The Future of the Jews:
How global forces are impacting the Jewish people, Israel, and its relationship with the United States

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AMBASSADOR STUART E. EIZENSTAT was Chief Domestic Policy Adviser to President Jimmy Carter and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Staff (1977 – 1981). During the Clinton Administration (1993 – 2001), he was US Ambassador to the European Union; Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade; Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business & Agricultural Affairs; and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury. During this period he also served as Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State on Holocaust Issues. He is the author of Imperfect Justice: Looted Assets, Slave Labor & the Unfinished Business of World War II (Public Affairs, 2003) and The Future of the Jews: How Global Forces are Impacting on the Jewish People, Israel, and its Relationship with the United States (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012). On January 14, 2014, he received the Leo Baeck Medal at the Center for Jewish History in New York and delivered the 56th Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture, which is reprinted here.
I WANT TO THANK Rabbi Ronald Sobel, President of the Leo Baeck Institute, for his leadership and lifetime of service to the Jewish community, and Dr. William H. Weitzer, Executive Director of the Institute, and his staff, for their hard work in making this evening possible.

It is a double honor to receive this award from the Leo Baeck Institute, saddened only by the absence of my wife of 45 years Fran, but enhanced by the presence of my son Brian and daughter-in-law Erin, and by other family and friends.

For one thing, I have long admired the important role of the Institute. Since its creation in 1955 by a group of German-Jewish intellectuals who escaped the Nazi regime, the LBI has masterfully and lovingly documented the remarkably vibrant German-Jewish culture that was nearly extinguished by the Holocaust, in ways that provide lessons to us in the 21st century.

We can learn how to meet these new challenges by absorbing lessons from the thriving German-Jewish community before World War II and the Holocaust and the remarkable revival of Jewish life in Germany today, all of which are catalogued by the great resources of LBI, which is also the most important repository of primary source material on the history of the Jewish people in Central Europe over five centuries.
Today, Germany is the only country in Europe which has experienced a major increase in its Jewish population, although largely from Jews from the former Soviet Union. As a new Jewish community is flourishing again in Germany, global interest in the past German-Jewish community, preserved at LBI, is growing.

The second reason I am particularly pleased by this award is that it is being given to me by a cherished friend and fellow Carter Administration colleague, Michael Blumenthal. When Michael was the distinguished and effective Secretary of the Treasury in the Carter Administration, I worked more closely with him than with any other Cabinet officer. Michael’s life is an exemplar of what LBI stands for. He and his family escaped Berlin after Kristallnacht and spent the War years in Shanghai, where his tiny residence and photos in the Shanghai Jewish Museum (where Fran and I twice visited) are revered landmarks in China. Michael became a Chief Executive Officer of two major, multinational companies, a top trade official in the Kennedy Administration, and then Secretary of the Treasury in the Carter Administration, where he was a symbol of budget and anti-inflation rectitude.

Michael had done enough for several lifetimes, and one of his lasting achievements is the creation and leadership of the remarkable Jewish Museum of Berlin. He came to see me in the State Department twice, once in 1998 and again in 1999. In his first visit he told me he was going to write a book about the multiple generations of Blumenthals in Germany, loyal Germans who contributed so much to German society, to show, as he put it, how much Germany lost by killing so many of its Jews. The second visit was even more extraordinary. He said the Berlin government had approached him following the reunification of Germany about having the bottom floor on the history of Berlin’s Jews in the new, expanded public museum on Berlin’s history they were planning, designed by the famous architect, Daniel Libeskind. Michael told them he wanted the entire building devoted to Berlin’s Jews and what they had done to enrich Germany society and culture—and he would raise the money to achieve that goal. And this became the famous and wonderful Jewish Museum of Berlin which he founded and leads to this day. It is a premier site in the new, united
Berlin, with important lessons, much like those LBI provides, about the contributions of German Jews to their country.

To personalize this evening even more, on March 4, 2014 in Berlin, Michael and the Jewish Museum of Berlin are sponsoring the multimedia concert-drama, “Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezin,” which the Defiant Requiem Foundation I chair has created to honor the Jewish prisoners’ chorus who courageously fought the Nazis through the arts and music.

Yet, as we marvel at the life Michael has created, without rancor about the past, it reminds us how much was lost in the Holocaust, not just in Germany. We have never fully recovered from the Holocaust, which took two-thirds of European Jewry, the flower of world Jewry in religion, culture, art, and business. There were 17 million Jews in the world in 1939, before the War. Today, there are only 13.5 million Jews. There are rabbis unable to interpret another Talmudic tractate; cantors unable to sing another haunting prayer; musicians, artists, scholars, scientists, businessmen and women who had so much to contribute to the world; and yes, simple folk in shtetels and villages throughout Europe, simply trying to fashion a life with their families; and the 1.5 million young children, never able to make their mark.

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HOW DO WE BEST HONOR those who died and those who still survive the Holocaust?

Let me suggest the following:

First, it is imperative that we continue to do everything possible to help survivors live out their remaining years in dignity, by focusing on their needs now.

