

ReViews¹ - 17th Issue:

2011: The Year We Punched Back on the Assault on Israel's legitimacy

This issue of 'ReViews' sheds light on this year's relatively successful efforts to contain the assault on Israel's legitimacy. These achievements are primarily the result of growing attention dedicated to the challenge, increasing comprehension of its global nature, and timely dedication of resources to fight against it. Indeed, all over the world, Israel and its allies have achieved small but significant 'triumphs.'

The assault on Israel's legitimacy was not stopped everywhere, and there are still too many anti-Israel events contributing to a dangerous ongoing 'drip effect.' Moreover, it is clear that the developments in the Middle East have also diverted the attention of the world from Israel. And yet, this year a coordinated global effort to combat delegitimization emerged on every front, from international forums to university campuses. Indeed, the efforts invested towards this purpose sparked the successful creation of an 'anti-delegitimization network.'

In the first part of this document – 'resources and inputs' – we will analyze the emergence of our network. Critical contributions to this emergence include the Government of Israel (GOI) and the Jewish world's mobilization against the political assault on Israel, progress in connecting between the hubs and catalysts within our network, and the widening of our network's base ('the broad tent approach').

In the second section – 'results and outputs' – we will describe a number of achievements in repelling the delegitimization campaign this year. These include: The failure of 'mega' propaganda events (e.g. the Gaza flotilla), accomplishments in the legal arena, success in extracting a 'price tag' for acts of delegitimization, neutralization of key events on the 'anti-Israel Calendar,' and progress in stifling the momentum of anti-Israel boycotts.

Finally, we would like to stress that **this year's low tide does not herald the end of the assault on Israel.** An upcoming issue of ReViews will point out emerging trends that are likely to shape the form of the assault on Israel's legitimacy in 2012. Indeed, Israel and its allies should not be intoxicated by achievements, and should be prepared to deal with abrupt changes in the make-up of the political assault on the Israel's foundations.

¹ ReViews is a product of the Reut Institute which collects publicly available citations and reports that illustrate political trends with strategic long-term significance.

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Background

The Reut Institute has been committed to responding to the assault on Israel's legitimacy since the fall of 2008. Our team has worked to catalyze an effective response to this challenge in the Jewish world, as well as in the Government of Israel (GOI.)

Reut’s conclusions are summarized in a number of documents: [Building a Political Firewall Against Israel’s Delegitimization](#), [The Gaza Flotilla – The Collapse of Israel’s Political Firewall](#), [London as a Case Study](#), and a [report on Reut's team study visit to the San Francisco Bay Area](#). In addition, we published a document on [the Broad Tent and Red Lines Approach](#) and another on [the BDS movement](#), aiming to expose its true character. This paper informed the following [YouTube clip produced by StandWithUs](#).

Indeed, the fight against the assault on Israel's legitimacy stepped up significantly in 2011 compared to previous years. Since the first Durban Conference in 2001, multiple episodes of organized anti-Zionist activity were interpreted by many in the Jewish communities as spontaneous and local challenges. The nature of the response, therefore, was in most cases reactive and tactical. In 2010, we saw the reawakening of the pro-Israel camp and its reorganization for the purpose of facing this new challenge. The Israeli and Jewish establishments have recognized the problem’s nature, gravity, and global reach, and have dedicated efforts and resources to the fight against it.

Consequently, Israel and its allies have achieved a number of impressive successes in countering the assault on Israel in 2011. Delegitimization was not stopped everywhere, and there are still numerous anti-Israel events with a dangerous ongoing 'drip effect.' Yet, this year saw the emergence of a coordinated global effort to combat the assault on Israel on every front, from international forums to university campuses.

Resources and inputs:

The emergence of an ‘anti-delegitimization network’²

In the past two years, **the new focus on the assault on Israel** by the GOI, as well as by Jewish and civil society organizations, **resulted in the launching of multiple initiatives and the investment of considerable resources all over the world.**

This shift in focus should not be taken lightly. **Traditionally, the primary threat to Israel’s existence was perceived to be its physical existence and the security of its citizens. Consequently, the areas of diplomacy, public relations and law were considered to be of secondary importance.** Often, response options were circumscribed to the world of *hasbara*, assuming that the ability to better explain Israel's actions would suffice.

