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## **ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS: MUTUAL IMAGES, EXPECTATION, FRUSTRATIONS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The essay outlines the main developments and challenges in the developing relations between the State of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora abroad. With a Jewish population of 650,000 with the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Jewish nation, in the wake of the Holocaust, perceived the new state as a symbol of rebirth and continuity, which must have total support of the Diaspora Jewry for the survival of the Jewish state. Six and a half decades later, half of the Jewish population of the World lives in Israel, which with all its problems, is an advanced high-tech society. Today, Israel became a divisive issue in the Diaspora relating to Israeli policies and politics, and the complex definitions of “who is a Jew”. Israel today supports the Diaspora Jews to preserve and foster their Jewish identity in face of rising assimilation, it needs less the economic support of the well to do communities, but it needs the Diaspora as a pro-Israeli lobby. On the one hand it is a mutual need – if not dependence, on the other hand there is a possibility of the two sides – Israel and world Jewry drifting apart into two entities, with different agendas, priorities, differing perceptions on the meaning of being “Jewish”.*

### **KEYWORDS**

- Israel
- Diaspora
- assimilation
- Jewish identity
- Israeli politics

“No less than the Diaspora serves as an important strategic asset of Israel, Israel has to behave as a main strategic asset of the Diaspora.”

(Prof. Yehezkel Dror, Haaretz, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011)

For almost two thousand years, the Diaspora, or exile – “galut” existence was the abnormal form of existence for the Jews which through the centuries became a normal fate, as there was no other option. In a unique case among nations, Jews led a double life – yearning in their prayers to the hills of Jerusalem, pledging never to forget it, yet living in exile, scattered in the four corners of the world. In 1948,

with the establishment of the State of Israel, Jewish history changed its course, as continuing living in the Diaspora became a matter of choice, at least in the free countries, just as ending the existence in exile became of matter of choice, by immigrating to Israel, again subject to the local possibilities to do so. Aside from the small stream of those reaching Palestine throughout the centuries – under various rules, it was the Zionist movement since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century which raised the banner of ending the Diaspora, and securing the formation of an independent Jewish state. Zionism not only sought to forge a “new Jew” living in its ancient homeland, but also entailed the negation of the Diaspora in order to transform the Jews into a “normal” people. Thus, from a purely Zionist perception, the construction of a Jewish entity meant the mental and physical deconstruction of the fate of living in exile. The equation seemed to be logical: the fewer the Diaspora, the more normal a Jewish nation living in its own territory.

This brief overview intends to focus on the changing patterns of relationship between the State of Israel and the Diaspora, and to present some of the basic issues and dilemmas that preoccupy a complex and evolving relationship. Since 1948 there is an on-going dialogue between the Jews of the Diaspora and the State of Israel which is a multifaceted dialogue and discourse, not only between the two sides, as there are not really two sides – Israel looking at the Diaspora and vice versa, but also a reality shaped by developments among world Jewry and within the Jewish community in Israel. It is a dynamic field reflecting generational, demographic, social, political changes among the factors involved. During more than six decades mutual perceptions, expectations, even relations of power have emerged, as often reflected by such popular and simplistic expressions as “who needs more whom: Israel the Diaspora or vice versa?”

In 1948, the young State of Israel had a Jewish population of some 650,000, while there were some 11,000,000 Jews remained in a post-Holocaust Jewish world. In 2012, there were almost 6,000,000 Jews living in Israel, out of an estimated number of 13.500,000 in the world – and it is essential to keep in mind that a part of the complex issues involved in this relationship is “who is a Jew?”, who decides, where and how, and who considers having a Jewish identity in the Diaspora, and would the same person be considered a Jew by the laws of the Jewish State. Often the question is also raised in almost theological arguments – is Israel, the Jewish State, also the world center of Judaism?

In 1948, a traumatized Jewish nation cherished the young State of Israel, as a newborn baby, yet facing grave dangers, its survival not yet assured. For the Diaspora, it was a rebirth after death. Israel had to be supported, unconditionally as it was the lifeline and bloodline of an almost mortally wounded nation. “In 1948, Israel represented a poor relative in mortal danger, which you must help. In the case of Western Jewry, also because of the feeling of guilt of not having been able to do more during the Holocaust”.<sup>1</sup>

1 J Reynolds, ‘Israel’s Foreign and Defence Policy and Diaspora Identity’ in D Ben-Moshe, & Z Segev (eds), *Israel, the Diaspora and Jewish Identity*, Sussex, Brighton, 2007, p. 145.