There are around 500,000 Holocaust survivors worldwide, roughly half of whom live below or near the poverty line—over 80% in East Europe and the Former Soviet Union, 35% in Israel, 25% in the US. Over half of the more than 75,000 survivors in New York City, among
the world’s wealthiest cities, live below or within 50% of the federal poverty line. It is unacceptable that those who suffered so grievously in their youth should still live in deprivation.

The German government has done its part and deserves great credit, having paid over $60 billion in a variety of direct payments to survivors since the Luxembourg Agreement of 1952 between Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and then West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, which created the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Inc.

During the Clinton Administration, I led the US negotiating team that obtained over $8 billion for survivors worldwide from Swiss banks that hid Holocaust-era bank accounts placed there to prevent them from being confiscated by the Nazis; German and Austrian slave labor companies; European and German insurance companies that had never paid policies on the ground that the premiums were unpaid when the owners were in concentration camps or killed; French banks; the return of hundreds of Nazi-looted art works; the restitution or compensation for communal property, so that the re-emerging Jewish and non-Jewish religious communities could have the physical infrastructure to rebuild their shattered lives.

Again to its credit, the German government in July 2000 contributed half of the 10 billion DM ($5 billion) settlement we reached with over 1,000 German private companies.

The Austrian government contributed substantially to an $800 million settlement involving their private companies. I negotiated directly with Prime Minister Wolfgang Schüssel, former president of the Austrian Central Bank Maria Schaumayer, special property envoy Ernst Sucharipa, and Ambassador Hans Winkler, each of whom showed exceptional leadership in helping Austria face its role in the Holocaust, a role not as readily accepted in post-War Austria as in Germany.

Since 2009, as the head of the Jewish Claims Conference negotiating team, I have found the reaction of my German counterparts, led by State Finance Secretary Werner Gatzer, to be inspiring. We are
negotiating with men and women most of whom were not born until after the War, but they continue to feel a devotion to do what they can to support survivors worldwide, supported by all the major political parties in the Bundestag. In our recent years, we have been able to add almost 100,000 survivors, including most recently “flight victims,” who had never been compensated before, and we have focused on a new set of needs. Elderly, frail survivors now require home care to allow them to stay in their homes and apartments and avoid institutionalization. In June of 2013 in Jerusalem we negotiated an additional $1 billion home care program through 2017, which will benefit survivors worldwide by providing home care workers to help with food, medicines, and socialization services.

The US government has been strongly supportive of this effort. In the 2009 Terezin Declaration, which I negotiated with over 40 countries as Special Adviser to the Secretary of State on Holocaust-Era Issues, the first priority was the social welfare needs of survivors. Austria, to its credit, reacted by providing Austrian survivors, wherever they live, the same social security benefits all elderly Austrian citizens receive in Austria. Few countries did much else, besides Germany. In 2011, as Secretary of State Clinton’s Special Adviser on Holocaust-Era Issues, and with the great leadership of the US Ambassador, we negotiated a $50 million agreement with the Lithuanian government.

I am very pleased that in December at the Centennial of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Vice President Biden announced a new initiative in which for the first time since the end of World War II, the US government would provide some programs aimed specifically at helping poor survivors. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) will be holding a hearing on this issue tomorrow, January 15.

The Holocaust was not only the greatest genocide in history; it was the greatest theft and confiscation of private property—homes, businesses, art (600,000 pieces), and personal effects, very little of which has ever been returned or compensated for. In 2010 we negotiated the Best Practices and Guidelines for the Compensation and/or Restitution of Immovable (Real) Property Confiscated by the Nazis and their Allies between 1933 and 1945. A new institution in the Czech Republic, the
European Shoah Legacy Institute (ESLI) was created to encourage voluntary implementation of these Best Practices. However, precious little has been accomplished in private property restitution, particularly with Poland.

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The second imperative is memory. The last word on the Holocaust must not be money or compensation. How do we keep the memory and lessons of the Holocaust alive when there are no survivors, no first hand witnesses?

For a combination of reasons the Holocaust was largely ignored in the first decades after the end of World War II: the focus of the West on the Cold War with the Soviet Union; the need for the new State of Israel to defend itself from a continuing series of wars; the emphasis of survivors on adjusting to a new life, creating families and careers, and the pain of sharing their experiences. Authors like Elie Wiesel had difficulty getting their books published. There were no Holocaust courses in any university. Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg was denied the opportunity to teach a course on the Holocaust at Yeshiva University in the early 1960s on the ground that it was not a suitable topic for academic study, and had to style his course “Totalitarian Systems of the 20th Century.”

But something as monstrous as the Holocaust could not evaporate into the mists of history. With the end of the Cold War, energies could be focused on the Shoah. And now, survivors who had not shared their tragic experiences for decades as they focused their energies forward in adapting to a new land and new life finally felt more comfortable in doing so, with their children and grandchildren.

My first real recognition of the Holocaust came during the 1968 Hubert Humphrey presidential campaign, when one of my co-workers, Arthur Morse, published a ground-breaking book. While Six Million Died exposed to the world what the Roosevelt Administration knew about the Holocaust and failed to act on, and led me to privately pledge to myself that if I ever had the chance to do so, I wanted to somehow rectify our own government’s failure to act.
I had my chance in the Carter White House, when in 1978, President Jimmy Carter accepted my recommendation to create a Presidential Commission on the Holocaust, chaired by Elie Wiesel, and which proposed after a year of study the creation of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Since its opening in 1993, over 4,000 people a day, more than 3 million visitors, three quarters non-Jewish, have visited the Museum.


