Hasbara Grifters, Conditional Support, Alliances for “Change,” Aggressive Confrontation, and the Real Interests of the Jews of Israel: A Covenantal-Republican Critique

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The real interests of the Jews of Israel are not a more favorable ranking in foreign public-opinion surveys, a higher volume of approving clips, or a more skillful explanation of Israeli actions to audiences that have already decided the question. They are the preservation of Jewish life (pikuach nefesh), the maintenance of a Jewish majority and Jewish character in Eretz Yisrael, the defense of sovereign borders against those who have declared the intention to erase that majority, and the covenantal responsibility to live as a free people rather than a managed one. When the work of explanation or advocacy becomes an industry that rewards personal brand, paid amplification, the spectacle of interruption, conditional vetoes from outside, tactical alliances that enlarge the standing of those who reject the premise of Jewish sovereignty, or aggressive media confrontation whose primary measurable output is platform growth rather than security outcomes, it drifts from those interests. The distance can be measured by a simple test: whether Jewish lives and Jewish sovereignty are more secure on a given date, or whether the speaker’s own visibility, preferred political outcome, or external conditions have been advanced.

This essay examines that drift across related practices. It summarizes the principal approaches to Israeli public diplomacy since 7 October 2023, analyzes the incentives that have turned portions of advocacy into performance, conditionality, or spectacle, and offers a critique that places Orthodox Jewish sources in conversation with republican political theory. The governing idea is that freedom is non-domination—the secure condition of not being subject to the arbitrary will of another—and that this condition is secured, for the Jewish people, by the covenant rather than by external approval. Internal emet (truth) must precede external credibility. The analysis draws on public disclosures, Israeli commentary from multiple directions, and the categories of practice identified in the ongoing discussion, including the high-volume media advocacy associated with figures who reject traditional hasbara in favor of direct confrontation. It criticizes practices and structures, not persons.

I. The Real Interests of the Jews of Israel

Orthodox Jewish thought locates the primary political obligation in the preservation of life and the continuity of the people in their land. Pikuach nefesh overrides nearly every other commandment. The Rambam, in Hilchot Melachim, treats defensive war against those who threaten the people as milchemet mitzvah. The limited kingship of Devarim 17—horses not multiplied, wealth not hoarded, Torah not set aside—rejects both foreign domination and domestic arbitrary power. The same suspicion of concentrated, unchecked will appears in the republican tradition. Philip Pettit's account of liberty as non-domination (freedom not merely from interference but from the capacity of another to interfere arbitrarily) supplies a precise vocabulary for what the Torah already demands: institutions and borders that prevent one will from holding the Jewish people at its mercy. Domination exists wherever another possesses the capacity to interfere on an arbitrary basis, even if the interference has not yet occurred. Non-domination therefore requires institutions capable of restraining that capacity.

Daniel Elazar's recovery of covenantal federalism and the Hebraic sources of republican thought, and Yoram Hazony's insistence on the nation as a covenantal order rather than a universalist abstraction, reinforce the point. A Jewish state is not merely a liberal democracy that happens to contain Jews. It is the political expression of a people bound by a covenant that predates and limits the state. Demographic continuity is therefore not a side issue. Without a Jewish majority, the institutional capacity to refuse domination collapses. Security arithmetic—deterrence against Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Iranian axis; the return of hostages; defensible borders—is the practical content of that refusal. Diaspora optics and Western media frames are secondary. When they constrain the first, they cease to serve the covenant.

The Exodus is not merely liberation from hard labor; it is liberation from arbitrary rule. Pharaoh embodies unchecked authority. Covenant emerges as the alternative. Both republican and covenantal traditions recognize that power is necessary yet dangerous. Liberty depends upon virtue. Torah seeks to form citizens capable of justice, responsibility, and moral judgment through commandments that educate character across generations. Political communities must pursue common goods that transcend private advantage. The covenant deepens this idea by framing the common good within a larger moral and spiritual purpose. Law stands above rulers. The synthesis draws from republicanism's focus on domination, constitutional limits, participation, and accountability, and from covenantalism's moral responsibility, transcendent purpose, and virtuous citizen formation. Soft power is legitimate when it serves hard power and the strengthened self. It becomes a liability when it substitutes for them or when its success is measured by metrics that do not track the security of the people who live under the rockets.