Today, Israel's Jewish population approaches half of the total number of Jews in the world, a very important aspect, not only for its numerical significance but also for its psychological impact – soon, depending on various demographic projections, the majority of World Jewry will live in Israel, and the balance will tilt from the Diaspora to the Jewish State.<sup>2</sup>

From the perception of the “poor relative in mortal danger” or from an interesting observation by Thomas Friedman, stating that in his childhood memoirs that “Israel was a nation of ‘nebechs’ (Yiddish slang for clumsy, ineffectual), the place where we sent our old clothes.”<sup>3</sup> Today's Israel, with all its complex problems confronting it from inside and outside, is a strong economic, military, high-tech power, with an advanced society. In contrast to the support needed in 1948 and later, even to the old clothes of the Friedman family, today it is Israel who helps the Diaspora Jews, especially the younger generations, to foster and strengthen their Jewish identity and ties with Israel, in face of the rising trends of assimilation, and lack of Jewish identity. And then, the issues are focusing on the question of “what type of an example is given by Israel to the Diaspora Jews? What role model does Israel present, and for which segments and parts of the Diaspora?”

This dramatic change of roles and patterns of relationships has another very significant aspect. In the early years of the existence of Israel, the support of Israel, by the Diaspora Jews living in the West was unconditional, just as was of those behind the Iron Curtain who could not express their feelings openly. This support was not so much a matter of debate on what political stance of Israel or which political line to support, although internal political debates did take place within the Jewish communities, but rather Israel played the role of a unifying factor, an expression of the continuity and revival of the Jewish nation. To be automatically pro-Israeli was perhaps the most outspoken evidence of being a Jew and of Jewish identity. In the late forties, fifties till after the Six Day War of 1967, Israel was in the eyes of the Diaspora a living myth. Supporting Israel in general, contributing to various Israeli projects, localities, schools, hospitals, became a part of Jewish way life in the more affluent Western communities, especially in the largest Jewish community, the USA. In numerous ways, the support of the Diaspora shaped the new state, as it is evidenced by the signs on public buildings, enterprises, hospitals, schools and in public spaces.

However, with the changes within Israel, especially after the Six-Days War, the growing Israeli political polarization between the left and the right towards the Arab-Israeli conflict, between the secular and the various forms of religious viewpoints, especially focusing on the issue of conversion and “who is a Jew?” - in the eyes of the Diaspora, Israel has been transformed from a unifying factor to a divisive one, often gravely splitting Jewish attitudes, organizations and intensifying very vocal internal debates.

2 See S Della Pergola, ‘Jews in Europe: Demographic Trends, Contexts and Outlooks’ in J. H. Schoeps, & O. Glockner (eds), *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2011, pp. 34.

3 Quoted in Reynolds, op. cit., p. 145.

In the words of Jeremy Ben-Ami, the President of J Street, the left-wing US Jewish lobby, confronting the pro-Israel government mainstream lobby, “My greatest fear is that discussion around Israel will become so difficult that American Jews will find it easier to walk away from Israel and the Jewish community.”<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the partnership that was forged in 1948 and very evident in the first two decades after developing into a more distant and problematic relationship, often at the focus of internal debates within the Israeli political and academic establishments, and within the various Jewish organizations and forums in the Diaspora. There is a sense of drifting apart, unless urgent measures are taken for a rapprochement between Israel and the Diaspora Jewry. But the very nature and extent of this trend of drifting apart and the measures to be taken to bring closer the Diaspora to the Israelis, and Israel to the Diaspora, are themselves being perceived and evaluated in different forms by the factors involved. In the words of Gabriel Sheffer, “Loyalty to the host land or homeland (in the Jewish case, Israel, is not automatic and not universally accepted by the entire Diaspora.”<sup>25</sup> This process of drifting apart may even raise the possibility of the emergence of two Jewish nations – one living in the Diaspora and the other in Israel, a topic also to be mentioned later in this essay.