Projects like Stephen Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation encouraged tens of thousands of Holocaust survivors to share their stories for posterity.

Education is the key:

- Education to refute Holocaust deniers from David Irving to former Iranian president Ahmadinejad;

- Education to expose for future generations the dimensions of anti-Semitism, how neighbors turned their backs on their Jewish friends and colleagues, especially in Germany, where many German Jews felt themselves to be more German than Jewish, and Jews were more assimilated than in almost any country in Europe, fighting for Germany in World War I (like Michael Blumenthal’s and Richard Holbrooke’s grandfathers), and working as leading intellectuals, scientists, businessmen, writers, musicians, artists;

- Education to provide lessons of how to prevent future genocides and to teach what happens when tolerance and the rule of law are abandoned.

In January 2000, at the initiative of the then Prime Minister of Sweden, Goran Persson, we created the Holocaust Education Task Force, originally with only a half dozen, now with over 30 countries,
to promote Holocaust education in the schools. We in the US have set a poor example, as only eight of our 50 states have any form of mandatory Holocaust education in middle and high schools. But on the positive side, there are hundreds of Holocaust education courses on our college campuses.

Germany is again a leader, showing the world that a country which can honestly and critically examine its past will have a better future. Germany has placed the Holocaust Memorial and Museum next to the Brandenburg Gate; mandated Holocaust education; banned Nazi symbols; penalized pro-Nazi and other hate speech; created over 40,000 *Stolpersteine* (stumbling blocks) in sidewalks identifying Jewish families forcibly expelled from their homes; and organized trips to bring German-Jewish survivors to the local communities in which they had lived.

There has been an explosion of Holocaust-related events and commemorations. Since 2005, the United Nations General Assembly has designated an annual International Holocaust Remembrance Day, marking the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps and the end of the Holocaust. Many European countries also have annual Holocaust memorial days. But even with all of this, recent public opinion studies in Europe show Holocaust knowledge is becoming faint.

We all have a responsibility to know the facts; to combat Holocaust deniers; but also to press for policies around the world that will intervene early to stop future genocides, whether in Africa or elsewhere.

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**A THIRD WAY TO** honor the memory of those who were killed in the Holocaust and those who survived is to combat the rising tide of contemporary anti-Semitism and the effort to de-legitimize Israel as a state of the Jewish people.

I have never been one who thought modern-day anti-Semitism was a first priority challenge. We have grown all too accustomed to it in large
parts of the Muslim world, where Israel is not even shown on maps. From children’s books in Malaysia to the school curricula in Saudi Arabia, Jews are portrayed in the most negative ways in the Muslim world, and there is a new canard that Israeli soldiers kill Palestinian kids and sell their organs on the international market. Even as the peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority proceed, their official websites and television programs are filled with vile descriptions of Jews as “barbaric monkeys, wretched pigs” and “murders of Muhammad” (Interview with Arye Carmon, MEMRI; Rudoren, Jodi. “Israeli Officials Point to an Intensifying Campaign of ‘Incitement’ by Palestinians,” The New York Times, January 7, 2014).

But it is now painfully clear that there is a revival of anti-Semitism in parts of Europe, which we in America cannot fully appreciate.

When Fran and I lived in Brussels and traveled throughout the countries of the European Union, we could always tell where the synagogues and Jewish schools were because of the concrete barriers and armed police outside; this was at once comforting and disconcerting. That was 20 years ago; today there is an unmistakable increase in European anti-Semitism, documented in several recent studies by the European Union’s own institutions and other outside surveys.

At its most extreme, the economic crisis has led to a resurgence of neo-Nazi parties in Europe employing traditional stereotypical anti-Semitism and xenophobia, rising from the sewers to the parliaments in Greece (Golden Dawn party), Hungary (Jobbik party), and the Svoboda Party in Ukraine, now the fourth largest political party, which displays T-shirts emblazoned with the words “Beat the Kikes.”

But the phenomenon 70 years after the end of World War II and the Holocaust is more widespread. In the UK, there was such persistent harassment of Jewish school children that then-Prime-Minister Tony Blair appointed the MacShane Commission, which recommended tough new law enforcement measures. In Toulouse, France there was a terrorist attack against a Jewish Day School, killing a rabbi and three school children. That was just one of some 200 acts of anti-Semitic violence in 2012. The Jewish community of Hungary was targeted in
a number of recent violent incidents. And in Malmo, Sweden, a series of attacks culminated in the bombing of a Jewish community center in 2012. A British acquaintance I recently met in Israel told me that one of her daughters, a teacher, was advised by her principal not to let the students know she was Jewish, and another was asked by her professor at Bristol University, “Isn’t it odd that no Jews were killed in the 9/11 attack?”

