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**TRACKING DEVELOPMENTS IN
THE 'PROGRESSIVE FIELD'**

SMART MONITOR, NO.3



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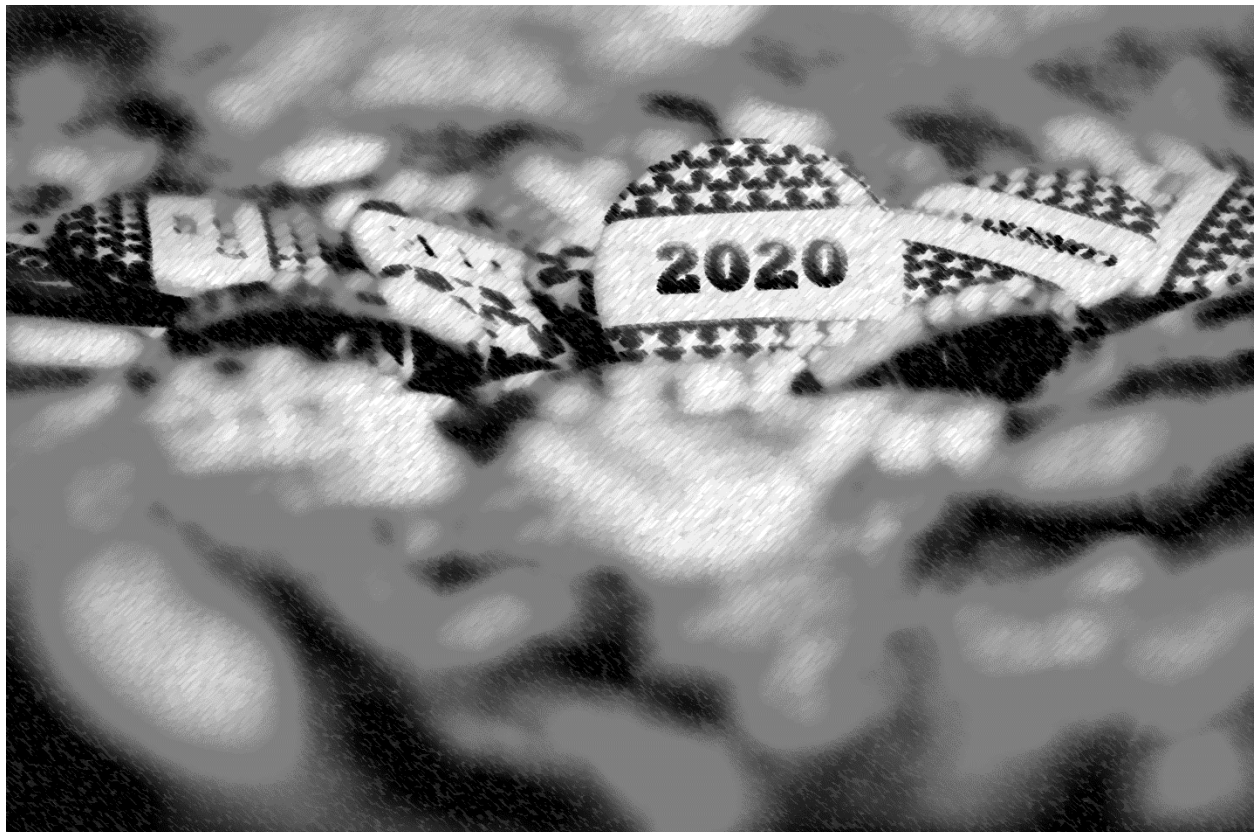
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INTRODUCTION

This product summarizes developments that affect the positioning of Jewish and pro-Israel communities within the U.S. progressive left. Spanning a two-week period, August 9 – August 22, and relying solely on open-source information, the document covers events and highlights ‘weak signals’ with potential for developing significance.

This product is part of the ‘Grand Pivot of the Pro-Israel Network Project,’ for which the Reut Group received the Genesis Prize as part of “Speak Out for Israel,” a global initiative in honor of 2019 Laureate Robert Kraft to combat anti-Semitism and efforts to delegitimize Israel, both of which are on the rise again in confluence with the onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic.

