



The New Frontiers of Community Relations

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



המכון מקבוצת ראות
The Institute by Reut



FIREWALL
ISRAEL

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THE NEW FRONTIERS OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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ABOUT THE REUT GROUP AND THE FIREWALL ISRAEL PROJECT

The Reut Group is a strategy and leadership group that focuses on making sense of the fundamental challenges facing Israel and world Jewry and leading transformative social change.

The Reut Group has been committed to promoting the well-being and security of Jewish communities around the world since 2008. In this context, a key Reut effort focuses on mounting responses to the challenge of delegitimization. The intended effect of Reut's work on this issue, as initially defined in its seminal paper of January 2010, Building a Political Firewall against the Delegitimization of Israel, is to catalyze the emergence of a pro-Israel network that would turn the tables on the actions by Israel's delegitimizers, while reuniting the Jewish world around Israel.

In January 2018, the Reut Group launched the Firewall Israel Project, with the purpose to improve the capacity of the North American Jewish community to combat anti-Israel movements as they engage in activities of anti-Semitism and delegitimizes Israel in the U.S. and elsewhere.

In the cover photo: New York Rally for Soviet Jews in 1967. (Copyright © 2009 Foundation for Documentary Projects.)

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We would like to express special gratitude to the **Jewish Council of Public Affairs (JCPA)**, which focuses on the role of community relations in maintaining community cohesion and is our partner in this project. The JCPA is the national hub for more than 125 local Jewish Community Relations Councils, and 16 national Jewish agencies. It has been defining and facilitating the community relations field for the last 75 years and convenes community relations organizations several times a year. We would like to specifically acknowledge **Cheryl Fishbein**, JCPA Chair; **David Bernstein**, JCPA President and CEO; and **Melanie Roth Gorelick**, JCPA Senior Vice President. The only public product of this partnership, this document reflects only the position of the Reut Group and is meant to serve the entire community relations field.

Over the years we have worked with many Jewish community relations professionals. In retrospect, we can say that many of them have greatly influenced the make-up of this document. Over the course of writing this paper, we particularly wish to thank **Daphna Kaufman**, Director, Israel Institute for Innovative Diplomacy; **Doug Khan**, former Director, JCRC San Francisco; **Alan Ronkin**, Regional Director, AJC Washington, D.C.; **Doron Ezickson**, Regional Director, ADL Washington, D.C.; **Ethan Felson**, Executive Director, IAN; **Geri Palast**, Executive Director, IAN; **Stephanie Hausner**, Deputy Director, IAN; **Rebecca Caspi**, Director General, JFNA Israel office.

Working on this project at the Reut Group are: **Gidi Grinstein**, Founder, President, and a marathon runner; **Eran Shayshon**, a proud CEO and a beer-maker; **Edun Sela**, the tranquil VP Programs of Reut USA; **Naama Klar**, the charismatic, take-no-prisoners director of the Institute; **Daria Schitrit**, an analyst and a fashionista; **Zachary Narin**, MVI (most valuable intern); and **Solomon Tenenbaum**, MVI2.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

U.S. Jewry is generally considered a success story about a community rising from oppression to affluence and influence in many aspects of American life. **The Jewish community relations field**, operating through decentralized organizations and initiatives and orchestrated by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), **has played and maintains a key role in uniting communities and creating coalitions to advance Jewish communal interests and values.**

However, **U.S. Jewish leadership more broadly is struggling with generational, denominational, and ideological divides** that characterize the community today. In the turbulent background of a polarized society, decline in central institutions, and climate of political extremes, conventional modes of operation are being challenged and are eroding unique attributes of the Jewish community relations field which previously enabled its success. These dynamics rupture community relations' capacity for broad engagement and undermine abilities to achieve internal consensus or operational coherence.

In particular, the growing rift between Israel and world Jewry serves as a strategic stumbling block – Recent Israeli government actions have widened this chasm, exposing a long-percolating crisis that has also significantly contributed to the erosion of Jewish communal cohesion and the increasing polarization of the Jewish community in the U.S. **The rift undermines the political strength and efficacy of the Jewish community in the U.S.** and increasingly jeopardizes Israel's bi-partisan status. This, in turn, may gradually undermine the positioning and security of U.S. Jewish communities.

Anti-Israel movements take advantage of these developments to further drive a wedge between progressive communities and Israel, with the goal of sowing disunity within and among Jewish communities. Anti-Israel movements' strategic successes target Israel by blurring the lines between criticism of Israeli policies and anti-Zionist ideology and demonizing the State of Israel as antithetical to progressive values.

These movements are now also targeting U.S. Jews, and making anti-Zionism a litmus test item for their progressive legitimacy. As anti-Israel movements work to undermine the status of Jews on the left and at large, a noteworthy cohort of Jews are experiencing anti-Semitism from the left for the first time. Indeed, anti-Zionist 'progressive' groups have found a strategic niche within a mainstream 'resistance' movement – significantly, piggy-backing on intersectional ideologies – and are accumulating some influence within certain political spheres. **This paper warns that if not contained, anti-Israel campaigns will eventually directly threaten the U.S. Jewish community.**

This contemporary anti-Semitism is characterized by increasing prejudice and discrimination emanating from the progressive left. It combines classic anti-Semitic themes related to power and influence with a portrayal of Jews as responsible for the 'original sin' of Zionism unless willing to renounce or work against it. This new wave requires that Jews acknowledge their privilege and power status by renouncing claims of prejudice, discrimination, or insecurity experienced individually or collectively. It does not tolerate Israel or Jews that identify as Zionists or as a minority.

Mainstreaming anti-Semitism in the UK should serve as a warning sign to U.S. Jews. Today, it is clear that the British and European left have a comprehensive, deep, and pervasive anti-Semitism problem. Anti-Israel movements play a significant role in weakening cultural norms that previously protected against the normalization of these harmful trends.

However, U.S. Jewry increasingly frames threats to Israel's legitimacy as exclusively an 'Israel problem' or as "fake news" propagated by Israel's government to avoid criticism. Thus, more voices within U.S Jewry are challenging the notion that fighting anti-Israel movements should be a core issue within the community relations field and are calling upon Jewish communal organizations to focus solely on domestic issues. In fact, fighting anti-Israel sentiment is losing its place as a consensus mission of the Jewish community.

The Government of Israel seems to underestimate the role it plays in these developments, and their possible consequences. This lack of awareness could have serious ramifications for Israel. Broadly, it could contribute to undermining the raison d'être of Israel: to serve the Jewish people as the nation-state. There needs to be genuine 'soul-searching' on the part of the Israeli government about its contribution to the growing gap within world Jewry. Crucially, this starts by first acknowledging that criticism of Israel from within the Jewish community does not necessarily signify distance from Israel or 'anti-Israel' sentiment but can arise from feelings of belonging and responsibility.

At the same time, the 'Israel factor' has occasionally become a pretext for avoiding hard but necessary internal work to examine and reimagine fundamental values and priorities of the American Jewish community today. In order to continue to play an effective leadership role, U.S. Jewish leadership must harness Jewish communities' brain power to create new and relevant narratives, visions, agendas, and subsequent projects.

Absent fundamental and systematic transformation in perspective, approach, and policy led by the Israeli government and U.S. Jewish leadership, the community relations field's impact will remain constrained. Yet, **bolstering the community relations field is the most potent response available to address the community's challenges and is most effective platform within the pro-Israel network for combating contemporary anti-Semitism.**

Further, **the emergence of a common threat in the form of anti-Israel attitudes and anti-Semitism is also an opportunity** for community relations organizations to reconnect across dividing lines within the Jewish community at a time when Israel's place in U.S. politics faces significant vulnerability.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. **The Jewish community relations field has significantly contributed to the rising affluence and influence of U.S. Jewry, by communicating the ‘American story’ of the Jewish community as one which started out as a disempowered minority and then gained significant influence on many aspects of American life.** Community relations organizations and initiatives have built and maintained a powerful infrastructure of relationships with key political, civic, ethnic, and religious leaders and institutions. Serving as a central hub for community relations organizations, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA) has played a pivotal role in this success.