In 2012, the ADL did a comprehensive survey of anti-Semitic attitudes in 10 European countries (March 2012, “Attitudes Toward Jews in Ten European Countries,” Prepared by First International Resources, LLC), and the results are sobering. More than half of the people surveyed believe Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their own country. More than a third believe Jews have too much power in the business world and in the international financial markets. Over 40% believe it is “probably true” that Jews still talk too much about the Holocaust. Almost 30% say their opinion of Jews is influenced by the actions taken by the State of Israel, and 65% of those indicate their opinion of Jews is worse as a result of Israel’s actions. Compared to a similar survey in 2009, there has been an overall increase in anti-Semitic attitudes, most dramatically in Hungary, the UK, and Spain, with a slight decline in Austria.

But no one was prepared for the recent report (November, 2013) by the European Union’s own Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), which surveyed some 6,000 self-identified Jews in nine EU member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden, and the UK, which are home to around 90% of the EU’s Jewish population. Two-thirds considered anti-Semitism a problem, and three quarters indicate it has worsened in the past five years in their country, with 75% considering online anti-Semitism a significant concern. One third of the Jewish respondents experienced one or more incidents of verbal insult or harassment in the previous five years because they are Jewish. Almost half worry about becoming victims of a verbal insult or harassment, and a third fear a physical attack. Nearly 60% heard or saw someone claim the Holocaust was a myth or had been exaggerated. This has had a cumulative effect, with nearly one-third stating they have considered emigrating because they did “not feel safe”
living in their countries. (“Survey: 29% of European Jews considered emigrating due to anti-Semitism,” JTA, November 8, 2013, based on a survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights). The daughter of close friends in Brussels, a successful young professional, told me she and her family are leaving for Florida because they see no future for their Jewish children in the capital of the European Union.

To deal with rising anti-Semitism, a series of steps should be considered by the EU, some of which have been recommended by the EU’s own Agency for Fundamental Rights:

- Anti-Semitic harassment and violence should be treated as “hate crimes,” as they now are in the UK and France, including on the Internet, with special police units to monitor hate crimes;

- When “crimes are committed with an anti-Semitic motive, EU Member States should ensure that law enforcement authorities record this motive appropriately and that it is taken into account throughout proceedings, from the initial police investigation through to sentencing by the court. (FRA Report, November, 2013);

- This should be addressed systematically by the EU and its Member States as part of integrated strategies on human rights, crime, and violence prevention;

- Holocaust education should focus not only on the tragedies of the past, but on the lessons to be learned from the Shoah today, with Holocaust education integrated into “human rights education and history curricula” (FRA Report, November, 2013).

There is another related phenomenon, a new strategic threat to Israel: the subtle, insidious de-legitimization campaign to deny the Jewish people’s right to self-determination in a sovereign nation-state of its own in its historical homeland. This is not so much to physically destroy Israel, as to undermine its right to exist as a homeland for the Jewish people. It threatens Jews everywhere, since Israel has become such a touchstone of Jewish identity for so many Diaspora Jews. This effort is
being played out on a broad battlefield, on campuses, academic institutions, social media, international courts, the United Nations, and in the fight for world public opinion.

Neither Israel nor its supporters, Jewish and non-Jewish, are adequately prepared to combat this new sophisticated campaign, and they are at risk of losing the battle for world public opinion, leading to an unprecedented diplomatic and political isolation of Israel. It is characterized by what is called the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions), which is supported by a so-called “Lawfare” campaign. The 2001 UN-sponsored World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, was a key tipping point. A conference convened to combat racism worldwide turned into an attack on Israel, using a new vocabulary that has had a lasting, pernicious impact. Some 1,500 NGOs at Durban called for the “total and complete isolation of the apartheid state” of Israel. Zionism was equated with racism, leading the US and Israeli delegations to withdraw. To this day, there are “Israel Apartheid Weeks” on many American and European campuses.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion declaring the Israeli defense wall used to protect its citizens against terrorist attacks illegal under international law.

Belgium and the UK have “war crime” laws with universal jurisdiction that prevented senior Israel officials involved in the Lebanon and Gaza wars from traveling there for fear of arrest. The United Nations Human Rights Council has devoted more than half of its resolutions to criticizing Israel, rather than serial human rights violators like Zimbabwe, North Korea, China, Iran, or the Congo.

The 2009 UN Fact-Finding Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict (the “Goldstone Report”) accused both Israel and Palestinian militants of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity because of Israel’s response to unrelenting Hamas attacks over several years against Israeli civilians.

Now the BDS campaign is explicitly targeting private corporations. In October 2012, Richard Falk, a Princeton professor, who is Special
UN Rapporteur “on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967” issued a report calling for the boycott and sanction of a dozen companies, including HP, Motorola, and Caterpillar, simply because their products or services are used in the West Bank. The Dutch public prosecutor raided the home and office of an Israeli-born Dutch businessman as part of an investigation into the possible commission of war crimes because a small percentage of his world-wide construction leasing equipment was taken by a third-party contractor to build a project in the West Bank.

This BDS campaign is extending far beyond what is generally recognized. Indeed, it has now spread to the United States. In December, 2013, the American Studies Association (ASA) approved a resolution calling upon its 5,000 members to boycott Israeli academic institutions that it asserts have been complicit in Israeli government policies it alleges “violate human rights and negatively impact the working conditions of Palestinian scholars and students.” ASA has indicated that it is not targeting individual Israeli academics, but Israeli institutions and their official representatives. But this is a distinction without a difference, since the faculty is a central part of any university, and to sweep Israeli universities into a boycott is itself pernicious. (Guttman, Nathan. “What Next of the Boycott of Israel Movement after ASA Vote,” Forward, December 27, 2013; see also, Anderson, Nick. “University Presidents Oppose Call for Israeli Boycott,” The Washington Post, January 8, 2014).