II. Hasbara as Scapegoat and as Industry

Hasbara, from the root to explain, has long been treated inside Israel as both a necessity and a permanent alibi. Yossi Sarid observed, years before his death, that the word is invoked whenever policy fails: "Everything is going great—only the hasbara is garbage." If only the explanation were better, the ideal situation would be recognized. Israeli commentators on the right and center have repeated the observation after 7 October 2023. Coordination failures, vacant directorships in the National Public Diplomacy Directorate, ministerial statements that undercut official lines, and the absence of a political horizon that Israelis themselves will accept have all been attributed to communications deficits. The remedy proposed is almost always

more funding and more fluent speakers. The underlying strategic questions—what ends are being pursued, what costs are acceptable, what demographic and military conditions make those ends sustainable—are deferred.

The scale of effort expanded after 7 October 2023. Foreign Agents Registration Act disclosures document contracts in the tens of millions for public diplomacy, influencer placement, and efforts to shape digital environments. Separate reporting has described campaigns that compensated participants for individual posts and larger architecture intended to seed narratives into search and generative systems. Haaretz reported in April 2025 on the reorientation of lifestyle influencers toward unnuanced defense of Israeli actions and asked whether the product advanced the recovery of hostages or the dismantling of Hamas capacity, or whether it primarily enlarged the platforms of the speakers. Israeli internal assessments have noted that large budgets have not reversed the deterioration of external perception when the facts on the ground—civilian impact, duration of operations, lack of a credible end-state—are difficult to explain. The left-leaning critique treats this as proof that occupation and settlement policy are the problem. The right-leaning critique treats this as proof that explanation without strategy is empty. Both recognize that the industry can continue to grow while the security condition of the Jews of Israel remains unchanged.

III. The Format of the Shouting Match and Aggressive Confrontation

Piers Morgan Uncensored has hosted repeated panels on the war in which pro-Israel guests and critics interrupt one another at high volume. Contemporary accounts record dozens of interruptions in single segments, rapid production of short clips optimized for circulation, and the dominance of frames—casualty ratios, international-law hypotheticals, emotional appeals detached from pikuach nefesh—that force Israeli arguments into defensive postures. The format rewards the speaker who can dominate the audio track. It does not reward the patient exposition of Israeli security doctrine, the demographic arithmetic that makes a Jewish state viable, the history of rejectionism from the Peel Commission forward, or the concrete requirements of returning the remaining hostages.

One approach that has appeared frequently in these formats rejects the premise of hasbara itself. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, who has written extensively on Jewish values, Israel, and the need for aggressive public defense, has argued that the cause is just and that Jews should stop explaining and instead attack their enemies. In interviews and writings he has dismissed hasbara as insufficient and called for confrontation rather than defensive messaging. This approach treats the media war as one that is won by volume, moral clarity, and refusal to apologize. It has produced high-visibility exchanges on platforms such as Piers Morgan Uncensored. The practical question remains whether the resulting confrontation advances the security arithmetic of the Jews of Israel—deterrence, hostages, borders—or whether it primarily generates circulation and platform growth while the underlying military and demographic conditions remain unchanged. Aggressive confrontation can clarify rejectionism and blood libels. It can also collapse into the same interruption-driven spectacle that prioritizes the clip over the substance. Internal emet requires distinguishing the two.

IV. Three Practices That Fail the Test

A. Those for “change” who nevertheless ally with their shouting rivals.

Some participants in the media shouting matches present themselves as advocates for change inside Israel—judicial reform, coalition composition, or the character of the government—while sharing platforms, rhetorical frames, or tactical alliances with voices that reject the Jewish right to sovereignty itself. The format of interruption and viral clips rewards the appearance of even-handedness or internal critique. It does not require the participant to distinguish between legitimate argument about how the Jewish people should order their common life and arguments that treat the existence of that common life as the problem to be solved.

From the covenantal side, the limited kingship of Devarim 17 and the Rambam’s treatment of defensive war already supply tools for internal accountability without external veto. From the republican side, Pettit’s non-domination forbids any external will from holding the capacity to dictate the terms of Jewish survival. When the demand for change is advanced by methods that enlarge the standing of those who deny the premise of Jewish sovereignty, the method itself becomes a form of domination. The alliance may be temporary and tactical. The effect on the security arithmetic of the people who live under the rockets is not. Internal emet requires that the distinction between critique of policy and rejection of the polity be maintained in public speech, not collapsed for the sake of a shared stage.