Alongside organizations such as the American Jewish Committee (AJC), Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), the field collectively has played a leading role in the civil rights movement, the struggle to free Soviet Jewry, advocating for Israel, and opposing racism and bigotry. Over time, these organizations have shaped and embodied the character of the Jewish community in the U.S. and has significantly elevated its status and social capital.

2. **In recent years, however, the capacity of Jewish organizations to engage and maintain communal cohesion and promote interests of the Jewish community is being challenged.**

Definition

Reut uses the JCPA definition of ‘community relations’ as the web of organizational and personal relationships on behalf of the organized Jewish community with leading largely non-Jewish institutions and leaders. These relationships occur at the local, state, and national levels, including with: public officials; civic, racial, ethnic, and religious leaders; social justice organizations; law enforcement; media; and public schools and higher-education institutions. Jewish community relations also refers to the ability to mobilize the organized Jewish community to action on strategic issues, and serving as the community’s grassroots infrastructure.

Dynamic history of engagement

3. **Jewish community relations organizations and initiatives have played a critical role in building the U.S. Jewish community from its initial status as a vulnerable minority group within society into a position that enables it to advance its interests, values, and security.**

- The Jewish communal field emerged during the late 19th century, seeking to more effectively advance Jewish interests communally. ¹ **The primary focus of community relations was fighting anti-Semitism.** Founded in 1843, the oldest Jewish community relations organization is B'nai B'rith. ² In 1944, the National

¹ Norman Linzer, David a. Schnall, Jerome A. Chanes, **A Portrait of the American Jewish Community**, Praeger, 1998.

² B'nai B'rith is committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish People and the state of Israel and combating anti-Semitism and bigotry. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life, to provide broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and to facilitate advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world. See [Wikipedia](#).

Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), which later became the JCPA, was created to serve as a hub for the community relations field, beginning with 14 JCRCs and five national organizations.

- **U.S. Jews have a proud history of standing with disempowered populations** and of participating in grassroots activity on behalf of feminist agendas, immigrant rights, workers' rights, civil rights, and environmental issues. Indeed, in the 1950s and 1960s the community relations field – prominently including the JCPA, RAC, AJC, ADL, and American Jewish Congress, and Jewish leaders such as Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel – supported the American civil rights movement, which sought to secure legal rights for African Americans, and were considered an integral part of the effort. The community's involvement was based on altruism along with other various converging interests.³
 - **After Israel's 1967 Six-Day War, Jewish community relations shifted more focus to Israel advocacy⁴ and the cause of Soviet Jewry.** U.S. Jewish advocacy ultimately helped to secure rights of Soviet Jews and cultivate a wide foundation of American support for Israel. The JCPA played a leading role in facilitating the work of community relations, including by practicing new approaches, learning through trial and error, and meticulously compiling successful strategies and best practices.
 - **Following the Oslo Process and the resolution of the plight of Soviet Jewry, areas of the community relations field experienced a decline.** The U.S. Jewish community shifted its focus to internal challenges of Jewish education and identity with the belief that peace could be achieved, anti-Semitism was declining, and oppressed Jewish communities were now free. Although some community relations organizations and initiatives in larger communities flourished, much of the field lost resources and attention from the U.S. Jewish community.
4. **To date, many of the unifying external challenges and domestic social barriers that Jews faced, which were at one point the key mobilizing factors in community relations, are no longer relevant.** Domestically, for example, the disproportionately high representation of Jews in spheres from which they had been excluded in the U.S., such as Ivy League universities, reflects the improving status of Jews.⁵
 5. With the lifting of social barriers, **Jewish identity has undergone a significant shift in self-perception** and in external image from the status of a marginalized and disenfranchised community **to increasingly being seen as a privileged social group.**

³ A special African-American-Jewish political relationship existed during the Civil Rights Movement and had a significant impact on the movement. At the same time, this collaboration suffered from an ongoing tension, caused by the different extent of discrimination suffered by each one of the groups, their socio-economic differences, ideological disagreements, Jewish racism, and African-American anti-Semitism. These tensions make the relationship's decline easier to understand. See Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, **Troubling the Waters**, Princeton University Press, 2010.

⁴ See an example: "U.S. Jewish Communities Report on Their Speedy Response to Israel's Crisis, **JTA**, June 12, 1967.

⁵ Jerome Karabel, **The Chosen: The Hidden Story of Admission and Exclusion at Harvard, Yale and Princeton**, Mariner Books, 2006.

Snapshot of current U.S. Jewish community relations field

Community relations organizations today conduct public affairs on behalf of the Jewish community on local and national levels. They represent Jewish organizations on critical issues affecting Jews as individuals and as a community. They lead advocacy efforts on various issues to ensure the interests of the community and to promote social justice and build bridges with other minority and faith groups.

- **Structure: The network of community relations is decentralized and diverse.** It includes individuals; inter-communal, inter-ethnic, and inter-faith organizations and initiatives; and traditional organizations formally charged with community relations.
- **Main organizations in the community relations field in the U.S.:** Jewish Council for Public Affairs (**JCPA**) and its network of 125 Jewish Community Relations Councils (**JCRCs**), which frequently act as public affairs arms of Jewish Federations; American Jewish Committee (**AJC**), with 22 regional offices in the U.S. and ten overseas offices; Anti-Defamation League (**ADL**), with 29 chapters in the U.S. and three overseas offices; World Jewish Congress (**WJC**), which represents Jewish communities and organizations in 100 countries around the world; and **B'nai Brith** International. The field also includes organizations exercising de-facto community relations, such as **Hillel**, with presence in nearly 500 campus in the U.S. and around the world; National Council of Jewish Women (**NCJW**), which currently has over 90,000 members; **Hadassah; Women's Zionist Organization of America**; and the Israel Action Network (**IAN**), which focuses on fighting delegitimization along with 147 Federations, 125 JCRCs, and dozens of affiliated organizations. Although not the focus of this paper, broader definitions of community relations could that include lobby group, primarily such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (**AIPAC**), which advocates pro-Israel policies to the Congress and Executive Branch of the U.S, and to its left **J Street**, which focuses on the Israel–Palestinian conflict.
- **Common ideology, goals: Community relations are premised in the notion that American Jews prosper in a pluralistic America.** Community relations organizations' mission is to secure interests and promote values of Jewish communities by serving as a bridge with ethnic and religious groups to ensure a more tolerant and pluralistic society, in which Jews and others flourish.
- **Inwards and outwards operations:** In order to accomplish their mission, community relations organizations and initiatives **cultivate and instrumentalize Jewish communal cohesion**, connecting between top-down centralized Jewish communal leadership and bottom-up Jewish political activity. They then **represent Jewish communities outwards, building coalitions and relationships around areas of common interests and values.**

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY RELATIONS FIELD

6. **Community relations engagement-based approaches and methodologies remain as critical now as they were seven decades ago** for the security and well-being of Jewish communities in the U.S. and beyond. Indeed, recognition of the importance of JCRCs continues to grow, and calls to launch them where they are absent continue to increase.⁶ Jewish leaders recognize the need to secure their leadership by making their moral voice heard by engaging with other religious and ethnic groups and future next generation.
7. **However, several structural dynamics coupled with accelerating trends are limiting the effectiveness of community relations** organizations and initiatives.

