

Reut's Broad Tent and Red Lines Approach

Definition

The Reut Institute created the concepts of ‘broad tent’ and ‘red lines’ as a part of its strategic response to the assault on Israel's legitimacy, particularly as carried out by the BDS Movement. These are metaphors that outline an approach to enhancing capabilities within the Jewish world of developing diverse, ad-hoc partnerships across the different theatres in which the delegitimization assault play out.

The ‘broad tent’ concept refers to the need to promote a united front, across the political spectrum, against the assault on Israel. **The ‘red-lines’ concept** refers to voluntarily boundaries that delineate the range of constructive discourse about Israel.

Background Challenge and

In recent years, Israel has been subjected to assault on the very legitimacy of its existence. This assault is driven by a global network of a relatively small number of loosely coordinated organizations – usually either radical leftist elements or dogmatists Islamists (hereinafter "**delegitimizers**").

The delegitimizers reject Israel's right to exist and the Jewish people's right to national self-determination, and thus, reject the paradigm of two states for two people, which secure the status of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people.

According to Reut's analysis, the delegitimizers are very few in number and are considered peripheral almost wherever they operate. One of the secrets of their success has been their willingness to **overlook ideological differences and to collaborate tactically with groups and individuals critical of Israeli policies**, and even self-identified Zionists and Israelis. **We frame their approach as ‘open tent.’**

Meanwhile, **the tendency of the Israeli Government and Jewish organizations to classify harsh critics of Israeli policy as delegitimizers** often results in alienating critics who engage in legitimate discourse on Israel. **This ‘closed-tent’ approach has sometimes pushed critics into the arms of the delegitimizers.**

The combined effect of the delegitimizers' ‘open-tent’ approach and Israel's supporters' ‘closed tent’ approach has led to the latter being outnumbered, with the center field seized by Israel's adversaries. Reut believes that this trend was the central cause for Israel being overwhelmed in 2006-2009 by a global, systemic campaign against its legitimacy. In recent years, the assault on Israel's right to exist has driven a wedge between many Jews and their communities, turning Israel from a unifying issue into a divisive one.

The Response

Reut's response to this problem is the ‘broad-tent’ approach. Its logic is supported by the fact that some of the most effective voices against delegitimization often come

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from the political left, as well as from non-establishment fringe groups. This is due to their ideological proximity to the (false) pretention of delegitimizers to serve peace, human rights, and international law. Therefore, in order to effectively challenge the delegitimization phenomenon, the community of Israel's supporters must broaden its base by increasing its tolerance for legitimate discourse on Israel.

Reut argues that the answer to the question “who is in the tent” must be contextual. Yet, the Jewish discourse often focuses on the possible qualification to 'the tent' of specific individuals or organizations, and thus, reflects a tacit assumption that 'the tent' is a closed permanent list, in which one is either “in” or “out.”

The essence of the ‘broad tent approach’ is that the heart of the tent is the establishment, which is expected be prepared to consider diverse ad-hoc partnerships against the different form of delegitimization with grass-root and fringe groups when it may be beneficial to do that. This resilient approach also requires a commitment by those groups interested to become part of the tent to adapt an acceptable code of conduct on the discourse on Israel, which is delineated by 'red lines.'

Indeed, a 'broad tent' is not an 'open tent.' The 'tent' must be compounded by ‘red lines’ in order to distinguish between legitimate criticism and acts of delegitimization. Furthermore, the parameters that 'red lines' establish are critical to enhance the internal clarity of organizations and individuals that, in some cases, have been inadvertently fueling the assault on Israel's legitimacy.

Delineating red-lines must be a community based deliberation. The red lines cannot be imposed top-down by the Government of Israel or by Jewish community institutions. There may be great value in the process by which local communities, synagogues, communal organizations, and grassroots organizations grapple with the question.

Guiding Principles

In order for these strategies to be effective, the following principles should be applied:

- **Adopting a narrow definition of what delegitimization is in order to drive a wedge between delegitimizers and those who are critical of Israeli policies.** Reut defines delegitimization to mean the rejection of the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination or of the State of Israel to exist.
- **Engaging with critics of Israel's policy** by building personal relationships with key individuals. Such engagement may influence the overall performance of organizations that self-identify as 'pro-Israel,' but house or support activities that are borderline or even beyond-the-pale as delineated by 'red lines.'
- **Outing, naming, and shaming delegitimizers** to expose their real agenda.
- **Encouraging community-based dialogue about the red-lines** on the discourse on Israel. Such a dialogue is essential in order to form an ideologically diverse coalition that can credibly and effectively confront the delegitimization of Israel, and may, in fact, create an opportunity to reconnect across the dividing lines within our communities and to promote re-engaging with Israel in new ways.

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Examples of community initiatives to undertake a process of internal dialogue include the [San Francisco JCRC and JCF policy on Israel-Related Programming by its Grantees](#), the [Hillel Guidelines for Campus Israel Activities](#), and [the Initiative of Restoring Sanity to the Israel Discourse](#).