Ben-Gurion’s expressions that the Zionists, and in fact the “good Jews” are only those who will come to Israel, and thus make “aliyah” – the Hebrew word for emigrating to Israel which means “going up” – in contrast to leaving Israel, “yeridah”- which means “going down”- had to be refined or redefined. While in general, many Israelis will express some reservation over leaving the country to live abroad, most of them realize that one can be a good Jew, a good Zionist in the sense of supporting Israel, while living abroad, in the Diaspora. Nevertheless, Israel recognized and realized that the “negation of the exile” a favorite expression of the pre-1948 Zionist discourse cannot be realized, and maybe even it should not be realized. Not only for the practical reason that Israel cannot absorb further millions – with all the difficulties and achievements of the massive one million people wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union, but because Israel needs the Diaspora Jews as a factor in supporting Israel, not necessarily through material support, but as a Jewish lobby acting within the democratic societies in which they live. The participation of the Israeli political elite in major events of the leading Jewish umbrella organizations in the major Western countries such as the USA, Canada, Great Britain, and France may serve as a proof for the importance Israel attaches to the Jewish organizations in their respective countries. Israelis and Diaspora Jews know that there are two parallel Jewish worlds, interacting but also growingly clashing at times, diverging one from the other, and even drifting apart.

4 N Sheizaf, ‘Our brothers, ourselves’, *Haaretz*, 1 April, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/our-brothers-ourselves-1.353502>, accessed 10.01.2013.

5 G Sheffer, ‘The European Jewish Diaspora: The Third Pillar of World Jewry?’ in J. H. Schoeps, & O. Glockner (eds), *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2011, p.41; for extensive analysis of Diaspora politics see the studies of Y Shain as Y Shain & B Bristman, ‘Diaspora, kinship and loyalty: the renewal of Jewish national security’, in *International Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 1, 2002, pp. 69-95.

The two parallel Jewish worlds reflect basic realities to which both sides are aware, but it seems that there are no easy solutions to the problems that are also debated within each of the component parts – in the Diaspora and Israel.

Is “the State of Israel the center of world Jewry”? , asked Yosef Gorny, and eventually answered , “I doubt it, because of the universal nature of global society that tends to be more and more universal and multi-cultural than self-sufficient Diasporas.”<sup>6</sup>

Both sides have different agendas, life-styles and different ways to express their Jewish identity. By using some gross generalizations, the following example can be useful. If four Jewish youngsters from Buenos Aires, Bucharest, Jerusalem and Beer-Sheba are brought together for a discussion, very soon two groups would emerge, the Diaspora “team” and the Israelis. The two, living abroad - from the Israeli point of view, will find common themes on how they perceive their Jewish identity, whether they attend a synagogue or not, and what forms of religious life they lead, if at all, and if they participate in local community centers or club activities. They would discuss the chances of intermarriage and eventual assimilation, which is a major issue nowadays. They would mention anti-Semitic attitudes and incidents, and its impact on their identity, as being identified as Jews by such elements. Perhaps last and even least, they may raise the issue of their attitude towards Israel, mentioning past or planned visits there.

In contrast, the items shared by the two young Israelis are completely different. Keeping Jewish identity is not an issue, as probably according to their view living in Israel is already an expression of identity, even if one of them is completely secular, intermarriage – very little chances, assimilation – nil. But a favorite subject would be, completely strange to the two colleagues from the Diaspora, their military service and comparing their yearly tours of duty as reservists, a heavy burden on those young civilians after years of service (three for men, two for women). They would also probably differ on their views on the Palestinian issue, and the future of the territories. The issue of relating to Jewish life in the Diaspora would not even come up between the two. Thus we may have the two groups with little common ground, except their shared Jewish identity, whose nature could be different between the two groups. In a younger group, the impact of the Holocaust on their identity may come up, perhaps, in the presented case, by the member of the group from Bucharest. Such a situation may illustrate the possibility of the emergence of two Jewish nations – related yet differently in the life-styles and agendas towards Jews, Judaism and Israel.

Various projects as “Taglit-Birthright” brought almost three hundred thousand Diaspora Jews between the ages of 18 and 26 to visit Israel, in order to bring the two sides closer, and for the visitors to experience Israel, even for a short period,

<sup>6</sup> Y Gorny, ‘Does European Jewry Need a New Ethnic Spiritual Umbrella? Reflections’ in J. H. Schoeps, & O. Glockner (eds), *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2011, p. 155; Gorny’s programmatic and reflective thoughts were given on the concept of the search for old-new collective identities based on the concept of “Klal Yisrael”.