Changing demographics of the Jewish community

8. **The demographic landscape of the U.S. Jewish community has changed its nature dramatically over the past few years.** While comprehensively covering this change is beyond the scope of this paper, the following related trends directly affect the community relations field:
 - **Jewish identity challenge** – Primarily liberal Jewish denominations today face disaffiliation, and low birthrates; some predictions foresee their disappearance within two generations due to assimilation.
 - **Jewish communities are increasingly marked by generational, denominational, and ideological divides.** The rise of niche and single-issue initiatives that work independently from traditional Jewish communal organizations is an expression and accelerator of a broader fragmentation and diversification of Jewish voices.⁷ The declining relevance of Jewish communal organizations to young generations echoes a broader mistrust of centralized representation; Americans today have the lowest confidence levels in public institutions and governmental leaders in U.S. history.⁸
 - **The challenge of engaging millennials** is central. This generation represents the largest cohort in American history and is rapidly re-shaping societal fundamentals and institutional behaviors. Millennials tend to be passionate about social justice which they see as an important component of their identity.⁹
 - **Jewish organization have been losing their ‘street cred’** – As American Jewry improved their socio-economic status over time, Jewish communal

⁶ See for example, Steven Windmueller, “Why L.A. Needs to Bring Back the JCRC,” **Jewish Journal**, June 7, 2018, ([click here](#)).

⁷ One such example is Bend the Arc, a movement of progressive Jews that work to build a more just society independently from Jewish communal.

⁸ Steven Windmueller, “Reinventing the Jewish Public Square: Promoting a Jewish Community Relations Model for the 21st Century,” **EJP**, ([click here](#)).

⁹ See the personal account of the former senior vice president at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Martin J. Raffel: “Wanted: New ways to engage the next generation of Jews,” **NJJN**, June 11, 2018, ([click here](#)).

organizations seemed to simultaneously gradually lose their ability to be genuinely identified with progressive causes based on an ‘on-the-ground’ presence, and to be recognized as a credible, legitimate ally to other disempowered populations.¹⁰

- **The U.S. Jewish community is on the bleeding edge of a broader polarization in U.S. politics and on Israel, which impedes consensus-making around key issues.** This reality makes it very difficult for communal organizations to project their own moral voice. This results in deep fissures within communities, philanthropic circles, and even among families.

The ‘Israel factor’

9. **Historically, the secret sauce of the community relations field has been communal cohesion** – The scope and impact of Jewish engagement with broader communities over time has reflected the unity and cohesion of Jewish communities themselves – in times of common cause, Jewish community relations have proven transformative.

Even in the absence of a cohesive structure (*as proposed by the MacIver report, a 1951 study of the relationship between and among top national Jewish communal organizations – see Annex II*) shared interests, values, and commitments of community relations organizations to common agendas have largely maintained community cohesion and kept such diverse organizations moving towards the same goals. Significantly, community cohesion has been a primary pillar of Jewish community resilience.

10. **In recent years, the declining support for and identification with Israel among the U.S. left is devastating community cohesion.** Though Jewish communities expend significant resources attempting to address this factor, their efforts have not been successful. **Currently, the ‘Israel factor’ is a key obstacle in mobilizing Jewish communities internally.**
11. **The ‘Israel factor’ is also a key obstacle when externally engaging among diverse constituencies, and threatens to spill over into mainstream politics.**
12. **Two parallel dynamics amplify the increasingly polarizing effect of the ‘Israel factor’:** an underlying eroding level of support for and identification with Israel within U.S. Jewry, specifically on the left, and the Israel government’s current right-wing tilt.

Eroding support from American Jews

13. **Israel’s role in the identity of American Jews is changing** – For a growing number of Jews today, a connection with Israel is seen as less relevant, less a badge of pride, and certainly, less a duty. For many, Israel is not part of their identity, and has no role to play in their day-to-day life.

¹⁰ Additional reading: Karen Brodtkin, **How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America**, Rutgers University Press, 1998.

14. **Israel is primarily losing the next generation of U.S Jews.** The generational divide on Israel in the Jewish community is now visible. Younger Jews are clearly more ambivalent towards Israel than previous generations.¹¹
15. **This is largely the result of an increasing criticism over Israeli policies and conduct, which erodes Israel’s perception as a peace-seeking, pluralistic, and democratic state (hereinafter, PPD):**
 - **Peace-seeking** – The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to serve as the 'engine' driving criticism over Israeli policy. Israel’s lack of a credible and persistent commitment to the two state-solution has become a significant stumbling block in Israel’s relations with world Jewry.
 - **Pluralistic** – Israel’s policies regarding the status of religion in Israel greatly impacts Israel’s relations with the Jewish world. A number of official decisions and the exposure of systemic biases have deepened Israeli isolation on issues of religious pluralism. Prominent examples include the Government of Israel decision to cancel the so-called ‘Kotel Compromise’ amendment of the conversion bill and Israel’s Chief Rabbinate decision not to acknowledge conversions performed by most rabbis outside of Israel, as well as the ‘blacklist’ of ‘not recognized’ rabbis that the Chief Rabbinate secretly created.
 - **Democratic** – An advancing discourse around the erosion of Israel’s democracy has also found its way into circles of Israel’s closest Jewish friends. In addition to concerns about the degree of transparency and competition in Israeli media and high-profile corruption cases, Israel’s policies affecting the status of minorities in Israel and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers are greatly impacting Israel’s relations with the Jewish world.
16. **Recent Israeli government actions have generated a backlash in Jewish communities and a re-thinking of relationships with Israel.** Leaders of major Jewish communal organizations have issued rare public criticism of the Israeli government in mainstream media outlets.¹² Their concerns are echoed in the reaction among U.S. Jewish media to the nation bill, recently passed as a basic law by the Israeli Knesset, which was interpreted as Israel’s decision to choose “ultra-nationalism over Diaspora Jews”¹³ or as an example of the erosion of Israeli democracy.

A rightward Israeli tilt

17. **The political right appears to be growing closer to the State of Israel.** The current U.S. presidential administration has warmed the relationship with Jerusalem, backed by Evangelical Christian support. Israel has yielded several diplomatic wins, centrally, the decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem. The association of the current administration with the alt-right movement, coupled with Israel’s seemingly unequivocal

¹¹ See for example the results of a study, conducted by Steven Cohen and Jack Ukeles, which was commissioned by the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin, and Sonoma counties. Read also here: Batya Ungar-Sargon, **The Forward**, February 13, 2018, ([click here](#)).

¹² See for example an op-ed in the New York Times by President of the World Jewish Congress Ron Lauder, August 13, 2018, ([click here](#)).

¹³ See Yossi Alpher, **The Forward**, July 30, 2018, ([click here](#)).

embrace of the current administration, has contributed to a perception of Israeli alignment with these groups despite the prevalent anti-Semitism within them. Jewish communities were, for example, upset and disappointed with the Israeli government's slow response time in condemning the anti-Semitic events in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017.

18. In the background, and decades-long in-the-making, **growing identification between Israel and the political right has deepened structural fissures between Israel and the political left** as well as **amongst many liberal Jews**. Evangelical Christian support for Israel has proven difficult for liberal Jews to reconcile. Attempts to bring together Evangelical and Jewish communities have exposed fundamental tensions, prominently rooted in Evangelical religious beliefs surrounding historic and future roles of Jews as well as the stark contrast between Evangelical political conservatism and the relatively liberal Jewish community.

