

Author's note: The following article was written as a response 10 days ago, but when it was published today, on the eve of Israel's Remembrance and Independence Days, I recognized the need to add some words on the wider context of Zionism in which narrow and often personal ideological warfare takes place. From the beginning, Zionism and the re-establishment of Jewish sovereign equality and democracy in the Land of Israel has been a precarious enterprise, in a largely hostile environment. It is also the most important political development and achievement of the Jewish people in 2000 years, and we have a collective obligation to nurture and protect its fragile successes, which are under continuous attack, both militarily, and through soft-power warfare, such as boycotts, demonization and the Durban strategy. (These attacks are largely from the outside, but some come from Israelis and Jews occupying different fringes of the ideological spectrum, who, due to psychological or other factors, are unable to comprehend the singularity of the historical moment, and act within its parameters.)

Substantive differences and debates between us on the best means to achieve these difficult objectives are not only legitimate but necessary to avoid mistakes in any democratic society. For the most part, I recognize David Newman's comments in this spirit, even if often exaggerated and using the language of personal attacks. Prof.

Newman is a staunch Zionist, and he has contributed centrally to opposing anti-Israel boycotts as a member of the Academic International Advisory Board (IAB), which for some reason, he included in his ideological offensive. The danger is that extremists who consider themselves to be members of the academic Left, will mistakenly use Newman's debating points as part of the soft-war being waged to falsely and immorally label Israel as an illegitimate "apartheid" state, and to join in the wider demonization process.

On Yom Hazikaron -- The Day of Remembrance - for those who have paid the price for the Jewish right to sovereign equality among the nations, and looking towards Yom Haatzmaut -- Independence Day -- and the achievement of freedom and rebirth in a very hostile environment -- we are morally required to remember this historical context and the obligations that it brings.

Chag sameach,

Gerald Steinberg

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Beyond the Left-Right diatribe

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Gerald Steinberg , THE JERUSALEM POST

David Newman's attack ("Bashing the Academic Left," April 14) against me, NGO Monitor, the anti-boycott international advisory board (IAB), Scholars for Peace in the Middle East and various other targets illustrates the dangers of ideological filters. According to Newman, our activities are aimed at "bashing the academic Left" in Israel - as if university professors and others included in this category (such as journalists and powerful NGO officials claiming to promote human rights) were an endangered species whose survival required suppression of inconvenient research and information.

He even invoked the hoary memory of "McCarthyism" - named for the leader of the anti-communist witch-hunts of the 1950s in the US (that, not coincidentally, also had anti-Semitic dimensions). And he omits the role of "the academic Left" in targeting its enemies on the Right and, more widely, of a wider indulgence in gratuitous Israel-bashing.

His allegations are wrong on many counts, beginning with the over emphasis on ideology. David Newman is a Zionist, and a staunch member of the Israeli academic Left, but he defines critics and nonbelievers, including myself, as heretics and members of the opposite camp. This is a major error and contributes to the distorted claims in his article.

In contrast to Newman, I have no patience for or interest in the anachronistic wars between the Left and Right, particularly in the Israeli context. Ideology is a one-dimensional filter that prevents us from a realistic understanding of the issues and responses to threats. In trying to force complex situations to fit simplistic theories, adherents of political religions and false gods on both fringes - Left and Right - have more in common than they care to admit. Fascism and communism sought to box human behavior into one-dimensional models, and both failed, but only after their impassioned adherents did considerable damage. Ideologues, like other fanatics, tend to be intolerant of outsiders and skeptics, perhaps explaining why anti-Semitism is found at both ends of the spectrum.

NEWMAN VENTS entirely misdirected outrage against NGO Monitor's analysis of massive funding provided by foreign governments such as the European Commission and its member states for Israeli and Palestinian political groups. He falsely asserts that this research, which I lead, "has set as its task to delegitimize almost any NGO that so much as dares to support the peace process and/or receives funding from the European Union."

In the first place, it is hard to understand how an academic can condemn research that seeks to reveal and understand a highly secretive process by which public funds are transferred into private hands by the EU or any other governmental organization. If EU officials would practice the transparency that they preach to others, and explain why many politicized NGOs critical of

Israel are supported from among the many worthy applicants, my research (and possible legal action to obtain documents that should be public) would be unnecessary.

In addition, Newman seems to be objecting to the facts showing that many of the NGOs funded by the EU's "Partnership for Peace" framework actually fuel the conflict. (Newman has received EU funding for some of his own projects, perhaps making it difficult for him to play the role of an unbiased observer.) NGO Monitor's analysis of the 2007 PfP awards highlights a number of projects and organizations that clearly promote anti-Israel boycotts and demonization.

For example, the "Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem" has been generously funded by the EU since 2000, including the latest grant of 374,174 euros. This money is used for a project on "Monitoring Israeli Colonizing Activities in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza."

ARIJ, like a number of other recipients of European funds, promotes the Palestinian narrative and erases the context of incitement and rejectionism that long preceded the 1967 war. ARIJ accuses Israel of "racism" and of "seeking to loot as much as possible of the Palestinian lands to fulfill its never ending colonial and expansionist desires..."

As a research organization, NGO Monitor is asking the EU to show the contribution to advancing peace and tolerance in the "everyday lives and welfare" of Israelis and Palestinians, as stipulated by the EC guidelines. Any evaluations that may have been produced are closely guarded secrets, and this is one of many examples.

Furthermore, as recipients of this largesse from foreign governments, the "Left," to use Newman's definition, is clearly not on the endangered species list. Rather, as a result of this EC support, the winners in this hidden popularity contest enjoy a privileged position in Israeli society, with massive resources to hire lawyers, file an infinite number of motions against the policies of the elected government, place advertisements in newspapers promoting their ideology, and hold rallies and conferences. The facts - always an inconvenient obstacle for ideologues - show that no EC or foreign government NGO support goes to what might be called "rightist" or even impartial organizations. Indeed, NGOs and "civil society"

organizations tend to reflect "leftist" ideology, and this systematic built-in bias is reflected in EC funding.

Research regarding such political activities is entirely legitimate, and I look forward to continuing the ongoing debate with Newman. But it is time to retire inappropriate emotionally-laden terms like "McCarthyism" and stick to the facts.

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