out of hope for further visits and eventual “*aliyah*”. Other forms of activities, such as bringing Israelis to Jewish communities abroad, are also aimed to further the dialogue between them. While such projects indicate awareness to the growing gap between Israelis and Diaspora Jewry, their long range impact is difficult to be assessed. The fact is that among the younger generation of Jews in the Diaspora, especially in the West, there is less interest on Israel, and Israeli oriented activities play a less essential part in their identity, than perhaps among the same generation in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Israelis, in general do not seem to perceive Diaspora Jewry as a “Jewish hinterland”, and one popular Israeli satirical TV show, “Wonderful Country” portrayed in several short episodes, in a very sarcastic way, the young Jewish visitors to Israel through the “Taglit-Birthright” program. They came across as empty headed, ignorant of Israeli realities, yet “borderline fanatic Israeli lovers” and using the trip to Israel to find relationships, fun and booze. In one segment of the first clip out of several shows of the program, the tour guide announces a trip to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum:

“The Yad Vashem Museum is based on the Holocaust (plays somber music). We will give you time to be sad, and at the same time you should all send text messages to your parents, urging them to continue donating money to the State of Israel...”

Participants: (Collective bleak nod)

Tour guide: “... so there won’t be a second Holocaust, since the sequel is always worse than the original.”<sup>7</sup>

As the *Haaretz* wrote, the “tour guide takes the group on a quick emotional rollercoaster ride.” Problematic elements in Israeli-Diaspora relationship are portrayed in a very mocking way – mutual stereotypes, fun seeking, mostly ignorant Diaspora Jews, Israel playing on their guilt feelings.

Aside from such satirical representations, perhaps not surprisingly recent findings show that the “diversity of Jewish life in the Diaspora is often a revelation to Israelis introduced to it for the first time. Thus, for Israelis meeting with Diaspora Jews has the benefit “of strengthening Israelis’ commitment to Jewish peoplehood.”<sup>8</sup> These findings discussed at an academic conference at Brandeis University also presented that “a lower percentage of its graduates tend to intermarry than do their counterparts who do not go on Taglit trips.” In other words, such visits if they do not lead to the visiting youth to move to Israel, at least they lower the rate of assimilation in the Diaspora. While one may argue with the relevant data and their interpretation, and even may treat it in ironical ways, there is no doubt on the very impact of such Diaspora-Israeli encounters.

7 E Konrad, ‘Israeli comedy show parodies the Birthright experience’, *Haaretz*, 24 January 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/israeli-comedy-show-parodies-the-birthright-experience-1.409028>, accessed 10.01.2013.

8 D Kraft, ‘Young Israelis get Jewish identity boost from Birthright too’, *Haaretz*, 28 May 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/jewish-world/jewish-world-news/young-israelis-get-jewish-identity-boost-from-birthright-too-premium-1.432745>, accessed 10.01.2013.



Israel's role in monopolizing the decision on "who is a Jew", the problem of Orthodox conversion, and the various attitudes by Diaspora Jewry towards Israeli politics and policies, and Israeli reactions to such debates, represent perhaps the most essential issues confronting Diaspora-Israeli relations. According to some bleak assessments, that "Israel is tearing apart the Jewish people" Carlo Strenger wrote that,

"there has never been a government so oblivious of its relation to World Jewry. Israeli laws that increase the Orthodox establishment's stranglehold on religious affairs and personal life are completely disregarding that 85 per cent of world Jewry are not Orthodox – and simply dismissing their Jewish identities and institutions. As a result, this majority of world Jewry feels Israel could not care less about its values and identity."<sup>9</sup> (9)

Claims by Israel's Orthodox establishment that by monopolizing conversion to Judaism and the laws of marriage they are preventing a rift in the Jewish people, are being rejected as exactly the opposite. And he went on, that "it is the unholy coalition between nationalism and Orthodoxy that is tearing the Jewish people apart."

Israel is not only a "Jewish and democratic state" – whose character and definition is a major bone of contention within the Israeli public and political discourse, a debate that gradually moved also to the Diaspora, but Israel's very *raison d'être* is seen as

"the core state of the Jewish people. Its principal mission is to assure the Jewish people's long term thriving... For this reason, the Jewish leaders of Israel should regard themselves to a significant extent as leaders of the Jewish people as a whole, and as such, to acquire the mandatory understanding of the dynamics of Jewish communities worldwide, which at present time most of them lack."<sup>10</sup>

If indeed, as according to this view, Israel's principal mission is to assure the long term thriving of the Jewish nation, then one of the major paradoxes of the Jewish people since 1948 becomes evident – Israel is not necessarily the symbol of the negation of the Diaspora, but rather by its very existence and activities it is in charge of assuring the "long term thriving" of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, and thus the survival of the Diaspora becomes an Israeli project.