THE MAJOR STORIES

Two main stories dominated the focus in the two weeks spanning August 9-22: Joe Biden’s nomination of Kamala Harris as his running mate, and the normalization agreement between the UAE and Israel that has taken annexation off the table in the immediate term. The first part of this document will focus on each of these, covering developments related to the positioning of Jewish and pro-Israel communities on the left.

The Kamala Harris nomination and the fragility of Party unity

The nomination of Kamala Harris, a moderate Democrat AIPAC supporter who is married to a Jewish man, **has been greeted as a very positive development** – an additional bulwark in place against a slippery Democratic slide towards increasingly non-mainstream positions on Israel. Harris also appears the embodiment of a bridge-building opportunity between the Black communities and Jewish communities, which both overwhelmingly greeted her nomination joyfully (on the Jewish [organizational](#) side, from JStreet to the Endowment for Middle East Truth; and evident in the abundance of Jewish media coverage ‘kveling on Kamala,’ e.g. [here](#) and [here](#)).

Initially, it seems that Harris’s positioning will be utilized by the campaign for Jewish outreach – shortly after her nomination, an event with members of the Jewish communities was already in the [works](#) (see upcoming conversation including Harris’s husband [here](#)). Notably however, closeness to a particular community can sometimes prove a double-edged sword – from being used to deliver harsher messages or needing to ‘bend over backwards’ so as not to be perceived as biased in favor. Also worth watching, Harris’s [choice](#) of Karine Jean-Pierre, a major supporter of the AIPAC boycott effort, as senior campaign adviser.

Moreover, in the background of the collective sigh of Jewish and pro-Israel relief at the nomination, **tension between the stability and continuity that the Biden-Harris ticket portends and underlying trends of disruption continue to threaten to erupt.**

- **On the one hand, a historical moment that favors unity** – The multiple crises America is undergoing – the COVID-19 pandemic, protests over racial injustice and police brutality, and unprecedented opposition to the president – are [lessening](#) intra-party divisions and inspiring a high degree of unity in support of the Biden-Harris ticket. The subject of Israel has been generally [muted](#) among Jewish Democrats.

In the context of non-divisive rallying points, the fight against anti-Semitism emanating from the right is an increasing focus within Democratic politics (for example, see on the prominent role of accusations that Trump stokes racism and anti-Semitism at the Democratic convention [here](#) and [here](#); and its prominence as a go-to issue for Jewish Democrats, e.g. [here](#)).¹

- However, **the cracks are surfacing under the moderate surface in simmering tensions between the Democratic progressive and centrist wings** – So far Israel has remained [off the table](#) of

¹ Notably, the fight against right-wing anti-Semitism is also a growing rallying cry for progressive Jewish organizations (see [here](#) for example), some of which hold blatantly anti-Israel positions and reject claims of Jewish marginalization from progressive circles based on their unwillingness to renounce Zionism. For example, [recently](#) Jewish groups – which included IfNotNow and Jewish Voices for Peace alongside Bend the Arc and Never Again Action – joined the Movement for Black Lives and a number of other progressive minority groups in a statement against right-wing anti-Semitism. Thus, an opportunity for broad-tent coalition building may create strategic dilemmas and require carefully navigating the need for engagement of diverse and sometimes critical groups versus an imperative to call out blatant anti-Semitic anti-Zionism.

Democratic campaign issues, which is generally attributed to Biden's strong stance on the subject. Similarly, Biden [disavowed](#) Linda Sarsour after she spoke at a Democratic convention forum, re-affirming in that context his opposition to anti-Semitism and BDS. However, there is increasing discourse contemplating the deep-seated undercurrents of change that are being stifled by the historic imperative for, at least, temporary unity (for example, see [here](#) and [here](#)). Notable elements pointed out include that:

- **Their moment will come** – While the [urgency of the moment](#) has generated among progressives a prioritization of unity, “come January, we maybe have a different goal,” according to a former Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez aide and political adviser. Such a goal would be pursued, according to Justice Democrats spokesperson Waleed Shahid, by a progressive leadership “more powerful and willing to flex their muscle.” The [Washington Post](#) framed Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's convention speech as a warning to the Democratic establishment and to Biden that the far-left is a force he will have to reckon with.
- **The inevitability of the next generation** – Today, the Democratic Party is [led](#) by “pragmatic-minded septuagenarians and octogenarians” (Biden is 77 and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is 80). Indicators of a younger and more diverse future abound: [CNN](#) framed the selection of Kamala Harris as a recasting of the Democratic power structure for years to come due to her background as the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants. Indeed, more than 130 Black women – [a record](#) – filed to run for Congress this year.
- **Harbingers of the kind of battles to come** – [Tensions](#) erupted around the Democratic convention as left-wing activists organized a #LetAOCspeak campaign, with a [petition](#) circulated by the Young Delegates Coalition asking the DNC to give her more time than the one minute allotted her. Meanwhile, some [moderate Democrats](#) were concerned that a prominent role for AOC would enable Trump to frame the Democrats as far-left.
- **Increasing agenda-setting power** – Progressives [have been working](#) to oust centrists and to increase their numbers in Congress, expanding their ability to influence agendas in the legislative and executive branches. Though they have not been able to secure many legislative victories in Congress so far, even their current level of representation has enabled progressives to transform the broader Democratic platform in critical fields. Recent signs of strengthening and flexing progressive wing muscle include:
 - [Reports](#) circulated that all three candidates vying for the chairmanship of the House Foreign Affairs Committee following the defeat of current chairman Rep. Eliot Engel expressed support for a measure that would prohibit Israel from using U.S. military assistance to unilaterally annex parts of the West Bank. Subsequently, candidate Rep. Gregory Meeks [said on an AJC call](#) that he opposes conditioning aid to Israel.
 - During a press call with J Street President Jeremy Ben-Ami, Rep. Andy Levin [framed](#) the upcoming departures of Reps. Eliot Engel and Nita Lowey as an opportunity to advance progressive Congressional leadership, including on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Levin characterized J Street positions advocates as becoming center mainstream.
 - [Nancy Pelosi's](#) decision to back Joe Kennedy in a Massachusetts Congressional race against an incumbent sparked backlash among progressives, who also roiled at the failure of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to take action when Ilhan Omar's moderate primary challenger, Antone Melton-Meaux, freely admitted to using blacklisted campaign funds. Omar [easily defeated](#) her well-funded challenger.
 - In an [evolving story](#), a progressive Massachusetts Jewish Congressional candidate, Alex Morse, who has been endorsed by the Justice Democrats political action committee and IfNotNow, is being cast as the subject of a smear campaign by the establishment group, the College Democrats.
 - In a strengthening pattern in local political races, voters in Orlando's metropolitan region [chose](#) Monique Worrell, the most progressive candidate in a four-way Democratic primary, for state attorney in Orange and Osceola counties.

- **New Democratic organizational infrastructure** – A [Guardian](#) piece credited the wave of progressive victories this year to “energy from the Black Lives Matter movement, failure of conventional policy, and the solid infrastructure of progressive organization,” comprising outside groups with enhanced infrastructure that are boosting progressive candidates on local and national levels. The creation of organizations and political action committees around the country is [credited](#) in particular with the exponential growth in Black women Congressional candidates.

The Democratic Socialists of America, a rising force in American politics that endorsed the BDS movement in 2017 and is credited with helping AOC and Jamaal Bowman upset incumbents to win Congressional seats, got a lot of [attention](#) in recent weeks with a questionnaire that asked candidates to pledge to not travel to Israel. Dozens of members of the New York State Assembly subsequently [condemned](#) the DSA for the “blatantly anti-Semitic litmus test,” and New York’s mayor [called](#) on candidates to reject DSA pledge against Israel trips. The DSA later [clarified](#) their position to assert that they are not opposed to trips taken to Israel for personal reasons.