In the document [Building a Political Firewall Against Israel’s Delegitimization](#), Reut noted that **“it takes a network to fight a network”³** such as the network generating the assault on Israel’s legitimacy. Consequently, Reut called for the pro-Israel camp to embrace a network logic. In an attempt to mobilize Israel and its allies to invest in this effort, Reut has been advocating since January 2010 for a number of policies to be adopted: Elevating delegitimization to national security priority status; focusing resources on the hubs of delegitimization; exposing delegitimizers’ true agenda (i.e. negating the Jewish people's right to self-determination); engaging with critics of Israeli policy in order to isolate delegitimizers; and adopting a 'broad tent' approach, which seeks to broaden support for Israel across the political spectrum. **Indeed, efforts invested in fighting the assault on Israel successfully sparked the creation of an ‘anti-delegitimization network,’ as described below.**

Common cause: Prioritizing the assault on Israel's Legitimacy

Cultivating a network requires Israel and its allies to share a ‘common consciousness,’ which can take the form of a shared goal, cause, or threat, **and to mobilize around this shared understanding.** Indeed, the GOI and Israeli and Jewish world organizations coalesced in identifying this assault on Israel as a top priority issue, tangibly manifested in structural changes and budget increases:

- **The Government of Israel established dedicated units across the political and security establishment** with the aim of monitoring and assessing the different aspects of the

² On social networks, see: Albert-László Barabási, **Linked: The New Science of Networks**, (Basic Books, 2002); Thomas L. Friedman, **The World Is Flat 3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century**, (Picador, 2007); Joshua Cooper Ramo, **The Age of the Unthinkable**, (Little, Brown and Company, 2009); Yochai Benkler, **The Wealth of Networks**, (Yale University Press, 2006); F. H Norris, "Community Resilience as a Metaphor, Theory, Set of Capacities and Strategy for Disaster Readiness", **American Journal for Community Psychology**, (Vol. 41, 2008); J.R.McNeill, **The Human Web, A Bird's Eye View of World History**, (Norton & Company, 2003); J. Surowiecki, **The Wisdom of Crowds**, (Anchor Books, 2005); Malcolm Gladwell, **The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference**, (Back Bay Books, 2002).

³ See: Dr. Boaz Ganor, **It Takes a Network to Beat a Network**; John Arquilla, **It Takes a Network**; or Dr. Pete Rustan, **Building an Integral Intelligence Network**.

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political assault against Israel. The GOI thus recognized the assault on the country's legitimacy as a key national security threat, and made the fight against it a priority. Examples of this prioritization include the establishment of a new dedicated unit in military intelligence, as reported in the Israeli press.

- **In the Jewish world, organizations reassessed strategies, allocated resources, and created new organs for this cause.** The most prominent example is the establishment of the [Israel Action Network](#) (IAN), a result of the collaboration between the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA). In addition, Jewish communities around the world reassessed their approach to their unique local characteristics of the assault on Israel primarily in London, San Francisco, Toronto, Orange County, and South Africa.
- **In the realm of activism,** pro-Israel civil society and non-governmental organizations realized that given delegitimization's roots in civil society, a response from the same arena would be the most effective. A variety of pro-Israel civil society actors subsequently volunteered their resources and expertise to the cause. Examples include the ongoing activity of 'veteran' organizations' such as [NGO Monitor](#), [StandWithUs](#), [the Zionist Federation](#), [The Israel Project](#), [the David Project](#), [The American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise](#) (AICE), and [BICOM](#) – and several new coalitions and partnerships like the [Cookbook to fight BDS on Campus](#).
- **In policy realms,** several Jewish and Israeli think tanks allocated resources to tackling delegitimization. Examples include the [Institute for National Security Studies](#) (INSS); the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI), which launched a policy-oriented project to study this issue; and the Institute for Policy and Strategy (IPS), which included this topic in its annual Herzliya Conference series.

