Yogev Karasenty, On Israelis Abroad. JPPI, 2014.

26 See discussion on this topic at Karasenty, above.
Summary

The Israeli government decision on June 25, 2017, to freeze the Western Wall (Kotel) agreement and advance a conversion bill was dramatic, as were the responses from Jewish leaders and organizations in the United States, Israel and other countries. This, of course, did not occur in a vacuum and should be understood in the proper Israeli political, social and demographic context.

These events highlight the importance of conducting two serious and related discussions. The first is within Israeli society regarding the nature of the relationship between religion and state. The second regards Israel’s relationship with the Diaspora: what does it mean on a symbolic and a practical level for Israel to be the “homeland for all the Jews”?

Navigating these issues with sensitivity and resolving them quickly is important for maintaining Jewish unity, in Israel and between Israel and the Diaspora.

We note that this analysis reflects primarily an Israeli viewpoint and focuses upon the resultant consequences in Israel, since these decisions, regardless of their impact on world Jewry, were made within Israel’s political system. It is equally important to examine the issue from a perspective of the Diaspora communities, specifically American Jewry. An early conclusion concerning this matter, and one Israeli decision makers should consider, is that decisions regarding religion and state in Israel affect, and are stirring a debate about the continued centrality of Israel to Jewish identity in the Diaspora.
Background

On January 31, 2016, after years of delicate negotiations, the Reform and Conservative movements, Women of the Wall, the Israeli government represented by the Prime Minister’s office, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Jewish Federations of North America – reached an agreement to designate the southern part of the Western Wall officially as an area for non-Orthodox prayer. The agreement, called “historic” by some of the participants, was to upgrade and expand the current platform (in use for egalitarian prayer since 2000 and which has received some gradual physical upgrades over the years), create a visible and official entrance on par with the main “Orthodox” sections of the wall, and grant public funding for the site. Most importantly for the Reform and Conservative movements, the agreement would have defined the southern section as officially a part of the Western Wall and as a holy site, which it currently is not, as well as establish a governing council that would include representatives of their respective movements.

Following approval by the cabinet, an outcry in ultra-Orthodox circles forced the political leadership of their parties to wage a fight to cancel the plan. The result was that a year and a half later – when the plan was not yet implemented because of the political hurdles involved – and to the surprise of many, the government announced (June 25, 2017) that it was shelving the plan.

On the same day, the ministers’ committee on legislation approved a controversial “conversion bill”. This was somewhat overshadowed by the Kotel developments but is no less significant for non-Orthodox, as well as modern Orthodox, Judaism in Israel. This was a move by the ultra-Orthodox parties to tank the Reform and Conservative movements’ (and liberal Orthodoxy’s) efforts, in the High Court of Justice to have conversions conducted outside of the Chief Rabbinate be recognized for the purpose of gaining citizenship. If the conversion bill becomes law (which requires Knesset approval), Reform and Conservative, as well as all other conversions, of non-Israelis conducted in Israel and outside the official Orthodox conversion system, would not be recognized by the state for citizenship purposes.

What these decisions do and do not mean

On the practical level, freezing the agreement means that the inclusion of the site as a part of the Western Wall, and defining it as a holy site (including the legal protections inherent in such a move), and the establishment of a visible and equal entrance, as well as of a governing council including Reform and Conservative representatives, will not happen, at least not under the current government. (A court discussion scheduled for late August could change the situation.)
However, headlines aside, this does not mean that liberal Jewry has no place to pray near the Western Wall. The current site, although not ideal, and legally vulnerable, has been and will, for the time being, continue to be in use for egalitarian prayer. Moreover, it will likely receive some important physical upgrades through government funding, albeit less than what was agreed upon, as announced by Cabinet Secretary Braverman. Relatedly, Women of the Wall, who had already won the right to pray on the women’s side with prayer shawls and phylacteries (tallit and tefillin) and read from the Torah, will continue to pressure the ultra-Orthodox administration of the site in the Courts. It should be noted that the government is currently seeking to adapt the legislation to force Women of the Wall to conduct their prayers in the egalitarian section, once upgrades are in place.  

Regarding the conversion law, if it passes (and as of this writing it is not clear whether it has majority support in the Knesset – and if it does pass, it will likely be amended, though it is not clear how), it will do little to change the de-facto status of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel today. Currently, Reform and Conservative conversions conducted abroad are recognized by the Interior Ministry for the sake of citizenship (Law of Return) but not by the Rabbinate; and the new law will not affect such conversions. Furthermore, Reform and Conservative conversions conducted in Israel for Israeli citizens are currently recognized for the Interior Ministry’s registry but again, not by the Rabbinate (marriage).  

So what will change? Based on a March 2016 High Court precedent that ruled the state must recognize private Orthodox conversion courts for the sake of granting citizenship, the Reform and Conservative movements sought similar recognition for their conversions for non-citizens within Israel. To date, the matter of conversion in Israel has never been defined by law, unlike marriage, which by law is run by the Orthodox Rabbinate. The bill aims to prevent such a court decision as well as to overturn the ability of private Orthodox conversions to confer Israeli citizenship, establishing for the first time a legal monopoly over conversion in Israel.

The bill’s supporters cite the need to maintain oversight over a process that grants citizenship, particularly to ensure that migrants and political asylum seekers, such as from Africa or the Palestinian territories, who are not considered sincere convert applicants, cannot take advantage of more lenient or even fake conversion processes to gain citizenship. Conversely, the heads of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel note that they had already agreed to criteria as to the conversion applicants and that they would not conduct conversions on such asylum-seekers. They further fear that were the Rabbinate to gain greater control over the conversion process, it could eventually attempt to overturn the ability of community rabbis abroad, of any denomination, to convert for the sake of making Aliyah.

"the bill will ensure that migrants and political asylum seekers cannot take advantage of lenient conversion processes to gain citizenship"
Numbers and politics

With much of the discussion centering on the moral, symbolic, and international implications of these recent moves, it is important to acknowledge that demographic changes and the resulting political power won the day. Though recent developments have been perceived by some as part of a pattern pointing toward the direction of Judaism in Israel or Israel’s desired relationship with Diaspora Jewry, the underlying political context must also be taken into account.

The political calculation is simple: Prime Minister Netanyahu’s current governing coalition has 66 of 120 Knesset seats. The ultra-Orthodox parties (Shas and United Torah Judaism) hold a combined 13 seats in this coalition and remain firmly opposed to any move that a) breaks the state/religion status quo or b) grants recognition, in any way, to non-Orthodox Jewish movements. A segment of the Jewish Home (HaBayit HaYehudi) party’s 8 seats is also opposed to such moves. This means that there is an opposition to such moves of 13 to possibly as many as 18 members within the coalition. This represents a significant group within a 66-member coalition that the Prime Minister, for a variety of reasons, wants to preserve.

It is important to note that the opposition of the Haredi parties to changing the status quo is not only a power-play. There is deep ideology involved as the representatives of these Haredi parties genuinely believe in the need to guard the “true” traditional Judaism from what they view as corrupting forces of “modernization and assimilation.” They see the Reform and Conservative movements (as opposed to secular Judaism) as threats to Judaism, since from the Orthodox point of view these movements redefine the very meaning of Judaism and Torah observance while lacking the authority to do so.

It is also important to keep in mind that the more progressive forms of Judaism are not widespread in Israel. Non-Orthodox forms of Judaism barely existed in Israel until the 1970s and only really began to take root over the past couple of decades. Until recently, Israelis tended to be secular, traditional, Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox. The old saying goes that “the synagogue the average Israeli does not attend is Orthodox.” While this dynamic is in the process of changing, as a growing number of secular and traditional Israelis are connecting to Judaism through non-Orthodox options, there are still today only around 30,000 formally affiliated members of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel (12,000 adult members). Add to this a small group of egalitarian liberal Orthodox activists, and perhaps a few thousands committed to the separation of religion and state, and you are still left with a wildly lopsided field.

Israel’s Jewish population today, which stands at 6.5 million people (out of 8.7 million citizens) is roughly 9 percent ultra-Orthodox, and 13 percent National-Religious (half the latter of whom tend to espouse more conservative social views). On matters of religion and state, these groups often enjoy the tacit support of a significant group of “traditional” Israelis (29 percent), whose Jewishness is Orthodox, even if they do not practice it fully. Anecdotally, one only needs to show up at the Kotel at random
times and count the black-hat clad worshipers at the main (Orthodox) section, compared with the number of Reform and Conservative worshipers at Robinson’s arch, or witness the size of an ultra-Orthodox demonstration as compared to the Reform and Conservative one following the recent government decision (which attracted no more than 1,500 people), to understand the preponderance of power. The numbers, beyond their symbolic aspect, belie commitment to the cause.

Things are, of course, slowly changing. Polling in recent years does show that anywhere from 5 percent to 12 percent of Israeli Jews, with the most accurate figures probably around 7 percent, identify with the Reform and Conservative movements if given such a choice. Indeed, the Reform and Conservative movements each report that a few hundreds of thousands of Israelis regularly attend (at least a few times each year) their religious services, life-cycle events and cultural programming, without officially belonging to a community. These are significant numbers no doubt, and would be especially so were they to translate into political weight. However, at this time they do not. Beyond that, most Jews who identify with the Reform and Conservative movements support the parties in opposition to the current ruling coalition.

Beyond that, while a majority of Israeli Jews (over 60 percent) and a vast majority of secular Jews (over 80 percent) support the original Kotel decision and the establishment of an egalitarian section, few have been willing to do much about it, as only 11 percent of Israeli Jews place the issue high enough on their political agenda and are far more concerned with day-to-day issues such as marriage freedom or transportation and shopping options on the Sabbath. That said, the largely secular Israeli electorate has shown that when frustrations rise, it is capable of coalescing around its opposition to what it sees as the undue influence of the ultra-Orthodox over public affairs in Israel. The Yesh Atid party taking 19 seats in the 2013 elections is the most recent example, with the ultra-Orthodox avoidance of military service as one of the main issues in its platform.

The hard truth, regardless of which side of the debate one supports, is that the Reform and Conservative movements do not at this time have widespread political power in Israel. In lieu of this, they have worked deftly to play weak political hands, gaining victories mainly through two venues:

- Battles in courts provided the movements with public funding for rabbis, access to the education system, some budget allocations (although these pale in comparison to what the Orthodox are granted) and more.
- Support from their American counterparts provides the other pillar for Israel’s Reform and Conservative movements. While not possessing much local power, in the U.S. Reform and Conservative Jews comprise a full half of the six million strong community and are a source of significant activity, philanthropy and pro-Israel political influence. Worldwide, there are an estimated four million Reform and Conservative Jews and probably more
who do not belong to a community but would attend such synagogues as a fallback option. ¹² ¹³

But things are changing with these two levers of influence. And the decision by the PM to cave in to the ultra-Orthodox demands might be a hint of things to come.

The current government under Likud’s Netanyahu and with The Jewish Home’s Ayelet Shaked as Justice Minister, has made it its mission to restrain and weaken the High Court’s ability to influence government policy. This is not necessarily a move aimed at changing the relations between religion and state but rather the result of the belief in some government circles that the High Court – beginning in the 1990s – asserts its authority in ways that a) usurps the electorate’s role in making policy, and b) erodes Israel’s Jewishness and prioritizes individual rights at the expense of the collective Jewish good. The coalition is diligently working to alter the course of the Court and has received the support of its voters as it moves in this direction.

In addition, there seems to be a decline in the collective power of American Jewry to influence Israeli decision-making. Once unified around larger organizations, this community has become more diffused in recent years. Politically, the once close-to-monolithic major groups have to compete with foundations and organizations who have their own, sometimes-contradictory agendas. Moreover, due to Israel’s much grown economy the U.S. community has also become less influential in its ability to wield power through massive philanthropy. Add to these facts the rising numbers of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jews in the U.S. who will less questioningly support Israel while non-Orthodox Judaism seems, at least from the perspective of many Israelis, to be on the decline (low birthrates, intermarriage, etc.) and you have a weakening of the second arrow in the non-Orthodox movements’ quiver. Moreover, in the eyes of many Israelis, when the U.S. Jewish community does come together to influence Israeli policy, it at times does so in ways that contradict Israel’s interests, at least as defined by the supporters of the current government. There is even some sentiment within the current government that Evangelicals and non-Jewish conservatives are today, perhaps a greater source of support for Israel and especially this government’s policies, than is mainstream Jewish America. ¹⁴

That is not to say that these two forms of leverage are now irrelevant, and far from it. The courts are still able to wield significant effect (in fact, both the Kotel decision and the proposed conversion law came in response to court procedures). Similarly, the uproar from the mainstream U.S. Jewish community was clearly felt in Israel. The degree to which the government is taking this issue seriously shows it is not dismissive of the U.S. Jewish community, even if it preferred to acquiesce to the ultra-Orthodox this time around.
Next moves

Israeli politics are fickle and so non-Orthodox movements still have many paths for achieving their goals. However, **recent developments should make it clear that there is no substitute for political power – plain and simple.** The Reform and Conservative movements are, in fact, already working to lay the grassroots foundations for having a more Jewishly diverse society, on the community level where they conduct lifecycle events for thousands of Israelis each year, and in the school systems. If they can mobilize anywhere near that 12 percent (or even 5 percent) of Israeli Jews to support their agenda actively and not just offer tacit support – or to mobilize secular Jews to join forces against the ultra-Orthodox control over certain areas of Israeli life – things might look much different down the road. The recent tumult has led to an uptick in support from across the political spectrum in Israel, such as the opposition Yesh Atid party putting forward a bill that would turn the Kotel agreement into law.15 This development could be used to increase the visibility and political clout of these movements and their demands.

Yet the current political power map leads one to conclude that the Reform and Conservative movements still have a lot of political power building to do – which ought to focus on creating “facts on the ground” rather than achieving symbolic victories. This is not say that the symbolic aspects are not important. Indeed, it is incumbent upon Israel to officially make room at the table for the non-Orthodox movements, despite their small numbers. Still, in the case of the Kotel this could necessitate a slight change of course. Plans are in place to physically upgrade the Robinson’s Arch platform. And a subsequent effort could aim to turn this area into a magnet for both world Jewry and Jewish Israelis. Paradoxically, the movements could realistically use the recent crisis as an opportunity for increased government funding and support on a range of practical (though perhaps not symbolic) matters – as the government will likely seek non-controversial and practical measures to ameliorate Diaspora anger.

As for American and world Jewish groups, this could be an opportunity for them to demonstrate their commitment to the growth of non-Orthodox Judaism in Israel. Rather than pull philanthropy from Israel, as some have threatened, they could repurpose it as a tool for advancing and growing the Reform and Conservative presence.

**American groups could repurpose philanthropy as a tool for advancing the Reform and Conservative presence in Israel**

The movements currently have a yearly budget of around $5-7 million each (around 10 – 20 percent of that from government funding) – a paltry sum compared to the largesse enjoyed by the ultra-Orthodox and Orthodox groups, estimated at around $1 billion each year if not more.16 Were these sums to be even doubled and invested in outreach and infrastructure, including expanding synagogues and community centers (which have doubled in recent years), high quality schools and
kindergartens (which the movements already run with great success), summer camps and more, they could have a real effect in winning over sympathetic Israelis to their cause. The domestic debate has yet to be decided if pluralistic Judaism is less prevalent in Israel because enough Israelis just aren’t that interested, or because the movements can’t compete with respect to resources. This could help settle the matter.

As for the government, it is a political reality that short-term political survival often trumps long-term ideological moves. Still, the government ought (and seems) to recognize that the insult felt by a vast majority of Diaspora Jews is real and cuts deep. It will take serious damage control and no small degree of a political balancing act to mollify Israel’s Jewish friends in the U.S. and elsewhere abroad and by extension the movements in Israel. Among liberal American Jews, there are signs that support for Israel is already weakening, and these recent government actions could very well be the proverbial backbreaking straw.

The six-month freeze announced by the Prime Minister’s office on June 30, meant to create a space for a compromise “arrangement” on both the Kotel and conversion issue, and the more recent appointment (August 16, 2017) of a former senior cabinet minister to review Israel’s conversion policy, were positive moves and must be fully utilized. 

Additional thoughts: Judaism in Israel

The unescapable irony of all this is that as the ultra-Orthodox and the institution of the Israeli Rabbinate which they control have become increasingly forceful in maintaining and expanding their monopoly over Jewish practice, a growing number of Israelis become more distanced than ever from “that” Judaism and alienated from, and resentful of, the Rabbinate. Israeli Jews are more interested in Judaism than ever, just not under the auspices of the Rabbinate. As an illustration, a recent survey shows that 80 percent of Israeli Jews believe that the Rabbinate’s control over marriage and divorce “increases the number of Israelis who choose to wed … abroad”, and 56 percent feel that the “amount and content of religious legislation…is distancing Israeli citizens from Judaism”, including 74 percent of secular Jews.

In lieu of civil marriages (which do not exist in Israel), Israelis by the thousands have been flying overseas to marry in ceremonies of their choosing (but, still, cannot avoid the Rabbinate in the event of divorce). Alongside this phenomenon, there is a growing trend of couples conducting unofficial ceremonies in Israel and registering as a common-law union, thereby totally skirting the Rabbinate. Today, 6 percent of Israeli couples are not officially married, and the past year has seen more than 1300 such unofficial wedding ceremonies (as compared to roughly 40,000 official Jewish marriages each year). Of note is that the majority of these alternative
cere monies were Jewish ceremonies, be they Reform, Conservative, non-denominational or liberal Orthodox. Relatedly, Tzohar, the modern-Orthodox organization that seeks to reform the Rabbinate from within the system, weds a full 10 percent of Jewish couples in Israel (while on matters of conversion, Tzohar is acting in a more subversive manner to challenge the institution, such as through its “giyur k’halacha” conversion courts). Additional research hints that attitudes toward Orthodoxy itself are also changing. Just to flesh this point out, JPPI’s 2017 Pluralism in Israel Survey found that over half of Israeli Jews would prefer to attend synagogues with mixed-gender seating (including 52 percent of liberal Orthodox) rather than traditional gender-segregated seating Orthodox synagogues. As the ultra-Orthodox and the Rabbinate fend off alternatives to their version of Judaism, a growing number of Israelis, including the more liberal Orthodox, are gradually creating an alternative world of Jewish institutions from marriage and conversion to kosher certification. It is hard to say if Israeli society has reached a tipping point on this matter, but it is not difficult to imagine the day when the Rabbinate is largely obsolete for a sizeable segment of Israel’s population.

Additional thoughts: Israel-Diaspora relations

The latest crisis in Israel-Diaspora relations serves as a strong reminder of just how important, and fragile, “Jewish unity” is. Israeli and Diaspora leaders must engage in a serious and earnest dialogue about what it means for Israel to be a “homeland for all Jews” on a real and practical level, and to what extent the Israeli government should consider Diaspora perspectives in domestic decision-making, especially when there are implications for Diaspora Jewry. This discussion should happen in Israel, in the Diaspora, and between Israel and the Diaspora. It will not be a simple one.