19. **Moreover, it appears, at least partly, that engaging Evangelical and other right-wing communities as an 'alternative' to more conditional and unstable support from liberal Jews is a conscious decision made by the Israeli government.** Although PM Netanyahu denied saying that Reform Judaism in the U.S. would disappear within two generations due to assimilation,¹⁴ there are indications that key decision-makers within Israeli government agencies believe that the demise of non-religious and Reform Judaism is inevitable. Preparation for the day Israel will no longer enjoy the support of a thriving and cohesive U.S. Jewish community may include a prioritization of strengthening ties with the influential Evangelical Christian community and other non-traditional allies.

[The assault on Israel's legitimacy](#)

20. **Since 2010, campaigns aiming to undermine Israel's right to exist (hereinafter "delegitimization") have posed a major concern for the Government of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.** In 2010, the Israel government and world Jewish organizations began to substantively come together in identifying the delegitimization assault on Israel as a top-priority issue. This cooperation tangibly manifested, for example, in adaptations to structure, re-allocation of resources, and enlargement of existing resource pools. Resulting efforts coalesced around the idea of cultivating a network, based on a shared set of goals and causes, to hit back at anti-Israel movements.
21. Indeed, **in recent years combating delegitimization has constituted as a main focus of community relations organizations;** with strengthening support for Israel and Israel's legitimacy in the U.S. and the international sphere as an integral part of their mission. In 2010, the JFNA and the JCPA partnered to establish the IAN (a forerunner was established in 2007), which serves as a central body focused on combating delegitimization and the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign against Israel (BDS) along with 147 Federations, 125 JCRCs, and dozens of affiliated organizations. The ADL, AJC, WJC, and other community relations organizations are increasingly focusing on this issue as well.

¹⁴ See the JTA report [here](#), December 1, 2017, based on an article by Ariel Kahana, Makor Rishon.

22. **Despite these efforts, anti-Israel agendas have made headway in influencing liberal and progressive circles in Western societies.** BDS represents a central focus of broader anti-Israel movements, which use such tactics to generate negative public attention toward Israel and brand it a pariah state.
23. Aided by growing criticism over several Israeli government decisions and procedures, **anti-Israel movements are able to increasingly and effectively blur the line between criticism of Israeli policies and anti-Zionist ideology** which enables these groups to mask their true colors. Movement leaders try to depict their activities as non-political and liberal, and aim to establish the broadest possible common ground among and with critics of Israeli policy.
24. **Polarization of the political discourse also enables anti-Israel movements to more effectively leverage genuine injustices that require change in order to advance ideas of the entire Israeli political model as illegitimate.** In this climate, the anti-Israel movement is better able to portray the Israeli right-wing government as 'fascist' and 'racist,' and Israel's political model as 'apartheid.'

Failure to contain evolving brand of anti-Semitism

25. **The growing gap between Israel and world Jewry is making the delegitimization threat appear more distant in the eyes of Jewish communities.** In some cases, delegitimization is perceived as a "fake news" propagated by Israel's government to avoid criticism. Increasingly, Jews are seeing it as an 'Israeli problem.'
26. As a result, **many liberals, including many Jews, are turning a blind eye to the deeply anti-Semitic roots surfacing in anti-Israel movements' campaigns.** Thus, underlying anti-Semitism emanating from anti-Israel movements is **posing a new challenge within the polarized and radicalized environment in which it is emerging.**
27. **This contemporary version of anti-Semitism can be described as prejudice and discrimination emanating from the progressive U.S. left. It combines classic anti-Semitic themes related to power and influence where Jews are held responsible for the 'original sin' of Zionism, unless they are willing to renounce or work against it.** This setting also requires Jews to acknowledge their privilege and powerful status by renouncing claims of prejudice, discrimination, or insecurity experienced by the Jewish collective. This contemporary anti-Semitism is a product of anti-Israel movements that engages in a diverse array of campaigns and initiatives seeking to delegitimize Israel. **It does not tolerate Israel or Jews that identify as Zionists or as a minority.**
28. What is new? **Attacking Israel as the Jewish state became a default option when traditional anti-Semitic slander is unpalatable to the mainstream. Now, however, anti-Israel movements are attacking the status of Jews on the left and in U.S. society.** In the U.S., anti-Zionist progressive left groups are piggy-backing on intersectional ideologies, having found a niche within a mainstream 'resistance' movement. These groups are accumulating some influence in political spheres.

29. **As they continue to expand and deepen their roots, anti-Israel movements are expanding and mainstreaming their messages and campaigns.** New forms of activism and mobilization on the left, and the emerging platforms and movements undergirding them, provide unprecedented opportunity to engage the broader liberal base and beyond.
30. **Indeed, a noteworthy cohort of Jews are experiencing anti-Semitism from the left for the first time.** Some have a history of suffering discrimination in anti-establishment and far-left movements, documented against Jews since Occupy Wall Street. For other Jewish progressives – and in particular for newly minted, post-Trump ‘resistance’ activists – this is a first, and sometimes personally devastating, taste of this brand of anti-Semitism in their political homes.

The exploitation of intersectionality

31. In recent years, intersectionality¹⁵ has re-emerged in U.S. society, evidenced in the prominence of identity politics and in the form of ad-hoc coalitions of different minority groups ranging in issues from police brutality to women’s rights.
32. **The challenge of intersectionality refers not only to the exclusion of Jewish communal organizations from the contemporary discourse of intersectionality, but also to its abuse by anti-Israel movements.** These impede community relations efforts and the mobilization of support for Jewish community agendas, including support for the State of Israel. While there is still a relatively high level of coordination between African-American and Jewish institutions today – for example, delegates of the JCPA, RAC, and ADL hold key seats at the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights – Jewish communal organizations have largely been excluded from the discourse of intersectionality and have contended with anti-Israel movements’ abuse of this ideology (see below). Indeed, **connection with Israel is a challenge for many Jewish communities and an impediment to their ‘progressive credibility.’**
33. **Anti-Israel movements exploit increasingly influential intersectionality politics as a platform to propagate their potent mix of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.** Intersectionality campaigns launch anti-Israel attacks and further cement perceptual categorizations of Israel as the oppressor and Palestinians as the oppressed. African-Americans, Latinos, and the LGBTQ community are more frequently intersecting in solidarity with anti-Israel groups, including those who are part of the BDS Movement. The #PALESTINE2FERGUSON campaign promoted by BDS groups, which coincided with Black Lives Matter is an example of a social justice coalition meant to exclude Jewish voices.¹⁶

¹⁵ Intersectionality is a social phenomenon wherein minorities and disempowered communities collaborate to combat different forms of real or perceived oppression and discrimination based on the belief that they are systemically linked. The concept of intersectionality was coined by law professor and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 when she observed that different forms of oppression and discrimination that fall within several biological, cultural and social categories – such as race, gender, religion, ability, sexual orientation, age, and class – overlap. See Crenshaw, K., “*Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics*,” **Feminist legal theory**, (pp. 57-80), Routledge, 1989 .

¹⁶ The policy platform of the Movement for Black Lives, a group affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement, states that, “The U.S. justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel

34. Obviously, **support for Israel in many of these spaces is not tolerated, and many Jews feel compelled to renounce aspects of their Jewish identity and heritage that tie them to the Jewish state in order to participate.** A prominent example of this is the exclusion of a participant who was holding a rainbow Star of David flag from the 2017 Chicago Dyke March.¹⁷ More broadly, the prominence of Women’s March leaders Tamika Mallory and Linda Sarsour who align with BDS and influential anti-Semitic figures, has raised the potential for anti-Israel sentiment to gain mainstream support.
35. **The exploitation of intersectional movements for anti-Semitic anti-Israel activism seeks to threaten a core motivating idea of the Jewish community relations field: that American Jews prosper in a pluralistic America.** The work of community relations organizations is based on strengthening American pluralism and the Jewish community’s relationships with other minority, ethnic, and religious groups through building and cultivating relationships.
36. **Intersectionality marks the latest effort within the anti-Israel ‘broad tent’ approach,¹⁸ which is meeting the pro-Israel ‘narrow tent’ approach with disastrously predictable results:** the pro-Israel camp is outnumbered and Israel’s adversaries are seizing the center-field. Anti-Israel movements’ ‘broad tent’ approach generates coalitions of diverse groups finding common cause and joining in collective action on the basis of broad and minimalistic common denominators. In contrast, the Israeli Government’s narrow-tent’ reality embraces policy supporters, sometimes almost exclusively. This confluence of opposing approaches has shrunk the pool of potential partners and coalition members willing to stand for Israel while helping to mainstream anti-Israel campaigns and messages.