Meeting points: Connecting our hubs and catalysts

Strengthening our network's 'hubs' and 'catalysts' require systematically creating 'meeting points.' Such meetings enhance the capabilities of pro-Israel activists in various global hubs by providing opportunities for them to exchange information, coordinate efforts, and generate a sense of urgency about the need to fight Israel's delegitimization. In addition, 'meeting points' enhance the connectivity of the network, facilitating its integration, helping shape a common language and shared guidelines, and enabling the creation of a flat and flexible structure.

Indeed, numerous events that took place this year served as such meeting points for the pro-Israel network. A number of examples follow:

- **The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Strategic Affairs partnered with civil society organizations** to conduct a strategic consultation titled "Building Partnerships and Synergies in Countering the Assault on Israel's Legitimacy." This event brought together 115 professional Jewish executives from more than 30 countries and resulted in the formation of a number of taskforces, some of which are still actively working to tackle different aspects of the assault on Israel's legitimacy (see [World Jewish Congress, 12/19/2011](#)). The event took place in Jerusalem in December 2010.
- **Reut itself partnered with the [American Jewish Committee](#)'s young leadership program, [ACCESS](#),** to launch a Global Network event that brought together anti-

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delegitimization activists from around the globe. This gathering saw the participation of 275 leader-activists from twenty countries, representing dozens of organizations from across the political spectrum and from all the major theaters of confrontation – including labor unions, academia, and the media ([AJC-ACCESS website](#).) The gathering took place in Washington, D.C. in May 2011.

- **The General Assembly (GA) of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)**, held in Denver, CO (6-8/11/11), dedicated several sessions to numerous aspects of the assault on Israel’s legitimacy, under the leadership of the IAN. The IAN also held a post-GA event titled *“Hotspots” of the Delegitimization Movement*, which saw the participation of selected groups of people from a number of ‘hubs’ of delegitimization, NGOs and the Israeli government.

- **Jewish organizations in London partnered with the British-Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) to organize the “We Believe in Israel” conference.** Drawing 1500 participants, the pro-Israel conference was the largest ever to take place in the UK. The event took place in London in May 2011.

This event was recently followed by [the Big Tent for Israel](#) conference that was held in Manchester. Organized by the local Jewish community and endorsed by the British Jewry communal organizations, the event was based on Reut’s document on [London as a hub of delegitimization](#).

- **“Helping the People of the Book become the People of Web”⁴** – several efforts were made to connect pro-Israel activists in order to educate them on the use of new media and social networks. Prominent examples include the [Like For Israel](#) – an online social media initiative and [the Hackathon](#) – an intensive practical workshop that brought 50 developers who created several useful smartphone applications. The [IAN](#) and the new-media department at the Prime Minister’s Office also conducted sessions and workshops on utilizing the internet, new media and social media.

- **September 2011 Education Blitz** – Reut has partnered with several i organizations, most notable are [MAKOM](#), Gil Troy (the Shalom Hartman Institute) and the World Jewish Diplomatic Corp, to catalyze an Israel education ‘blitz’ for September. That month a number of events, including the Palestinian campaign to seek UN recognition of statehood, coincided with the High Holidays, and placed Israel in the spotlight. Reut and its partners reached out to key individuals all over the world, including Jewish communal organization leaders, diplomats, high-level educators, and rabbis of major Jewish communities, who used this well-timed opportunity to talk to those many of Jews who they may otherwise see infrequently in order to re-engage them with Israel.

Widening our network’s base: The broad tent approach

The Reut Institute introduced the concepts of ‘broad tent’ and ‘red lines’ as a part of its strategic response to the assault on Israel’s legitimacy. The concepts undergird a strategy aimed at including in the pro-Israel camp the widest range of supporters of Israel’s legitimacy from across the political spectrum and from outside the Israeli and Jewish establishments. This strategy highlights the need to adopt a variety of approaches

⁴ Credit for this phrase goes to the IAN, who conducted workshop at [the JFNA GA on new and social media](#).

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against delegitimization and the ability of the Israeli and Jewish establishments to create ad-hoc partnerships with the civil society organizations.

Reut contends that broadening the tent is the pro-Israel camp's opportunity to drive a wedge between those whose ultimate goal is Israel's demise and those who principally support the legitimacy of its existence regardless of policy disagreements.