The publication (July 9) of the supposed “blacklist” of 160 rabbis from around the world whose conversions were deemed insufficient for the Rabbinate, including a number of prominent (liberal) Orthodox rabbis, added fuel to the tensions between Israel and the Diaspora. Revelations that the list was never official and that the Rabbinate had never compiled, endorsed or published such a list (a mid-level official at the Rabbinate compiled the list after a freedom of information request by an Israeli NGO, ITIM), made little difference as the clarification came out a full two days after. The incident, which took place on the heels of the much-publicized Kotel agreement abrogation, even garnered the interest of foreign media outlets, and could negatively affect Israel’s image in the U.S. and throughout the West.

Thus, all sides would be advised to proceed with caution. Israel needs American and Diaspora Jewry on its side, as they are both cultural partners
and a strategic asset. Conversely, American and Diaspora Jews are recognizing more and more how much they still need Israel, despite its complexities and polarizing nature, as a point of connection to Jewish identity; the success of Birthright is a prime example of this.

The Israeli government, Israeli society including the Reform and Conservative movements and the ultra-Orthodox, and Diaspora Jewry must conduct these discussions soon and with an abundance of sensitivity. All factions will need to make important choices and compromises in order to maintain Jewish consensus around what it means for Israel to be both Jewish and Democratic, and what it means for Israel to be a home (even if away from home) for all Jews.
Endnotes


2 The ultra-Orthodox lawmakers, who voted against the plan, initially did not seek to actively prevent its implementation.

3 The Kotel administration forbids bringing in Torah scrolls from outside the compound, so as to prevent Women of the Wall from reading Torah publicly. In response, the courts ordered that the women cannot be searched for scrolls, leaving the situation ambiguous for the time being.

4 As reported by the movements themselves.


6 Pew Israel study, 2016.


11 According to the 2013 Pew Survey, the U.S. Jewish community is 35% Reform, 30% non-denominational, 18% Conservative, 10% Orthodox and 6% other.


16 As reported by the movements themselves.


21 Marriage statistics are from the Central Bureau of Statistics and original JPPI research.

22 Which are strictly Orthodox but operate outside of the official conversion system.

23 Tzohar marriage statistics are from Tzohar.


2017 marks the 50th anniversary of Jerusalem’s reunification, the result of the Six-Day War. It has also been a decade since JPPI’s last major report on Jerusalem. Therefore, JPPI dedicated this year’s annual Israel-Diaspora Dialogue to an examination of Jerusalem’s status. Jerusalem is, of course, considered holy by the three monotheistic religions. However, JPPI’s 2017 Dialogue dealt with Jerusalem as understood, interpreted, and analyzed by Jewish stakeholders with an interest in the city’s future.

JPPI’s 2007 policy paper, A Strategic Plan for the Strengthening of Jerusalem as a Civilizational Capital of the Jewish People, argued that there was an urgent need to close the gap between the visions, perceptions, and ideals people have with respect to Jerusalem and the actual reality of the city. Ten years later, some elements of this argument stand.

In this short interim report (the full version of it: http://jppi.org.il/new/en/article/jerusalemdialogue/#.WS_XhBN97Vo) we highlight some of the findings from the Dialogue we conducted with 39 groups in 19 Jewish communities in seven countries around the globe. This is the fourth year of JPPI’s Israel-Diaspora Dialogue, and a comprehensive report on Jerusalem and the Jewish People will join the three previous reports: Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State (2014); Jewish Values and the Use of Force in Armed Conflict (2015); and Exploring the Jewish Spectrum in a Time of Fluid Identity (2016).

For each of these Dialogues JPPI conducted discussion seminars in many dozens of Jewish communities worldwide – this year, 2017, included the many participants in the Conference of Presidents of Major American
Jewish Organizations’ annual mission to Israel. All Dialogue sessions included a survey and a structured discussion. We include in this report findings from a JPPI survey of Israeli opinions on Jerusalem.

Some of the questions we put to participants were specific: Is it essential that Jerusalem have a clear Jewish majority? How important is it for the city to be Jewishly diverse? Would you support a division of Jerusalem in exchange for peace with the Palestinians? What role should Diaspora Jews play in determining Jerusalem’s future?

**Our aim was to better understand the following:**

1. How connected Jews and Jewish leaders[1] around the world view Jerusalem’s current situation – culturally, demographically, and politically? Is it viewed as a thriving city or as one in trouble? Do they feel pride in how it is developing, or anxiety about its future?

2. How important is Jerusalem to these Jews – especially Jews who do not live in Jerusalem, and, even more so, those who live outside Israel (visitors and tourists usually see only a small part of Jerusalem, and are not always familiar with the full complexity of the city) – and how invested they feel in its future?

3. What is the vision of connected Jews and Jewish leaders for Jerusalem, and what are the policies and priorities they would support in the fulfillment of that vision?

4. The survey of Jews worldwide represents the average views of a self-selected group of mostly Jewish leaders and highly engaged Jews who chose to take part in the dialogue.

**Main findings of JPPI’s interim report:**

- Jerusalem is a **crucially important** place to engaged Jews worldwide, and a **primary point of connection** between Diaspora Jews and Israel.

- Many Jews around the world and in Israel feel that Jerusalem is not moving “in the right direction.” Mainly due to concerns about Jewish-Arab relations and religious pluralism.

- Many non-Israeli Jews feel “at home” in Jerusalem.

- Diaspora Jews feel their views should be **taken into consideration** as the political and cultural future of Jerusalem is shaped.

- A small majority of engaged Jews the world over agree that Jerusalem “should never be divided.” A significant majority wants it to be a city “with a clear Jewish majority,” and that “the Temple Mount must remain under Israeli jurisdiction.”

- However, in a seemingly contradictory statement, a small majority also argues that “Israel should be willing to compromise on the status of Jerusalem as a united city under Israeli jurisdiction.”

- A clear majority of engaged Jews the world over believe that “all countries ought to move their embassies to Jerusalem.”
The relationship of Jews and Jewish identity to the surrounding non-Jewish society is one of the drivers that shapes Jewish identity in the Diaspora, in a number of ways. Liberal, Non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox Jews have in part shaped the parameters of their values and identity to facilitate their integration into non-Jewish society or a strategy to accommodate to a non-Jewish culture. This effort has intensified in America in the light of the significant impact that Jewish culture has had on the general American culture. Indeed, one of most significant catalysts of the acceptance of Jews and their place of the Jews in America is the fact that American values and culture have Judeo-Christian underpinnings. The Puritans saw themselves as latter day Hebrews, and a serious proposals were made to make Hebrew the official language of the new nation (first in 1620 by William Bradford and then again in 1780 in the midst of the Revolutionary War). In Harvard College orations were delivered in Hebrew, starting in 1642 at the first commencement ceremony until the end of the eighteenth century. It would seem that over the years it was the humanist values embedded in the Jewish tradition that had the most impact in shaping America's Judeo-Christian heritage over the years. The recognition that America enjoyed a Judeo-Christian humanist heritage facilitated the influence of such Supreme Court justices as Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter and the adoption of Biblical verses on central American symbols such as the Statue of Liberty ("Proclaim Liberty throughout all the Land" – Lev. 25:10).

Conversely, in reaction to the attractions of non-Jewish society, some traditional and Orthodox Jews have raised and hardened the boundaries of their Jewish identity, and even non-Orthodox and Reform have become more explicitly and boldly Jewish.
This year’s Annual Assessment examines this dimension of Jewish identity in relation to the recent election in the United States. The 2016 election cast light on increased political and cultural polarization between Orthodox and liberal elements in the American Jewish community. This chapter describes this polarization vis-a-vis voting patterns, political party affiliations, and social and political views. In addition, it discusses visible connections between the Orthodox Jewish community with the Trump administration and the contrasting, sometimes vociferous opposition to the administration and its policies by some liberal Jews and rabbis. Finally, it argues that these different political orientations appear to be connected to two alternative implicit strategies, one liberal and one conservative-Orthodox, of Jewish integration into American life.

**American Jewish Voting Patterns in the 2016 Election**

The American Jewish vote in the presidential election was bifurcated. According to exit polls, approximately 70 percent of U.S. Jews voted for Clinton and 25 percent voted for Trump (the remaining 5 percent voted for Gary Johnson or Jill Stein). Behind these overall numbers lies a significant difference in pattern between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Exit polls showed that over 70 percent of Reform and Conservative Jews voted for Clinton (76 and 71 percent respectively). Among the Orthodox, the number was lower, only 56 percent supported Clinton. Thirty-nine percent of Orthodox Jews supported Trump, opposed to 21 and 25 percent respectively among Reform and Conservative Jews. If one looks at real voting results in neighborhoods with large concentrations of Modern Orthodox and Haredi Jews (which some writers claim is more accurate than exit polls), the result is even more dramatic. In five Modern Orthodox neighborhoods in Greater New York, Chicago, and Florida, Trump received between 45 and 90 percent of the vote, and in Haredi neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New Jersey, and Ohio, he received between 56 and 94 percent. It must be borne in mind that, as of now, the Orthodox are about 10 percent of the Jewish population and the non-Orthodox 90 percent. This shift to support for Republican candidates on the part of the Orthodox is not a one-time “blip.” It represents a consistent voting pattern in the four presidential elections since 2004. In fact, in many places Trump received fewer Orthodox votes than either Romney or McCain had. Furthermore, according to the 2013 Pew survey of American Jews, over 55 percent of Orthodox Jews say that they lean Republican. This shift to Republican support is not arbitrary; both Modern Orthodox and Haredi Jews exhibit more conservative political attitudes that non-Orthodox Jews. A much larger percentage of Orthodox Jews disapproved of President Obama (over 50 percent) than other Jews (29 percent), and a majority of Orthodox Jews favor smaller government.
Liberal Jewish Opposition to the Trump Administration

If we look to the other side of the spectrum, as we have indicated, 70 percent of the Jewish community voted for Clinton. Moreover, the more liberal a community is religiously, the more it voted liberal politically. Seventy-six percent of Reform Jews, cast their votes for Clinton. Furthermore, many non-orthodox younger Jews voted for and supported Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries. Again, the liberal nature of the Jewish electorate represents a long-standing trend. The majority of Jews have consistently voted liberal, left or Democratic since the start of the 20th century. Furthermore, the 2013 Pew report declared that “Jews are among the most liberal, Democratic groups in the population.” It is noteworthy, though, that within this pattern, the less that one is religious or emphasizes particularistic Jewish identity and attachment, the more liberal are one’s social and political attitudes. Thus, while 70 percent of all U.S. Jews are Democrats or lean Democrat, among Jews of No Religion, Reform Jews and Jews of No Denomination the percentages are 78, 76, and 75 respectively. Similarly, 82 percent of all Jews said that homosexuality should be accepted by society, but percentages were recognizably higher for Reform Jews (92 percent), Jews of No Denomination (89 percent), and Jews of No Religion (91 percent). Insofar as millennials have high representation among Jews of No Religion, these very liberal views probably characterize many of them as well.

This liberal attitude also expresses itself in literature among younger writers who started publishing in the new millennium. This liberal approach has especially expressed itself in criticism of what is perceived as the mainstream Jewish community and “mainstream Jewish values.” In the titular story in Nathan Englander’s 2012 short story collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*, the centrality of the Holocaust and its symbols in American Jewish identity is examined and even to a certain extent lampooned. In a somewhat similar vein, Jonathan Safran Foer’s 2017 novel, *Here I Am*, considers American Jewish objections to, and demurral from, the perceived roughness and brutality of Israelis. This novel looks at the trajectory of American Jewish solidarity with Israel and how it has evolved into a relationship characterized by increasing complexity and ambivalence. These works join Michael Chabon’s *The Yiddish Policeman’s Union* in its critique of religious Zionist Messianism, right-wing Israeli government policy and Christian right-wing movements in America.

Thus, the current crop of young Jewish writing, continues the tradition of American Jewish liberalism and social critique but with a tone that is somewhat more far-reaching and critical than previous writing especially as concerns Israel. This tone seems to be in accord with the current polarization in American politics between liberal and conservative/populist camps. One central expression of this polarization was the 2016 election and its aftermath. Not only was the campaign extremely acrimonious, but the acrimony continued after the election results
were announced. One of the main expressions of this continuing conflict was the prominence of street demonstrations protesting the Trump administration and its policies. Many Jews have participated in these as individual citizens of the United States. However, beyond this, many Jews and Jewish organizations have participated in these demonstrations as Jews and on the basis of their Jewish identity. One such issue was the Trump administration’s effort to ban U.S. entry by citizens from seven predominantly Muslim countries. The three major Jewish religious denominations issued statements protesting the ban, with the Reform statement being the harshest rebuke: “The Reform movement denounces in the strongest terms the horrifying executive order on immigration and refugees,” it said. Even more pointedly, 20 rabbis, affiliated with the liberal movements, some wearing tallitot (prayer-shawls), protested the ban, and were arrested for obstructing traffic on Columbus Circle in New York. The protest was organized by T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, a non-profit group whose mission is to “bring together rabbis and cantors from all streams of Judaism, together with all members of the Jewish community, to act on the Jewish imperative to respect and advance the human rights of all people.” “We remember our history, and we remember that the borders of this country closed to us in 1924 with very catastrophic consequences during the Holocaust,” Rabbi Jill Jacobs of T’ruah said. “We know that some of the language that’s being used now to stop Muslims from coming in is the same language that was used to stop Jewish refugees from coming.”

While most leaders of Reform, Conservative and other Liberal groups deeply believe that their liberal perspectives on social issues emerge from their deeply held Jewish values, many observers believe that there is a strong tendency among some liberal groups to conflate Liberal and progressive values with Jewish values. Thus, Rabbi Dara Frimmer, in 2009, characterized the attitude of her young age cohort as follows: “Don’t keep kosher, that’s fine, don’t keep Shabbat, that’s fine, marry a non-Jew – whatever. But understand that it will take away your Jewish identity if you don’t fight for justice.” In a similar vein, in September 2016, a Jerusalem Post op-ed opposing the Trump immigration policy on Jewish grounds bore the title: “Jewish Values are to Welcome Strangers, Something Trump Doesn’t Stand For.”

It is practically certain that these developments were influenced by the polarization in the politics and culture of the general American society that found significant expression in the last presidential election. The religious, values related, cultural, and economic concerns of the central swath of the population that is white, religious (Evangelical or Catholic) and working or lower middle class found strong expression in the victory of Donald Trump. To a large extent, Orthodox Jews share these concerns.
Different Implicit Strategies of Integration into American Society

Underlying these differences between the Orthodox and liberal groups seems to be the growing crystallization of two different strategies of Jewish integration into general American society and identity. The first, liberal Jewish strategy is the classic model Jews in the West have adopted since the end of the 18th century. The liberalism of the majority of the Jewish community and their tendency to conflate liberal values with Jewish values is not simply the subjective preference of individual Jews. Rather, it seems to be related to the historical position of the Jews as a minority and the strategy that the Jews crystallized over the last 200 years for integration into the non-Jewish societies in which they lived. This classic strategy, which had been in use since the Enlightenment and the Emancipation, involves the adoption of the liberal civic virtues of tolerance, pluralism, civil and human rights, civic equality etc. and the minimizing of cultural and religious characteristics that mark the Jews as different from the general population. In the American case, it prefers that American national identity be based upon the American civil creed (“dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”) without too much emphasis on the Christian or Anglo-Saxon ethnic or cultural bases for American identity. To this very day, liberal Jews are one of the most vigilant groups with respect to the separation of church and state in the United States.

All Jews commonly understood the nature of the “deal” that modern Western society offered them in the framework of this strategy: In exchange for less explicitly expressed Jewish identity, they could achieve enhanced integration and achievement in the surrounding non-Jewish society. Jewish groups differed as to the extent that they would accept the deal. Many Jews shed their particular cultural and religious characteristics and, indeed, achieved outstanding integration and achievement in Western societies. Other (Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox) groups retained more particularist characteristics, and as a group, attained less integration.

Today with the rising prominence of Orthodox Jews in the Trump administration and in certain business, real estate and legal circles we may be witnessing the rise of an alternative strategy of Jewish integration and an alternative “deal.” This strategy would likely entail alliances with other, non-Jewish religious and conservative groups based upon a shared moral culture which is religiously based.

Like the original deal, the emerging alternative strategy comprises several levels. In what follows we parse these levels and compare the liberal strategy of Jewish integration with the emerging conservative one. According to the classic strategy, the Jews expected that they would become part of a “neutral” or “semi-neutral” society, that is, a general society, or at least a public sphere
in which religious and ethnic identities would not be present or, at least, prominent. Religious and ethnic identities would be relegated to the private sphere, if they existed at all. They similarly expected or hoped, that non-Jews would be likeminded liberals, committed to the values of equality, tolerance, pluralism etc., and would share, at least in the public sphere, a common, secular, liberal identity.

In the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the the twenty first, some of the groups which had been associated with this liberal strategy such as reform, conservative and even modern Orthodox groups underwent a change. Under the impact of the multi-cultural celebration of different ethnic and cultural groups, which started with "black is beautiful", these groups have given more emphasis to explicit Jewish religious symbols such as publicly marking Jewish holidays and making their services less "Protestant" and more Jewish (more use of Hebrew, talitot etc.).

It may be suggested that some Orthodox groups are going beyond this and developing an alternative strategy. In contrast to the liberal strategy, the Orthodox, conservative strategy builds upon alliances with other, non-Jewish religious groups, built, at the first level, upon shared interests. These would include increased government funding of religious education and the exemption of religious organizations, individuals and communities from the imposition of progressive mores (such as same sex marriage and the free availability of abortion) by force of law. Moreover, Orthodox groups wish to ally themselves with other non-Jewish religious, conservative groups because of the pronounced pro-Israel orientation of these groups. Not only are these groups pro-Israel in a general way, but they also support Jewish right wing and religious policies in regard to the settlement and incorporation of the Greater Land of Israel. Beyond the question of shared interests, there might also be a level of shared moral culture and shared identity.14

This brings us to the next two levels of the respective integration strategies. As indicated above, the liberal strategy of Jewish integration prefers that American national identity be based upon the American civil creed. without too much emphasis on the Christian or Anglo-Saxon ethnic or cultural bases for American identity. In contrast, the conservative-Orthodox strategy seems to accept the general conservative position (articulated, for example, by Samuel Huntington15) that American national identity is not only narrowly based upon Civil Creed but also upon a shared moral culture, which rests upon a religious (Protestant/Christian or Judeo-Christian) culture.16 This moral culture which Jewish conservatives (especially Orthodox religious conservatives) share with non-Jewish, especially Christian conservatives seems to rest upon different assumptions than liberal morality. This is the final level or aspect of the respective integration strategies we will compare.

