

ISRAEL IS A THREAT TO EUROPEAN JEWS

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As far-right parties feeding on fear of too much immigration from Africa and the Middle East gain ground in the European Union, the Israeli government has found useful leverage to argue against leading Western countries recognising the State of Palestine. However, by supporting far-right European forces and activists, Benjamin Netanyahu is putting in danger Jews in the continent, and betraying the reasons of the creation of Israel.

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Who could have imagined, back in 1948, when Israel was accepted as a new state in the concert of nations by the United Nations that, 76 years later, the policy of the country's leaders would endanger the Jewish diaspora and other minorities threatened by the extreme right, most obviously on the European continent? Few paradoxes of modern history are more surprising –and painful to Western Jews, but also to those supporters of the new state set up to be the ultimate refuge for Jews worldwide should a repeat Shoah take place. The political friendships of the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are antithetical to the foundations of the state of Israel. His courting of far-right political leaders such as Viktor Orbán, leader of Fidesz and Prime Minister of Hungary, Marine Le Pen, leader of the National Rally in France, and other of their ilk in Spain, The Netherlands and Romania point to what some observers describe as the neo-fascist overtones of Israeli policy.

The latest episode which confirms this drift is the invitation addressed by the Israeli Minister of Diaspora Affairs, Amichai Chikli, to the far-right UK activist Tony Robinson to visit Israel. Robinson's real name is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, who is described by the Board of Deputies of the British Jews and the Jewish Leadership Committee as "a thug" who represents the "very worst of Britain". Both organisations were reacting to the description of Robinson as "a courageous leader in the fight against radical Islam" by Chikli. Robinson is best described as a neo-Nazi. Moreover, such an invitation come after repeated accusations by Netanyahu against British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron for being soft on antisemitism and beholden to forces which support radical Islam.

This latest Israeli intervention in UK politics is calculated to add confusion and fuel the antisemitic slogans which are becoming a feature of certain pro Palestine demonstrations. By inviting Tommy Robinson to Israel, the Israeli government has debased politics even further and de facto insulted the British people. To ignore, as Chikli is doing, the views of the vast

majority of Jewish people in the UK contradicts Israel's self-proclaimed pretence to be a haven for Jews who feel persecuted. Robinson is weaponizing his self-proclaimed role as an ally against antisemitism as a way of stoking antisemitism.

At the same time, the mantra of fighting radical Islam has served the far-right in the West very well since it was first invented as the Axis of Evil by former US President George W. Bush. As far-right parties feeding on fear of too much immigration from Africa and the Middle East gain ground, the Israeli leadership has found useful leverage to argue against leading Western countries recognising the State of Palestine, which is anathema to Netanyahu and millions of Israelis. The latter is however playing, as we have come to expect an utterly cynical game as he knows full well that his repeated attacks on Western leaders, who until recently have given him unconditional support in his genocidal war on Gaza, is fuelling a rise in antisemitism across the old continent.

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Political figures from the radical right share a certain number of tropes about Jews which should give Netanyahu second thoughts, but he chooses to ignore them.

Fidesz has long supported the "Great Replacement" theory, which argues that Europeans are being submerged in a wave of *brown* and *black* (i.e. Muslim) immigration. This theory developed by French intellectuals for the past half century has gained traction in France and Spain, and more recently in the United Kingdom. In Budapest, the Holocaust Memorial Centre has sanitised the record of Hungary's participation in World War II and certain Jewish organisations have been stripped of their official status –such is the case of the Auschwitz Committee, for criticizing Viktor **Orbán's statement** that "race mixing with non-Europeans" is to be avoided. The Hungarian prime minister has also orchestrated a smear campaign against the Hungarian Jewish philanthropist and survivor of the Shoah George Soros.

In France, the National Rally is still boycotted by the Council of French Jewish Organisations, but Marine Le Pen is endorsed by Chikli as an "excellent" choice as presidential candidate. Although she has renounced the views of her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who denied the Shoah, her party still includes a number of antisemites. What attracts Netanyahu in Paris as in Budapest is the fiercely anti-Arab and anti-Islam message developed by both parties. The fact that Marine Le Pen's number two is Jordan Bardella, who is of part Algerian origin, is a contradiction which like many others in far-right politics seems to bother no one, nor the party's electors. Meddling in French politics is all the more fraught because France has the largest number of Jewish and Muslim voters of any European country, and offers fertile ground for a further advance of the National Rally on account of the deep political and economic crisis the country is stuck in.

To argue that President Macron has recently moved to recognise the State of Palestine for reasons of antisemitism is a charge which would sound absurd if it were not also so dangerous. It will not endear Netanyahu or the many Israelis who share his views to many French people, irrespective of the opinion they hold of their president.

The cynical use of anti-Islam and anti-immigrant rhetoric to further confuse European politics and try to deny the Palestinian people what is only their internationally recognised right to have a state is the worst gift Netanyahu could make to European Jews. He is endangering their future peace in Europe and betraying the very reason Israel was created for in 1948. This policy will end in tears in Europe and in Israel.