In this context, we specifically emphasized the need to harness the support of liberal and progressive circles. Their denunciation of delegitimization is particularly potent because they hold the banner of universal values and human rights – the same tenets that delegitimizers falsely claim to defend.

Critically, a broad tent is not an open tent. There are boundaries between legitimate criticism and acts of delegitimization. For this reason, becoming part of the tent should require a commitment to an acceptable code of conduct regarding discourse on Israel, delineated by 'red lines.'

- **Broadening the tent to new players and new partnerships:** Several private organizations and individuals who were previously NOT known to be part of the Israel advocacy groups launched independent initiatives to counter the assault on Israel's legitimacy. Examples include: [The Big Tent for Israel event](#) (Manchester); Middle East Network of Information and Action (MENIA) (Israel); 'What is Real' Student Project (Israel); Off the Map (Israel, U.S.); [Lawyers for Israel](#) (UK); the [Creative Community for Peace](#); the [Like for Israel Facebook](#) campaign, and Reframing Israel (U.S.).
- **Broadening the tent to include liberal and progressive circles:** Reut maintains that in order to effectively challenge delegitimization, the pro-Israel community must broaden its base by increasing its tolerance for legitimate criticism of the country's policies and seeking the support of progressive and liberal circles. Examples include: The Year of Civil Discourse initiative by the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC), which aims to promote respectful dialogue on Israel within the Jewish community ([JCRC website](#)), and 'Making the Progressive Case for Israel,' an initiative of the UK's **Labour Friends of Israel** aimed at bringing together progressive voices to speak in favor of Israel's democracy ([The Jewish Chronicle, 05/10/2011](#)).
- **Establishing red lines:** The broad tent approach must be compounded by 'red lines' that distinguish between legitimate criticism and acts of delegitimization. Reut believes that red lines should be delineated in a community-based deliberation. Indeed, several Jewish communal organizations have gone through a process of deliberation on this issue, for example: The [San Francisco Jewish Community Federation's policy on Israel-related programming](#), the [Hillel Guidelines for Campus Israel Activities](#), and [Prof. Gil Troy's initiative on Restoring Sanity to the Israel Discourse](#).

Results and outputs: Tangible achievements

The emergence of the pro-Israel network led to a number of achievements on different fronts. Some of these successes derive directly from network activities and can therefore easily be identified and tracked. Others were only indirectly influenced by the network and are therefore harder to trace.

Failure of the ‘mega propaganda events’ strategy this year

The delegitimization network strives to conduct ‘mega propaganda events’ to strike highly publicized blows to Israel’s legitimacy. The guiding strategy is to rally support from activists that are critical of specific Israel’s policies, such as the blockade on Gaza, which delegitimizers view as mere milestones on the road to Israel’s ultimate dismantlement.

The most prominent ‘mega propaganda event’ is the Gaza flotilla of May 31, 2010, which was part of the “Lifeline to Gaza” campaign. **The Gaza Flotilla of 2010 inspired several initiatives in 2011, which the Israeli government and the pro-Israel community effectively tackled.** However, following this episode, Reut predicted that “the flotilla strategy may have run its course” (see [Reut’s report on the 2010 flotilla](#).) Indeed, attempts to launch such ‘mega’ propaganda events this year failed resoundingly. Examples of such initiatives include:

- The “**Freedom flotilla II**” of July 2011 was foiled after Israel and its allies successfully rallied strong international opposition to the initiative, including from Greece, which prevented flotilla ships from leaving its ports ([Fox News, 07/04/2011](#)). Israeli diplomats' behind-the-scenes efforts as well the constant flow of information from civil society to the pro-Israel establishment were critical components of this success.
- **Propaganda display at Israel's international airport:** Activists from Europe planned a protest air convoy, a ‘flytilla’ to Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion Airport, whereby approximately 340 individuals would have flown to Israel to promote the Palestinian refugees’ “right of return.” The initiative was neutralized thanks to thorough intelligence preparation by the Israeli government ([The Independent, 07/09/2011](#)) and the flow of information from pro-Israeli activists to the establishment (see also [CiF Watch](#)).

