



Foreword

The Annual Assessment continues to be the flagship of the JPPI. Nowhere else is an annual stocktaking of the Jewish world done. Apart from being a unique offering and picture of the state of Israel and the Diaspora, the annual assessment presents both a baseline for comparison and a series of variables to judge the direction of change. Each year the assessment identifies emerging problems and opportunities—and makes recommendations for responding to both.

Never has this task been more important. The geopolitical picture is mixed but daunting. The fact that the leading Arab states and Israel have a common view of the threats they both face is an important development. Translating shared threat perceptions into overt cooperation will prove very difficult until the conflict with the Palestinians can be fundamentally defused or resolved—neither of which seems likely for the foreseeable future. The emergence of radical Islamists—Sunni and Shia—who may be fighting each other in Iraq and Syria, absorbs Israel's most virulent enemies in other conflicts. But the reality that Israel now has Hezbollah, Iran's Revolutionary Guard and

global jihadists along its northern border also has to be a cause for concern. While both Hezbollah and Hamas may be deterred in the near-term, their growing rocket capabilities and practice of embedding their rocket launchers and fighters in civilian areas means the next conflict will once again face Israel with terrible dilemmas as it defends its citizens. Both Hezbollah and Hamas don't simply seek to use civilian populations as shields; they want to produce civilian casualties on their own side as a way of stigmatizing Israel on the world stage and denying Israel the right of self-defense.

Here we see how what Hezbollah and Hamas seek fits neatly with those who are trying to de-legitimize Israel. De-legitimization needs to be seen for what it is: no less an existential threat to the Jewish state than the Iranian nuclear program. Israel needs to mobilize all its assets to deal with the strategic danger posed by the de-legitimization movement. Making sure that there is a coherent response, bureaucratically and politically, is necessary but is not a substitute for policies that permit Israel to go on the offensive and take it off the defensive.

This year's Annual Assessment, even by JPPI's high standards, is exceptionally diverse, fascinating and important. It includes a review of world Jewish demographic trends over the last 70 years since the end of WWII. It notes that the worldwide Jewish population has been steadily expanding and now numbers 14.3 million people. If we include those who identify as partially Jewish and immigrants to the State of Israel who are not halachically Jewish but have qualified under the Law of Return (and do not profess any other religion) we are approaching the number of Jews in the world on the eve of WWII. It also notes that for the first time in memory the majority of adult children of intermarried couples between the ages of 18-30 identify as Jewish. The Assessment also notes that despite this overall growth, the Jewish "middle" (non-Orthodox Jews who have strong Jewish identities and strong commitment to the Jewish people) is shrinking. This is due not only to an increase in intermarriage, but also to a growing number of late marriages and generally small families (the 2013 Pew study finds an average of 1.9 children, while 2.1 is necessary to just stay stable).

The Annual Assessment also takes an important and creative look at the growing positive relationship between Israel and two countries that are home to 40 percent of humankind, China and India. Neither has any history of anti-Semitism. China's trade and investment relationship with Israel is growing rapidly. One of the largest gifts ever made to an Israeli university was recently made by a Chinese citizen. China sees Israel as a high tech Mecca; a crossroads as it seeks to revive

its ancient "Silk Road." But China also perceives Israel as an island of stability in the Middle East at a time when it is facing separatist pressures in its western region from Muslims, some radical. The Assessment notes the very positive turn in India's relationship with Israel since the election in May 2014 of Narendra Modi as prime minister. While India has long had a strong military relationship with Israel, India kept Israel at arm's length, afraid that public demonstrations of support would anger its large Muslim population. This is changing in a major way.

We are breaking new ground in the present Annual Assessment to recommend creative use of video games to tell Israel's story in positive ways. There has been an explosion worldwide of video game users: 59 percent of Americans play video games, and the average age of video gamers is 31 years old. The enemies of Israel and the Jewish people are making use of this medium. It is time the State of Israel and the Diaspora make positive use of these games, by investing in a new generation of games that are positive in explaining Israel's history and that of the Jewish people.

The Annual Assessment this year takes an in-depth look at the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Israel activity on American college campuses. While groups like Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) have a presence on over 300 American campuses, there are frequent BDS resolutions, and Jewish students report feeling harassed and intimidated, the Assessment finds that severe anti-

Israel activity is limited to around 20 campuses, mainly in California and in some elite East Coast schools. The Assessment goes beyond analysis and offers positive recommendations for how to approach students, faculty, administration and donors, and the U.S. Jewish community to combat this very real threat. JPPI also calls upon the new Israeli government to appoint a lead person to combat BDS and de-legitimization to coordinate responses.

In the past year, JPPI played the same unique role it was asked to play in 2013 by the Israeli government, when it conducted a unique 40-community, worldwide outreach to Diaspora communities in North America, Latin America, Europe, Australia and South Africa on views of how Israel could be both a democracy and a Jewish state. In 2014, encouraged by the Israeli Prime Minister to continue this dialogue, building on that experience, and at the request of the Israel Foreign Ministry, we conducted a multi-community Diaspora outreach on how Israel could maintain Jewish values when it is forced into military conflicts not of its choosing, as in Gaza. We also are near completion of a massive study on the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) threat to Israel, at the request of the Israel Ministry of Strategic Affairs.

To be sure, Israel needs the United States to help blunt the de-legitimization effort internationally. At a time of dissonance over the possibility of a deal on the Iranian nuclear program, special attention must be made to manage the relationship with

America, to avoid it taking on a partisan character, and to minimize polarization and division within the American Jewish community.

Precisely because JPPI seeks to generate policy-relevant recommendations, these particular themes and objectives were very much the focus of the brainstorming conference at Glen Cove, New York, in May 2015. We had a wide range of Jewish leaders and professionals from the organized Jewish community, the heads of major federations, former senior government officials from the U.S. and Canadian governments, academic experts from Israel and across the United States, a key address by former Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger on the impact of the new world order (or disorder) on the Jewish people and Israel, and a fascinating discussion of Israel's central role in the global high-tech field by Eric Schmidt, Executive Chairman of Google.

The theme of the conference was "Pluralism and Jewish Solidarity in Polarizing Times." In several plenary sessions and six working groups we looked at how Israel could maintain Jewish values in the face of dilemmas that compel it to use force in a complex environment, like Gaza; how we can best maintain the connections and solidarity between Israel and Diaspora Jews, at a time when ideological and value-based disputes are becoming more prominent; the expected implications of the foreign policy agenda unfolding in Washington and the increasing domestic U.S. political polarization, to the strength of the Washington-Jerusalem-American Jewish community triangle.

Prof. Leonard Saxe of Brandeis University also summarized a new 2015 survey on the American Jewish population. On the positive side, he said the American Jewish population has grown since 1990, from 5.5 million to 6.9 million, a 25 percent overall increase, with 78 percent identifying as "Jews by religion." The vast majority are proud of their Judaism and identify with it in various ways. However, according to Prof. Saxe, this increase is only 17 percent for Jews "by religion" and 70 percent for Jews "not by religion," (who have lower Jewish connections and commitments). Half the children now 18 to 34 years old, so-called Millennials, are children of intermarriage. Over 50 percent of Jewish marriages in the U.S. since 2006 have been intermarriages, most without conversion by the non-Jewish spouse. Thus, the overall picture is mixed, and its long-term implications for Israel and the Jewish people should be carefully studied.

As always, there is no other document that better captures the breadth of challenges and provides positive solutions than JPPI's Annual Assessment. It is required reading for Israelis, Diaspora Jews, and all others interested in Israel and the Jewish people.

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