UK universities have a virtual boycott on exchanges with Israeli universities. Pension funds in Europe and in the United States are divesting their holding from Israeli companies whose products are used in the West Bank. The renowned scientist Stephen Hawking boycotted the June 2013 Presidential conference sponsored by Israeli President Shimon Peres under pressure from Palestinian groups.

In 2013, fourteen foreign ministers from EU member states, including Germany, wrote a letter urging European Commission President Barroso to impose labeling requirements on all products made in the West Bank. And the EU published guidelines for its large science and technology program that would restrict grants to Israeli entities that are
established outside Israel’s pre-1967 borders or which operate wholly or partly in the Palestinian territories. In the past five years, Israel was the largest non-Member state recipient of these grants (some 600 million euros) and third overall, next to the UK and Germany.

This BDS campaign is, unfortunately, grounded in public opinion in Europe that is far different than that in the United States. A May 2013 BBC survey, which included 17 EU member states, found the European public ranked Israel fourth to last, along with countries like Iran and North Korea, as having a “mainly negative” impact in the world.

Why has this campaign been so successful in Europe, and for that matter, why the rise now of anti-Semitism in Europe? There are a variety of factors. Memories of the Holocaust have faded, though this is not the case in Germany. Politicians react to changing demographics and new constituencies. There are 15 million Muslims in Europe today and one million Jews, and within 25 years there will be 30 million Muslims and even fewer Jews. Poor economic conditions traditionally tend to translate into higher rates of anti-Semitism. But one engine is the impasse in the Palestinian-Israel peace process and the incorrect perception that Israel is somehow against peace and in favor of permanent occupation of Palestinian territories; that sees the Palestinians as the weak victims, the underdogs against the Israeli Defense Force (see the 2013 paper of the Jewish People Policy Institute).

The following strategies should be considered to deal with the delegitimization campaign:

First it is important not to label every criticism of Israeli policy, however harsh, as anti-Semitic or an effort at de-legitimizing Israel, or the defense against real attacks at Israel’s legitimacy will lose credibility. As a sovereign state Israel must be subject to criticism like any other country. Indeed, Israel’s distinctiveness in the Middle East is its vibrant, self-critical, no-holds-barred democracy. Natan Sharansky offered the “three D” test to distinguish legitimate from improper criticism: Is Israel being Demonized rather than criticized? Is there a Double Standard applied to Israel, as in the UN Human Rights Council? And is the critique against Israeli policy seeking to Deny the
legitimacy of Israel as a state? To me, the EU sanctions cross the line, given the history of boycotts against Jewish businesses during the Nazi era and the historic discrimination against European Jews for over a thousand years.

Second, there needs to be a central coordinating point and one person to lead the effort within the Israeli government. The Ministry of Strategic Affairs, led by Yuval Steinitz, has been given this role.

Third, every charge should be rebutted by irrefutable facts—facts the world has forgotten—whether those charges are made in schools, social media, blogs, newspapers, or the BBC. It is important to go back to basics. Israel was explicitly created by the United Nations itself out of the British Mandate from World War I as a Jewish State, alongside a far larger Arab state. Israel has made great sacrifices for peace, totally withdrawing from the oil fields and air bases in the Sinai in return for peace with Egypt. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally withdrew all settlers and soldiers from Gaza, and got Hamas rockets rather than flower petals in response. And two other Israeli Prime Ministers, Barak and Olmert, proposed giving back 95% of the territories occupied by Israel following the 1967 War, with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state, and were rejected by the Palestinian Authority.

More proactively, it is important to emphasize that Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East, with a strong commitment to the rule of law and remarkable achievements in the cultural, scientific, and high-tech spheres that contribute to the good of the world. Almost no one knows that Israeli hospitals have been treating hundreds of Syrian refugees who sneak into Israel seeking medical help for their wounds, or that parents bring their seriously ill children from Gaza into Israeli hospitals for care.

Fourth, a network of non-Jewish “validators” should be catalyzed to help counter unfair criticism. They will have special credibility, and they very much exist. The most effective voices against the ASA boycott of Israeli educational institutions was the almost universal opposition of leading American university presidents,
who condemned the boycott as a blow to academic freedom and exchanges which are important to their institutions (Anderson, Nick. “University Presidents Oppose Call for Israeli Boycott,” The Washington Post, January 8, 2014).

Fifth, Israeli should and is developing deeper relationships with emerging powers like China and India which have no history of anti-Semitism. Israel is doing this now.

Sixth, and critically important, Israel must recognize that some of its policies fuel the flames of the de-legitimization campaign. When leading politicians in Israel publicly urge a unilateral state controlled by Israel over the whole West Bank, when scores of settlement outposts are erected in violation of Israel’s own law, and when new settlements are announced while the Vice President and Secretary of State Kerry are seeking to achieve a peace agreement, combatting the de-legitimization campaign becomes more difficult.