Responding to the ‘Lawfare’ Attack

‘Lawfare’ is the attempt to combat Israel in the legal arena, often through acts that undermine Israel’s legitimacy as a sovereign state, brand it as a pariah entity and deter its decision makers and officers from taking the necessary means to protect the country. Issuing arrest warrants against Israeli decision-makers or by filing civil lawsuit against military generals are means used by the delegitimizers.

- The UK amended its controversial **universal jurisdiction law**, which was previously used by anti-Israel activists to issue arrest warrants against Israelis. This amendment reduces the prospects of issuing arrest warrants against Israeli political and military figures who will be traveling to Britain ([Jerusalem Post, 09/15/2011](#)).
- **The UN Palmer Report** on the 2010 Gaza Flotilla is a legal and moral victory for Israel. The report determined that the Israeli naval blockade on the Gaza Strip is legal, as “Israel faces a security threat from violent groups in Gaza.” The Palmer report’s conclusions were the result of the GOI’s constructive and transparent approach vis-à-vis the international

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investigation. In a further indication of this more transparent approach, Israel accepted two international observers as members of the Israeli Turkel Commission, which investigated the flotilla raid and the Gaza blockade.

- **Goldstone ‘repents’:** Judge Richard Goldstone, head of the UN panel that issued the infamous report on the Cast Lead operation accusing Israel of war crimes, published an op-ed on April 2011 in which he reconsidered the report’s allegations ([Washington Post, 4/2/2011](#)). This article, in addition to the results of the Palmer Report and the change in Israel's policy towards Gaza, ‘pulled the rug’ from under the flotilla strategy’s feet.

The IDF's transparency vis-à-vis the international community, which was demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt by the IDF’s thorough and self-critical reports (issued by the Military Advocate General Corps of the IDF), is believed to have affected Goldstone and caused him to retract his conclusions.

Quite likely, reports issues by a number of NGOs – for example, [the Response to the Goldstone Report](#) of the Meir Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Information Center and the [Lawfare Project](#) – also had an impact.

Putting a price tag and exposing the delegitimizers’ true agenda

This year, pro-Israel activists successfully managed to expose the true colors of some of Israel's delegitimizers and exact a ‘price’ for their actions. This thwarted the efforts of these delegitimizers to pretend to focus on ‘correcting’ Israeli policies, hiding the true essence of their struggle to assault Israel's political and moral foundations, and turned acts of delegitimization into a more risky endeavor.

- **The Dutch Foreign Minister, Uri Rosenthal,** conducted an inquiry over his government’s indirect funding of Electronic Intifada, a Website that, among other things, compares Israelis to Nazis, following a report by [NGO Monitor \(Jerusalem Post, 1/22/2011\)](#) and a newly formed coalition of bloggers and pro-Israel organizations in the Netherlands, which launched an intensive publicity campaign on the web.
- Israel’s Ministry of Defense **outlawed the London-based Palestinian Return Centre,** a Hamas-affiliated organization, also based on reports about its delegitimization activities, such as those by [Harry's Place](#), [the Meir Amit Terrorism and Intelligence Information Center](#), [Mapping the Organizational Sources of Global Delegitimization Campaign against Israel in the UK](#) by Ehud Rosen from the [Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#), and the [Reut report on London as a Case Study of a Hub of Delegitimization](#) .
- **“Irvine 11”** – Ten of the eleven University of California, Irvine students who interrupted a talk by Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Michael Oren were convicted for conspiring to plan the disruption ([Los Angeles Times, 09/24/2011](#)). The Jewish Community of Orange County played an important role in bringing about this outcome.
- **The Berkeley Daily Planet was forced to cease print operations (2/10)** – Local activist John Gertz used his website [www.DPWatchDog.com](#) to mount a successful campaign against the publication, which was the most important mouthpiece for the BDS Movement in the Bay Area.