The social psychological research of Richard Shweder and especially Jonathan Haidt points to the fact that different cultures and population groups have different underlying conceptions and approaches to morality. Haidt talks about two
main approaches: a “contractual approach” and a “beehive approach.” “The contractual approach takes the individual as the fundamental unit of value. The fundamental problem of social life is that individuals often hurt each other and so we create implicit social contracts and explicit laws to foster a fair, free, and safe society in which individuals can pursue their interests and develop themselves and their relationships as they choose.”23 The rules the contractual approach develops largely focus upon not harming other people and caring for them, especially the helpless and the oppressed. They also value fairness and reciprocity.

"The beehive approach, in contrast, takes the group and its territory as fundamental sources of value. Individual bees are born and die by the thousands, but the hive lives for a long time, and each individual has a role to play in fostering its success. The two fundamental problems of social life are attacks from outside and subversion from within. Either one can lead to the death of the hive, so all must pull together, do their duty, and be willing to make sacrifices for the group.”18 The beehive approach will propound within its system of moral rules and values, as we shall see, other issues beyond harm/care and fairness/reciprocity.

Liberals consider the individual the regnant unit of value. Hence, their moral assumptions are mainly “contractual.” Conservative and traditional groups tend to view the group as the regnant unit of value. Hence, While liberals tend to think that something is morally wrong only if it harms or oppresses other people, according to the research of Jonathan Haidt and other social psychologists, conservatives and traditional people in general have a larger list of moral concepts and understand key notions somewhat differently.19 They tend, as well, to emphasize as moral values norms and behaviors that promote the survival and well-being of the group.

In addition to the virtue of care (for small children and helpless animals and by extension for all unfortunates) and liberty from oppression that they share with the liberals,20 Conservative moral concepts also include:

1. Fairness as proportionality – i.e. people should get their just desserts, or as St. Paul put it “he who does not work neither shall he eat.” People who work and contribute deserve their benefits. Freeloading is a moral sin. Hence they tend to question whether the recipients of welfare or government benefits actually deserve them.21 Liberals, in contrast, think of fairness in terms of privileged people taking advantage of non-privileged groups. Hence they insist that wealthy people should pay their fair share of taxes or that dis-privileged people should get higher, that is fairer, benefits that provide minimum income, shelter, health etc.22

2. Loyalty – One should support and contribute to the immediate groups that one belongs to: family, community, nation and country. Dante put the betayers in the lowest circle in the Inferno. Conservatives are more comfortable being part of a group than liberals are and will tend to enforce group loyalty even if it comes at great cost to individuals.
.3 Sanctity – There is a “higher” side to man’s nature and one’s body should be treated as a temple not as an amusement park. Normatively speaking, one’s bodily and sexual behavior is not entirely determined by oneself as an autonomous individual.

4. Authority – Human beings like other animals are organized into hierarchies that are not by definition oppressive – i.e. parents and children, clergy and laymen. Conservatives and religious traditionalists will demand respect and obedience for authority even if it is not entirely rationally justified, such as authority that is age and gender based.

Because of their individualistic orientation, liberals tend to think of morality in universalistic terms. The idea that one should give preferential treatment to members of one’s ethnic or religious group (or even one’s family) is embarrassing to certain liberals. None of the above arguments should be taken to imply that liberals are not loyal or disrespectful to authority. However, they tend to give these concepts a more individualistic and rational interpretation.

Of course, from a liberal point of view, much of conservative and traditional morality smacks of irrational adherence to tradition and superstition, and values such as group loyalty at the expense of individual fulfillment, blind obedience to authority, and traditional restrictions on human sexual behavior and orientation often seem to be immoral suppressions of human autonomy and interpersonal oppression.

Orthodox Jews who believe in reward and punishment (and who think of themselves as deserving middle class people); who believe in unquestioning loyalty to their families, communities and people (Am Yisrael) and (despite traditional Jewish reserve towards Gentile governments) are developing a form of right-wing patriotism towards their nation (America); who respect the authority of parents and of rabbis and who try and live their lives in accordance with Kedusha (sanctity) seem to share this moral culture. Through their membership in this shared moral culture, they claim membership in American society and American identity. It is important to emphasize that according to this strategy, they claim their American membership not despite their Orthodoxy (as liberal Jews believe), but because of it. Their Orthodoxy makes them part of the moral culture – which they share with evangelical Protestants and (white) believing Catholics – which, in the eyes of these groups, grounds American democracy. In other words, they seem to be proposing a new deal: Become American by emphasizing your Orthodox way of life and the values that this embodies.

American identity according to this Orthodox approach is achieved upon a higher level of abstraction. Jews, Evangelicals and (white, devout) Catholics share the same moral/religious culture and the same moral values. However, they actualize these values in parallel fashion in their respective faith traditions and communities. A certain reservation is in order here. In the context of the “new deal”, Haredi and especially Hassidic Jews, having much less secular
education, command of English and income than the American Jewish norm, might not achieve the same level and quality of influence on the general society that Jews today enjoy. Nevertheless, Haredi and Hassidic groups have proven over the years to be enormously resourceful and resilient and they might find other, new channels for maintaining access to power centers of American life and influence upon them. In fact, in recent years Haredi and even Hassidic groups have established policy research institutes and consulting firms.

If there really are two strategies for Jewish integration into American society, then that implies a deep difference between the Orthodox and the liberal streams of the American Jewish community. Until around 2000 it was reasonable to assume that Orthodox and liberal Jews had similar interests and aspirations vis-a-vis American society. The differences between them had to do with the lengths that each community was willing to go in order to achieve them and the manner in which each accordingly approached the Jewish tradition. If each community, though, is developing different or even opposing aspirations vis-a-vis American society and their place within it, that represents a new level of dissent and even polarization with the community.

**Conclusion**

As we have written in previous Annual Assessments, the Orthodox community in the United States is strengthening demographically. This demographic strength is translating, unsurprisingly into political strength. For the most part, the Orthodox and especially the Ultra-Orthodox utilize their political power to obtain benefits for their own communities, including state support for religious education and the exemption of religious organizations, individuals and communities from the imposition of progressive mores by force of law. To a certain extent its also seems to include the promotion of a socially conservative agenda for general American society. In pursuit of these goals they are forming alliances with similar religiously conservative groups such as Evangelicals and devout Catholics. At the same time, the ultra-Orthodox especially, are not much engaged with the general organized Jewish community and, as we have seen, they are a lot less involved with general American life and their ability to influence it seems lower than the Jewish norm.

Thus the three groups that constitute the American Jewish community each present significant challenges: The group that is distancing itself from Jewish life and community (often the children of intermarriage, and who often say that they have no religion) needs to be reengaged and reconnected with the Jewish people and the Jewish community as well as with Jewish life and culture. Secondly, the group that had until now constituted the backbone
of the Jewish community in America, the Jewish “middle – the Reform and Conservative Jews who belonged to synagogues and Jewish organizations, gave money to Jewish causes, and were very attached to Israel and the Jewish People are shrinking. Thirdly, the Orthodox and in particular, the Ultra-Orthodox who are among the most committed to the Jewish People and Jewish life are insufficiently engaged with the general organized general Jewish community and do not seem to have the wherewithal for continuing the legacy of Jewish influence on the larger American society.

Endnotes

1 The 70-30 split among the Jewish vote goes back to the last decades of the twentieth century. Only in recent years however, has the split been largely according to denominational lines.


6 The street demonstrations of the weeks after the election have in the meantime petered out. To a certain extent they have been replaced by meaningful political organization.


9 Jewish People Policy Institute, Annual Assessment 2010, p. 169


11 To be sure, in the late nineteenth and during the twentieth Century, the dominant form of Christianity in America was liberal (“Mainline”) Protestantism that embraced liberal values. The liberal Protestant American ambience, which was not altogether secular, encouraged the liberal Jewish strategy of integration.


14 Of course, one of the factors encouraging the Orthodox approach is the significant strengthening of conservative and evangelical Christianity in America since the 1980’ and the decline of liberal Mainline Protestantism.


16 Cohen and Maisal, op. cit.


18 Ibid.


20 Two caveats are here in order. The first is that we are talking about conceptions, values, and norms, not behavior. In any moral system individuals will deviate in their behavior from the accepted norms and values. Nevertheless, we still consider that they adhere to the moral system if they recognize the normative force and claim of the moral values and norms in question. In other words, individuals in a given culture who affirm the moral value of marital fidelity might still commit adultery. They remain in the moral system or culture if, despite their behavior, they recognize the normative force of the prohibition and recognize (on some level) that their own behavior was wrong or deviant.

The second caveat is that we are dealing with ideal types, that is “pure” ideal constructions that have an inner logic to them. These generally do not characterize real populations and real people. Real populations generally carry a mixture of two or more ideal types, even if one ideal type is dominant.

Finally, it should go without saying that our approach is purely descriptive and analytical. We make no claims and stake no position with respect to the moral superiority of one group or approach over another.

21 Exactly who is a freeloader is a politically loaded and contested concept. Some conservatives who focus upon this value tend to stereotypically label whole populations, such as minorities, welfare mothers, youth etc. as freeloaders. See Hochschild, Arlie. Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right. New York and London: The New Press, 2016.


23 Haidt, op. cit.

24 President Obama: “In the eyes of God, a child on the other side of the border is no less worthy of love and compassion than my own child,” Obama said. “You can’t distinguish between them in terms of their worth or inherent dignity.” http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/25/politics/obama-merkel-germany/index.html

25 See for example “Patriotism is our Value, Editorial, The Jewish Star, (Orthodox newspaper published in Long Island), Nov. 23, 2011.

Another aspect of the bifurcation of the Jewish community in the United States is expressed in terms of demography, marriage and reproductive patterns, and their relation to Jewish identity. Whereas the Orthodox, and especially the Ultra-Orthodox, marry young, overwhelmingly marry Jewish spouses, and have significant numbers of children (Modern Orthodox, average 3 children; Ultra-Orthodox, almost 6 per family), non-Orthodox Jews marry late, have a high incidence of intermarriage, and have far fewer children (on average, 1.4).

Demographers and social scientists are divided over the meaning of this situation, especially the pattern of Jewish identity and reproduction of non-Orthodox Jews. Some researchers and commentators, looking at the small number of children, the high number of households without children, and the high rates of intermarriage have drawn pessimistic conclusions regarding the future of the non-Orthodox Jewish community. Analyzing the 2013 Pew study of Jewish Americans data, they have drawn attention to the fact that only 21 percent of Jewish adults between 25-54 are raising children as Jews by Religion, that is, as Jews who exhibit a high rate of Jewish engagement: membership in synagogues and Jewish organizations; Jewish philanthropy; attachment to Israel and feeling of solidarity with, and responsibility toward, other Jews. They have also stressed that that children of intermarriages and Jews of No Religion exhibit much lower levels of Jewish engagement and sense of connection to, and responsibility toward, other Jews.

At the same time, a number of writers have taken issue with this pessimistic outlook. They have argued that spiritual quality and the meaningfulness of Jewish life are more important than numbers. Above all, they have pointed to data that show that among those under 30, a
The youngest cohorts the majority of children of intermarried families identify as Jewish.

The real question undergirding this debate is: What does it mean to be Jewish in 21st century America? The pessimistic camp (who prefer to describe themselves as “deeply concerned”) represented by Steven M. Cohen and Sylvia Barack Fishman, others, holds a vision of Jewish membership and belonging that until recently characterized the “Jewish middle” – Conservative and Reform Jews who were very committed to the Jewish people (worldwide) and to Israel and expressed this commitment through membership in synagogues and Jewish organizations and through Jewish philanthropy. The backbone of this approach is a commitment to the well-being and flourishing of Jewish “sacred ethnicity.” On a deep level, Jewish identity is conceived as belonging to a primordial, given community of faith characterized by a high degree of mutual solidarity and responsibility. The pessimistic camp is alarmed because it sees this form of Jewish identity as disappearing. They are seeking to find ways to promote a pattern of active engagement in the religio-ethnic community characterized by subjective commitment, religious practice, informational association, and formal affiliation, either through educational interventions or by somehow encouraging earlier marriage, in-marriage and larger families. Many of the interventions these researchers advocate are aimed at forming and/or reinforcing Jewish social networks, which are viewed as key in establishing Jewish families with children and encouraging Jewish engagement. In connection with this, some researchers in this camp stress that in order for ethnic (or religio-ethnic) groups to exist they must maintain some sort of social boundaries vis-a-vis non-members of the group.

Members of the other, more optimistic group take the disappearance of primordial sacred ethnicity as a given in contemporary America. They take it for granted that belonging there will take the form of individual choice. They are encouraged by the fact that in the youngest cohorts among the majority of children of intermarried families identify as Jewish. This, of course is a new development in modern Jewish history. It seems to stem, in part, from the high esteem that Judaism and Jews enjoy in contemporary America, possibly to the fact that so few of this cohort have yet married, and that intermarriage is so widespread that far more committed Jews (their parents) are intermarrying. Researchers with this point of view have also argued that research of the past year or two, shows enhanced Jewish identity also among young Jews of other groups characterized in the past by low identification and engagement (such as Jews of No Religion) due to educational programming targeting them.

In line with this, certain writers and observers have stressed the need for programs that individuals will find engaging and meaningful. Participating in such programs, and communities – camps, youth
groups, Israel trips – will (ideally) demonstrate that Jewish engagement can be meaningful for individuals. Such participation can help children of intermarriages and Jews of No Religion choose to identify and engage Jewishly. Thus, writers such as Len Saxe and his colleagues have published research showing that intermarried couples who are married by a rabbi, or children of intermarriages that participate in Jewish programming in college or go on Birthright trips have higher levels of Jewish engagement. The challenge, though, in regard to the population of the marginally affiliated and the children of intermarried couples is not that they do not respond to meaning-laden or immersive programming, but in getting them to participate in such programs in the first place.

Furthermore, a few researchers have suggested that such programs work because they construct social boundaries as well as provide meaning.

The two approaches do not really generate policy alternatives. Everybody seems to agree that we should prepare programs for both the Jewish core or “middle’ and the marginally affiliated and intermarried. There do seem to be somewhat different emphases between the two camps.

The more optimistic camp advocates investment in the marginally affiliated and the intermarried group, claiming that, in fact, this group is becoming paradigmatic for Jewish identity writ large in America. This camp would like to foster the development of meaning-laden and immersive programs, and strategies for marketing them, so that those whose connection to Judaism is based entirely on individual choice will be inclined to choose Judaism and Jewish engagement. They, of course, also think that “connected Jews” can benefit from these programs insofar as the Jewish identity of connected Jews is also, today, ultimately based on individual choice.

The “deeply concerned” are more explicit about the need for best practices and creative programming for connected Jews and their children (the Jewish middle). However, they agree that the issue is not binary and that there is a lot of fluidity in who benefits from programs like Birthright Israel, Jewish college courses, and successful initiatives for unmarried younger Jewish adults.
Endnotes


2 Fishman and Cohen op. cit. p. 8-10.


5 Shlomo Fischer, Uzi Rebhun, Noah Slepkov, “Patterns of Jewish Identification Among Jews in America”. 17th World Congress of Jewish Studies, August 9, 2017.


8 Fischer, Rebhun and Slepkov op. cit.
“Against All Odds, We Are Here To Stay”

Throughout modern history, Jews have been the ultimate “other” in Europe, and they have constituted a symbolic reference baseline for all subsequent “others.” This unique situation provides them with a set of duties, but also certain prerogatives. Neither migrants nor fully natives, the question of dual allegiance lingers unresolved, whatever the claim. As the standardized reference for European democracies’ governmental decisions regarding minorities, they receive frequent media exposure and privileged access to political leaders.

Today, in an era of mass migration of non-European newcomers and weakening collective identity, European Jews are often expected to behave as role model citizens, fully allegiant to the dominant ethos at the cost of their particularistic self-interest. In this context, there is a difference between Western and Eastern Europe. In countries with large Muslim minorities, especially in West Europe and Scandinavia, Jews are routinely called on – for the sake of the public quiescence – to make sacrifices in order to avoid provoking resentful radicalized Muslim youth and fascism revivalists with conspicuous displays of their particularism. In Hungary, Poland and other post-communist states, in East Europe, the expectation of cultural conformity is implicit and most people with Jewish roots avoid disclosing their ancestry. Jews in North America, are open about their belonging to the Jewish people with their professional and friendship circles, but on the old continent, being a Jew is a freighted biographical element and Jews are careful with whom they share this information.

Existential discomfort, leads many Jews to adopt one of the well-known Jewish strategies: some,
with the means to do so, emigrate to friendlier environs; a significant population, not ready to pay the price of emigration, avoid the public sphere and settle into homogeneous enclaves. This is particularly true of those who follow traditional, stringent Jewish religious practices. But the vast majority, who are less committed and more secular, have no desire to positively affirm their otherness: They decrease their Jewish profile and adopt an assimilationist stance, which, based upon historical experience, leads in the end, to Jewish decline.

The last years have brought challenges, crises and a self-questioning atmosphere to Europe. The European Union and the various governments it comprises have been shaken by a wave of protests forcing them to examine and define their place within the continent, and within the world. The ramifications of these processes for the Jewish communities of Europe are numerous. We will describe them in the following paragraphs.

**Historical Background**

Despite the fact that Jews have lived in Europe for 2,000 years, often settling there well before today’s majority ethnic groups, the position of Jews in Europe has historically been precarious. The emergence of the nation-states in the 18th and 19th centuries created a political context that demanded the full allegiance of Jews to the nations accepting them as citizens. Neither migrants nor fully native, their specificity placed them in an in-between situation and the only way to be considered fully part of the national community was to present themselves as exceptionally loyal citizens, models for all future newcomers.²

Jews learned to prosper under these conditions. German Jews excelled in demonstrating full allegiance to the Kaiser and French Jews to the Republic. Similarly, Hungarian and British Jews were champions of patriotism. By the 1920s, despite the opposition of conservative elites, Jews in most European countries succeeded in making the most of the opportunities liberal nation-states offered, and many of them reached key positions in various fields.

European Jews achieved relative success despite the ambivalence and hostility of their non-Jewish counterparts. Despite their attempts, the issue of dual loyalty has never been resolved. Again and again, they were accused of playing a double game, of hiding their “true” affiliations (to capitalism, to communism, to international orders) while pretending to be good national citizens.

Following WW2, a rejection of the nationalistic discourse emerged and collective identities (either religious, ethnic, national) were regarded suspiciously. This new post-national worldview underpinned the construction of the European Union. Jews were, once again, a point of reference in this process: “Rising from the ashes,” the European integration process, espousing a peaceful and hatred-free vision, took the fate of European Jewry and the Holocaust as one of its important symbols as they underpin the liberal order and the centrality of human rights.³

As the archetypal victims of nationalistic ethnocentrisms, many Jews became the champions
of the European idea and the construction of a supranational entity, an ameliorating counterforce to the racial, ethnic and religious discrimination consubstantial to the nation-state. As the nation-state ethos was accompanied by xenophobia, antisemitism, conservatism and opposition to social mobility, Jews were among the most ardent supporters of the new ethos. In concrete terms, over the last seven decades, Jews have taken advantage of globalization and identified themselves with the post-war post-nationalist European ethos. If we, for just a moment, disregard the horrific Nazi period, European Jews over last two and a half centuries have successfully adapted themselves first to the emancipation, then the modern nation-state, and, most recently, European post-nationalism.