To be sure, Israel cannot make peace by itself. It needs a Palestinian partner it has never had to join Israel in making painful concessions. At the very least, Israel should adopt the diplomatic version of the medical Hippocratic oath: “Do no harm.” If peace cannot be reached in the short-term, at least take no measures on the ground which make a two state solution even more difficult.

Peace with the Palestinians is not a gift to them; it is an imperative to preserve a majority Jewish democratic state. Secretary of State John Kerry is making a truly Herculean effort to achieve a peace agreement, bringing the parties back to the bargaining table. He deserves the full support of the American Jewish community and of the Israeli and Palestinian governments.

Israel now has a coincidence of interests on preventing an Iranian nuclear weapons capability, on Syria, and on combatting militant Islamic radicalism with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, Egypt and Jordan, and should act accordingly to strengthen those tenuous bonds. Beginning in 2002 and continuing to today, Saudi Arabia has put forth a full peace proposal and has gotten the entire 22-nation Arab League to adopt it.
While it includes some obviously unacceptable terms, it deserves an engagement so the onus, if failure occurs, is not on Israel.

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But there are broader global forces to which we as Jews must adapt to assure Jewish continuity after the Holocaust.

One is the historic shift of power and influence from the West in general and the US in particular, with shared values and sizable Jewish populations, to the nations of the East and the South, with a very different set of values and interests and tiny or non-existent Jewish communities.

The US is Israel’s only real ally in the world and its sole defender militarily and politically. Since the end of World War II, America has been the ballast to promote democracy, economic growth, tolerance, and stability in the world. Anything that impacts the strength and influence of the US has a direct impact on the Jews and Israel.

History is replete with examples of one nation supplanting another as the preeminent power in the world. But there are two unique features to this shift of power. One is that there are simultaneously a host of rising powers, from Brazil to India and China, from Indonesia to Turkey and South Korea, all seeking their day in the sun, and complicating the ability of the US to build alliances to our benefit and the Jewish people’s. Moreover, throughout our history, the US has been the ascendant power, becoming the preeminent power after World War II and the end of the Cold War. But today, there are a host of ascending powers cutting our advantage across the board in every area. Today, more than half the global GDP comes from emerging and developing countries, and by 2020, three fifths of global growth will come from Asia. China is the number one producer of autos, steel, even violins, and the largest foreign holder of US dollar reserves. In the space of a decade China has become the second largest economy in the world and by mid-century will overtake us as the largest.

The Great Recession has taken a further toll on the US. Our students have fallen behind in math and science proficiency, and our polarized
political system has prevented us from attacking the problems we need to overcome in order to maintain our preeminence.

Yet the US is not a beached whale like Great Britain after World War II. We have great strengths, like an unmatched university system; enormous creativity and innovation; an infusion of immigrants that keeps us growing and provides a new energy level. And we have one other asset that can help arrest, although not totally reverse, the shift of global power: energy. Due to American technology, hydraulic fracturing of rock will make the US the largest producer in the world of natural gas within three years and of crude oil within ten years. This can help transform our balance of payments and lead to a re-industrialization of America.

Moreover, I would not want to trade places with China. They have huge unrest, an aging society, and a closed system that will deny their people the capacity to be as innovative as we are.

Ironically, Israel will also benefit from an energy revolution. We used to joke that Moses took the wrong turn in the desert. But now an American energy company, Noble, has found large natural gas deposits in the Israeli Mediterranean Sea. The discovery of the Leviathan gas field in 2010 represented the largest deepwater natural gas discovery in the world over the past decade. Israel will become a net exporter of natural gas, and this will help deepen its global reach.

Israel already recognizes its need to reach out to the new, emerging powers of Asia and Latin America. Its trade relationship with China is growing significantly, and it is the third largest supplier of military equipment to India. All of this can be accomplished without threatening its relationship with the US, so long as it is careful not to transfer military technology to China.

Another phenomenon to which the Jewish community must adapt is globalization, the increasing integration of the world, powered by the digital and information revolutions, creating unprecedented social, financial, trade, and economic relationships across national boundaries. This is changing the way we communicate, work, learn, shop,
and transact business as profoundly as the invention of the Gutenberg printing press 500 years ago.

For sure, there are negative aspects to this Digital Revolution, from cyber-attacks which can disable large sectors of an economy, to the use of the Internet by terrorist groups to plan, fund, and implement attacks, to the income inequalities it helps foster. But for the Jewish people and Israel it is by far a net positive.

It is creating an interdependent world with a global supply chain for the major products we use, providing most countries with an equity stake in stability, and a staggering array of new high-tech products, in which Israel has become a major player. More broadly, the key to success in this new Information Age is education, and as the People of the Book, who prize education, and whose children attend college at twice the percentage of the general public, this provides an advantage to the Jewish people. We have survived calamities over the millennia because of our adaptability and creativity, the very foundation for success in the 21st century.

Another global force with more sobering challenges is the battle for the direction of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims. The outcome will speak volumes about the type of world we as Americans, as Jews, and the State of Israel, will experience.

It is a serious mistake to view this as a “battle of civilizations” between the Western and Muslim worlds, as Harvard Professor Sam Huntington envisioned. For sure, there are elements of this, as the Muslim jihadists seek to purge the Middle East of all Western influence and to destroy the State of Israel.

