

# THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

## Blinded by the right

By: Tzvi Gottlieb- July 18, 2013

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A few days ago I've read this lovely somewhat naïve piece in The Jerusalem Post by an American-Jewish student. In her op-ed the writer claims that although she loves Israel and had lived there, she cannot accept many of the actions of the Israeli government, statements by Israeli politicians and the discourse in Israel, which has moved to the right.

Siegel is one of many American-Jews that feels the same way. Although their love and support for Israel is great, for a growing number of them it is no longer unconditional. Immoral actions, undemocratic statements, the continuation of the occupation, social injustice and more effect their view of Israel. And inside the Jewish community, those who dare to criticize Israel are at best scrutinized and sometimes even outcasted from their communities. Maybe its time to tell Americans the real story of what happened to Israel and why they might know this story better than most Israelis.

Something happened to the Israeli right 8 years ago, after the disengagement plan from Gaza, maybe the biggest defeat of the Israeli right put forward by one of their own, former prime minister Ariel Sharon. The Israeli right had decided to change its tactics – moving the extreme right-settler agenda to the Israeli center.

Led by current and former leaders of the settlement movement and prominent figures from Yesha council (some very close to current PM Benjamin Netanyahu), the Israeli right had decided to adopt the means of their ideological American equivalent, The Conservative Movement, and create a system of propaganda to influence Israeli discourse.

In the past several years were founded several think tanks such as The Institute for Zionist Strategies (which received support in the sum of 500,000\$ from The Hudson Center) led by former head of Yesha council Israel Harel, Shalem Center (which enjoys the a 12.5 million dollars support from the Tikvah fund) which hosts many right wing scholars and current and former politicians (which was recently recognized by the Israeli government as an institute of higher education), Jerusalem Center For Public Affairs and others, trying to influence the discourse and political agenda, based on conservative think tanks such as The Heritage Foundation, Cato Institute, The Hudson Institute etc.

One of the most well known and successful campaigns was the campaign to delegitimize The New Israel Fund, led by Im Tirzu non-profit organization, which its founders were trained by The Institute for Zionist Strategies and which received funding from John Hagee Ministries. Another favorite organization is My Israel, an organization that promotes writing massive amounts of pro right comments to news stories online to create the effect that the public opinion is right wing, formed by current Israeli minister Naftaly Bennet and MK Ayelet Shaked from Habait Hayeudi Party, former aides to PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

And there are many other right wing agenda based organizations trying to influence Israeli discourse such as Israel's Media Watch, Latma, My Israel, Regavim, NGO Monitor, The Legal Forum for the Land of Israel, The Jewish Statesmanship Center and many others. Compare

those to their American equivalents such as Accuracy in Media, The Center for Media and Public Affairs, Citizens for Sound Economy, The American Legislative Exchange Council, Council for National Policy and many others.

You can write a whole story about the taking over of media outlets by the right, starting with the Sheldon Adelson Netanyahu pamphlet Israel Hayom, Maariv, Arutz Sheva, majority of local radio stations owned by Likud party members (against the initial franchise giving by the government) and of course the national TV station Arutz 1 and Kol Israel radio stations ran by political operatives close to PM Netanyahu. Compare that to Fox News, the Washington Times, syndicated conservative talk radio, blogs and others.

We are talking about a deliberate campaign to create a false image that the majority of Israelis are on the right wing pro-settlements agenda. The means are interest groups, non-profit organizations, think tanks, newspapers, radio stations, commentators, columnists and more and it is working.

The agenda, much like the anti-Liberal agenda in America in the 80's and early 90's is against The term "Left" and against principals and organizations considered social and democratic and identified with the left.

As in the case of the Conservative movement funding, the majority of the funding for the Israeli campaign is also American.

The Israeli left as yet to recognize the severity of their situation and elaborate campaign aiming to delegitimize and destroy its platforms. But there is still ways to fight these attempts. For that there is an urgent need to wake up. In Israel and in American-Jewry.