**The New Choice**

Europe may be at a turning point in its history. Recent seismic events in European politics have shown two contrasting tendencies on the continent. On one hand, several signs point to a crisis of mistrust or outright rejection of globalism. Brexit is, so far, the most visible symptom of this, but other phenomena like the December 2016 constitutional referendum in Italy and the rise of the right-wing AfD party in Germany reinforce this idea. In Eastern Europe, many consider partnership with Russia a viable and attractive alternative to the European Union.

On the other hand, it would be premature to conclude that the European idea and its liberal orientation are dead. The failure of Geert Wilders and his PVV party in Holland, whose campaign was based on opposition to immigration and the European Union, and the election of Emmanual Macron president of France over the far right candidate Marine Le Pen, prove that the people of Europe are still attached to the European Union. Moreover, while the election of Donald Trump in the United States had been seen as the possible beginning of a nationalistic populist wave that would also sweep Europe, the reality appears, on the contrary, to be characterized by a sense of alarm at events unfolding in the United States and a rejection of the U.S. president’s ideas.

In short, last years’ political and social developments in Europe reveal the complexity of the continent’s situation, where opposing trends and projects face each other, without a clear dominance of any one of them. These changes in the European political world have led to a new balance of power in European politics.

**Economic Globalization Vs Cultural Globalization**

Differentiating between two different facets of the globalization process – the economic and the cultural – is useful in both analyzing the new challenges and recommending directions for intervention. The political distribution in Europe is not anymore a continuous spectrum from far left to far right but a dual-axis map. As presented in the following matrix, the four main political streams can be arranged according to their support of economic and cultural globalization.
Far Right: All over Europe, and beyond, far right parties oppose both economic and cultural globalization. In the economic field, they support nationalistic economic protectionism in order to protect local traditional industries from international low-cost competition. Culturally, they want Europe to remain Christian, avoid international cultural influences, and keep the economic and political leadership in the hands of elites of ethnic European origin.

Far Left: Claiming that the economic competitiveness of the non-European industries results from the subjugation of local workers, the far left, ironically, supports economic protectionism similar to that proposed by the far right. However, the similarity does not carry over to the cultural realm. The far left camp advocates the acceptance and integration of non-European migrants, and believes the countries of Europe should become multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-faith societies.

Moderate Right: in line with the ethos of economic liberalism that made Europe a global actor, the moderate right supports economic globalization but opposes multi-culturalism and is reluctant to accept and integrate migrants.

Center / Social Democrats / Social Liberals / Moderate Left: both Macron and Merkel, who belong to this moderate camp are avid supporters of the E.U. and the Globalization. They wish to preserve national identities while also integrating cultural elements and promising elites of Muslim descent in the public sphere.

The European political history of the last decade can be seen through the prism of competition between these four camps. One could argue that the continent’s fate will be linked to the outcome of this competition. The camp that ultimately claims power will determine the European outward strategy toward the world and the inward disposition toward its own minorities, including its Jewish communities. In Western
European countries, the far left has held a more dominant place in society than can be observed in Eastern Europe. At the same time, the far right, though present throughout the continent, has much more influence in the political discourse in Eastern European countries. However, despite these regional differences, every political actor in Europe falls into one of the four camps.

The Social Implications Of The Globalization Process

Thanks to globalization, 1.5 billion people in underdeveloped countries have been lifted out of extreme poverty in the last two decades. The borderless world has brought unprecedented opportunities to individual and collective players. For various historical reasons, the Jewish people and the State of Israel were culturally prepared for and have greatly benefitted from this process. Yet, this rapid destabilization of the world order has been met with backlashes, and what appears to be a concomitant rise in anti-Semitism with the potential to harm Jewish life in Europe and elsewhere in the West: pauperization of Western working classes, social downgrading of the middle-classes, intrusive influence of international economic actors, inability of politicians to protect their constituents, and massive migration. Last but not least, populist backlash against elites and post-nationalists.

Among the four political camps, the far right and the far left are, from the point of view of the Jewish people and their institutions, the most problematic:

- The rise of fervent nationalism brings with it the potential for xenophobia, Christian and racist anti-Semitism, pressure for cultural conformity, and the rejection of Jewish exceptionalism. Jewish ritual practices (such as external markers of religious belonging, circumcision, Jewish slaughter) may be subject to prohibition, Jews may be expected to lower their Jewish profile and avoid expressions of solidarity with world Jewry or Israel.

- On the other side, the multiculturalists envision Europe as multi-ethnic society and question the hegemonic hold of the traditional Judeo-Christian heritage. As most migrants in Europe come from Muslim countries with non-democratic systems, and, frequently, institutionalized anti-Jewish/anti-Israeli attitudes and resentments, current immigration inflows have worrisome implications for Europe's Jewish communities.

- Proponents of both cases above, tend to associate the Jews with international finance and globalization in its different dimensions, and their ascendency to power would pose significant threats for European Jews.5

Current immigration inflows, coming mostly from Muslim countries, have worrisome implications for Europe's Jewish communities.
Today, European states are torn between two antithetical constitutional projects: either becoming a unified political entity or returning to the good old days of entrenched nationalism.

**Constitutional Project 1:** The implications for European Jews of a return to the nationalistic narrative are somewhat predictable. In such a scenario, while the most religious Jews will relocate to Israel or self-segregate in closed neighborhoods, we may expect that European Jews will re-adopt the well-known low Jewish profile, characterized by a very privatized, non-exteriorized and non-totalizing Judaism. While the ultra-orthodox Jews built self-segregated enclaves, socially and culturally integrated Jews adopted this strategy for two centuries in Western Europe prior to the Second World War. This strategy has been a slippery slope to assimilation, but in the new context of a vibrant Jewish nation-state in Israel we may imagine a new sustainable model.

**Constitutional Project 2:** On the other hand, the implications of a scenario in which European countries were to become one unified political entity with fewer national prerogatives are more ambivalent. Many believe that without national governments to protect them, in a context of increased presence of non-European migrant populations in a multi-ethnic scene, Jews’ status may be at risk. However, others associate this scenario with possible positive consequences. Delving into the historical precedent of the ancient empires that often accepted Jewish particularism, the partisans of this perspective believe that such a multicultural entity may offer the Jews a kind of normality: to be one cultural group among a multiethnic project.

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**The New Emerging Non-Totalizing Diaspora Identity**

Milton Friedman is famous for his “pool player” analogy, according to which the player wins without knowing all the mathematical and physical theories that explain his shots. The economist uses this analogy to underline that economic agents act in accordance with economic theories without being aware of them. The same can be said, in our study, of European Jewish social agents. Without knowing the models explicated here, and only by reacting to their social environments, European Jews have built strategies enabling them to adapt to possible evolutions of the wider European societies.

In a context of fluid and post-national identities, geographical mobility and Jewish transnationalism, an interesting new kind of Jewish activist is emerging in Europe, one that teaches, launches innovative projects and breathes new life into centuries-old communities. Some are professionals and businesspeople, some are teachers in the hundreds of Jewish schools, and some are active in cultural and social Jewish and non-Jewish projects. Even if they are, at this point in time, small in number among the young generation, they inspire others and embody a new existential stand that can be described as a non-totalizing model of Jewish identification. Judaism and Israel constitute only part of their fields of interest. They support European multiculturalism and readily confront the daunting European challenges alongside their non-Jewish counterparts. They reject the view of some Israeli and American Jews that the old continent is a Jewish cemetery in the making and
that European Jewry is holding on blindly to a sinking ship.

Despite rumors of their imminent demise, they aren’t going anywhere and are instead developing proud Anglo-Jewish, French-Jewish, Polish-Jewish, and Swedish-Jewish identities. Mostly well-educated and often the products of a highly affiliated upbringing who have experienced both Israel and America, they are well aware of the growing difficulty in affirming a strong Jewish identity in Europe. But still, they have consciously chosen to remain in Europe and establish their families there. They are aware of the unfavorable trends. They know about the demographic shifts, the continuing economic decline, the rise of far right and far left parties, the growing anti-Semitism and the anti-Israel stand of the local media. They know that this new model of identity will include compromises regarding their Jewishness, and that on many occasions they will have to adapt to the dominant assimilationist European ethos. Reductively describing this non-totalizing identity as merely “symbolic ethnicity” would be counterproductive.6

Unlike the assimilationists, they do not deny their interests in the Jewish heritage but, on the other hand, they do not want to be reduced to the Jewish part of their identity and see Europe ethos as full part of their DNA.

Unlike the old-model anti-Zionist diasporists who opposed Diaspora as an open society to Israel as a huge ethno-religious ghetto, the new European diasporists love to visit their “Jewish homeland” frequently and have many friends there. Some of them even see Israel as the ultimate Jewish place to be but, reluctant to total commitment and responsibility, they are not sure they want to live in such a place and enjoy not being in charge. Furthermore, they feel better in the borderless fresh European environment and dislike the Israeli Jewishness that they see as too much a matter of sociological identity and too less a matter of positive content.

They try to set-up innovative cultural initiatives to provide Jewish content to their challenging existential position. In an effort to encourage and foster this positive trend, much has been written about these courageous but often limited-scope initiatives, the best known of which are the Limmud events, the Krakow’s and Budapest’s festivals of Jewish culture, the annual “European Day of Jewish Culture,” the multiple Jewish films festivals, and the few programs launched in the non-Shoah oriented Jewish museums that have opened in most European capitals. Even if each initiative allows a significant number of unaffiliated Jews to rediscover their roots, reconnect to their identity, and this is therefore a noticeable accomplishment by itself, at the end of the day, from a strategic perspective, it is hard to see how these local limited initiatives may be able to reverse the European Jewry decline in the old continent. As Europe is in the middle of a political, economic, identity and demographic turmoil, the European Jews who may expect to maintain Jewish continuity in the next generations are mostly the ones who become religiously observant or the ones who have quitted the old continent.
Conclusion and Perspectives

Most analysts who carefully read the different scenarios presented here will be pessimistic about the Jewish future in Europe. And this pessimism has been evident in several previous JPPI papers on Europe. Yet, as we have seen throughout Jewish history, reality sometimes defies the analysts and we observe instead the emergence of new and creative modes of Jewish engagement. Not surprisingly, the emergence of a new non-totalizing Jewish positioning which mixes selective attachment to Jewish identity, prominence of individual accomplishment and profound local patriotism, is in line with the socio-cultural tendencies which prevail in Europe.

Three game changing elements stand behind the emergence of this surprising renewal: (1) social networks that allow isolated Jews to establish and participate in support groups and mobilize their peers. (2) Israeli businesspeople, either commuters or full time residents, who run companies in Europe while remaining connected to Israel. We may add to them another population, composed of the few dozens of thousands of Israeli-born Jews who, for a variety of reasons, have relocated to European capitals. Even if they rarely interact with the local Jewish communities, whether they remain in insular groups or assimilate actively into the general society, they strengthen the population with some Jewish or Israeli roots. (3) The growing Israeli and American Jewish roots tourism industry, which makes Jewishness more and more part of the landscape. All over Galicia and Ukraine, non-European born Hassidim settle and re-open small Jewish nodes that collectively and interconnected with the dozens of Chabad houses make Europe a tourist destination even for observant Jews. Thanks to this flow of visitors, many of the Eastern Europe communities that lack a demographic critical mass of engaged Jews can sustain a year-round Jewish life.

From a Jewish policy perspective, this renewal has to be encouraged and supported financially. It will probably not transform back Europe to the nurturing soil that it had been for centuries, but it will allow individual second- and third-generation disaffiliated Jews an entry point to reconnect to their heritage, and this is certainly valuable in itself.

In many ways, these new types of European Jews prefigure an emerging type of Israel-Diaspora relationship: these new European Jews acknowledge Israel as the vibrant center of the Jewish life and decide for personal reasons to live their life in the Diaspora. Despite the fact that Judaism is peripheral to their daily life, when they want to reconnect to their heritage, they take a plane and jump to Ben-Gurion airport: Tel-Aviv is their most attractive JCC, Jerusalem is for them a kind of homeport and they get real-time news from Israel on their smartphones. More and more this new model of relationship resembles that of twenty-first expats with their core country. Without doubt, this was made possible because of the proximity of Europe to Israel but, who knows, we may imagine that in the coming years, with Israeli life becoming more and more vibrant, we will see such a relationship developing in more remote places such as South Africa, Canada and even Australia and USA.
Endnotes

1 In an article dedicated to the analysis of the function that anti-Semitism fulfills in the construction of Western collective identities, Henri Zukier highlights the fact that The Other, the “outsider”, is psychologically constructed as the projected image of the negations and repressions of every society. Once constructed on this basis, and having undergone a process of demonization, The Other becomes an emotionally charged object that may be “manipulated, preserved and called up at will” by the members of the dominant group, and also has the capacity to trigger powerful “mechanical” feelings and reactions. See Henri Zukier, “Transformation of Hatred: Antisemitism as struggle for group identity,” in Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia, edited by Robert S. Wistrich, Harwood academic publishers, Amsterdam, 1999, p. 120. Psychologist Edward E. Sampson goes even further, asserting that the entire Western project is marked by the construction by dominant groups of “serviceable others”, whose lives are negated through control over how they are defined, as well as by the reality in which they live. See Edward E. Sampson, Celebrating the Other: A Dialogic Account of Human Nature, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1993, p. 4. Quoted in Martina L. Weisz, “Micro-physics of otherness: Jews, Muslims, and Latin Americans in contemporary Spain,” in Antisemitism International 5-6, 2010, edited by Robert S. Wistrich.

2 The statement of Comte Clermont-Tonnere in the National Assembly during the debate on the status of Jews in the French Republic (23 December 1789) is well known: ‘ We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals”.


In this part of JPPI’s Annual Assessment, we consider the influence of several forces for change upon the ability for Jewish communities to maintain a material basis for their families, institutions, and communities to continue sustaining traditional interests while reacting to external change. In the first section, we look specifically at the reaction against “globalization” that appears to have been so strongly expressed in the political turmoil of 2016-17. What does this portend for the Jewish people and for Israel? We then look at the institutions of the North American Jewish community in the face of no less forceful social and financial upheavals and assess their resilience in the face of change.

Anti-globalization and the Jewish People

2016 saw unexpected political transitions reverberate throughout most of the industrialized Western democracies. The attempts to provide a generalized explanation for the various local upsets are numerous. Yet, an openly expressed desire to move away from the international economic norms that have ruled policy in most Western capitals for decades does appear to run through the presidential election in the U.S., the Brexit vote, the subsequent upset of Teresa May’s Tories in the U.K. general election that followed, and many of the nationalist resurgences in France, Germany, and elsewhere. Often loosely referred to as “globalization,” the more recent rhetoric has been a reaction to an international order perceived as being based on highly mobile capital flows, low tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, and the expanding influence of multi-national business at the expense of home industries and their workers.

It is too early to tell how firmly the reaction to the policy shibboleths of the past will take hold and how much it may transform the realities of international economic relations, but the rhetoric and political forces being harnessed to the more nation-centric perspective are real enough to take seriously in themselves. How have the post-World War II trends toward a more open international order affected Jewish communities and Israel and how much does the vitality of these communities depend on the continuation of the norms that have been the hallmark of the past 50 years?
The Jews – an Ancient Modern People

In many respects, the Jews (along with the overseas Chinese) were among the first modern peoples in the sense that for at least a millennium before the modern era they embodied many of the appurtenances of modernity: they were both literate and urbanized, they understood how money worked and they were networked internationally. Combined with a sophisticated approach to money and the need to rely on trade when craft professions and land tenure were denied them, Jews were early beneficiaries and artificers of a nascent global trading culture. This has worked to the benefit of Jews economically by allowing them to thrive and, when necessary, move persons and assets with some facility. But this has been a double-edged sword, providing precisely the lightning rod for charges of “rootless cosmopolitanism” to be leveled against Jews when nationalist, nativist, or xenophobic stirrings have become exacerbated indirectly or actively encouraged by political currents.

Jews are today distributed predominantly and disproportionately in the major urban centers of the leading Western democratic societies. This is a considerable transformation from the turn of the prior century when the experience of the broader Jewish communities of Eastern Europe and the Middle East – and even locales such as the U.S. – was a considerable measure of isolation, exclusion, or poverty. It is not coincidental that these new horizons were in the centers that themselves were taking the leading role in bringing about a more globalized economy and that were, until the recent rise of East Asia, its principal beneficiaries. Jewish emigration to the “coming” economies of South America – Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Sao Paulo – was considerable during the same years that North America became a lodestone, and for the same reasons: a perception not only of opportunity but the possibility of wider connection to global opportunity. That these same communities have proven less of a magnet since the 1920s has something to do with their failure to achieve their perceived potential as future international economic hubs.

Moving forward, there is no reason to believe that Jewish communities will be exceptionally disadvantaged if more autarkic and nativist thinking becomes a major driver of economic policies both nationally and internationally. Neither is there much reason to believe that they would somehow be immune from the consequences if a more protectionist policy stance around the globe results in what most professional economists would expect to be a downturn in both trade and national incomes. It is probably the case that because of educational attainment, orientation toward trade, and family tradition Jews are involved more directly in pursuits that constitute active participation in the globalized economy than is true for their non-Jewish compatriots. Certainly, the high degree of professionalization that has become a characteristic of Jewish labor force participation since Second World War makes Jews inherently better connected to the global knowledge economy that has grown massively. While not often the focus of globalization’s
opponents — and, indeed, even in many cases the designated engine that policy makers in most countries seek to mobilize to enhance their nation’s posture in a globalized economic environment, this trade in knowledge resources and its embodiment in the migration of the technically highly trained to centers of global excellence may be impinged indirectly by other measures designed to limit the flow of immigration more generally. At the same time, if Jewish communities experience the consequences of a more general economic downturn from more restrictive national trade policies, their successful accumulation of wealth over the years of economic liberalization should provide something of a cushion.

The conclusion is that while Jews may well be affected by a shift away from globalization of world trade and a global orientation of economies in the countries in which they reside, they are unlikely to do so disproportionately. Quite the opposite; while seeing traditional avenues for economic advancement become more constricted and, therefore, possibly lowering growth or even leading toward economic stasis, Jewish communities might be better placed than others to weather the consequences — economically. The political consequences of such a radical turn in the minds of the citizens of the democratic, developed West that would predispose such a reversal from the course that had been previously followed may have considerable effect on the sense of well-being and security perceived by Jewish communities — and perhaps even on the reality of their social and physical acceptance within the nations in which they reside.