Trends in the UK are a Warning sign

37. **Attacking Israel as the Jewish state becomes a default option when traditional anti-Semitic slander is unpalatable to the mainstream** - While there are leaders of anti-Israel movements and BDS supporters that regularly express explicit anti-Semitism¹⁹, most of its leaders deny being anti-Semitic even while focusing their criticism on Israel and not on towering examples of human rights violator-states, such as Russia, China, Iran, and Syria.

and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people... Israel is an apartheid state with over 50 laws on the books that sanction discrimination against the Palestinian people." See MBL website ([click here](#)).

¹⁷ In the June 2017 Chicago Dyke March, organizers asked three Jewish women to leave because they carried Jewish pride flags and due to their political stance in regards to Zionism and Israel.

¹⁸ **Broad Jewish tent** – Jewish communal organizations increasingly understand that the diversity of the Jewish community represents a great asset, especially in the struggle against delegitimization. In many cases organizations have collaborated with diverse groups and individuals willing to take a clear position against any assault on Israel’s fundamental legitimacy, regardless of their criticism of Israeli policies. See Reut’s **Broad Tent and Red Lines Approach**, July 28, 2011, ([click here](#)).

¹⁹ This is manifested by blatantly, drawing upon hard-core blood libels (*for example, then-British Parliament member and a BDS supporter Baroness Jenny Tonge who started a rumor that the Israeli army rescue mission that helped save lives in Haiti following the devastating earthquake here (2010), was in fact ‘harvesting’ organs, see the Jewish Chronicle, February 11, 2010, (click here)*), or aligning publicly with the anti-Semitic Hamas and Hizballah (*See for example the Bay-Area based Paul Larudee, a founder of the Free Gaza and Free Palestine Movements and an organizer in the International Solidarity Movement, (click here).*)

38. **The trend towards mainstreaming anti-Semitism in the UK is serving as a warning sign to the Jewish community in the U.S.** – London serves as an unofficial world capital of anti-Israel movements. It is clear that today the British and European left have an anti-Semitism problem that is comprehensive, deep, and pervading the establishment; anti-Israel movements play a significant role in weakening cultural norms that protect against these phenomena and the normalization thereof.

The most prominent example representing the potential normalization of new kinds of anti-Semitism is the rise of the Jeremy Corbyn, current Labour Party leader in the UK. Corbyn, whose explicit anti-Semitism is becoming increasingly acknowledged, recently tried to get his party to reject the parameter of the internationally accepted definition of anti-Semitism that includes fundamental delegitimization of Israel, a critical step for beginning to normalize anti-Zionist anti-Semitism.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

39. **Several implications from these contemporary challenges pose significant risks to the mission and operations of community relations organizations and initiatives**, specifically regarding the status of Israel and for Jews that identify with Zionism or fail to renounce it within the U.S. progressive left.

Risk of normalizing anti-Semitism

40. **Despite all of the above, many liberals including many Jews have become immune to the message that anti-Israel activities are rooted in anti-Semitism, accusing Israel and its allies of overplaying the anti-Semitism card.** Indeed, the Government of Israel and some Jewish organizations too frequently adopt a ‘narrow tent’ approach by including only those who support Israel according to their standards. Disagreement over and criticism of Israeli policies are often branded as anti-Semitic or delegitimizing, and can lead to harsh consequences through blacklists or even limitations on access to Israel. Often highly publicized within the Jewish world, such ‘consequences’ also further weaken Israel’s image within Jewish communities as PPD.
41. **But anti-Semitism is a real phenomenon, and the assault on Israel’s legitimacy is deeply rooted in anti-Semitism. If it is not contained, delegitimization will eventually turn directly against the Jewish community.**
42. **Anti-Israel movements increasingly hijack this polarized environment which champions intersectional ideologies in order to propagate a potent mix of anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism** that in essence requires Jews and the Jewish state to renounce their need for a protected status.
43. **A serious concern is materializing on the Jewish left, with the lines between the contemporary version of anti-Semitism and criticizing Israeli policy continuously and purposefully blurred**, while Israel’s status as a relative consensus issue among U.S. Jews and in the broader society faces serious challenges.

Losing bipartisan support

44. **The weakening of Jewish support for Israel and the growing identification of Israel with the political right accelerates a parallel process on the broader left.**
45. ***From Kibbutz to Kibbush: a profound transformation of attitudes toward Israel is taking place within the Jewish community and liberal communities*** at large in the U.S and beyond. Today, even mainstream liberals are undergoing an inversion from regarding Israel as a model for progressive egalitarian society in the 1960s (the ‘kibbutz’ model) to viewing it as a non-liberal country that engages in brutal occupation (*kibbush*).
46. **It encroaches into mainstream politics: Israel has gradually been losing its bipartisan support in the U.S., and its position in the Democratic Party today is in flux.** The eroding perception of Israel as PPD and decreasing support for Israel within the Democratic Party are increasingly evident in polling²⁰ as well as the complete absence of Democratic Party representation from the ceremony marking Israel’s 70th anniversary of statehood and in the opening of the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem in May 2018.²¹
47. **Israel feeds into broader political polarization and radicalization** – Rising figures in the Democratic Party and establishment hold non-consensus positions on Israel that Israel opposes. The recent ascendancy of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which supports the boycott campaign against Israel reflects a new important segment within left-wing politics. This segment is exemplified by the agenda of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who defeated a seasoned opponent in a Democratic primary for U.S. House of Representatives, and Julia Salazar, who won a seat in the NY state Senate.²²
48. **New Jewish left-leaning political groups gaining momentum**, such as Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and The Jewish Vote – both of which endorsed Salazar and Ocasio-Cortez – **also indicate the generational divide on Israel in the Jewish community that is spreading and threatening to impact national politics.**²³
49. **The moment of truth in determining Israel’s status as the Jewish ‘nation-state’ will likely to be the ‘day after’ Trump leaves office** –
 - **In retrospect, the current support from the Trump administration may be perceived as ‘Trump’s bubble of legitimacy,’ which exploded post-term.** Clearly, the relationship between Jerusalem and Washington during the current administration brought about several diplomatic achievements for Israel, including, most notably, the U.S. embassy move to Jerusalem.

²⁰ See for example: David Horowitz, “Israel Losing Democrats,” **The Times of Israel**, July 5, 2015, ([click here](#)); Republicans and Democrats grow even further apart in views of Israel, Palestinians: Netanyahu remains a deeply polarizing figure in the U.S., Pew Research Center: U.S. politics and policy, January 23, 2018, ([click here](#)).

²¹ For more examples, see Sheldon Kirshner’s blog in Times of Israel, May 24, 2018, [click here](#).

²² See Catie Edmondson, “A New Wave of Democrats Tests the Party’s Blanket Support for Israel,” **The New York Times**, ([click here](#))

²³ See Batya Ungar-Sargon, “What Julia Salazar’s Win Means about Our Changing Tribe,” **The Forward**, September 14, 2018, ([click here](#)).