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Studying the ‘anti-Israel calendar’

This past year, the Israeli and Jewish establishments carried out impressive preparations for recurring events on the ‘anti-Israel calendar,’ and managed to render them practically irrelevant. At times, the decision to avoid media coverage by refraining from staging public counter-events proved to be the most effective. Below are a number of successful examples:

- **The neutralization of “Durban III Conference”:** This UN meeting was held in commemoration of the first Durban Conference held in South Africa in 2001. The Durban conferences are used as a platform for displays of anti-Semitic hatred, and the Durban II conference even hosted the Iranian president, Ahmadinejad. This event did not receive any substantial media coverage this year and had no impact.

Following an intensive diplomatic campaign by the Israeli government and pro-Israel organizations, fourteen countries ended up boycotting the meeting ([Jerusalem Post, 9/23/2011](#)). In addition, Jewish and pro-Israel organizations conducted extensive campaigns to expose the hypocrisy of the Durban III event (examples include the [We Have a Dream](#) and [Perils of Global Intolerance](#) conferences).

- **Unmasking the Russell Tribunal:** The Russell Tribunal on Palestine of September 2011, which held a session in South Africa, “considered” whether “Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian people fits the international legal definitions of the crime of apartheid.”

The local Jewish community's two-pronged strategy, which entailed deliberately paying little attention to this event while collaborating with [NGO Monitor](#), proved effective. The event did not receive substantial media coverage, and what publicity it did generate largely unmasked the true agenda of the organizers: namely, to promote the singling out of Israel and branding it as a pariah.

- **Israel hate week on campuses fails:** Campuses have become an important arena on which the assault on Israel’s legitimacy is promoted by radical forces, which invest their resources in these ‘greenhouses’ of the future liberal and progressive circles. The main instrument used in recent years for this purpose is the [Israel Apartheid Week](#) (IAW) event, with its stated goal of describing the State of Israel as racist and encouraging a boycott against it.

Israel and its allies put forth a tremendous amount of effort in this arena in the past year, and this has likely significantly contributed to the slow momentum of 2011 IAW. These efforts come from the ongoing commitment of student organizations, such as the [Israel on Campus Coalition](#) (ICC); [Hillel](#); the [Union of Jewish Students](#) (UJS); [World Union for Jewish Students](#) (WUJS); and new initiatives and platforms, including [What Is Real](#), [MENIA](#), and the [BDS Cookbook](#).

Boycott momentum derails

The boycott campaign against Israel claims to seek to influence Israeli policies but is in practice clearly aligned with platforms that oppose Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state (see Reut's document [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \(BDS\) Movement Promotes Delegitimization of Israel](#)). This year, the vast majority of boycott attempts were rejected outright or declared illegal. In other cases, the boycott movement hailed as victories a number of boycott resolutions that were subsequently reversed or

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never implemented (the best source on this issue is the [Divest This!](#) blog). Of dozens of failures, notable examples include:

- The government of the **state of Victoria in Australia** asked the Australian consumer watchdog to investigate the BDS Movement's boycott of businesses with ties to Israel, including the local branch of Israeli chocolate shop Max Brenner, for suspected violation of local competition laws ([The Australian, 08/08/2011](#)). Moreover, **the Green NSW Party officially abandoned recently the support for Israel boycott** ([read here](#)).
- The **UK's Family Courts Union** rejected two anti-Israel boycott propositions that were presented last Yom Kippur (10/8/2010). The first expressed support for the BDS movement and encouraged members to join it, and the second sought to align the organization with the position of the Trade Union Council in support of anti-Israeli boycotts ([The Jewish Chronicle, 10/19/2011](#)).
- The **British National Union of Journalists** (NUJ) and **University and College Union** (UCU), as well as South Africa's University of Johannesburg (UJ), all passed boycott resolutions and later reversed them or did not implement them ([Divest This! blog](#)).

Epilogue

Reut's strategic analysis highlights the need to adopt a variety of approaches against the political assault on Israel. For this reason, we have for the most part refrained from evaluating the different strategies adopted by pro-Israel players.

We would like to stress that **this year's low tide does not herald the end of the assault on Israel**. An upcoming document of Reut will point out emerging trends that are likely to shape the form of the assault on Israel's legitimacy in 2012. Indeed, Israel and its allies should not be intoxicated by achievements, and should be prepared to deal with abrupt changes in the make-up of the political assault on the Israel's foundations.

The End