



THE BLOGS

Ros Altmann



THE BLOGS ▾

My Blog

About Me

As friends of Israel – we should not offer succour to its enemies

JUN 2, 2020, 2:10 PM



FACEBOOK



TWITTER



EMAIL



PRINT

42

SHARES

3

COMMENTS



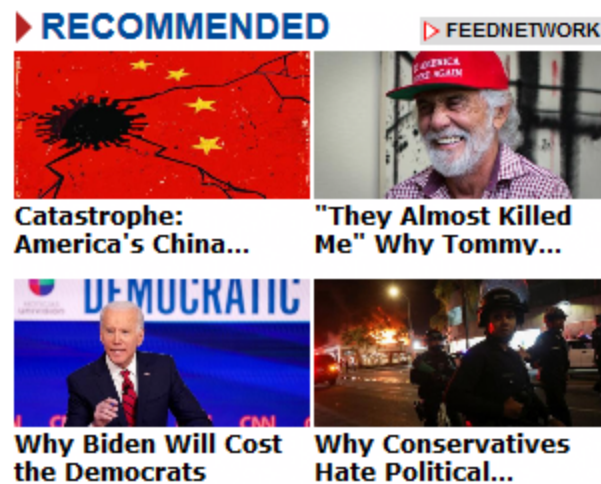
Israeli and British flags (Jewish News)

Please note that the posts on The Blogs are contributed by third parties. The opinions, facts and any media content in them are presented solely by the authors, and neither The

Israeli politics is a source of endless fascination and speculation for the Jewish community.

Times of Israel nor its partners assume any responsibility for them. Please contact us in case of abuse. In case of abuse, [Report this post.](#)

Jews living outside Israel will always have opinions about what is happening in our 'homeland' and there is always much heated debate about the rights (or wrongs) of decisions that impact both the strategic and individual future of the State.



The most recent proposals to annex parts of Judea and Samaria are no different.

Anyone who reads the Jewish press or social media, cannot fail to see that the debate about what Israel 'should' or 'should not' do is driving passionate exchanges of opinion. Of course, healthy well-informed debate is the lifeblood of our people. But there's a big difference between expressing views as private individuals with a group of social media friends or followers and public statements or censure from official bodies which represent the Jewish community as a whole.

That is why I support the position taken, in the face of some fierce opposition, by Marie van der Zyl, who does not want the Board of Deputies to take any public views on the Israeli Annexation issue.

I do not believe that the British Jewish community can claim to have a superior view of what Israel 'should' be doing, to that of the Israeli government itself. We can disagree as a personal view, but as friends of Israel, we should not offer succour to its enemies.

The borders of Israel are for Israel and the neighbouring governments to decide – including the Palestinians too, if they want to sit at the table (but, sadly, their leaders have so far seemed unable to do so).

We, in the diaspora, do not need to have a publicly expressed position on this issue. Indeed, I would go even further than this. Not only do we not

an issue. Indeed, I would go even further than this. Not only do we not need to have a view, it would be wrong to express one. I fear it could be very damaging if the Board of Deputies – our representative body – were to proffer a public opinion. I hope that it will stand firm in remaining silent.

Naturally, there are strong views on both sides. It should, therefore, be obvious that coming down on one side or the other is likely to alienate parts of our community. Especially at a time when we are all struggling with daily life in the shadow of the Covid-19 virus, surely that word ‘community’ is more important than ever. Let us look for ways to minimise division, rather than inciting it.

But less obviously, if the Board of Deputies does take a public stance, I fear it could add to the already increasing level of antisemitism. From an outside perspective, others could claim the only possible reason for the Board to take a view on such a divisive matter is if it thinks it can influence the government of Israel. Therefore, I fear public pronouncement by representatives of British Jews could be grist to the mill of the antisemites, who blame all Jews for policies of the government of Israel. Indeed, one example of antisemitism in the widely adopted IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) definition [of antisemitism] is ‘holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.’ It is just not up to those living outside Israel to claim the right to determine its internal policies and our views will not influence their policies anyway.

We all want peace in our Jewish homeland and I certainly feel proud that there is a country my family could go to, should the need arise, as sadly has been the case so often throughout our history. But those living there are far better placed to judge how to achieve that, than us over here trying to be armchair critics.

Time and again, Israel has proved it wants peace. It made peace with Egypt and Jordan and withdrew from Gaza in 2005. No parent in Israel wants send their children to the army, if it could possibly be avoided. But those are the facts of Israeli life. Our own children can travel from the UK to visit Israel and return home, but for the citizens of that country, peace is an existential goal.

And the prize for peace could be enormous. I cannot say whether the

Trump Peace Plan is a realistic basis for successful negotiations, but it

Trump Peace Plan is a realistic basis for successful negotiations, but it seems clear that an agreed peace deal could have enormous benefits for the Palestinian people, not just for Israelis. For example, the US proposals offer the potential to facilitate more than \$50 billion in new investment over ten years and Sovereign Wealth Funds in other Middle-Eastern countries have indicated they will invest significant sums to help regenerate a Palestinian state. After the Berlin Wall fell we saw how quickly investment in the formerly moribund and outdated East Germany developed to become a vibrant part of West Germany's economic powerhouse. The same could happen in the Middle East, with the breaking down of barriers. Just as German reunification was a matter for Germans and not Brits (much as Mrs Thatcher might have wanted otherwise!) economic and political reshaping of the Middle East is a matter for those who live there.

If we disagree with the route map, let us express our views privately, among friends or family, rather than fanning the flames of antisemitic hatred by publicly criticising our one and only Jewish state, which is constantly attacked by more than enough outside enemies.

I fully endorse the current position of the Board of Deputies to make no public comment on the Israeli Government's annexation proposals – and hope that will remain the case.