But having spent a considerable amount of time in the Muslim world, my belief is that the vast majority want what we want for our children: education, empowerment, economic opportunity, and peace.

The real battle is within the Muslim world, between fundamentalists and modernizers, Shiites and Sunnis, those who want to be part of the new globalized world and those who wish to blow it up and create an
Islamic caliphate. The US can help strengthen the forces of moderation and modernization, but it will be up to the Muslim world itself to make the choice between chaos and conflict on the one hand, or stability, reform, and progress on the other.

In the very area of the Arab Middle East where Israel most needs US influence, we have lost a great deal since the Arab Revolutions began in Tunisia and spread to Egypt and Libya and now Syria. Our allies, the Saudis and Gulf States, the Egyptians and Jordanians, and many in Israel, question our leadership as never before in the post-war era. Certainly, no one could be more dedicated to the Middle East peace process than Secretary of State Kerry, but it is critical that the Administration not create a vacuum in the region and continues to play a robust role, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Syria. We must support our friends and oppose our enemies in a visible and clear fashion.

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THE EXTERNAL THREATS TO the Jewish people from the revival of anti-Semitism and the BDS campaign against Israel and the challenges from the global forces of the 21st century are matched by an internal challenge. The greatest legacy we can bestow on the six million Holocaust victims who were killed simply because they were Jewish is to assure Jewish continuity. In the Diaspora, the greatest threat to Jewish continuity is a result of our very success in being fully integrated into the broader community, being fully accepted regardless of our religion. We must make clear that Judaism remains relevant in an open society, when every Jew will become a Jew by choice, even if they are Jews by birth.

The American Jewish community, the largest Diaspora community in the world, is like an enterprise with two divisions of roughly equal size. One is vibrant, healthy, engaged in the full range of Jewish religious, cultural, social, and political activities, and deeply engaged in Israel, in ways never before seen in any Jewish community at any time outside of Israel. The other is near bankruptcy, assimilating, intermarrying, disengaged from any Jewish communal activity and from Israel, and threatening the health of the overall enterprise.
The challenge of assimilation was dramatically demonstrated by the October 1, 2013 Pew Research Center Survey of US Jews, “A Portrait of Jewish Americans,” which was the most important study of the state of American Jewry in a decade and the first examination by an outside, non-Jewish group. It has engendered great concern and controversy within the Jewish community. Some see it as portraying a community in decline, others as a positive finding allaying the concerns of many of the doomsayers.

There are positive elements. There are more American Jews than previous demographic studies indicated. The Pew study puts the number at about 6.7 million, consisting of 5.3 million (both Jews by religion and those who consider themselves Jews aside from religion) and 1.3 million children in households with a Jewish adult who are being raised Jewish or partly Jewish, far higher than the number of around 5.5 million from other surveys.

There are other positive findings. For instance, 78% of the adult Jewish population considers themselves Jews by religion. Some 96% of Jews with a Jewish spouse are raising their children as Jewish by religion. Ninety-four percent of US Jews, including Jews by religion, and 83% of Jews of no religion say they are proud to be Jewish. American Jews have remarkably high education attainment compared to the general American public. Significant percentages participate in Passover Seders (70%) and fast on Yom Kippur (53%) and seven in ten Jews feel either very attached (30%) or somewhat attached (39%) to Israel, essentially unchanged from surveys in 2000 – 2001.

Moreover, the Orthodox community is very healthy, with very low rates of assimilation and intermarriage. Indeed, a new analysis of the Pew findings indicates that while Orthodox Jews make up about 10% of the American Jewish community, 27% of Jews younger than 18 live in Orthodox households, compared to only 11% aged 18 – 19. The high Orthodox birthrates will make the Orthodox community a growing percentage of the total American Jewish population. Professor Steven Cohen puts it this way: “Every year, the Orthodox population has been adding 5,000 Jews. The non-Orthodox population has been losing 10,000 Jews” (Nathan-Kazis, Josh. “New Pew
Data Shows Orthodox Growing Faster than it Appeared,” *Forward*, November 15, 2013).

But to me, the Pew findings should be a wake-up call: the division of the American Jewish enterprise that is disengaging is growing at the expense of the engaged core. In addition, although it is a positive development that there are over a million more American Jews than previous surveys indicated a decade ago, the birthrates of the Jewish population are at best at simple replacement levels, compared to the more rapidly growing general population in the US, so the Jewish community is only about 2% of the total American public.

Here are the Pew findings that I find alarming:

- While only 22% of Jews who identify themselves as having no Jewish religion are younger Jews, among Millennials born after 1980 that figure is 32%;

- Rates of intermarriage have skyrocketed since 1990, so now 58% of Jews who married between 2005 and 2013 married a non-Jewish spouse;

- Intermarried couples are “much less likely than Jews who marry fellow Jews to be raising their children as Jewish by religion and much more likely to be raising children as partially Jewish but not by religion, or not Jewish at all.” They have less engagement in the Jewish community and with Israel.