While the Jewish leaders of Israel may regard themselves as "leaders of the Jewish people as a whole" – and for some of them this could be a fruitful political playground, it's another matter whether Diaspora Jews and their leaders, tend to perceive or would be willing to perceive Israeli leaders as such.

<sup>9</sup> C Strenger, 'Israel is tearing apart the Jewish people', *Haaretz*, 24 June 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/strenger-than-fiction/israel-is-tearing-apart-the-jewish-people-1.369341>, accessed 10.01.2013.

<sup>10</sup> Y Dror, 'Toward a state of all Jews', *Haaretz*, 4 March 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/opinion/toward-a-state-of-all-jews-1.347070>, accessed 10.01.2013.

At the core of the raging arguments, that have intensified in the past years within the Diaspora and within Israel, is the basic question of Diaspora attitudes – if one can speak at all of “Diaspora attitudes” – towards the changing Israeli social and political landscapes. Does the “Diaspora” have to lend uncritical support towards Israel, as it did in general terms in the early years after 1948? How much Diaspora leaders have the right, and perhaps the duty to question Israeli policies in 2012? Can one distinguish cracks in the Jewish establishments and within the communities as “who really can express towards Israel the views of the community members”? Do the Jewish establishments and their respective lobby frameworks, especially in the large communities in the West, not only in the US, but also Canada, Australia, Great Britain, France, represent the “grassroots” Diaspora populations?<sup>11</sup>

A brief overview of the debates of the past few years may illustrate the growing schism and what Jeremy Ben-Ami warned of that in face of the divisive issues, “American Jews will find it easier to walk away from Israel and the Jewish community”. On the background of intensified internal debates in the various large communities, similar warning signs have appeared not only in the USA.

In June 2010, Peter Beinart, a former editor of the *New Republic*, published in the *New York Review of Books* an essay whose main thesis was that the Jewish establishment in the USA alienates the Jewish communities; it causes damages and divisions by its automatic support of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

The article generated heated debates, and a new round of polemics have opened up in the spring of 2012, when Beinart published his “The Crisis of Zionism”, a very critical appraisal of Israeli policies and their unconditional support by the Jewish establishment which in the words of one reviewer of the book, “have hijacked American liberalism.”<sup>13</sup>

Beinart accused of the US Jewish establishment of becoming a tool in the hands of the illiberal Israeli government, blindly following Netanyahu’s policies, mainly in the activities of the major pro-Israeli lobby, AIPAC (The America Israel Public Affairs Committee). This automatic following, polarized debates within the communities, and the result was as the title of his essay “The failure of the American Jewish establishment”, which through its policies caused that many, especially of the younger generation have drifted apart from their communities and pro-Israeli (and one may ask what does it mean “pro-Israeli”) attitudes. Beinart portrayed a very bleak picture of the young, secular, liberals not only not being attracted to pro-Israeli activities but in fact running away from such activities, when they see the policies of the establishment, blindly following Israeli policies.

11 See for example D Taras and M Weinfeld, ‘Continuity and Criticism: North American Jews and Israel’, *International Journal*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1990.

12 P Beinart, ‘The Failure of American Jewish Establishment’, *New York Review of Books*, 10 June 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/jun/10/failure-american-jewish-establishment/?pagination=false>, accessed 10.01.2013.

13 P Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism*, Times Books, Henry Holt, New York, 2012. Reviewed by J. Rosen, ‘A Missionary Impulse’, *The New York Times*, 13 April 2012.



The polarization of Israeli political life and the internal arguments on Israeli policies have more than ever before been reflected in Diaspora attitudes towards Israel, taking up the “right” and “left” divide. The moderate J Street lobby, incorrectly branded by its critics as “far-left”, and by Morris J Amitay, a former executive director of AIPAC, as “these are people who cannot be considered as friendly to Israel”, - has raised its voice in the US, gaining more support, being critical of Israeli policies, and promoting the peace process with the Palestinians and a two state solution”.<sup>14</sup>

Amitay’s remarks clearly reflect not only the mutual intolerance between the various sides, but also the monopolization of the notion of “love of Israel”. After all, who can decide and define who are the people who can be considered as “friendly to Israel”. Certainly, in the eyes of a respected former director of AIPAC, the people from J Street are not to be considered in this category, while activists of J Street probably see themselves as the best friends of Israel, by criticizing its present right-wing, nationalist policies.