- **However, Israel is likely to face an extremely difficult international and American diplomatic stage the day after Trump; bipartisan backing of Israel and support for a two-state solution will no longer be a given** - The next Democratic administration will likely be the least friendly to Israel in recent history due to deep undercurrents which have been eroding Israel's bipartisan status. Moreover, the working assumption of the next administration from its first day of office will be that the Jewish population between the river to the sea in Eretz Israel has become a minority, while the two-state solution may be perceived by that time as an historical anecdote.

Polarization undermines community cohesion and ability to mobilize

50. **The dynamics above contribute to Israel becoming a deeply polarizing issue among and within U.S. Jewish communities.** Israel's eroding status as a consensus and bipartisan issue, and diminishing Jewish communal cohesion are undermining the political strength and efficacy of the U.S. Jewish community.
51. In this climate, the imperative of supporting Israel and fighting against anti-Israel sentiment are losing their relative consensus status in the Jewish community. **Disruptions in Jewish communal cohesion have started to create gaps even between Israel and the pro-Israel network, and are limiting their capacities in responding to the delegitimization campaign:**
 - **The lack of sufficient communal cohesion that spans political, ideological, and generational divides is compromising the ability of the Jewish community to engage with liberal and progressive circles, which are essential to denounce anti-Israel campaigns.**²⁴
 - **The growing gap between Israel and world Jewry is making the delegitimization threat appear as an 'Israeli problem' and not the business of U.S. Jews.**²⁵ Some voices are challenging the notion that fighting anti-Israel movements should even be a core issue for the community relations field, and are calling to focus only on domestic issues.
 - **Moreover, many young Jews are actively opting away from Israel and others are supporting and even leading anti-Israeli activities.**

Erosion of Israel's status as the nation-state of the Jewish People

52. **Broad alienation between Jewish communities and Israel challenge the raison d'être of Zionism and the fundamental legitimacy of the State of Israel,** which are rooted in the common ideal of Israel serving as the nation-state of the entire Jewish People. Rifts between Israel and world Jewry highlight the tension between the classic

²⁴ For more on the pro-Israel camp's opportunity to drive a wedge between those whose ultimate goal is Israel's demise and those who principally support the legitimacy of its existence regardless of policy disagreements, see [Reut's Broad Tent Strategy](#).

²⁵ See for example MOLAD, **Alliance in Crisis**, December 2013, ([click here](#)).

conception of Zionism and the contemporary reality of the Jewish People in the 21st century. Israel was to be the national home for the entire Jewish People and, in fact, fulfilling this vision has been its 'central project' for the past century. However, multiple crises in relations between Israel and world create alienation and disrupt this historic relationship; increasingly Jews do not see Israel as their national home in any meaningful sense.

53. If world Jewry continues to disentangle its identification from Israel – for example, **if leading Jewish organizations and individuals abandon their support for Israel – it will devastate Israel’s current national security concept, ethos, and rationale, and constitute a strategic and moral threat.**²⁶

AN OPPORTUNITY TO RISE TO THE OCCASION

54. **This moment of crisis also presents a multi-leveled opportunity to address the ‘Israel factor,’ bolster community cohesion, and incapacitate anti-Israel movements.**

55. **The risk of anti-Zionist anti-Semitism mainstreaming and normalizing poses a common threat shared by Israel and U.S. Jewish communities. It therefore creates an opening to reconnect across dividing lines within the Jewish community and to re-engage with Israel in new ways.**

56. Specifically, there is a counter-reaction to every reaction: **Extreme positions on Israel are unsurprisingly yielding counter-reactions, such as progressive Jews coalescing around a rejection of left-wing anti-Zionist anti-Semitism.** This contemporary version of anti-Semitism is opening up many progressive Jewish eyes and has ushered in a dialogue about driving a wedge between anti-Israel movements and progressive platforms. Buoyed by events in which Jews have been threatened with exclusion or excluded, such as those surrounding the Chicago '[Dyke March](#),' today, an organic discourse is rising within progressive Jewish circles where there is strong potential to connect and organize on this issue.

57. **The visible gap between Israel and U.S. Jewry is serving as a wake-up call** to address an impending and accelerating threat of losing Israel's status as a consensus issue. This issue has loomed prominently on the threat radar for some time for the American pro-Israel community. Today, Israeli organizations and institutions feel a similar sense of urgency.

58. **Jewish leadership in the U.S. must undertake internal soul-searching regarding generational, denominational, and ideological divides** that characterize the community today. **In some places, the ‘Israel factor’ may have become a pretext for avoiding hard but necessary work in examining and**

²⁶ See Reut’s conceptual framework: **The Future of Nation State of the Jewish People: Consolidation or Rupture?**, March 2017, ([click here](#)).

adapting fundamental values and priorities, with all the operational implications that follow.”²⁷

Bolstering the community relations field is the order of the day

59. **The Jewish community is facing a dual challenge** that is both internal and external; **addressing it requires internal and external engagement.** Significantly, **the challenge is also dual in nature in that it impacts Jews both in the U.S. and Israel.**
60. **The community relations field is the best platform that the Jewish community has to meet prominent emerging threats,** and specifically, growing challenges to the status of Jews and Israel within the progressive left, such as through the exploitation of intersectionality by anti-Israel movements. Today, there is also an opportunity for Jewish community relations organizations, and the JCPA in particular, to do what they do best – mobilize internally to affect societal ills.
61. **Meeting contemporary challenges and promoting overall resilience requires a relationship-based approach and work with many kinds of groups in a bottom-up fashion – the ‘bread-and-butter’ of the community relations field.** Countering the influence of anti-Israel networks, for example, involves aggregating a critical mass of ‘local wins’ earned by mobilizing and coordinating ad-hoc, often local, networks, which is also the core work of community relations organizations.
62. **Contending with the duality and decentralization of the threat and opportunity environment will mean bolstering the network of Jewish community relations organizations and initiatives for addressing challenges that they are often first to sense and best-positioned to respond to.** Doing so will require strengthening the resilience and diversity of the relationships they cultivate and maintain, and working to foster greater internal coherence– both as a means of increasing strength and efficacy, and as a moral imperative.
63. **Strengthening community relations organizations that mobilize and coordinate networks of relationships may have an outsized impact on the effectiveness of the pro-Israel network, particularly in small communities and in niche arenas.**

Experimental approach

64. **New challenges and opportunities require new tools and focus on new engagement approaches** - Smarter and more strategic use of Jewish communal resources will increasingly allow for innovative thinking and methods, revise modes of

²⁷ Harvard University leadership expert Prof. Ron Heifetz’s concept of ‘work avoidance’: “...people fail to adapt because of the distress provoked by the problem and the changes it demands... Holding onto past assumptions, blaming authority, scapegoating, externalizing the enemy, denying the problem, jumping to conclusions, or finding a distracting issue may restore stability and feel less stressful than facing and taking responsibility for a complex challenge. These patterns of response to disequilibrium are called work avoidance ...” Heifetz, R., **Leadership Without Easy Answers**, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994 (see: [Atlas of Public Management](#)).

organizing for social and political activism, and call for constantly developing new knowledge.

65. **Encourage experimentation to develop responses** - Effective responses will require continuous learning and adaptation based on extensive experimentation, which often takes place outside of the traditional institutions. In the context of Jewish communities, this space is especially rich with perpetual novelty, representing limitless potential to continuously re-invent and create in order to meet emerging and evolving challenges.
66. **An experimental phase highlights the importance of a centralized body to monitor and evaluate, spread best practices, and provide support and consultation** – The challenge posed to the leading institutions (namely, the JCPA, and in the particular case of fighting anti-Israel movements, the IAN) is to enable, encourage, and learn from such experiments. The ability to learn and adapt is the crucial characteristic of success given a dynamic system and a rapidly changing environment.

