

All in all, soft power, that is the ability to influence behavior through values, policies, institutions and culture, as opposed to ‘hard’ or coercive power exercised through military or economic pressure, plays a tremendous role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict especially when the incitement detailed by Marcus and Zilberdik cascades through Palestinian media outlets into the schools and mosques where the next generation of Palestinian children continue to nurse on the same lies their parents and grandparent were taught.

The facts documented by *Deception: Betraying the Peace Process* have a great value to the extent they are set within the larger historical context and are recognized as a symptom of the obstinate Arab rejection of a Jewish state. Without this dimension of understanding and truthfulness it will be difficult for Israel to make its case effectively in the court of world public opinion.

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Jeremy Ben-Ami, *Fighting for the Survival of the Jewish Nation: A New Voice for Israel*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 224 pp.

*Reviewed by Guido Weiss*

The pro-Israel support base in the United States is the largest, most organized and perhaps diverse in the world. An assortment of groups such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, StandWithUs, American Friends of Magen David Adom, the American Friends of Hebrew University, The American Society for Yad Vashem and many others have worked over the past decades to provide support for various facets of Israeli society. J Street was established in 2008 for “pro-Israel pro-peace Americans,” employing tactics and taking positions accepted by a growing following but challenged by a sizable and notable group. This development has created shock waves in the pro-Israel world.

Jeremy Ben-Ami, author of *A New Voice for Israel*, is a patriotic American who has a significant family and personal connection with the history of the establishment of the state of Israel. Ben-Ami has held prestigious positions as political strategist, including Deputy Director to Howard Dean’s election campaign and Domestic Policy Advisor to Bill Clinton. More recently, Ben-Ami created the Israel lobby, J Street. *A New Voice for Israel* describes and rationalizes the reasoning behind Ben-Ami’s “call to arms” in the world of Israel advocacy.

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As a matter of course, Ben-Ami believes that today's pro-Israel establishment is led by a small and vocal minority of American Jews that runs counter to peace initiatives because of its failure to act as a check on counterproductive Israeli policies. According to Ben-Ami, this small but vocal pro-Israel minority has kept elected officials in a position of fear of criticizing Israel. While elected officials are ostensibly afraid of upsetting the dominant pro-Israel establishment, the alternative Jewish establishment that Ben-Ami describes as generally liberal (and to which he belongs) fears this minority.

A plethora of Israel advocacy related groups tend to work under the idea that Israel is under threat and the way to make sure Israel stands the test of time is to aid Israel. Ben-Ami's J Street operates under a different premise that runs contrary to most of the well-established Israel advocacy groups. According to the J Street point of view, Israel is not a country that requires the same assistance as it did since her establishment. Israel is now in a position of power and J Street, through indirect pressure, can help Israel save itself before the Zionist dream is lost. Also, support for Israel does not mean a zero sum game, meaning that advocating Israel's position does not necessarily need to be a "for or against" issue, but as Ben Ami states it is "gray."

Jeremy Ben-Ami introduces *A New Voice for Israel* by describing his problems with the current Israel-supporting community. The initial chapters delve into his deep family connection with the state and land of Israel. Ben-Ami also provides a brief history lesson to readers about Jewish history during the late nineteenth century and early Zionism. Ben-Ami goes on to describe his problem with the current pro-Israel establishment and how it does not coincide with the mainstream of the Jewish establishment. In Chapter 11 entitled "What Becomes of Tel Aviv In 2109?" (a reference to the bicentennial), Ben-Ami goes so far as to express the fear that under current conditions he fears that Tel Aviv may not be in existence in 2109, or at least in recognizable form.

Confronting this problem, Ben Ami suggests what in his view should become normative pro-Israel activity. He offers three "rules" for new Israel support: (1) support does not need to be simply "for or against," but rather a more complex relationship filled with agreements and disagreements; (2) supporting Israel does not require approval and devotedness to every policy of the Israeli government; and (3) American Jews should associate only with other domestic groups that share American Jewish values and not Christian Evangelicals or any group that supports Israel but does not conform to standard liberal principles.

*A New Voice for Israel* is largely a discussion of Ben-Ami's personal ambitions. He presents himself as possessing the ability to help save the state of Israel by establishing a voice (J Street) for these pro-Israel critics and liberals who are trapped by the current pro-Israel establishment. The title of this book describes Ben-Ami's ideological outlook, that "New Voice for Israel" is essential "For the Survival of the Jewish Nation." This is the essence of his message.