- **Waning influence of traditional pro-Israel political organizing** due to changes in the political influence landscape:
 - o From ‘bundling’ big checks to greater reliance on grassroots donors; and from large television ad buys and other costly campaign spending to a new reality of free social media attention and the growing effectiveness of grassroots strategies such as canvassing, door-knocking, and phone-banking (see analysis [here](#)).
 - o Growing emphasis on voting in swing states (see [here](#)).
 - o Frustrated significantly funded efforts of pro-Israel groups (see [here](#) and [here](#) on the 0-4 string of losses to beat back the “Squad,” and [follow](#) Democratic Majority for Israel investment defending incumbent Rep. Richard Neal against challenger Alex Morse).

at the same time, **Jews are recognizing the need to carve out a Jewish political voice that is adapted to the times.**

- o **Strategic Jewish ‘Get Out The Vote’ efforts:** Jewish Democrats are organizing to swing key states in the presidential election through voting campaigns, identifying the potential to make a critical difference in this area (see [here](#) and [here](#)). [According](#) to Sen. Ben Cardin (from the DNC webcast): “The Jewish community and the Jewish votes are going to be critically important... We have critical House races, critical Senate races, and the Jewish vote could very well be determinative.”
- o **Examples of new organizing from the young generation:** See [here](#) on Jewish-led ‘Jews 4 Joe,’ founded to fill the absence of a Jewish niche among student-led groups opposing Trump. In the four months since its inception, Jews 4 Joe has recruited more than 65 college campus ambassadors, amassed over 3,500 social media followers, and enlisted some 200 millennial and Gen-Z volunteers. According to the group’s outreach team co-director Sarah Gordon, “Coronavirus and virtual grassroots organizing has presented us with a profound opportunity to capitalize on technology and the ease with which we can get people to events [and] phone bank.” Importantly, the group prioritizes reaching out to young progressives who find it difficult to reconcile their progressive identity with their Jewish identity and that are excluded from progressive spaces on the basis of their affiliation with or their support of the State of Israel.

The normalization agreement: An (almost) unqualified positive development

The UAE – Israel accord, essentially offering normalized relations in exchange for Israel taking annexation of the table for an undetermined period, is should have allegedly been well received across the liberal spectrum , especially since annexation policy has been signaled to represent a red line for mainstream political and American world, support for Israel. Indeed, subsequent positive developments include the [introduction](#) of bi-partisan legislation (initiated by New Jersey Senator Cory Booker and Ohio Senator Rob Portman) to advance normalized ties between Israel and Arab states by cracking down on countries that punish their citizens for engaging in normalization activities. However, **notable pitfalls and**

cautionary signals also accompanied the news, and opposition to annexation is remains central on the agenda of the Democratic Party. Significantly:

- **The rejectionists have their say.** On the Congressional side, Rep. Betty McCollum introduced [legislation](#) – with co-sponsors including Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar and Ayanna Pressley; supporters including Democratic Socialists of America, IfNotNow, and Jewish Voice for Peace; and promoted by [CodePink](#) – “to prohibit the United States from formally recognizing or providing U.S. aid to any area of the occupied West Bank annexed by the Government of Israel.” During a [speech](#) on the House floor, McCollum said that the accord “changes nothing,” maintaining, regarding Trump and Netanyahu, that, “Their promises and commitments are worthless because they have both proven, time and time again, that they cannot be trusted.” The usual organizational suspects (e.g. [IfNotNow](#), [Jewish Voices for Peace](#), [Code Pink](#), [American Muslims for Palestine](#)) publicly denounced the deal – possibly also presenting an opportunity, given the overwhelming embrace of the accord by the mainstream, to further confine their extremist positions to the fringe.
- **Annexation is not off the American political opposition table.** While Rep. Gregory Meeks appears to have backtracked, Jewish media [reported](#) that all three Democrats vying for House Foreign Affairs Committee chair support restricting Israel from using American financial support for annexation. Even Biden, who congratulated the Israel-UAE accords, made clear in his [statement](#) that annexation would present a red line in his support.
- **The framing of the accord as a Trump success story is earning inevitable liberal ire.** See related coverage [here](#) on the accord as a ‘big win’ for Trump, [here](#) on Trump’s ability to change the domestic political conversation from his failures, [here](#) for Jared Kushner’s glowing account of Trump’s winning Middle East strategy, and [here](#) on Trump taking credit for “doing peace in the Middle East.” See also [here](#), Rep. Max Rose bemoaning members of the Democratic Party who oppose Trump’s pro-Israel moves for partisan purposes: “... let’s not make this one of those issues that we are fighting tooth and nail with a blind spot of partisanship. It is just wrong and it does not help Israel.”