Engaging on Israel in new and relevant ways

67. **Addressing the ‘Israel factor’ is increasingly pertinent in order to enhance Jewish community cohesion, which is the basis for networked cooperation across diverse interests critical to Jewish communities’ well-being and security.**
68. **To continue to play an effective leadership role in doing so, community relations organizations will have to create a new vision and agenda.** This will also require engaging through civil spheres across ideological divides, into niches, and within influence networks. Extending capabilities in these often-emergent arenas will likely predict the resilience of Israel’s global standing moving forward.
69. One way of enhancing efforts in internal cohesion and external engagement on Israel is to identify and **focus on a few defined and shared agendas on Israel**, for example by:
 - **Adopting a strategy of “constructive ambiguity” regarding a few polarizing issues** – In the current political environment in Israel and the Jewish world, given tension between progressive Judaism and the State of Israel, it is unlikely that a broad spectrum of the pro-Israel camp can reach common ground delineating ‘red-lines’ on issues such as settlement boycotts and anti-BDS legislation.
 - **Modeling and scaling civil discourse practices** – Some community relations organizations have acquired robust experience in conducting civil discourse programs to elevate levels of discussion within the Jewish community on polarizing issues.²⁸

²⁸ For example, the **JCRC in San Francisco launched The Year of Civil Discourse (YCD)** initiative that “provides Jewish community members, institutions, and leaders with the tools to have respectful, vibrant, engaging conversations about Israel and emerging controversial issues.” Encounter and Resetting the Table are two Jewish communal organization committed to fostering a healthier relationship about the Israeli – Palestine conflict: “**Encounter** is a non-partisan educational organization committed to cultivating more informed and constructive Jewish leadership on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It enable[s] deeply committed Jewish influencers to encounter firsthand the people, perspectives, and challenges at the heart of the conflict,” see <http://www.encounterprograms.org>; **Resetting the Table (RTT)** is dedicated to “building meaningful dialogue and deliberation across political divides in American life. Drawing from facilitation and mediation expertise, Resetting the Table has developed a celebrated methodology, conceptual

- **Highlighting the merits of Jewish unity (not uniformity)** in addressing the 'Israel factor' and its effect on communal cohesion will mean working closely and constructively with Israeli leadership on truly joint challenges. The history of how powerful the Jewish People can be when fighting injustice together is an important and sometimes forgotten lesson.
- In this context, **the emergence of anti-Israel attitudes and anti-Semitism in movements with increasing influence on the left is a defining moment for community relations organizations, and an opportunity to reconnect across dividing lines** within and among Jewish communities at a time of significant vulnerability for Israel's status on the American political left. The potential for fighting together re-focuses the critical community relations role.

Being an 'all-around player' in U.S. society

70. **The Jewish community relations network** (and not every organization) **can become an all-around player, engaging both conservative and progressive constituencies.** Operating in a decentralized mode becomes an asset when actors within the pro-Israel network focus on their unique added value and engage with different political segments. The cumulative engagement of the network can constitute an 'all-around player,' given basic parameters of a broad-tent approach and increased collaboration.
71. Successfully doing so **could uniquely position the Jewish community in U.S. society.** The Jewish community is already engaging across constituencies and across the political and ideological map; despite this, it is far from tapping its full potential of being a **cross-community bridge in times of political and social polarization.** While difficulty in doing so grows with the increased polarization of the current era, which is further dividing Jewish communities as well as support for Israel on the left, there is great potential because:
 - **There is a real opportunity to shape the uniquely Jewish contribution to the global progressive movement** – A global populist resurgence makes the **historic social justice role of Jewish community relations** ever-more crucial. This is the time to strengthen the engagement and mobilization of the U.S. Jewish fight against discrimination and hatred in all forms and to seize a historic moment to assert Jewish identities and contribution in this area. Such a mobilization has the potential to shape the global progressive movement as well as Jewish communal cohesion, and in the process, to marginalize BDS and its exploitation of intersectionality platforms. The importance of the Jewish voice in defense of social justice highlights why it is crucial to confront increasing instances of Jewish individuals and communities uncomfortable with expressing Zionist and Jewish affiliations in social justice movements.
 - **Connections and street cred through an empowered Jewish community relations approach,** which will require developing expertise in transferring tacit and implicit knowledge within Jewish communities, especially to serve disempowered populations and minority communities. The know-how of the Jewish

framework, and practical toolkit for communication across passionate and charged differences." See <http://www.resettingthetable.org>.

community, including its structure, modus operandi, and public affairs approach, could be valuable assets for other disempowered populations and help them overcome discrimination and prejudice.

- **Jewish communities must also engage with new and rising conservative constituencies in the U.S.** This means reaching out to the white working class²⁹ and conservative and religious voters, with whom Jewish communal organizations have traditionally less connections and influence. Such engagement can help build an effective network to address increasing anti-Semitism on the right.

Instilling a culture of cooperation and process of specialization

72. The decentralized structure of the community relations field has meant, among other characteristic dynamics, that **duplication, competition, and lack of coordination persist**. In a large part, the diagnosis of the MacIver Report (see Annex II) may still be relevant today.³⁰
73. At the same time, **this structure is uniquely able to engage within a fragmented ecosystem with changing, proliferating, and diverse constituencies**. Indeed, the level of coordination at the national and local level within the community relations field has greatly improved, mainly as a result of the work of national hub organizations, such as the JCPA, and in the case of fighting anti-Israel activity, the IAN.
74. However, **addressing contemporary structural challenges requires further development of a ‘culture of cooperation’ so to leverage and amplify a parallel ‘process of specialization.’** A ‘culture of cooperation’ for the Jewish community relations field includes efforts to promote information-sharing and create internal databases, monitor performance, and celebrate successes. Additionally, permanent local forums, backed by national Jewish communal organizations, could bring together community relations organizations to share knowledge, research best practices, issue joint statements on behalf of the local Jewish community on topical issues, and decide on conducting public campaigns or launching joint initiatives.
75. **Deliberate specialization within and among pro-Israel community relations organizations and initiatives is essential**; unique assets become foundations for distinct contributions, division of labor, and dynamic processes of learning maximize network potential. Every organization can commit to identifying its unique added value and ‘plugging it in’ for network contributions and benefits.

Building adaptive capacities

76. **The full potential of the community relations network to enhance Jewish community resilience both internally and externally, and specifically in fighting delegitimization, is still largely untapped.** Enhanced adaptive capacities

²⁹ Mazin Sidahmed, “Big five U.S. sectors whose decline has driven voters to Donald Trump,” **The Guardian**, ([click here](#)).

³⁰ Gary Rosenblatt, “Still Redundant After All These Years?,” **The Jewish Week**, January 6th, 2010, ([click here](#)).

that promote successive and repeatable achievements require strengthening cooperation, co-learning, and engagement frameworks. Developing these capacities within the Jewish community relations field will entail:

- **Undertaking strategic organizational and inter-organizational processes** aimed at generating structural reforms, upgrading operating principles, developing new knowledge regarding challenges, and becoming smarter and more strategic in using existing resources. **For example, adapting to a reality of Internet-mediated influence patterns should be reflected in organizational parameters** such as structure, incentives, and priorities: e.g. Jewish communal organizations could prioritize the development and promotion of a Chief Technology Officer function charged with finding and deploying tech solutions and force multipliers.
- **Enabling learning-and-doing cycles** to improve capacities of community relations organizations to initiate concise, powerful campaigns to engage old and new audiences. Some community relations organizations have begun to do so, **developing simple, flexible, and scalable platforms, tools, and resources** in areas such as information-gathering, analysis and research, project management, and collaboration and learning. Overall, this would require an upgrading of information-gathering and strategy-building capabilities, and finding new ways to integrate these capabilities within field activities that can be used by activists in small communities and niche arenas.
- **The technology exists to help understand emerging patterns of influence and guide strategic targeting**, such as by mapping – within segments or communities of focus – influential players, organizations, communities, and movements on the basis of social media activism and impact, and proximity to strategic targets in ideological, demographic, geographic focus areas. Tech tools may be useful in guiding intervention strategies by identifying potential inflection points, and hubs and critical nodes.