The Open (and Closed) Economy of Israel

How have the trends toward a richer and more integrated global economy affected Israel and its prospects? How would a general move away from globalization influence its prospects?

Founded in 1948, Israel was created precisely at the dawn of the international system that was framed to nurture and sustain such a global economy. Its elements include the Bretton Woods arrangements for currency and financial transactions between states; international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, Bank for International Settlements and World Bank; and the early measures that would become established in the form of the World Trade Organization.

Despite this, at the time of Israel’s founding, there were few historical examples of deliberate economic development policy to draw upon. The two most obvious candidates, the military-focused transformations of Meiji-era Japan and the extreme collectivization and centralization of the Stalinist security state in the Soviet Union, were the most successful examples but hardly the most practicable or desirable for the young state to emulate. Instead, what came to be the conventional wisdom among the newly independent states of the post-colonial order was the need for import substitution: native industries should be protected and provided with both centrally funded resources and state management to reduce and eventually remove dependence on former colonial rulers to build the economic
sinews of a modern, independent state. This was the course charted by such leaders of the non-aligned movement as India and followed in large measure by the socialist founders of the state of Israel. While not so rooted in autarkic principles as those that emerged victorious in the Soviet Union from its industrialization debates of the 1920s, there was a distinct family resemblance. This period saw the foundation of the economic institutions of an Israel determined to stand on its own feet with everything from its own arms industry to a complete value chain for automobile manufacturing.

In none of the countries that employed these principles was rapid economic development realized in any degree commensurate with expectations. This was as true in Israel as elsewhere. Economic growth was large during the decade following independence, but it started from a comparatively minimal base of economic activity and was largely driven by extensive means – greater amounts of inputs, particularly of labor during the early waves of immigration – rather than intensive means of enhancing productivity and innovation. By the 1960s, the engine was sputtering. At the same time, what became the new dominant model for economic development emerged from the examples of the so-called Asian Tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.) In contrast to the strategy of import substitution (building new indigenous industries from scratch in mild defiance of the economic doctrine of comparative advantage,) the new model emphasized export promotion. Rather than reduce the flows of imports and therefore engagement in international trade, this policy encouraged precisely the opposite: build on inherent advantages to increase exports and vastly outweigh imports while, at the same time, moving up the value chain as more competence was gained in manufacturing and greater presence was gained in the international marketplace.

Following the 1977 political revolution of Likud’s rise to power, this more modern view of appropriate policy for economic development became more preponderant in Israel. (But as we shall see, the vestiges of the former orientation were never completely eradicated.) Today, Israel would be characterized as an open economy, one in which trade – both exports and imports – account for a substantial share of national income. While the actual scale of trade as a component of Israel’s economy is below the average of the countries evaluated for openness by the International Chamber of Commerce, Israel nonetheless ranked near the top third (27th out of 75 economies) in ICC’s Open Markets Index for 2017. This constitutes a movement from 38th place in the initial index in 2011. The result was owed largely to reforms that had ostensibly transformed the country’s actual trade policies as well as its openness to foreign direct investment (FDI). This latter fact points out that openness and global connection involves flow of capital (and people) as
much as flows of goods. Indeed, the extraordinary growth of Israel’s high technology sector has been very much driven by FDI contributed by multinational firms and foreign institutional investors.

There are other, less formal ways to consider the degree of Israel’s globalization, albeit more difficult to reduce to numbers. The most significant in affecting Israel’s material well-being is participation in the global knowledge economy. This term may be applied more widely to less formal avenues for knowledge transfer than just to sales of patents and licenses. An important aspect of these more informal pathways is that they result in the phenomenon of “knowledge spillovers,” value that spreads beyond exclusive control by targeted recipients. Knowledge is embodied in the minds of individuals and in the collective interaction among individuals who may each bring their own expertise to achieve a collective cross-product not attributable to any single constituent of the group. This knowledge is notoriously difficult to formally codify, especially in its early stages, yet this represents among the most important flows in the commerce of ideas leading to innovations and their wide diffusion. Israel has been extraordinarily globalized in this sense. Not only do others bring their skills to work in Israel, but Israel has been a large exporter of technical expertise in the form of its expatriates working abroad. These are not losses to Israel in some mercantilist accounting of “brain drain” but rather each represents a potential human bridge of knowledge that flows strongly in both directions. An Israeli working as a professor in a U.S. university is in contact with colleagues in Israel and may bring promising graduate students to work with him or her. These contacts are notoriously difficult to quantify. In a world that becomes more nationally focused with more restricted work opportunities for foreigners, this important flow may become attenuated to the net harm of Israel’s research and innovation enterprise.

While global commerce and openness to participation in international efforts brings its benefits, economic openness can clearly also foment local discomfort. It is largely the unwillingness or inability to recognize the potential for individual harms on the part of governments interested in promoting globalized economies that have led to the recent anti-globalization backlash coursing through the developed West. The losers demand redress or retrenchment of the policies of openness. This is especially true in the case of a relatively small economy such as Israel’s and while there have been few if any popular demonstrations, in several subtle ways Israel’s openness has been offset by policies and practices that move in the opposite direction albeit with little public notice. As policy decisions have moved Israel in the direction of a more liberalizing strategy, politics at the local level have adhered more closely to local interests. It is these which have led to retention of a good deal of the structural relationships built during the earlier
period of more inward-looking development.

For one thing, the orientation toward exports has been limited to a few sectors. Figure 1 shows how little diversification there is in Israel’s bundle of exports. Israel’s exports are highly concentrated in pharmaceuticals, chemicals, diamonds, and electronics (representing in total more than two-thirds of all exports) and in each case only a few firms tend to account for the greatest flows. Israeli exports are considerably less diverse than in other countries at similar income levels.

This points to an underlying paradox between policy direction of openness and the realities of Israel’s economy which tends toward concentration, cartelization and resistance to the competition that would come from greater import access into many consumer markets. The banking industry illustrates this. Five banking groups (themselves often associated with large family-owned business conglomerates) account for 95 percent of all assets with two accounting for over 60 percent. There have been almost no banking market entrants in nearly 50 years. With market power comes a certain degree of political influence. Owners of firms within industries exhibiting high degrees of concentration and cartelization can become natural allies of workers who, in common with those in the U.S. and elsewhere, fear seeing their jobs eliminated by either foreign goods displacing local products or manufacturing moving elsewhere. So, despite a certain embrace of globalization and even a formal government stance pointing in that direction, there are still forces that while originating in local concerns and interests nevertheless push in the same direction.

Figure 1: Diversification in Exports, OECD Countries (1990-2010 averages)

Source: IMF, 2017
as anti-globalization activists. The aggregate result of the inevitable political pressures on many small specific decisions is (as we have seen) relatively low trade openness, a regulatory structure that often functions as a non-tariff barrier to entry and, as has been seen in the past year in several high-profile legal prosecutions, a susceptibility to anti-competitive insider dealings that keep prices high, efficiencies low, and productivity below the levels of peers at a comparable level of development.

This suggests that even in a country that has benefited considerably from globalization and is well-poised to continue to do so, its relative small size serves to magnify interests that militate against movement in that direction. The small scale of Israel’s home market has always bedeviled those seeking to enhance competition. When the Bazan oil refinery, previously a state-owned enterprise, was privatized in 2006, the regulatory authorities insisted that its two locations (Haifa and Ashdod) be sold to different groups to enhance domestic competition. But instead of having two weaker players compete in a small, protected market, a different approach might have been to keep the company whole so that it could operate more widely in the competitive Mediterranean regional market for refined petroleum products, while opening the local market to greater access from elsewhere.

Such decisions are typical of those faced by a small-market country forced to play a global game. Israel has relatively few global business champions of major size. A significant exception is its dominant player in pharmaceuticals, Teva, which generates $22 billion in net revenues from 57,000 employees worldwide. Of these, fewer than one in eight works in Israel.6 There is little else in Israel to compare with Teva for size and degree of globalization as represented by dispersion of its workforce. Two other major exporters, Israel Chemicals and Israel Aerospace, present quite different profiles (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparisons of Leading Israeli Manufacturing Exporters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Israeli Exporter</th>
<th>Income ($millions)</th>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>Israel Share of Workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teva Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>21,903a</td>
<td>56,960</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel Chemicals, Ltd.</td>
<td>5,363b</td>
<td>13,414</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel Aerospace Industries</td>
<td>3,700c</td>
<td>15,734</td>
<td>&gt;60%d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES: a) 2016 Net revenue; b) 2016 Sales; c) 2015 Sales; d) Conjectural

The dichotomy between the sectors of Israel’s economy that are active in the global economy and those that are less engaged owing to various policy and regulatory factors maps directly into the “Two Israels” debates discussed in previous JPPI Annual Assessments. It is true that 48.5 percent of Israel’s $43.5 billion exports in 2016 fell into the “high technology” category. But these figures exclude the biggest single export, diamonds (nearly $15 billion in 2016) and so the effective share is less than usually reported. And of the total in the high-tech category, approximately one-third would include pharmaceuticals, that is largely exports by Teva. Especially if aircraft exports are also deducted, this means that the electronics, communications, and computational exports, what comes most often to mind when thinking about Israel’s high-tech export sector, actually represents a smaller share of exports than might have been thought. To be certain, this sector is highly integrated with the global economy. It might almost be viewed as a relatively isolated economy within the larger economy with relatively few hybridizations with other potential partner sectors such as health, agriculture, education, and so forth. But this also means that a considerable share of Israel’s industry and economy are less outward looking than might otherwise seem to be the case. This less globalized Israel stands behind various walls of protection and is characterized by slower growth and less productivity than is the case for the more globalized sectors.

Were the net result of the upheavals of 2016 to become embodied in a wide international inclination to turn away from the globalization course of the past half century and instead focus on national interests, this may reduce the opportunities that so far have existed for Israeli businesses. But the true casualty might be that the balance of forces in Israel between more and less competitive practices and structures could well shift away from the former and the growth of the latter. This may well then lead to a paradox: the case of Israel suggests that a less global stance in the name of greater national interests could well have precisely the opposite effect on domestic economic outcomes than was intended.

Transformation in the Material Resource Base of the North American Jewish Community

It is useful to differentiate North American Jews and the North American Jewish community. The economic status and health of North American Jews continues to be exceedingly strong. While poverty persists in parts of the Jewish community – particularly among first and second-generation immigrant groups, the elderly, and the ultra-religious (Haredi) community – North American Jews continue to be among the most highly educated and financially resourced ethnic and religious group on the continent.
Looking forward, the challenges facing all Americans will affect the next generation of American Jews. The complex issues advanced industrial societies face may well make it difficult for today's middle and upper middle-class Jewish youth to easily replicate the economic status of their parents. Many have observed that this is the first generation of Americans that will struggle to retain the socioeconomic status in which they were raised. One can assume that the factors challenging so-called millennials – globalization and its counter-reaction; declining opportunities for high-income employment – will also present significant challenges for the next generation of North American Jews. That said, North American Jews continue to hold significant positions of leadership in a broad array of high-income fields including financial services, real estate, media/entertainment, and technology. Large segments of North American Jews continue to enjoy economic and social achievement unrealized to such an extent by any prior generation of Jews.

If North American Jews remain comparatively healthy in material terms, the health of the North American Jewish Community is more complex. For this discussion, the North American Jewish community consists of the complex web of local and national organizations which provide the institutional framework for Jewish communal life. On the local level this includes organizations such as synagogues and yeshivot, Jewish day schools, Jewish community centers (JCCs); campus Hillels, and social service agencies that care for the poor, seniors, and others in need.  

Leaders of other ethnic and religious groups look with awe at the immense structure of the organized Jewish community and participate in Jewish communal life by becoming members, clients and/or users.

There also exist the national Jewish organizations: umbrella organizations for affinity groups of local institutions cited above – denominational organizations of synagogues, national coordinating or servicing bodies of JCCs, Hillels, Jewish day school organizations, social service agencies and the like. In addition, at the national level there are also significant advocacy organizations – defense agencies that lobby or engage in advocacy on behalf of North American Jewish communities, “Jewish needs,” the State of Israel, and far more. The organizational structure of the North American Jewish community remains exceedingly impressive. Leaders of other ethnic and religious groups continue to look with envy and awe toward the immense structure and influence of the “organized Jewish community” and ponder how it was created and how they might emulate it.

The North American Jewish community is also confronting problems associated with accelerated change. With new forms of communication and technology, the position of virtually every national agency has been eroded as local institutions can increasingly easily and directly access expertise and resources. Many local institutions resist paying dues that national bodies have long
depended upon for core financial support. The national bodies of the religious denominations are especially challenged. As are others: during the past decade, two longstanding national bodies--the National Foundation of Jewish Culture (NFJC) and the Jewish Education Society of North America (JESNA) have both gone out of business, unable to sustain their work financially. That said, it should also be noted that a range of new national organizations have emerged including the Birthright Israel Foundation, the Foundation for Jewish Camping and Prizma (supporting Jewish Day schools) among others.

Locally, the much-noted high cost of Jewish living and the disinclination of millennials to join institutions has created membership challenges (hence budget shortfalls) for some Reform and Conservative synagogues, which have in turn led to a number of congregational mergers and consolidations. While noteworthy, these occurrences are still rare. Membership dues, user fees, and philanthropy from constituents continue to be the main funding sources for local institutions. Despite the challenges mentioned, most of the institutions that provided the framework for Jewish life 20-plus years ago remain intact.

In the world of Jewish community-wide philanthropy, local Federations emerged in the early 20th century as central bodies for coordinating fundraising and planning to address the growing needs that emerged as waves of European Jewish immigrants reached America’s shores between 1880 and 1920. In the late 1930s, the national United Jewish Appeal (UJA) was created along with community-based UJAs established in virtually every Jewish community in North America. National and local UJAs raised funds for “overseas needs” – primarily for the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). These two global agencies provided essential care for Jewish communities throughout the world and rescued Jews enabling them to create new lives in Israel. Between 1948 and 1952, in just the first five years of the country’s existence, the Jewish Agency rescued nearly three-quarters of a million Jews, resettling them in Israel. By 1985, the community based Federations and UJAs had merged in all communities.

As both direct giving emerged in American philanthropy and “American friends of” groups were established by Israeli universities, hospitals, and cultural institutions, many sage observers anticipated a concomitant substantial weakening of Federations. Despite such concerns, the 148 Federations continue to raise close to a billion dollars via their annual campaigns and well over $2 billion from all sources (annual campaigns, capital campaigns, donor advised funds, planned giving, etc.). While the total amounts raised have surpassed most predictions, the numbers of Federation donors has declined significantly, although most of this decline has taken place at the lower levels of giving (under $1,000) with the decline in efficacy and increased costs associated with direct marketing (direct mail, telemarketing, e-philanthropy). Said differently, Federations’ funding – although challenged on many fronts — has remained far stronger than virtually all pundits predicted in the 1990s.
Following the 1967 Six Day War, when Federations exploded philanthropically and became the primary vehicle for North American Jews to express their support for and solidarity with Israel, Federations grew and for several decades dominated the central square of North American Jewish Philanthropy. Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, many significant Jewish communal donors – virtually all prior and continuing leaders and contributors to Federations – established family foundations, the largest often professionally managed. The foundations they established are now well known in the Jewish world. While virtually all these foundations continue to provide support for their local Federations and local institutions, they have also forged significant high visibility initiatives – some national – reflecting their interests and their view of what is required to address what they consider the most serious issues facing the Jewish community. To cite but three, the various Wexner leadership programs, Birthright, and PJLibrary were planned and launched by family foundations, which in turn sought and established funding partnerships with Federations, other foundations, and in the case of Birthright, with the Government of Israel to sustain these and other initiatives.

In parallel to these new trends, many of the largest donors to Jewish communal purposes were increasingly becoming involved in major American universities, cultural institutions, and hospitals. Jews of wealth and influence were recruited to serve on the boards of these institutions and expected to contribute. And they did. The names of major Jewish donors now adorn the walls of virtually every significant American university, cultural institution, and hospital – many of which precluded Jewish participation until the middle of the 20th century. In most areas of North American life, the borders that once excluded Jewish participation have evaporated, including in philanthropy.

An additional trend influencing North American Jewish philanthropy is the explosion of direct giving. In a culture that celebrates individualism, this attitude has also become foundational for many philanthropists. Whereas communal giving was heralded in the early and mid-20th century, we are now in an era in which individuals are encouraged to express themselves including via their philanthropy. Hence, increasingly engaged Jews gravitate to support institutions in which they actively participate, or institutions that reflect their values and particular areas of interest.

As a result of these and other factors, North American Jewish philanthropy has become less centralized and far more diffuse over the past two decades. Significant initiatives are now forged by Federations, family foundations, and by individual donors. Partnerships are then sought linking such initiatives with community-based organizations and local institutions – synagogues, JCCs, Hillels, summer camps, schools, and social services agencies – where Jewish life is lived.

How may we then assess the material health of the North American Jewish community and its resilience in coping with the changes that currently surround it and those to come? As noted, North American Jewish philanthropy is undergoing a transition from a highly centralized
system to one that is more diffuse. It remains true that membership dues, user fees, and fundraising at the local level continue to provide the largest income streams for the core local gateway institutions where Jewish life is lived. But we are far from being able to predict with confidence the course of trends and the implications of the changes underway in North American Jewish philanthropy for understanding the financial reality of contemporary Jewish life and the evolving roles of Federations, foundations, individual clients and members, and other sources that sustain the essential institutions of North American Jewish life.

But in keeping with the famous song, “the fundamental things apply as time goes by.” As in past generations, Jewish identity and Jewish philanthropy will continue to be intrinsically linked. Living in the most open societies in which Jews have ever found themselves, individual Jews will only provide financial support and invest in Jewish life and Jewish communal institutions if their identification as Jews carries positive individual reinforcement and with that the commitment to sustaining and strengthening the Jewish people. During the past three decades, Federations, foundations and individual Jewish donors have elevated the priority and increased funding for the purpose of strengthening Jewish education, various enhancers of Jewish identity, and Jewish life in general. At present, both renewal and decline are taking place. Major new initiatives have been launched: a growing number of synagogues, JCCs, and Hillels are working to become more compelling and engaging Jewish life spaces; Birthright has now brought over 550,000 young men and women to Israel, and Masa, the most successful follow-up program to Birthright, is now bringing over 12,000 participants to Israel each year for extended periods of study, volunteering, and service. College campuses offer far more Jewish programming than was the case just 20 years ago, and Jewish Studies programs have proliferated on North American university campuses. New start-ups on both the supply and demand sides of philanthropy are emerging in every sphere.

And yet, simultaneously, North American Jews continue to exhibit high levels of assimilation and intermarriage. North American Jewry, despite living in a society at the apex of technological and economic proficiency, finds itself confronting the full experience of modernity. All the former borders and boundaries between North American Jews and the broader culture have been sundered. With the exception of those who have consciously chosen to live in more isolated contexts, most American Jews find themselves in the Open Society. In a practical sense, all North American Jews are Jews by choice, not just those who convert from outside the fold. The work of the next few decades will challenge North American Jewish leaders to create the architecture for compelling Jewish lives. This alone under such circumstances has the prospect of leading far larger numbers of Jews to a fulfilling self-identity and engagement.

