

Trump still has his Jewish enablers, and Gadi Taub is one of them

Gadi Taub has no problem loving authoritarians who use classic antisemitic stereotypes because he wholeheartedly backs their vision of illiberal democracy – for Israel

David N. Myers | Feb. 7, 2021 | 12:58 PM | 3

In his article from last week, "The Normalization of Antisemitism," Gadi Taub is right about one thing. We all should be concerned about antisemitism.

In the United States, the rate of reported antisemitic incidents rose 90 percent from 2015 to 2017, as reported by the Anti-Defamation League in its annual survey. In 2019, the ADL chronicled the highest number of antisemitic incidents on record.

Indeed, we should be concerned when high-ranking public officials lapse into classic stereotypes about Jewish global elites, disloyalty (for voting Democratic), and obsession with money. That is what Donald Trump has consistently done, and no more brazenly than at a gathering of American Jews in December 2019 when he referred to Jews as "brutal killers, not nice people at all."

Notwithstanding such statements, Trump still has his Jewish enablers, and Gadi Taub is among them. All too often, those enablers subordinate truth to politics and follow the playbook of "illiberal democracy," as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has called it.

How so? By vilifying political opponents, attacking the courts and free press, and by engaging in baseless conspiracy theories that make wild and dangerous claims about perceived enemies. And of course, by casting doubt on the veracity of Joe Biden's victory over Donald Trump.

Gadi Taub checks off all the boxes. It is shocking, though not surprising, that he imagines a global network of "bitter enemies" of the State of Israel — of which the New Israel Fund is the chief villain. He distorts and misrepresents, accusing NIF of being part of the "boycott movement" — when, in fact, it refuses to fund organizations that support BDS.

More egregiously, he ignores, willfully or not, the extraordinary role that NIF has played for 40 years in advancing democracy in Israel. The New Israel Fund has proudly committed its resources to defend the rights of the most vulnerable in society such as asylum seekers, whose removal Taub has so loudly advocated for.

The New Israel Fund proudly supports full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel and seeks to overcome the deep structural discrimination against them that has existed since the creation of the state.

The New Israel Fund proudly supports a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities to women, Mizrachim, Ethiopians, Haredim, Russians and others who have often been denied equal access.

Above all, the New Israel Fund is committed to a vision of democracy that realizes the ideals of the Proclamation of Independence, which calls for "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex."

On each of these principles, Gadi Taub finds himself on the wrong side— with the "illiberal democrats," whom we should call now by their more accurate name: anti-democratic authoritarians.

The only right which matters to Taub is self-determination. And the only group that deserves that right, in his view, are the Jews.

Let there be no mistake: the New Israel Fund supports the right of the Jewish people to self-determination in this land. But we also have internalized the historical lesson of Jewish existence that there is a moral and political imperative to treat minorities in the State of Israel – and Palestinians who dwell under Israel control in the West Bank – with equality and justice.

It is in this context that we come to the matter that prompted Gadi Taub's latest diatribe: the New Israel Fund's participation in a statement of the Progressive Israel Network opposing the enshrinement into law of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism.

In simple-minded fashion, Gadi Taub sees the Progressive Israel Network position as evidence that NIF tolerates antisemitism. Try telling that to Amos Oz, whom Taub invokes in support of his own position. But let's do our homework and remember that Amos Oz was a member of the International

Council of the New Israel Fund to his dying day. In fact, Oz saw NIF as embodying the best of democratic values in the state of Israel.

Let it be stated simply: NIF unequivocally opposes antisemitism. What we don't endorse is making laws that prevent legitimate criticism of Israel from being heard.

Of course, if you don't adhere to a robust notion of democracy with a strong commitment to free speech, then it won't matter. If like us, you do, then you will be concerned by the IHRA being transformed into a legally binding formulation.

This is not a fringe, radical left position. According to Jewish Insider, a coalition of mainstream American Jewish organizations including the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Congress have come together to call on the Biden Administration to use the IHRA as an educational and training tool, but not as a legally binding formula.

The reason, they posit, is that laws that codify the IHRA definition "could be abused to punish Constitutionally protected, if objectionable, speech."

Will Gadi Taub now accuse the ADL of being a "bitter enemy" of the State of Israel? I hope not. Perhaps he should learn to distinguish between real threats to Jews and the weaponization of antisemitism to silence critics of Israeli government policy.

Perhaps he should stop lending support to antidemocratic authoritarians such as Donald Trump and uphold the principles of free speech, the rights of minorities, and the right to dissent.

That is genuine democracy, a far cry from the anti-democratic authoritarianism that Gadi Taub openly courts.

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