Moreover, a broader dynamic of Israel serving as a Trump administration political football for ends that include placating evangelical voters surfaced in this time period, with Trump [citing](#) the importance of the Israel-UAE deal for evangelical voters, and [describing](#) his administration’s move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem as being “for the evangelicals.”

SIGNS OF SHIFTING GROUNDS IN BLACK-JEWISH RELATIONS?

While significant challenges routinely surface, opportunities to break through engagement barriers in Black-Jewish relations are arising in parallel, notably in the context of a diminishment of the monopoly of intersectional ethos, which exclude Jews from conversations about racism; an opening of positive opportunities for dialogue and understanding; and in efforts of Jewish communities towards internal diversification.

- **Exceptionalism v. intersectionality: An inherent tension** between intersectional thought systems – which, since unrest the 2014 protests in Ferguson have significantly shaped the anti-racist struggle – and a framework that can be described as ‘Black exceptionalism,’ which has been rising following the George Floyd killing protests, continues to surfaces. Black exceptionalism is an idea that advances the claims of Black Americans based on the uniqueness of the American Black experience and suffering, and on the foundational role Black people have played in making the country what it is today. It holds fundamental contradictions to the universalist ideology prioritizing joint struggle against all different forms of oppression that underlies intersectional movements. (See more in a recent [Reut report](#) that describes this conceptual shift within the anti-racist movement as an opportunity for Jewish and pro-Israel communities to transcend the exclusionary nature of intersectional coalitions, which often single out Jews unless they are willing to renounce Zionism, in favor of pure ally-ship.) Two recent examples reflect this tension:
 - See a New York Times [article](#) on the ‘cancellation’ of a University of Pennsylvania Professor Emeritus Adolph Reed, a Black Socialist. He was disinvited to speak to the Democratic Socialists of America’s New York City chapter because he planned to promote the

intersectional vantage point of anti-racist struggles and speak against the left's current overwhelming focus on the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus on Black people.

- On the other side, see Damon Young on the term 'people of color' [here](#): "By grouping ethnicities together, the term was meant to engender an oppression-based solidarity... Unfortunately, doing this has a way of flattening unique cultures and the unique battles each racial group faces in America."
- **Forward movement in dialogue processes**, including mainstream coverage of the dialogue process with Nick Cannon, such as [here](#) and [here](#) and a [joint op-ed](#) by Nick Cannon and Jonathan Greenblatt; as well as multiple Jewish solidarity and understanding initiatives with Black rights struggles, see examples [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). See also here a [personal account](#) of the experience of a Black and Jewish person with racism and anti-Semitism that appeared in a platform dedicated to showcasing and sharing Black voices.

Also, [notable](#) – within anti-Israel demonstrations held in at least eight cities across the country Aug. 7-9, and despite speakers attempting to connect between the struggle for Black liberation and the Palestinian cause, no official Black Lives Matter groups or anyone claiming to be a part of the Black Lives Matter movement participated in Days of Resistance rallies.

On the challenge side, see [this ISGAP video](#) exposing challenges to Black-Jewish unity stemming from the influence of Louis Farrakhan.
- **Initiatives highlighting the experience and participation of Jews of color within the Jewish community**, see for example [here](#) and [here](#).

THE CHALLENGE OF DEFINING AND SETTING LIMITS ON ANTI-SEMITISM

On campus, in social media, and beyond, Jewish and pro-Israel communities navigate sometimes porous boundaries between criticism of Israeli policies, and anti-Semitic discrimination against Jews and Jewish collectives. Defining and achieving consensus around definitions² is critical for efforts to credibly call out prejudice and discrimination, avoid the abuse of accusations of anti-Semitism used to delegitimize political disagreement, and discredit attempts to smear individuals and organizations that are calling out anti-Semitism – including in these key fields of conflict in this area.