**Colleges and universities are offering far more Jewish Studies programs than 20 years ago**
in Jewish life. Not because they are forced to; they are not. Not because of guilt; they have none. But because of the meaning and purpose they find in experiencing Jewish life. This is a prodigious challenge, but also an opportunity. The outcome remains uncertain. But the material strength of North American Jews and North American Jewish philanthropy will be a critical determinant of that outcome.

Need for Historical Perspective -- and Forward Reconnaissance

As in the Sherlock Holmes story of the dog that did not bark, perhaps the headline regarding Jewish communities in North America, and more generally abroad, is that there have been no large discontinuities on the financial front. Despite dire predictions, generational change, the emergence of new forms and methods of both Jewish and general philanthropy, and dramatic changes in technology and communication, the primary Jewish financial story remains one of remarkable continuity. North American Jewish institutions appear to be weathering the multiple transitions to new patterns of Jewish philanthropy exceedingly well.

But this is not necessarily going to be true moving forward. There may be aspects of transition already underway, not currently detected nor necessarily being looked for, that might prove to be deleterious over time. As JPPI has urged in prior Annual Assessment examinations of the sources and uses of Jewish wealth in pursuit of Jewish people goals, it behooves us to enhance our ability to observe and gather information on the underlying phenomena. This is a pre-requisite to applying the analytical perspective that would allow us not only to fully understand change, but perhaps gain early warning capabilities as well. Several measures would be of value in allowing this more informed stance.

- Gain greater understanding of the streams of Jewish philanthropy supporting the institutions where most Jews experience Jewish life: Synagogues, JCCs, Hillels, summer camps, Jewish day schools (as well as the national organizations that support these institutions: denominational bodies, national Hillel; JCCNA, etc.) and national Jewish advocacy organizations.
- Evaluate how North American Jewish philanthropy has been re-contextualized by the remarkable growth and success of the Israeli economy. While no longer significant in amount, it still does good in Israel. But how has the diminution of Israel’s centrality as a project wrought indirect changes in the financial basis of North American Jewish people concerns?
- Seek to elaborate in detail and in aggregate the mix of funding streams for major North American organizations and institutions. In particular, gain insight on the changing streams of user fees, membership dues, philanthropic support from members, Federations, family foundations, government (federal, state, city) and other evolving sources.

Ideally, we would like to be able to track and evaluate changes over time. Hence, it would be
useful to gain sufficient data to benchmark 10-year intervals beginning in the 1990s. The challenges are large. Accessing financials of synagogues and Jewish day schools, for example, is difficult when not required to file public documents. Denominations may have information on synagogues; boards of Jewish education on day schools. But as JPPI has pointed out in the past, not even those with publicly available financials, such as federations, use a common taxonomy for how income and outflow is denominated. This, in effect, further reduces transparency. Once again, an important step toward gaining the understanding and perspective needed to ensure matching Jewish funding and Jewish people needs in the future would be for North American Jewish institutions to take steps allowing for greater transparency and sharing of vitally important information.

Endnotes
1 Baruch Spinoza’s Jewish community of Amsterdam consisted almost entirely of a transplanted Jewish and converso community from Portugal.
3 Compare the chapter on Demography, “Israelis Abroad” in this volume for a different approach to this question.
5 Ibid.
6 Teva Pharmaceuticals Form 20-F, U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, data as of 31 December 2016. (http://phx.corporate-ir.net/External.File?item=UGFyZW50SUQ9MzY3MDgwENoaWxkSUQ9LTF8VHlwZT0z&t=1&cb=636228527216394377)
9 According to the Pew Research Center, the most highly educated religious grouping in the U.S. are Hindus, 48 percent of whom have post-graduate degrees with a further 29 percent completing college. For Jews, the next most educated group, the post-graduates represent a 31 percent share with 29 percent completing college. This performance, especially in completion of post-graduate degrees, makes the two religions substantially different from almost all of the other groups surveyed. Jewish households have the largest share of those earning over $100,000 a year (44%) followed by Hindus (36%) and more distantly by other groups. (http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/educational-distribution/; last accessed 28 July 2017.)
10 Hospitals and senior adult facilities, in most communities established by Jews and the Jewish federations and originally funded by Jewish philanthropy, are now primarily funded by local and federal government. While hospitals, social service agencies, and senior adult facilities continue to receive substantial philanthropic support from American Jews, there is debate about whether they ought to be considered integral to the North American Jewish community even though it is clear that relationships persist and such ties strengthen both the Jewish community and the medical/senior adult facilities.
12 These would include, but are by no means limited to, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, the Wexner Foundation, the Samuel Bronfman Foundation, the Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life; the Jim Joseph Foundation, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, the Adelson Family Foundation, Genesis Philanthropy, the Ruderman Family Foundation, the William Davidson Foundation, the Harold Greenspoon Foundation.

13 Otto H. Kahn was the principal financial guarantor of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City during its crucial period of growth in the early twentieth century, providing the backing that allowed the company to see off its rivals — but, of course, he was prevented from purchasing a family box in the theater owing to his Jewish origin. See, Sachs, Harvey (2017). Toscanini: Musician of Conscience (New York: Liveright Publishing,) p. 230.
This chapter is the first iteration of a work in progress. It discusses the links between creativity and its drivers on the one hand, and Jewish achievement particularly in non-material fields: culture, science, technology, and the arts, on the other. Our underlying assumption is that creativity in all fields was essential to the survival and thriving of the Jewish people in the past, and thus, Jews have an interest in promoting creativity in the future as well.

Creativity is generally defined as the ability to synthesize knowledge from different (including subconscious) sources to produce innovative ideas or products. In many known civilizations, there have been two basic pre-conditions of creativity and if these two are met, there are two factors triggering creativity. The pre-conditions are: I. education and II. cultural versatility, the triggers are III. stress or necessity and IV. curiosity. One might add to these factors enabling conditions (another term for a supporting environment), for example material resources or fame and popularity. But enabling conditions alone do not bring about creativity if the other factors are not present. It might look artificial to separate a complex phenomenon like creativity into four boxes. However, separating the conditions and triggers will facilitate the formulation of policy recommendations at a later stage. The relative weight of each factor and their combinations vary from case to case, and different authors offer their own assessments of the weight of each factor.

It is difficult to demonstrate with precise statistics whether and how the four factors mentioned affect creativity. The tools to answer such questions are the traditional tools of the historian and sociologist: studying relevant literature as well as biographies of creative individuals, collecting available data, looking for precedents and parallels in history and using common sense to identify the most plausible factors.
If we define creativity as the ability of a person or a people to innovate, change and transform itself in order to survive or achieve any other goal, the definition is valid for Jews and many others, but it is not universally valid. Some cultures and societies have survived well, apparently by resisting change or by changing very slowly. This too may require its own kind of creativity. Haredi Jews in Israel and the Diaspora are quite creative in their own ways in resisting change and innovation, so it seems. A more famous example is Pharaonic Egypt. Egypt’s ancient civilization lived and often flourished during 3000 years without any lasting, profound changes in its language, script, religion, art, dress, political structure and patterns of behavior.

The Jewish creativity reviewed here is that of the last 200 years, but modern creativity could also have roots in pre-modern history. The following reflections include historical, religious, and socio-economic causes that could have affected the four factors mentioned above.

**Education**

The connection between knowledge acquired through education, and creativity as demonstrated by various accomplishments seems obvious, although, as said, it is not easy to statistically prove a direct correlation between level and quality of education and later achievements at a collective level.

For most of their known history, the Jews were among the most highly educated peoples in the world. This has given them a competitive advantage in their non-Jewish environments. Religious demands, the obligation to study the Torah is the best known and most compelling reason for Jewish education and literacy. The Talmud reports that the High Priest, Joshua Ben Gamla, who lived before the destruction of the Temple, ordered teachers to be appointed in each town and children to enter school at the age of six or seven. If the Talmudic story is true, it would have set up the first compulsory primary school system in the ancient world. When a few hundred years later Jews moved from agriculture into skilled crafts and trades, their literacy, although acquired for religious reasons, conferred advantages to them in other, particularly economic fields.

There were equally powerful socio-economic reasons compelling Jews to acquire education. In the Middle Ages and later, their minority status, their connections across borders, and social or economic discrimination attracted them to commerce and long-distance trading, which required much more knowledge and education than, for example, farming, the main occupation of the majority population.

The history of German Jewry in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and of American Jewry in the 20th century, shows continuous improvements in general education. These preceded, and arguably preconditioned, the subsequent rise of Jewish economic, cultural, scientific and other achievements – bursts of creativity in many fields. Education is an indispensable but not singularly sufficient driver of creativity, but it is easier to identify and measure than other factors, and thus, trends in education might be useful indicators of future trends in creativity.
Germany

This chapter attempts to evaluate American and Israeli Jews of the 20th and 21st centuries, not German Jews. However, there is important research literature, including statistical data that document the history of German Jewry from 1800 to 1933. This research supports our hypotheses about the factors driving creativity, at least in the German case. The rise of German Judaism and the enormous contribution of Jews to German culture, science, and its economy occurred in several stages. At the end of the 18th century, most German Jews were poor and many were destitute, living from begging, hawking, junk dealing and petty crime. In 1800, almost 20 percent of all Jews had no profession at all; only 2 percent were wealthy. Their situation began to change after Napoleon decreed their emancipation, but their economic conditions improved gradually. What changed more radically was their education. Jews understood quickly that any real betterment of their socio-economic situation depended on a substantial elevation of their general education. From 1810 on, dozens of Jewish schools teaching general subjects sprang up across Germany, and in a short time Jews became fluent in literary German, which few had mastered before 1800. It took approximately one generation, until the mid-19th century, for a considerable improvement of Jewish economic conditions to become visible, and one more generation, until the late 19th century, for Jews to move out of commerce into many other professions and begin their extraordinary contribution to all sectors of German culture and science. It is uncontested that the rise of German Judaism over more than 100 years was the direct result of the initial fast rise in general education. It is equally clear that the long delays between educational and socio-economic and cultural improvements were due to anti-Jewish discrimination, which never completely disappeared in German society. Whatever other factors contributed to German Jewish creativity – stress and discrimination were certainly critical triggers – education was ultimately the key factor.

The United States

The educational, economic, cultural, and political rise of American Judaism since 1945 is spectacular and unmatched in any other country or period of Diaspora history. Like in Germany, education took off first.

American Jewish Educational Attainments

1945:
Jewish educational attainments more or less on par with U.S. average.

1957:
Jews have 1.7 years more education than national average, 16% of Jews are college graduates; national average is 9%.

1972-80:
Jews have 2.6 years more education than national average; 39% of Jews are college graduates, national average is 13%.

1983-84:
56% of Jews are college graduates.

1991-2002:
Jews have 2.6 years more education than national average; 61% of Jews are college graduates.
The figures show that Jewish educational attainments in relative terms levelled off from the 1972-80 period on. The numbers for the 1990s are almost the same as those for the 1970s and 1980s. This was also the period when complaints about the high cost of education in Jewish schools became more frequent.

**American Jewish Income**

**1957:**
Jews relative income 126% of Protestants; 140% of Catholics.

**1972-80:**
Jews relative income 147% of Non-Jews.

**1999:**
Jews relative income 246% of Protestants; 243% of Catholics.

Jewish earnings began to pick up soon after increases of educational attainments, but the most massive earning increases (1999) followed a period of approximately ten years after the 1980s when educational attainments were levelling off. The 1999 peak resulted from much earlier educational investments.

**Jewish Contributions in Science, Literature, Art, Culture, Finance, Politics**

**1924-25:**
Jews contribute 70%, relative to national average of 100%.

**1944-45:**
Jews contribute 43%, relative to English-American average of 100%.

**1974-75:**
Jews contribute 245%, relative to national average of 100%.
Jews contributed 216%, relative to English-American average of 100%.

1994-95:
Jews contribute 468%, relative to national average of 100%.
Jews contribute 587%, relative to English-American average of 100%.

These figures, taken from Who’s Who in America, show a sharp rise of Jewish American creativity in all sectors, relative to other segments of the American population. Thus in 1974-75 Jews contributed almost two and a half times as much as the national average and a little over twice as much as English Americans. This rise was enormous already in the 1970s, and became wildly disproportional in the 1990s. The disappearance of various discriminatory practices which held back Jews before the war can partly explain these figures. It is also likely that Who’s Who editors became more open to acknowledging Jewish contributions after the war whereas they might have been biased against Jews before. However, it is plausible that the main reason for the steep rise in both creativity and earnings is the substantial educational investments of American Jews that started in 1945 and preceded all other rises by several, if not many years. The sociologist Paul Burstein examined these data and arrived at similar conclusions: it is “social capital,” accumulated by networking, e.g. in Jewish schools, families and meeting places, and together with it, “human capital” accumulated by education that explains American Jewish creativity and success.

If this is so, it stands to reason that the relative educational levelling-off that began in the 1980s will have long-term consequences. It could show itself in a levelling off of Jewish earnings and cultural contributions relative to other parts of the American population. Many Jews will remain wealthy, creative, and influential, but other minorities, such as Indian Americans and other Asian Americans are catching up and are about to reach similar levels. The relative levelling off of American Jewish earnings, influence, and cultural creativity may have already started, although it will take years before it is reflected in the statistics.

Israel

Linking educational performance to creativity as expressed by contributions to science, culture, art, etc. and following trends both in education and creativity is much more difficult for Israeli Jews than it is for American Jews. A quarter of Israeli Jews were not born and educated in Israel, and on the other hand, there is no internationally comparable and relatively unbiased measurement of Israel’s general creativity. However, it is possible to measure with a high degree of objectivity, Israel’s performance in science and technology, and to evaluate how this performance is related to Israeli schools and universities.
One of the accepted measures of educational attainment is the estimate of average years of education attained by the population. According to a report by the OECD for 2015 that measures social welfare, the average years of education for Israel’s population aged 25-64 is 11.4, which is very close to the OECD average. This average masks large gaps of inequality, especially as it includes the Arab population (whose average educational attainment is 9 years), and the Haredim (10.3 years). A 2016 United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) report shows a slightly different picture. The report shows that as of 2015, when estimating the educational attainment of the population above 25 years of age, Israel is seventh out of 188 countries with an average of 12.8 years.\(^6\)

In the 2016 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) statistical yearbook, it is noted that Israel "is one of the more highly educated countries in the OECD."\(^7\) This claim rests upon the number of university educated individuals, another important measurement. Both in 2014 and 2015, Israel was ranked fourth among developing nations in the number of university educated individuals between the ages of 25 and 64 (see figure 2 below).

When one examines the data for the 25-34 age cohort, Israel loses its high ranking, even though it is still above the OECD average. One of the hypotheses

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**Figure 2** / Percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education, by level of tertiary education (2015)

1. Some levels of education are included in others. Refer to the source table for more details.
2. Reference year differs from 2015. Refer to the source table for more details.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education, regardless of the level of tertiary attainment.

for the lower ranking is connected to the older age at which Israelis begin higher education stemming from mandatory military service and the tendency of Israeli youth to go on extensive post-army trips before starting their academic studies.

Not only is the number of years of education an important measurement but so too is the quality of education. In Israel, seven universities engage in research and teaching. According to the ranking of the ARWU (Academic Ranking of World Universities, also known as the Shanghai Rankings) two Israeli universities, the Technion (69) and Hebrew University of Jerusalem (87) were among the 100 top universities in the world in 2015.8 The distribution among the top 100 universities in the world in 2015 is as follows:

51 American universities
9 British universities
4 universities from each of the following: Switzerland, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, Holland, and Japan
3 Swedish universities
2 universities from each of the following: Denmark, Belgium, and Israel
1 university from each of the following: Finland, Norway, and Russia

The Weizman Institute, which had been in the top 100 in 2012-2013, has declined somewhat in the last few years. In August 2017, new rankings

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**Figure 3 / Israeli University Rankings in the Shanghai Rankings 2007-2016**

![Graph showing the rankings of Israeli universities from 2007 to 2016. The graph indicates the performance of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, Weizmann Institute of Science, Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Bar Ilan University, and University of Haifa.]
were published and Hebrew University was not among the top 100, leaving the Technion as the only Israeli institution on the list. Nevertheless, one should emphasize that controversy attached to the rankings, and the need to look at long term trends make it difficult to draw conclusions from this short terms data alone.

It is useful to look at rankings in specific disciplines. Thus, in Mathematics for example, four Israeli schools are ranked in the top 100 – the Hebrew University is ranked 11th, and the Technion, Weitzman Institute, and Tel Aviv University are ranked in the 51-75 group. In Chemistry, two Israeli universities are found in the top 100 – the Technion and the Weitzman Institute. In Physics, though, only the Weitzman Institute is in the top 100 (76), and in Biology, no Israeli university ranks among the top 100. In regard to the last two disciplines, five Israeli research institutes are in the leading 500.

Patent registration is a measure of creativity that is very difficult to obtain for Jews around the world, but it is accessible for Israelis. In order to register and approve a patent it has to meet certain criteria of innovation and usefulness. Therefore, analyzing the pattern of patent registration provides useful insight into the dynamics of innovation. There are various measures of patent registration. One of them that reflects the intensity of the innovative dynamics of a country is the proportion of patent applications relative to the population. Such an inquiry was conducted by the Shmuel Neeman

**Figure 4 / PCT Applications per 100,000 residents by country**
Institute in their reports which present indices of science, technology, and innovation in Israel. According to the Neeman Institute’s analysis as seen in Figure 4, in 2012 Israel was listed as fifth in patent applications PCT (Patent Cooperation Treaty) in proportion to population size (23.9 per 100,000).

This data shows a positive correlation between the achievements of Israeli education and the high degree of innovation. Israel ranks high when demographic and economic data are integrated. Though, as we pointed out in the 2016 Annual Assessment, the overall picture of Israeli education as reflected in the data is complex and cannot be summed up as either one of increased success or decline. This very complexity brings several researchers and experts to suggest that the situation today reflects successes and trends of the past (for instance, the Russian Aliyah) and not to current efforts. If this argument turns out to be accurate, the future may bring a decline in many of the indices. Because of the relatively young age of the State of Israel, and because many of the indices are relative and depend upon parallel trends in other countries, there is an objective difficulty in testing this claim. However, whether accurate or a mistaken hypothesis, it is clear that in order to advance Israel and to bring it to the top of the rankings, long range strategic thinking is needed along with high levels of material and cultural investment in education and human development.