Ben-Ami names those with whom he fundamentally disagrees, such as Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz, and founder of CUFI, John Hagee. Ben-Ami also targets organizations such as the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), the Committee for Accuracy in Media Reporting in America (CAMERA), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and StandWithUs as members of the current pro-Israel establishment. At the same time, *A New Voice for Israel* serves as an apology for Jeremy Ben-Ami. He uses his book to justify his involvement with personalities who may not be accepted by the pro-Israel establishment. Ben-Ami goes into detail about his relationship and involvement with George Soros, Richard Goldstone, Park 51, BDS, and even with Steven Walt, a co-author of *The Israel Lobby*.

Ben-Ami paints a picture that is grim in comparison to what may be the status quo mentality of Israel supporters. He brings the issue of morality into the subject when dealing with Israel in the West Bank and the blockade of Gaza, repeatedly bringing up the idea that even a “liberal” American Jew can hold Zionist ideology over morality. Ben-Ami fails to give a full description of Israeli reasoning in the grim picture he paints. He also uses the idea of *TikkunOlam* (repairing the world) as a platform to launch attacks against those with whom he disagrees, implying that those who adamantly advocate for Israel are “less strongly democratic,” “less liberal,” and “more likely to have voted for John McCain,” according to the “polling.”

Ben-Ami’s *A New Voice for Israel* is well written, capturing, and even motivating the reader. It does not, however, fit into the category of serious scholarly literature. Although Ben-Ami provides a reference section for each chapter of his book, it does not answer a question neither does it advance a thesis. On the contrary, it is a highly personal quest supported by sources that back up his claims. Ben-Ami’s up-to-date sources include biographies, NGO websites, polls, articles, and his father’s biography.

*A New Voice for Israel* presents a case in a predictable order of events. Not surprisingly, it is praised by leaders who support Ben-Ami, including Peter Beinart from *The Daily Beast* and Letty Cottin Pogrebin, formerly president of Americans for Peace Now. Ben-Ami’s writing is shallow and may be read with haste. Jeremy Ben-Ami appears repetitive at times, dwelling on his family connection to Israel, describing the younger generation as game changers, and the place of Jewish values as part of his argument against the established pro-Israel community. He contradicts himself over the issue of finances and is quick to condemn those whose ideology runs contrary to his for contributing to causes with which he finds fault. At the same time, Ben-Ami boasts of J Street’s PAC’s political donations to those candidates with whom J Street agrees.

*A New Voice for Israelis* is an important read for those who wish to understand the shockwaves rumbling through the Israel advocacy community in the United

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States. It provides the reader with a description of a new development within the rich history of the Israel advocacy world.

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Ferhat Mehenni, *Le siècle identitaire; la fin des Etats post-coloniaux* (The Century of Identities: The End of Post-Colonial States), Paris: Editions Michalon, 2010, 190 pp., French.

*Reviewed by Michelle Mazel*

Ferhat Mehenni is far from being a household name, though he is the head of the—admittedly self-proclaimed—provisory government of Kabilya, a vast region in the North-Eastern part of Algeria. The Kabyles who belong to the larger Berber ethnic group are indigenous to North Africa; they have their own language and traditions, though they were Islamized in the first wave of Islamic conquest. They remained largely autonomous in the Ottoman Empire but became part of Algeria under French domination. They were at the forefront of that country's violent fight for independence from the French. Algeria became independent fifty years ago and, ever since, the Kabyles, who make up a third to forty percent of the population of Algeria, have been clamoring for self-government.

Born in 1951, Ferhat Mehenni studied political science at the Algiers university while pursuing a singing career; in 1973 he won the first prize at the modern music festival of Algiers but soon turned his talent to protest songs directed against the government and the Muslim establishment (though he himself is a Muslim). This led to repeated periods of imprisonment—he was arrested 13 times—and eventually to his departure in exile. It is from Paris that in June 2010 he founded the Provisional Government for the Autonomy of Kabilya, of which he is the president.

In this relatively short essay, Mehenni is trying to place his people's fight in the larger context of colonization and decolonization as well as what he sees as the failure of international institutions. "By analyzing the obstacles to be found on the path to freedom of the Kabyle people, he writes, I became aware of the fact that the situation of Kabilya, however singular it may appear to the uninitiated, is far from being an exception."<sup>1</sup> While his thinking on historical processes is original and articulate, his attempts at drawing from the universal to the specific condition of his people can be disconcerting for the reader who does not know Kabilya well enough to follow his logic. Yet some of his observations are extremely interesting.