- **Fighting campus hate:** The campus is a traditional battleground in which extremities of struggles to define and challenge anti-Semitism, especially when it appears from the left, are fought. Recent developments include:
 - Posing a challenge to Jewish and pro-Israel students, California Gov. Gavin Newsom [signed](#) a bill into law on Monday to require an ethnic-studies course requirement for matriculation from California State University. An initiative [spearheaded](#) by the AMCHA Initiative had called on Newsom to veto the bill based on the anti-Zionist advocacy and the promotion of BDS present in critical ethnic studies.
 - A judge [ruled](#) that a high school principal who refused to say that the Holocaust was "a factual, historical event" because he had to stay "politically neutral" should not have been fired.
 - Demonstrating a solid avenue to combating threats of this nature, Florida State University (FSU) President Steven Thrasher [announced](#) that the university has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism and is going to take other measures to combat anti-Semitism on campus. Thrasher's announcement came after FSU

² See in this context Reut's work [here](#) on defining anti-Semitism in progressive movements as manifested in: Prejudice or discrimination against Jews related to their presumed or actual association with, defense of, or support for the Jewish state; holding all Jews responsible for the 'original sin' of Zionism; Rejection of the exceptionalism of the Jewish experience, including pertaining to historic and continuous vulnerability, and exclusion of Jews from identifying as a collective with other oppressed groups; Holding Jews uniquely responsible for oppressive power structures, and demanding of Jews and Jewish communal organizations to acknowledge their privilege and power status by renouncing claims of prejudice, discrimination, or insecurity experienced individually or collectively).

Student Senate President Ahmad Daraldik, even after being exposed for past blatantly anti-Semitic social media posts, survived a no-confidence vote in his leadership.

- Rose Ritch, the University of Southern California undergraduate student government president who resigned after being harassed by students for her support for Israel, may exemplify the next generation of leadership on this issue. Ritch published an op-ed in [Newsweek](#) describing Zionist students across the country “being asked to disavow their identities or beliefs in order to simply enter many spaces on campus,” and vowed “to partner with my peers, allies and the broader community to show the many faces of anti-Semitism and call out those who marginalize others in spaces where we should feel safe and welcome.”
- **The social media battleground:** Facebook’s recent [announcement](#) that it would ban posts about Jews controlling the world, among several other efforts to combat hate speech, followed a month-long [boycott](#) of advertising on Facebook spearheaded by a coalition of civil rights groups led by the Anti-Defamation League; and an [appeal](#) by more than 90 national, state and local Jewish organizations representing the Jewish community relations network to Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook. More general [attention](#) is being focused on the role of Facebook’s recommendations systems, designed to prioritize the growth of groups, in bolstering conspiracy-theory spreading groups and enabling them to communicate, organize, and spread their message further.
- **The price for standing ones’ ground in the battle to out, name, and shame anti-Semitic anti-Israel rhetoric** – Several left-wing activist groups are [promoting](#) a campaign called ‘[Drop the ADL](#),’ which aims to persuade progressive institutions to cut ties with the organization on the grounds that the ADL is attacking “social justice movements led by communities of color, queer people, immigrants, Muslims, Arabs, and other marginalized groups” by calling them out for anti-Semitic anti-Zionism. The more than 100 signatories include the Movement for Black Lives, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Jewish Voice for Peace, and Jews for Racial and Economic Justice. Liberal Jewish organizations have stood up to the ADL’s defense, publicly [defending](#) it as a civil rights organization with a long track record of standing up for marginalized communities; a coalition of such organizations issued a joint statement pushing back on the criticism.

Another example of silencing tactics used to obstruct nuanced discussion around different forms of anti-Semitism are efforts such as that of IfNotNow to [define](#) anti-Semitism as an exclusively right-wing phenomenon, and frame calling out anti-Semitism on the left as a right-wing machination meant to sow divisions. IfNotNow used accusations of anti-Semitism levied against Linda Sarsour and against the 2016 platform of the BLM Movement, which labelled Israeli actions as “genocidal,” as examples of such nefarious attempts to mislabel anti-Semitism perpetrated for political purposes by the right.