Cultural Versatility

The term “cultural versatility” is used here as the ability to look at a problem from diverse perspectives, rooted in different traditions, cultures, and languages. This ability helps people understand that there is more than one response to a problem. Cultural versatility often results from a broad-based, open-minded education, having foreign friends, and travel. Some of the roots of this ability could be very old. Rabbinic Judaism values argument more than uniformity of thought. The Talmud reports unending arguments between two schools interpreting the Torah, the House of Hillel who tended to facilitate the law, and the House of Shamai who tended to make it more stringent. The Talmud states that the opinions of both sides, though conflicting, are equally valid – “words of the living God” – but that only Hillel’s interpretation will become law. Why? Because he quoted the contradictory opinion of Shamai together, and even before his own, thus showing respect for his opponent’s arguments. In other words, often there is not one, absolute, uncontestable truth, two “truths” are possible and both must be examined side by side.

The philosophical and moral implications of this principle are enormous. It encourages diversity and versatility of views widely beyond the religious sphere. Even the proverbial argumentativeness of Jewish politics could partly be influenced by this Talmudic precept. Chinese academic scholars are studying Judaism in order to understand the sources of Jewish creativity. Why are the Chinese less creative in spite of their huge numbers and
their enormous efforts in education? One scholar incriminates the traditional Chinese quest for uniformity. He advises his people to emulate the Jews: “In the Talmud there is no one answer or opinion to one question. Different answers to the same question could be true at the same time, and all could be valid. This kind of thinking could be qualified as distinct in its encouragement of diversity and negation of uniformity.”

Apart from religious tradition, the location and socio-economic situation of Diaspora Jews also encouraged diversity of thought and culture. Jews lived in many different places. A Frenchman visiting Turkey and Egypt in the 16th century marveled at the linguistic and cultural versatility of the local Jews: “They speak, it might be Greek, Slavonic, Turkish, Armenian or Italian...and so they speak every language and have been of great service to us, not only in translating for us but in communicating to us how things are in that country.”

Richard Florida's 2002 classic, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, regards cultural versatility as the dominant source of creativity. Creative thought, and the innovations that flow from it, flourishes in some environments but not in others. It thrives in places that are diverse, open, and tolerant – particularly toward unconventional people. Florida's creative class comprises scientists, engineers, architects, educators, writers, artists and entertainers, approximately 30 percent of the U.S. work force, while the “super-creative core” comprises 12 percent. Their creativity is distinguished by diversity, individuality, tolerance, and talent (with the latter not excluding education for which Florida shows less interest). Conferring the creativity label to such a large percentage of the population is excessive. Many members of each of these professional categories do repetitive, uncreative work. The true creators and inventors are much fewer.

Florida pays attention to the geographic location of creative people. They tend to congregate and live in close proximity. Similar observations were made long before when many creative people wanted to live near the sources of power and money. The Renaissance painter and art historian Giorgio Vasari offered a thought-provoking explanation for Florence. When a man of exceptional talent emerges, “nature” tends to create a second one “to encourage mutual emulation and inspiration” – but also competition and rivalry. Today, location is less of a concern because the information and transportation revolution has obviated the effect of geographic distance, but until not so long ago, location was an important supporting factor of Jewish as well as non-Jewish creativity. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Odessa became a magnet for rich Jewish businessmen, creative thinkers, writers, poets and politicians because Jews enjoyed more freedom there than in any other part of the Czarist Empire and because it was a city of many minorities. It was probably the most “multicultural” city of the Empire. Bialik, Mendele...
Mocher Sforim, Ahad Ha-Am, Isaac Babel, Shaul Tchernichovsky, Ze’ev Jabotinsky and Leon Trotsky all came from Odessa, or lived, were educated or published there. All of them were multi-lingual and felt at home in various cultures.

Biographical case studies demonstrate the links between cultural versatility and Jewish creativity today. An entertaining example is that of an unusual, brilliant Jewish aerospace engineer, Ben Rich (1925-95), who played a lead role in the conception and development of the Lockheed SR-21 Blackbird Mach 3 Long-Range Strategic Reconnaissance Aircraft. The Blackbird made its first flight in 1964. It was one of the most successful military planes ever developed by the United States. It kept flying over the Soviet Union and was never shot down. It was the first stealth plane, based on radically new designs. Aerospace experts regarded it as the most important aircraft innovation since the jet-engine and called Ben Rich “the father of stealth.” This is how Ben Rich describes his family background and upbringing:

...[M]y own stern father, Isidore Rich, [was] a British citizen who had been...the superintendent of a hardwood lumber mill in Manila, the Philippines where I was born and raised. The Riches were among the first Jewish families to settle in Manila, and after one of my paternal grandfather’s business trips to Egypt, he brought back a snap-shot of the beautiful young daughter of one of his Jewish customers to show to my bachelor father...Marriage followed a few years later. My mother, Annie, was a French citizen, born and raised in Alexandria, a brilliant linguist who spoke thirteen languages fluently, a free spirit who pampered me...³

Illuminating in this story is that Rich inherited from his parents and upbringing an innovative spirit wide open to the whole world, which he used much later in a field that could not have been more remote from his family’s life and interests. But if his versatile mind encouraged Ben Rich to tinker with radically new aero-frame designs, it took a special trigger to produce the Blackbird. This is what we call “stress”: America’s fear of the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War.

Yuri Slezkine called the 20th century “The Jewish Century” because Jews in the West and in Russia both absorbed and affected all surrounding cultures in major ways. This was the basis of their own, and of the modern world’s creativity. The 20th century was unprecedented in Jewish history when it comes to creativity. The move from marginality and exclusion to participation and involvement, the march out of the ghetto, explains the burst of modern Jewish creativity.

It is difficult to measure and compare cultural versatility objectively, in contrast to educational attainments that can be measured. Foreign language fluency might allow for an approximation of cultural versatility. In principle, knowing several languages should open the polyglot’s mind to different cultures and different ways of problem solving.
What can be said about the evolution of cultural versatility among Jews today? There are differences between the United States and Israel. Fewer and fewer American Jews are born abroad and have a life experience comparable to that of Ben Rich, and fewer and fewer master any of the languages their grand-fathers, and sometimes fathers, brought to America. But many, particularly younger Jews are travelling, absorbing new cultures and, occasionally, languages and also know enough of Judaism or Israel to be able to see issues from different perspectives. An interesting sub-group are the Russian Jews who immigrated to America over the last 20 years, today almost half a million. They are bi-cultural and bi-lingual. To draw conclusions about current American Jewish cultural versatility based on so few, and sometimes contradictory, data and some conjectures is hazardous. Maybe one can say that cultural versatility as a condition of creativity among American Jews survives but probably does not increase compared to the past. However, their versatility like their education is probably still higher than that of America’s general population.

Measuring the evolution of cultural versatility in Israel difficult as well. It may be argued that young Israelis born in Israel generally exhibit less cultural versatility than Israelis of a previous generation who were largely immigrants and were familiar with the cultures and languages of their home countries. However, today, there are signs pointing towards greater openness among Israelis compared to the situation some decades ago. A growing number of Israel’s young learn foreign languages, particularly English, and a growing number of Israelis travel to and work in foreign countries. Israel’s culture absorbs large numbers of foreign books, films, theater performances, music, art exhibitions and more. Can one conclude that Israel is becoming more culturally versatile?

The over-proportional growth of the Orthodox population both in Israel and America could reduce overall Jewish cultural versatility, at least in the short and medium term. This population respects and often knows one culture only. Long-term consequences are not predictable. Religious beliefs may prohibit some artistic production, but not necessarily scientific and technological innovation. Within the religious population and especially among the newly religious (Hozrim B’tshuva), there are individuals who have an intimate familiarity with both Western and Jewish Orthodox culture. Some of these individuals make significant contributions both in the arts and humanities, and in science and technology.

**Stress or Need**

“Stress” is a semantic shortcut for a number of incentives: reactions to or fear of discrimination, persecution and threats, frictions due to religious, social or political struggles, sub-conscious tensions due to forgotten traumas, and economic or social pressures.

Life responds to adversity – predators or a changing environment – by evolving new and better adapted organisms. Paleontologists are discussing what caused the “Cambrian Explosion,” the revolution in the history of life that took place 540-520 million years ago. During the preceding
billions of years, all life was single-celled, and then suddenly, the first vertebrates and the ancestors of all animals alive today appeared. A frequent explanation attributes this development to predation, and the stress predation creates. The first fossil records of the Cambrian period show true predators – animals that catch and eat other animals. Life forms had to become creative in order to survive and avoid being eaten. So much for a biological concept of creativity.

The most creative and far-reaching transformations of Judaism and Jewish history occurred in the wake of the three greatest catastrophes of Jewish history, the destruction of the First and the Second Temples and the Holocaust. Each catastrophe created enormous stress and new needs. The three “major” prophetic books – Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel – all address the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile. Their written words explain how the Jewish people could make sense of the catastrophe. They have become an integral part of Judaism, Jewish ethics and liturgy. The destruction of the Second Temple led to the development of Rabbinic Judaism. Rabbinic Literature, mainly the Talmud responded to the danger that Judaism would splinter or disappear without a temple. Rabbinic Judaism has shaped Jewish faith and history until today. And finally, the foundation of Israel was, among others, a creative response to the acute awareness, in the wake of modern anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, that the Jewish people could not be protected without a Jewish state.

Apart from these three “mega-stress” events, there are many specific socio-economic reasons for stress and difficulties. Diaspora Jews were often a “middleman minority.” They made their living bridging the difference between consumers and producers and were often at risk of triggering the enmity and envy of one side or the other, if not both. When emancipation began to ease but not completely abolish the burden of discrimination, Jews flocked to and helped set up new economic sectors, such as department stores, electrified transport, journalism, and the film industry.

While external conditions – war, persecution, discrimination – were the dominant stress and need generators in Jewish history, Jewish religious changes and infighting since Biblical times created no less stress. Whether this stress was creative or destructive could depend on the position and beliefs of later observers. Was the emergence of Christianity, splitting off from Judaism as a “heretic sect” as the historian Salo Baron called it, creative or destructive?

In 1919, Thorstein Veblen, one of the most respected American sociologists of his generation, published a paper that is rarely quoted now because its title offends current political correctness: “The Intellectual Pre-Eminence of Jews in Modern Europe.” Veblen argues that Jewish “intellectual pre-eminence,” which he calls indisputable, is the direct result of discrimination and persecution. It is the defense mechanism of the Jews, their creative response that protects them from being “devoured” Veblen privileges discrimination, fear, and stress as the true sources of Jewish creativity, not education or cultural versatility. Logically then, he predicts that Jewish pre-eminence will disappear should Zionism
succeed in creating a Jewish state where Jews would become a “normal,” not discriminated against people like every other people. In fact, his prediction was quite similar to the hopes of Theodor Herzl and other early Zionists.

Jews had to develop creative ways to survive, prevail, and, if possible, thrive. There are many examples that show modern Jewish survival creativity as a response to hostility and stress. Anti-Jewish hostility can be overt, crude, and violent. Chaim Weizmann remembers in his memoirs his childhood years in a Russian school. His teacher of Old Church Slavonic, a very difficult language, was an anti-Semitic Russian priest. Weizmann and the other Jewish boys made a particular effort to be the best in Slavonic in order to outdo the Christian boys. They knew this would infuriate their anti-Semitic school master. They succeeded beyond expectation. This is a good example of the sources of Jewish “intellectual pre-eminence” as explained by Veblen. Little Weizmann developed a creative response to open hostility that was typical for what occurred in many other cases.

Many examples demonstrate that modern Jewish creativity is a response to hostility and stress.

But in America and Western Europe, apart from the Nazi period, modern anti-Semitism is more often disguised, smug, and insidious. Some Jews notice it and feel stress but others don’t or don’t want to notice it (but nevertheless can also feel stress sub-consciously). The Ephrussis of Vienna did notice it and responded in grand style. The Ephrussis originated in Odessa, spoke at least four if not five or six languages, and created in the second half of the 19th century one of Europe’s great banking empires, an innovative, multinational finance institution that helped drive European economic development. There were Ephrussi banks in Paris, London, and Vienna. The Vienna family remained formally Jewish but was assimilated. They consorted less with the Jews of Vienna than with each other and with the Austro-Hungarian nobility they had joined at the discretion of Emperor Franz Joseph. He made them “Von Ephrussi.” They seemed fully integrated and accepted. They owned the largest palace on Vienna’s prestigious Ringstrasse. Edmond De Waal, a late descendant of the family and also their biographer, recently visited the pre-First World War Palace Ephrussi in Vienna and made a significant discovery in the ballroom.

Here, on the ceiling…there is a series of paintings of stories from the Biblical book of Esther: Esther crowned as queen of Persia, kneeling in front of the chief priest in his rabbinical robes…. And then there is the destruction of the sons of Haman, the enemy of the Jews, by Jewish soldiers. It is beautifully done. It is a long-lasting, covert way of staking a claim for who you are…. This is the only Jewish painting on the whole of the Ringstrasse…

What De Waal discovered was a residual anguish and a hidden ancestral pride behind the financial creativity and social success of the Von Ephrussi.
family. Even they were still not entirely sure of their position.

However, not all stress, fear, and pressure is generated by external enemies. The long march of emancipating Jews “out of the Ghetto” was accompanied by internal social and psychological stress. An extreme, but probably not isolated illustration of how violent internal Jewish pressure could be and how it might push creativity is the life story of the painter Chaim Soutine. Today Soutine is regarded as one of the most brilliant and unusual members of the “School of Paris” of the 1920s and 1930s. His paintings sell for millions. Soutine was born to pitifully poor traditional parents in a Lithuanian shtetl, the tenth of eleven children. His father wanted him to become a cobbler or tailor, but he liked to draw. His biographer writes: “Two of his older brothers constantly taunted him, saying ‘A Jew must not paint,’ and beat him mercilessly. Their cruelty almost became a ritual.”

As can be seen in the comprehensive catalogue of Soutine’s hundreds of published landscape and portrait paintings, there is not a single one with a Jew or a Jewish subject, but there are many with churches and catholic choir boys. Soutine never felt free of stress.

The march out of the Ghetto was accompanied by new Jewish search for excellence in science, art, literature, and economic activity. A simple explanation for this is that the emancipation opened new professions for Jews that were closed to them before. There is a more complex explanation. Was this search for excellence in science etc., a search for a new “truth” that had to replace the old, increasingly invalid truth – Judaism? Science, but also beauty in art convey a universally valid, objective ethics which religion could no longer do.

Veblen tried to identify a particular character trait that could explain Jewish creativity. He called it “creative skepticism.” This is his argument: when Jews were discriminated they tended to question the validity of the established “truths” of the societies in which they were living – not only the political and social traditions that excluded them, but all “truths,” including those in science and culture. Jews are “skeptical” – at least the emancipating Jews of the 19th and 20th centuries. In fact, many innovations by Jews represented a complete break-away from established traditions. Such breaks require considerable courage, which cannot always be found among well-respected members of the ruling majorities. It took years before Einstein’s overturning of traditional physics became – hesitantly – accepted, and decades before the twisted landscapes and human bodies in Soutine’s paintings were appreciated. In his lifetime the French art critics ridiculed him.

Veblen had predicted hundred years ago that in a Jewish state where Jews would become a people like all others, the Jewish creativity driven by stress, hostility and skepticism would come to an end. He
was surely wrong in regard to the Jewish state. There, for external and internal reasons, tension is obvious. Israel’s greatest economic success, its innovative high-tech sector, is a direct result of its struggle for survival supported by its defense research. Nearly all of the best-known Israeli novelists are driven by, and write in permanent anger about their country’s Palestinian policies, and few Israeli movies are comedies. Most focus on conflict. But maybe Veblen’s prediction will turn out to be correct for much of American Jewry? The ease and unease of being a Jew in America in the 20th and 21st centuries is a huge subject that cannot be examined quickly.

The data show that Jews, apart from Indian Americans remain the best educated, well-to-do, successful, respected minority of the United States. Identified and even Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews are now to be found in important and responsible positions in all branches of the economy and in leading law and financial firms, including those that did not hire Jews in the past. Young Americans of Jewish origin but without any Jewish links or commitment, and without any interest in Israel, should be free of the stresses that plagued Jews across the centuries. But American Judaism is a politically torn community, Israel is an embarrassment to some, and outside hostility to Jews continues to emerge in new forms. Stress and tensions – triggers of creativity for Veblen – have not disappeared. His prediction that normalization will put an end to Jewish intellectual and cultural “pre-eminence” may be premature for America’s Jews too.

Curiosity

Though stress is not the only driver of creativity, it probably is the dominant one for Jews. But there are other motivations that drive humans to discover what is new and unknown, inside and outside of themselves, or to create art not seen before. To summarize these motivations under the term “curiosity” is simplistic. We do so for lack of a better term. Curiosity is the impulse inherent in all humans (and animals) to acquire knowledge. Thirst for knowledge, “curiosity,” is part of the human condition, but more often than not, it is survival knowledge, knowledge with a purpose – economic, military, medical, religious, or otherwise. In this case it also belongs to the category of “stress” or “necessity.” Knowledge for knowledge’s sake is comparatively rare. There was such a thirst for knowledge in ancient Greek science, and there is a lot of it in modern “pure science” generating fundamental research. Likewise, some art was and continues to be commissioned by paying customers, but some also reflects an artist’s search for meaning and beauty and nothing else. Certainly, many Jewish contributions to modern science, art and culture were born in this search for pure knowledge, beauty, and significance, which is difficult to define and prove and impossible to measure.

One could see this, too, as a result of the Jews moving out of the Ghetto and entering professions that had been closed to them. Or one could see it as a secularized continuation of an ancient Jewish drive. Jewish religious tradition greatly values learning, the search for knowledge.
But it is knowledge with a purpose, knowledge of the Torah. While an important purpose of Torah knowledge was to guide correct religious practice, another important value of Torah study is "Torah study for its own sake." This value has been variously interpreted, but there is a central tradition of theoretical study and Torah knowledge as a value in its own right. Furthermore, central traditions of Torah study stress hiddush – innovation in interpretation and jurisprudence. Further research is necessary to establish to what degree if at all these traditions have contributed to modern Jewish creativity.

Enabling Conditions of Creativity: Material and other Support

Material resources to support creativity by public and private sources is often essential. They are enabling conditions. Money alone cannot produce creativity, but poverty can stifle it. Yet the opposite can be true also. Poverty and want – stress – can also encourage creativity. Leonardo Da Vinci and Rembrandt are two of the greatest painters of all time. Leonardo was rich, funded by kings and popes until the end of his life. He never knew want. Rembrandt, in contrast, did not benefit from his country’s economic “Golden Age” and was never able to husband his resources. Once, he had to sell his belongings to avoid bankruptcy. There is a deep sadness in his late self-portraits that express his life’s miseries. Did poverty damage or enrich his creativity? Apart from money, the promise of fame, the respect of one’s peers and other factors can also encourage creativity. But for policy makers, financial support is the most obvious and direct way to do so.