Similar divisions in attitudes towards Israeli policies are clearly evident in Europe, with the establishment of JCall, the “European J Street”, in April 2010. Under the banner of “European Jewish call for reason”, and presented as a “new voice for peace”, the organizers said that “whatever our personal paths, our connection to the State of Israel is part of our identity. We are concerned about the future of the State of Israel, to which we are unfailingly committed.”<sup>15</sup>

The growing voices of European Jewry whether they represent the “establishment” if one can speak in North American terms in a European context, or “dissenting” voices from a “leftist” perception vis-à-vis the present Israeli government, they certainly indicate several interesting processes. One is the emergence of European Jewry as the third pillar of the Jewish world, after Israel and the US, second is the impact of the unification of Europe on the eventual emergence of a “European Jewry” as a unified group, reflecting the integration of the continent.<sup>16</sup> These processes are also shaped by several important factors, such as the demographic trends and patterns of Jewish revival especially in the post-communist space, outside the scope of this study.

In Europe, umbrella organizations as the European Jewish Congress are not only reflecting joint all-European Jewish activities, and numerous projects of cooperation but also a more unified stand in supporting Israel, and fighting against anti-Semitism. While the EJC is engaged, among others in combating anti-Semitism, it also has on its agenda the “advocacy of Israel”, and it often reacts to the link between anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism in Europe.

14 See E Lichtblau, ‘Israel lobby group, not hawkish, still rises’, *International Herald Tribune*, 1 June 2012.

15 A Pommeray, ‘JCall, the ‘European J Street,’ to be launched in Brussels’, *The Jerusalem Post*, 30 April 2010.

16 G Sheffer, ‘The European Jewish Diaspora: The Third Pillar of World Jewry?’ in J. H. Schoeps, & O. Glockner (eds), *A Road to Nowhere? Jewish Experiences in Unifying Europe*, Brill, Leiden, Boston, 2011, p.35.

The complexities of Israeli-Diaspora relations are also evident from a variety of issues that preoccupy these relations, aside from the political aspects.

Israel is very much engaged in the activities commemorating the memory of the Holocaust and promoting education and research. It seems that there are no significant differences on this topic between Diaspora communities and Israel. The Holocaust is a strong connecting element between the sides, although with the fading away of the generation of survivors, in many cases when survivor families lived in Israel and abroad, this linkage among the new generations may be loosened. Sharing personal and collective memory in the past generation, the two sides will evoke less its memory as a binding element, as it was evident in the first decades after the Holocaust.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, both sides may appraise differently the usages of Holocaust memory for current political usages. Liberal Jews in the Diaspora, while recognizing sharing with the rest of the Jewish world the memory of the Holocaust, oppose the usages of the Holocaust for political reasons, as used by Netanyahu in warning of the dangers posed by a nuclear Iran.

The question of Israel's responsibility for the security of the Diaspora Jews is also an element that often is discussed, often in a discreet manner. As terrorism and anti-Semitic attacks target local Jews, identifying them as Israeli targets, the common fate between Israel and Diaspora can be brought up. Yet, the question may arise, whether Diaspora Jews – or whatever portion of them, are willing to serve as targets, as hostages to the Middle East conflict. Does an attack on a Jewish target, such as a community center, or synagogue, in whatever part of the world, can be seen as an anti-Semitic and/or anti-Israeli action? The terrorist who committed the massacre in Toulouse in March 2012 when four people, including children were killed at the Jewish school, claimed that it was a revenge for the killing of Palestinian children. Do such tragic events which show the identification between Jews and Israel by their enemies, reinforce the feeling of their common fate?

More than six and a half decades after the end of the Holocaust and in the sixty-fifth year of Israel's independence, forms of Jewish identity in the relations between Israel and the Diaspora are undergoing rapid changes which may reshape and alter these relations. The issues, some of them briefly presented in this paper are posing new challenges to the new generations, as each side is trying, through intensifying debates to formulate its own identity and its attitude towards the "other". But the "other", is in fact part of the collective "us".

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17 G Sheffer, 'Israel in Diaspora Jewish Identity', *apud* Jonathan Reynolds, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

## Note

The article is based on a lecture delivered in Budapest in May 2011 at the Balassi Institute at the joint Hungarian-Israeli Conference on “Hungarian and Jewish/Israeli ethnical and cultural experiences in recent centuries”. I am grateful for the opportunity to present this topic before the Center for Israeli Studies at NUPSA in Bucharest.

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