A key focus should be to develop strategic and operational superiority in the online arena in which campaigns to delegitimize Israel enjoy a relative advantage. It will be important to use all available assets, such as analytical data of social media, to aid in identifying and learning about relevant constituencies. The increasingly dominant role these platforms play in American life (e.g. in social organizing, media and discourse, and policy spheres³¹) create openings to develop new approaches and methodologies for broadening and deepening engagement.

³¹ For example, according to Pew Research Center, seven in ten Americans use different form of social media <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/social-media/>. Moreover, social media is replacing traditional media as the primary news source for many Americans.

GOVERNMENT OF ISRAEL MINDSET SHIFT IS REQUIRED

77. **The growing gap between Israel and world Jewry could have meaningful national security implications for Israel.**³² **Though the Government of Israel seems to underestimate the collateral damage of these developments, a widespread recognition in Israel is emerging that the evolving threat is strategic and significant,** and that it has the potential to knock Israel's support ecosystem in the U.S. off-balance.
78. In light of the major role that alienation from Israeli policies play in obstructing Jewish cohesion and in frustrating externally focused community-relations efforts, **we call for the Government of Israel to study the threat,** including by examining the impact of decisions perceived in Israel to be relevant only to domestic policy. Government leadership can **then reassess fundamental priorities accordingly.** A mindset shift by the Israeli government will require a process parallel to the soul-searching needed among Jewish leadership in the U.S., with operational implications, e.g. on decision-making processes, incentive systems, and resource allocation.
79. **Critically, Israeli decision-makers have yet to internalize that some criticism comes from a feeling of belonging and responsibility,** and that criticism of Israel does not necessarily signify distance from Israel or that critics are 'anti-Israel.' In the past, Jewish communities related to Israel in two ways: Indifference or strong support. Today, however, it is important to recognize a third way of relating to Israel; a desire to influence the character of the State of Israel in a variety of ways, prominently through criticism. This third way is increasingly common among the young generation of world Jewry, often emerging from feelings of personal connection and responsibility towards Israel. Instead of labeling this third method of engagement as 'anti-Israel,' Israeli institutions and society must develop ways to engage, internalize, and work with policy criticism and the potential interlocutors asserting their perspectives.

The End.

³² Reut is due to soon publish a report that makes the case for the relationship between Israel and world Jewry as an issue of national security

ANNEX I: THE PROPOSED VISION FOR THE COMMUNITY RELATIONS FIELD

1. **The following vision for the Jewish community relations field is primarily based on a strategic session Reut conducted together with the JCPA.**
 - **Community relations is viewed as indispensable to local and national Jewish communities, and community relations organizations are properly supported to serve their missions.**
 - **The organized Jewish community cultivates strong, vibrant, innovative, and credible community relations.** Community relation hubs support diverse activities adding value through functions designed to harness network advantages. The community relations field is on the cutting edge of developing and deploying tech and other innovative tools for engaging and maintaining relationships.
 - **The Jewish community plays an integral role in coalitions with other minorities to foster a pluralistic democratic society and develop its relevance to different sectors of the American society.** This is essential for maintaining a healthy society and for ensuring that Jewish interests are voiced in intersectional spaces hostile towards Israel and its supporters.
 - **Support for Israel remains a bipartisan American issue.**
 - **A ‘political firewall’ around Israel defends it against the assault on its legitimacy.** Community relations organizations lead effective counter-movements to confront and ultimately marginalize anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

ANNEX II: THE MACIVER REPORT

The MacIver report is a 1951 report written by Professor Robert MacIver, who was commissioned by the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC), the national policy-making body on Jewish community relations, to study the relationship between and among top national Jewish communal organizations, dealing with their longstanding complaints about “duplication, excessive competition, lack of coordination, and actual conflict.” The report called upon community relations organizations to put the common cause of Jewish advocacy above their particular interests and to devise a new system of allocating communal funds. The report was understood as calling to create a centralized authority that would limit the organizations’ autonomy and cause deep divides among them.

MacIver’s call for the organizations to put their common goal above particular interests and “to devise a new system of allocating communal funds caused an irrevocable divide among them” and was rejected, and even caused the ADL and the AJC to split from the NCRAC for a period of time. These organizations asserted that the proposal would create a centralized authority that they believed would violate the autonomy of member organizations.³³

There were practical reasons for the rejection of the report that go beyond rigidity, stubbornness, and protectiveness of organizations. In fact, duplication and internal competition over resources are perceived by many today, as they were in the past, as continuous impediments to the work of community relations organizations.³⁴

However, Reut believes that the fact that the MacIver Report was never implemented actually contributed to the rise of U.S. Jewry to great affluence since the 1950s, becoming the most influential and prosperous Jewish community in history. The decentralized structure of the community relations field, orchestrated by NCRAC and later on the JCPA, played an important role in elevating the status of the U.S. Jewish community.

³³ Jewish Community Relations Council Boston-MacIver Report, records; I-78; box number; folder number; American Jewish Historical Society, New York, NY, and Boston, MA ([click here](#) for the records). See also: Gary Rosenblatt, “Still Redundant After All These Years?,” **The Jewish Week**, January 6, 2010, ([click here](#)).

³⁴ See Rosenblatt, *Ibid.*, ([click here](#)).

ANNEX III: TO PUBLISH OR NOT TO PUBLISH? REUT'S POLICY ON WRITING ABOUT BDS

A central goal of anti-Israel movements is to brand Israel as a violent, occupying country that abuses human rights and violates international law – which stands in direct contrast to the values at the heart of Western, liberal societies. This branding makes it easier to delegitimize Israel and label it a pariah state. Delegitimization campaigns strive to constantly generate negative soundbites about Israel that will ultimately tarnish Israel's reputation beyond repair and raise questions regarding its moral right to exist.

The response of pro-Israel groups occasionally plays into the hands of delegitimizers when it adds to the media narrative surrounding delegitimization; sometimes boosting, rather than marginalizing anti-Israel campaigns. As a result, writing about these campaigns creates a dilemma. Frequently, it is the only way to generate strategic change within the pro-Israel network. However, we cannot ignore the fact that it also gives anti-Israel movements exposure and discloses elements of pro-Israel network proposed strategy and tactics.

Reut's approach, based on experience, is that writing selectively about this issue is the right choice for maximizing positive impact on the ecosystem opposing delegitimization and the BDS Movement. Reut primarily discusses the relevance of the mindset of the pro-Israel network and theoretical principles of response; rather than outlining a detailed plan of action, we seek to help pro-Israel groups adapt to an evolving challenge.

It is important to emphasize that in addition to responding to instances of delegitimization, the pro-Israel network is also proactively creating new frameworks of discussion about Israel that do not shy away from candid and open dialogue – a critical component of an effective response to delegitimization.





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The Institute by Reut



FIREWALL
ISRAEL

The Reut Group: From Vision to Reality

7 Hapelech St. Tel Aviv, 6816727, Israel

Reutgroup.org

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