B. Supporting on condition.

Conditional support takes the form of an explicit or implicit terms-and-conditions agreement: support continues only if the elected government meets criteria set from outside—judicial structure, coalition partners, religious status, or the pace of territorial compromise. Israeli and diaspora commentary has noted the pattern for years. The Jerusalem Post and Times of Israel blogs have described it as a shift from advocacy for the country to advocacy for a preferred political outcome inside the country. The distinction matters. Citizens of Israel who oppose a government still live with the consequences of its security decisions and can vote to change them. External conditionality does not share those consequences. It converts the relationship into a veto.

Orthodox sources treat the covenant as binding the people to one another and to the Land before any particular government. Republican theory treats freedom as the absence of arbitrary power. A condition set by those who do not share the risks of rocket fire or demographic decline is an exercise of arbitrary power over the people who do. The biblical version of conditionality—continued presence in the Land depends on moral fidelity—never required the polity to commit suicide or to accept an external definition of its moral obligations. Modern conditionality often does. When support is withdrawn or withheld pending satisfaction of external criteria, the real interests of pikuach nefesh and non-domination are subordinated to the preferences of the conditioner.

C. Supporting Israel only for personal reasons.

This category includes the conversion of advocacy into personal brand, speaking circuit, paid placement, or lifestyle content whose primary measurable output is engagement and income. FARA disclosures and reporting on influencer campaigns document payments for individual

posts and larger architecture intended to shape digital environments. Haaretz and other Israeli outlets have asked whether the resulting product advanced the recovery of hostages or the dismantling of enemy capacity, or whether it primarily enlarged the platforms of the speakers. Some participants have children in uniform or live under the same threats; many do not. The distinction is not moral purity. It is whether the work can be tested against the security condition of the Jews of Israel on a given date.

When success is measured by follower count, speaking fee, or clip circulation, the activity has become a form of geneivat da'at—the appearance of defense substituted for the substance. The Torah's suspicion of building a name (shem) without the precise covenantal word supplies the older language. The practical test remains Ben-Gurion's: the future depends on what the Jews do, not on what is said about them for personal advantage. Personal reasons are not forbidden. They become a problem when they displace the covenantal measure.

V. Synthesis and Critique

These practices are not identical. Alliances for "change" can collapse the distinction between internal argument and external rejection. Conditional support can convert advocacy into a veto. Personal-brand advocacy can convert defense into a career. Aggressive confrontation can clarify moral lines or collapse into spectacle. All can be distinguished from advocacy that explains Jewish rights without apology and that can be measured by whether Jewish lives and sovereignty are more secure on 1 November 2026. The covenantal-republican standard does not require silence about policy. It requires that the method of speech and the conditions of support not themselves become instruments of domination over the people who live the consequences.

Authentic advocacy explains the Jewish right to sovereignty without apology and supports the elected decisions that secure that sovereignty. It does not require the speaker to live the consequences, but it does require that the work be measurable against those consequences. Grift, conditionality, tactical alliance with those who reject the premise, and confrontation measured primarily by platform appear when the measurable success is the size of the following, the satisfaction of an external criterion, or the enlargement of a rival's platform, while the measurable condition of the Jews of Israel remains the same. The distinction does not require personal attack. It requires only the repeated question of what, precisely, has been advanced for the people who live between the river and the sea under the actual threats that exist on 1 November 2026.

Ben-Gurion's older formulation remains the practical standard: the future depends on what the Jews do, not on what the nations say. When resources that could strengthen borders, intelligence, or the return of captives are spent on another round of paid posts, another panel in which no one finishes a sentence, or another condition set from outside, the standard is failed. The failure is practical. It leaves the Jews of Israel exactly where they were.

Conclusion

The real interests of the Jews of Israel are security, sovereignty, and the covenantal continuity of the people in their land. Performative hasbara, media shouting matches, alliances for "change" that enlarge the standing of those who reject Jewish sovereignty, conditional support that

functions as an external veto, advocacy measured by personal brand, and aggressive confrontation whose primary output is circulation often serve the speakers' profiles and the platforms' metrics more than those interests. The synthesis of Orthodox sources and republican theory supplies both the diagnosis and the measure. Internal emet precedes external credibility. Non-domination is secured by what the Jews do, not by how skillfully they explain it to those who have already decided against them, nor by conditions set by those who do not share the risks, nor by the volume of the confrontation alone. The work that matters is the work that can be tested against the lives and the borders of the people who live under the covenant.

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