Summing Up

It will take more study and research to substantiate the statements, illustrations, and hypotheses advanced in this paper with precise data, and to formulate policy proposals to encourage creativity. Also, there are possible genetic and epigenetic sources of creativity that have not yet been discussed. What is clear so far, is that the explosion of Jewish talent in the West and Russia from the late 19th to the late 20th century was a direct result of the emancipation, of Jews leaving the ghetto. The historical conditions of the emancipation period will not be repeated, except perhaps for a thin trickle of Ultra-Orthodox Jews joining the modern world.

Today’s assimilated Jews, for whom Jewish identity has little or no meaning and who have never experienced discrimination, have nothing to prove, do not need to compete with their non-Jewish counterparts. Does this mean that the “Jewish century,” as Slezkine called the 20th century, was a unique historical period that will never come back? Jewish creativity is not limited to the 20th century. Biblical, Hellenistic, and Spanish Judaism during the so-called “Golden Age” were rich in creativity. During these periods, some of the conditions identified for the 20th century were also met: high levels of education, multicultural perspectives, and abundant stress.
In the next few decades, American Judaism and Israel could go in different directions. Levels and quality of education vary between the two. American Jews are probably better off now, but Israeli education is improving. Cultural versatility seems to be growing in Israel, but perhaps less so in the United States. The stress factor is very strong in Israel, but weaker for young American Jews. Can we say that Jewish creativity will fare better in Israel than in America, not least because Israel needs creativity for its sheer survival and American Jews don’t? No, it would be too hasty. We can test past conditions and triggers of creativity with all the yardsticks and data we can get, but exceptional creativity is ultimately a mystery that cannot be planned. Luck and coincidence play a decisive role in the presence or absence of creative individuals.

Mozart contracted smallpox at the age of eleven. In the 18th century, up to a third of the infected died of the disease. Had Mozart died then, the history of Western music would be radically different. Or, had the Nazis come to power in 1900 rather than 1933, Einstein would not have had time to develop and publish his relativity theory, and the history of science and technology in the 20th century would have followed a very different course.

What can be said is that a people that produced many creative individuals in the past arguably has the potential to produce more in the future. To encourage their emergence, a high level of education, a versatile, multicultural perspective, and some stress would appear to be essential. Policies can help with the first two, and history and human nature, for better or worse, will see to it that the third will not disappear, at least not in Israel.

At the end of this reflection, we have to return to a comment made at the beginning. Why is it good for the Jews to be creative? Jewish and Israeli contributions to science, technology, and medicine have facilitated Jewish and Israeli prestige and defense, no doubt. In the humanities and the arts the situation is more complex. Jewish creativity and innovation in literature, art, philosophy, and jurisprudence has challenged, according to some, or enriched according to others, many established majority traditions. It has gained respect, but is has also triggered enormous hostility. Anti-Semitic literature mentions Marx and Freud as proof of the alleged evil influence of Judaism on Western civilization. It is an old phenomenon but difficult to explain because it is unique to the Jews. Is creativity also a double-edged sword?
Endnotes

1 It must be noted though, the Haredi Judaism is itself an innovation. See Moshe Samet, Innovation is Forbidden by the Torah: Chapters in the History of Orthodoxy. Jerusalem, 2005.

2 Bavli Baba Batra 21a.


6 Before Israel come: Switzerland (13.4 years), the UK (13.3), Australia (13.2), United States (13.2), Germany (13.2) and Canada (13.1).


8 http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2016.htm

9 Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b.


17 Edmund De Waal, The Hare with the Amber Eyes – A hidden Inheritance, New York: Picador, 2010, 125.


19 See אבראהם בורנשטיין, ספר אגלי טל, פיעטרקוב, 1905.

Avraham Bornstein, Sefer Eglei Tal, Piotrków Trybunalski, 1905, introduction.
PART 3

Feature Articles
The outbreak of violence on the Temple Mount this past summer and the tensions around the “Lone Wolf Intifada” that preceded it, raised the need to examine relations between Jews and Arabs within Israel in this year’s Annual Assessment.

On one hand, the bloody civil war in Syria and the deepening of the Shia-Sunni conflict have intensified the signs that Israeli Arabs aspire to integrate into Israeli society and share the fabric of life with the Jewish majority. On the other hand, tensions between Jews and Muslims around the holy sites, and the identification of the Arab minority with the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, threaten to increase the nationalist-religious elements of the conflict. These trends have led Arab politicians and religious leaders to engage in incitement and profit politically at the expense of coexistence, and were met with similar responses from right-wing Jewish groups and controversial legislative initiatives.

On July 14, 2017, three young Israeli Arab men, residents of Umm Al Fahm, entered the old city unarmed, followed by a collaborator carrying a bag containing two submachine guns and a handgun. They met at the Al Aqsa mosque, took the three weapons and opened fire on the Israeli border police officers at the site, leaving two officers dead and another injured. Additional police returned fire, killing all three attackers. This was considered an especially rare incident, as it was carried out by Israeli citizens.

The three attackers were connected to the Islamic Movement in Israel, which clearly identifies with Hamas. One served as a preacher at his local mosque. The attack was an obvious result of religious sentiments in the air created by Islamic fundamentalism, which the Islamic Movement cultivates, especially in its northern branch, even if it does not give operational orders. One should not underestimate the movement’s power or

*A broader, more detailed paper on this subject is forthcoming as part of JPPI’s Pluralism Project.*
influence, despite that it is not the dominant force in Israeli-Arab society.

The Israeli public was surprised, even shocked to learn the attackers were Israeli citizens. This put the Knesset members from the “Joint List” (combined Arab Knesset parties) who see themselves as the leaders of the Arab-Israeli public in a dilemma. The Jewish public and authorities expected their clear condemnation of the attack, but they feared accusations of servility or even treason from their constituents. A number Joint List MKs posted weak, ambiguous responses that mostly blamed the “occupation.” The two Arab MK’s who did publish clear condemnations are not Joint List members (one is a member of the Zionist Union and the other of Meretz).

As for the “Arab street” in Israel – there were no public expressions of joy. In Umm Al Fahm itself, residents distanced themselves from the incident, some feared reprisals.

However, within a few days, things took a turn, following the police decision to install metal detectors at Temple Mount entrances. The Waqf, the Palestinian body responsible for the religious administration of the site, claimed the decision was a clear violation of the “status quo.” This position was adopted throughout the Arab and Muslim world.

After a few days of hesitation, the Israeli government decided to remove the metal detectors, but announced it would seek other methods to prevent weapons from entering the site.

It should be noted that, thus far, the July 14 attack seems to have been an isolated event. We have yet to witness any follow-up attacks or “side effects” in the positions or actions of the Arab “street.”

The Al Aqsa mosque is the third most important religious site in Islam. Its control by a non-Muslim authority (especially a Jewish one, an inferior religion according to Islam) is a constant source of bitterness and anger among devout Muslims. At the same time, it rests on the Temple Mount, which once housed both Jewish temples, and according to some, will one day hold the third temple. Due to these competing narratives, it is regarded as the most volatile place in the Middle East.

The “Lone Wolf Intifada” that began on the Jewish New Year two years ago (October 2015), erupted after a series of events on the Temple Mount that caused Palestinians to claim that Jews were inciting friction.

Radical Islamist actors, including clerics who preach during Friday prayers (the most important worship of devout Muslims), claimed these frictions reflected a hidden agenda of the Israeli authorities to undercut the “status quo” on the Temple Mount as part of an effort to “Judeify” the site. The Palestinians found Israeli government denials of this unconvincing.

Among the many friction points between the State of Israel and Jewish majority and the Arab minority, the Temple Mount (in Israel’s view) and Al Aqsa (in the Arabs’ view), is the most sensitive and loaded issue of all.

It is clear that Israeli Muslims are an integral and inseparable part of the Arab and Islamic
world, whose spiritual connection to it will not be compromised (regardless of diplomatic agreements one way or the other). However, until now, even in instances of violent confrontation between Palestinians and Israeli security at Al Aqsa, including those with casualties, Israeli Arabs have not taken to the streets. Harsh verbal condemnations by their leadership have sufficed.

The term “Israeli Arab” refers to Arab minority citizens of Israel (Muslim or Christian) living within the 1949 Armistice Lines. Most have a strong Palestinian identity. The Arabs of East-Jerusalem are not considered Israeli-Arabs and define themselves solely as Palestinian. The Israeli Druze, although Arab in language, ethnicity, and culture, have a different religion, and are considered a separate group for political and historical reasons.

Arabs (Muslims and Christians) constitute 15.5 percent of Israel’s population, the vast majority of whom are Muslim. Israel’s Muslim citizens (within the Green line) number 1,178,000 individuals, or 14 percent of Israel’s citizenry (not including East Jerusalem Arabs who are not Israeli citizens). Arab Christians make up less than 1.5 percent of the country’s population.

Since the 1967 Six-Day War, and especially, since the First Intifada, Israel’s Arabs are caught in an ongoing dilemma between “Palestinization” and “Israelization.” That is, between choosing a political path that focuses mostly on the Palestinian issue and the continued struggle over the national character of the State of Israel (a “Jewish state” versus a “state of all its citizens”) and a civil path – which includes striving for civil equality and integration in all aspects of life in the State of Israel.

In 2006, the High Follow-Up Committee and the National Committee of the Heads of Arab Localities published a joint manifesto, The Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel. This document demands full socio-economic equality and calls for redefining Israel from a “Jewish state” to a “Consensual Democracy”¹. While this increased fear and suspicion among some Israeli Jews, it never had practical expression within Arab-Israeli society.

The Influence of the “Arab Spring” – a series of revolutions, attempted revolutions, civil wars, and continued unrest that began in 2011 in a number of Arab states shaped positions and raised questions and dilemmas among Israeli Arabs. These mostly related to Arab society itself, with the State of Israel only playing a small role.

The Syrian Civil War – which started as part of the Arab Spring, deepened the divisions and polarization among Israeli Arabs. While Hadash/Maki (the Israeli communist party) expressed support for the Assad regime, Balad opposed it, as it disrupted Arab unity. The Islamist groups within Israel’s Arab community, chief among them the northern branch of the Islamic Movement, fiercely oppose Shia Islam, which they see as heretical, and therefore distance themselves from and have an aversion to Iran and Hezbollah.

The “Arab street” in Israel, as much as it is possible to identify trends within it, does not accept Assad’s repression of the Syrian people (particularly the Sunni sector), and certainly despises the massacres conducted by it in Aleppo and elsewhere in northern Syria. At the same time,
it also rejects and despises the radical violence of ISIS and the radical ideology of the Salafists. The recruitment of a few dozens of Israeli Arabs into ISIS ranks seems anomalous, not something that indicates a widespread reality.

At this time, it can be said that the Arab Spring did not elicit direct demands by Israeli Arabs from the state. However, it is quite likely that in the future, this will have implications for the continued formation of an Israeli Arab civil society and public sphere.

The positions of Israeli-Arab politicians are not monolithic. Arab politicians in Israel serve primarily under one parliamentary list due to political constraints (a law passed raising the threshold to a minimum of four electoral votes per party). Between the four parties represented on the list, there are deep political, ideological, and personal divisions. There is almost no doubt that were the law to be changed and the threshold lowered, most of the Joint List members would prefer to run as smaller parties again.

Thus, it is difficult to speak of a clear Arab-Israeli leadership. In practice, since the establishment of the state there has not been a single Arab-Israel leader who all Arab-Israelis, or at least most, recognize. However, there is a group of Arab-Israeli politicians in positions of leadership, and there are issues around which they unite, albeit with nuances and varying levels of intensity.

Israel’s Arab citizens share a common identity with the Palestinian people, in a historical, cultural, and ethnic sense. At the same time, their Israeli citizenship – with its higher standard of living than most Palestinians enjoy, and its economic and political connectedness within Israel, has had an effect over the past 70 years. On the one hand, they feel discriminated against by Israeli Jews and oppose this double standard. On the other hand, they prefer seeking remedies within the framework of the State of Israel, and not outside of it. They express (sincere) support for the Palestinian cause, and wish for a two-state peace agreement that would “end the occupation.”

The more moderate Arab parties – Hadash and Ra'am – Ta'al – support a two-state solution. Conversely, the more radical Balad, supports the establishment of “a single, secular democratic state,” expresses support for the Palestinian struggle, and does not see the principle of “two states for two peoples” as a solution to the conflict. The Islamic Movement advocates for the establishment of an Islamic state that would include all of the territory west of the Jordan River, which is also part of the Hamas platform. A majority of Israeli Arabs reject this.

Opposite the aspirations of the Islamic Movement, Arab nationalist sentiments, and the rage over perceived discrimination, there stands a general outlook common to most of Israel’s Arab citizens. Its key elements include:

• The state of Israel and its international standing are solid and stable.
• The fear of a response from the “Jewish street”.
• The economic aspect – the understanding that “there is much to lose”.

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• The realization that even if actual discrimination exists, Israel’s Arabs enjoy life under a democratic regime with a fair legal system – conditions that do not exist in any Arab country.

• The understanding that no Arab country will lift a finger for Israel’s Arabs, and that they must prosecute their own battles, while taking advantage of the democratic regime and legal system Israel offers them.

A large majority of Israeli Arabs set for themselves a goal to seek civil equality within the State of Israel. Advancing toward this goal has met with difficulties, some expected and familiar. The tension and gaps between the Jewish and Arab populations, which exist in any case, intensify following incidents involving Israeli Arabs, such as the confrontation during the demolition of the Bedouin village Um Al Hiram, in which a resident being evacuated was killed as well as a police officer, and, of course, the Temple Mount terrorist attack. To this, we add the stances and silence of a majority of Arab politicians. This led to a situation in which each group fears that the other threatens its personal security. Among the Arabs, there is also a fear of punishment or revenge by the Jewish majority.

Experience shows that the disconnect between the Jewish and Arab sectors of society tends to be temporary (due to the aforementioned moderating elements). At times tensions intensify in a specific place or area, while at other times it cuts across the entire sector (such as after the events of October 2000). However, each disconnect increases the foreclosure of the Arab participation in Jewish society, expressed, for example, in the refusal to employ Arab workers, especially those with academic education, in sensitive and security related industries.

Most experts who study Israel’s Arab population agree that although the “street” is generally interested in integration into Israeli society, the politicians (except the minority of whom are members of Jewish-Zionist parties) take confrontational and aggressive positions against the Israeli authorities, and at times Jewish society as a whole. The reasons for this seeming disconnect between the leadership and the “street” have yet to be fully analyzed. It is safe to assume that the politicians are motivated mostly by the fear that expressing moderate positions and a desire to integrate would brand them as collaborators.

Of great concern to most Israeli Arabs are the land swaps of populated areas proposed by leading Israeli public figures and politicians in the event of a peace agreement, including transferring Umm Al Fahm and the surrounding villages to the Palestinian Authority. Some Israeli politicians assert that these swaps should be a condition for any agreement, whereby the Israeli territory transferred to the Palestinian Authority is matched by Israeli annexation of parts of Judea and Samaria. The Israeli-Arab elites understand that such a move would be difficult, even impossible to implement, but wonder if raising it is meant to potentiate the existing trend (in their view) of marginalizing them and their membership in the state. Even the Basic Law currently proposed: “Israel – a Nation State for the Jewish People,” has
caused anxiety and fear among Israeli Arabs, who interpret this as legislation meant to enshrine and perpetuate their second-rate status.

**Summary**

A clear majority of Israel’s Arab citizens support a two-state solution, while emphasizing that they see their place in the State of Israel, in which they will continue to strive to achieve civil equality and equal opportunities.

Despite the voting patterns that express a strong identification with the Palestinian struggle to achieve independence, there is no widespread recruitment among Israeli Arabs against the Jewish state – not in terror activities or public protests. This issue exists and is palpable on the political, public, and parliamentary level, but does not represent a central component of everyday life for Israel’s Arabs. However, the issue of holy sites (Temple Mount/ Al Aqsa/ Haram A Sharif) that stands apart from all others and arouses especially strong emotions, and could lead to violent confrontations in the future.

**What Next?**

1. Most Israeli Arabs will continue to vote for the Arab parties, which are regarded as the proper framework for their representation, despite the fact that these parties do not place improving the lives of Arab-Israelis and their day-to-day interests at the top of their agenda.

2. Israeli-Arab politicians will continue to take an aggressive line on national political issues, and focus less on civil issues such as achieving civil rights and equality.

3. There will continue to be a disparity between the Arab-Israeli society (the Arab street) and the stances of Arab politicians, as the “street” will continue to be more moderate and balanced.

4. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will continue to top the political agenda of Arab politicians, but will not be the leading issue on the “Arab street,” unless there are dramatic upheavals, such as violent confrontations that result in significant Palestinian civilian casualties or what is perceived as jeopardizing Muslim holy sites, especially Al Aqsa (and perhaps also the Cave of the Patriarchs).

5. Developments in Syria – the stabilization of the Assad regime and/or the defeat of ISIS will only marginally affect Israel’s Arabs (although individuals may join ISIS or its heirs again in the future).

6. Israeli Arabs are very concerned by a number of legislative initiatives that directly affect them. They see these as a continued attempt to exclude them from the Israeli system, from society and from the job market (especially from desirable jobs). Arab politicians, in large part, will do almost anything to exploit these sentiments to advance their own interests, even if it means further distancing the Arab “street” from integration in Israeli society.
Endnotes

About JPPI

The Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) is an independent professional policy planning think tank incorporated as a private non-profit company in Israel. The mission of the Institute is to ensure the thriving of the Jewish people and the Jewish civilization by engaging in professional strategic thinking and planning on issues of primary concern to world Jewry. Located in Jerusalem, the concept of JPPI regarding the Jewish people is global, and includes aspects of major Jewish communities with Israel as one of them, at the core.

JPPI’s activities are action-oriented, placing special emphasis on identifying critical options and analyzing their potential impact on the future. To this end, the Institute works toward developing professional strategic and long-term policy perspectives exploring key factors that may endanger or enhance the future of the Jewish People. JPPI provides professionals, decision-makers, and global leaders with:

- Surveys and analyses of key situations and dynamics
- “Alerts” to emerging opportunities and threats
- Assessment of important current events and anticipated developments
- Strategic action options and innovative alternatives
- Policy option analysis
- Agenda setting, policy recommendations, and work plan design

JPPI’s publications address six main areas of Jewish People challenges and well-being: Geopolitics Impacting World Jewry; Community Bonds; Identity and Identification; Demography; Material Resources; and, Intellectual and Cultural Achievement. A full set of major publications can be found on our website: www.JPPI.org.il.

JPPI is unique in dealing with the future of the Jewish people as a whole within a methodological framework of study and policy development. Its independence is assured by its company articles, with a board of directors co-chaired by Ambassadors Stuart Eizenstat and Dennis Ross — both have served in the highest echelons of the U.S. government, and Leonid Nevzlin in Israel — and composed of individuals with significant policy experience. The board of directors also serves as the Institute’s Professional Guiding Council.