J.J. Goldberg, a columnist for the *Forward*, has attacked parts of the Pew findings, and finds that “despite warnings that American Jewry is dissolving in the face of assimilation and intermarriage,” in fact Pew actually “depicts a Jewish community that is growing more robustly than even optimists expected.” (Goldberg, J.J. “Pew Survey About Jewish Americans Got it All Wrong,” *Forward*, October 13, 2013). He bases his critique on the flawed comparison he accuses Pew of making with the 2000 – 2001 National Jewish Population Survey. This led to a rebuttal by Pew (Cooperman, Alan and Smith Greg. “Pew Stands by Sweeping Findings on #JewishAmerica in Face of Criticism,”
Forward.com, October 15, 2013) and then another broadside by Mr. Goldberg (Goldberg, J.J. “Dear Pew: I was Right. Here’s Why,” Forward.com, October 20, 2013).

While Mr. Goldberg is correct that the Pew findings have bright spots, and he is also correct that intermarried rates have leveled off since the big jump in 1995 – 1999 and remained stable at 58% since 2000, this is hardly something to write home about. He is not a demographer, and the Pew Center is highly respected for its objectivity. The key to me is the intermarried findings and the implications they have for the children of intermarried couples and identification with any part of the Jewish community.

The Pew survey should add urgency to the imperative to strengthen the core of engaged Jews, while reaching out to the periphery. For the core, that means emphasizing Jewish education, particularly full-time Jewish Day School education, but also improving after school, synagogue-based programs. A major barrier to day schools is the very high cost. We should make it a goal to create a $2 billion nationwide fund to help lower the cost.

At the same time, we must adjust to reality by reaching out to intermarried couples and make them part of the Jewish community; to have non-Orthodox rabbis perform intermarriages if the couple pledges to raise their children as Jewish and takes some Jewish religious education before the marriage; and to redouble support for programs that demonstrably work in building Jewish identification, like Taglit-Birthright Israel. Some 365,000 young Jews from 40 countries, ages 18 to 26 years old, have made their first trip to Israel, and a recent study by Brandeis Professor Leonard Saxe has shown dramatically less intermarriage and stronger identification with Israel and the Jewish community. The Israeli government is providing major funding support for Birthright. There are post-Birthright programs in which the alumni get together for activities. Young adults are being subsidized by Jewish Federations to live in apartments if they engage in Jewish outreach programs.

It is imperative that the division of the Jewish community which is most deeply engaged in Jewish life must make it a priority to reach out to the
part which is drifting away, or the entire Jewish enterprise in the US will be progressively weakened over the course of the 21st century.

I am optimistic we can meet these new challenges. We have fulfilled the prophetic vision of Jeremiah after the destruction of the First Temple, for the return of a “great company” to the Holy Land, by creating the strongest Jewish state in history in the very land from which we were twice exiled. We have been able to thrive in the Diaspora, albeit in painfully smaller numbers, after the Holocaust.

The Leo Baeck Institute can play an important role in helping assure Jewish continuity. German-Jewish history can provide some perspective on the Pew survey, as Jews in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s were increasingly secularized and represented in German business, finance, scholarship, and the arts, more so at the time than American Jews, but many maintained their Jewish identity.

Also, LBI has documented how the religious practices we have in the United States, including Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox observance, all have their roots in 19th century Germany.

The Leo Baeck Institute is more important than ever as we face these new 21st century challenges. May LBI “go from strength to strength.” As you grow stronger, so too shall the Jewish world.
Recent Leo Baeck Memorial Lectures

2012: Digibaech: 500 Years of German-Jewish History Online.


2010: Brenner, Michael: From German Wissenschaft to Global Scholarship: Jewish historiography between the World Wars.

2008: Gold, Nili Scharf: Yehuda Amichai: the German-Jewish roots of Israel’s national poet.


2005: Eisenmann, Peter: Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

The history of Jews in German-speaking lands is a story of outstanding accomplishment and unprecedented tragedy, and the Leo Baeck Institute New York (LBI) works to ensure that neither is ever forgotten. LBI was founded in 1955 by a circle of Jewish intellectuals who escaped the Nazi regime and resolved to document the vibrant German-Jewish culture that had been nearly extinguished in the Holocaust. For nearly 60 years, LBI New York has worked to fulfill that mission by building a world-class research collection that is now the most important repository of primary source material on the history of Jewish people in Central Europe over five centuries.

Our founders’ mission remains relevant today. The stellar individual achievements of German-speaking Jews in the arts, science, business, politics, and beyond have shaped our modern world and given us powerful critical tools for understanding it. Beyond the achievements of luminaries, LBI collections tell a powerful story of the dynamic role that minorities can play in society when granted opportunity and democratic freedoms, as well as a cautionary tale about how fragile their situation can be in the face of bigotry. German-Jewish history also has a special relevance for modern Jews throughout the Diaspora, as Germany was the birthplace of major branches of contemporary Jewish religious practice—including Reform, Orthodox, and Conservative Judaism.

As a new Jewish community begins to flourish again in Germany, global interest in the past preserved at LBI is growing. The Institute provides an intellectual home for both the brightest and the most tragic aspects of the 20th century, and we must ensure that its lessons for the 21st century are preserved. With your support, we can ensure that those who cherish the history of German-speaking Jews will be the ones to write that history.

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