Summer reading list: Thought-provoking essays on Jews, the Israel-Hamas War, and Iran

written by David M. Weinberg | 11.07.2025

Occasionally, it is useful to take a step back from the breakneck-speed flow of daily news with its never-ending fare of political mudslinging and reportage on pain and suffering, and instead read long-form essays that reflect on more substantial ideas and long-term trends.

Here is a summer reading roundup of 17 recent deep-think articles on a range of issues: the Gaza and Iran wars, US-Israel relations, global antisemitism, Israeli society, and more.

Summer reading list

1. "Iran's Target Isn't Just Israel; It's Us," by Mathias Döpfner, chair and CEO of Axel Springer (*Politico*). Döpfner explains why the entire West should celebrate Israel's strike against Iranian nuclear weapons facilities – because Iran leads the forces of tyranny against the forces of freedom. This most important narrative is still not sufficiently understood worldwide.
2. "How Bibi Buggered On to Victory," by Prof. Edward N. Luttwak (*Tablet*). The dean of American defense strategists argues that Prime Minister Netanyahu's tenacity, against "howling mobs in Israel and around the world that demanded a ceasefire and the Israeli prime minister in handcuffs," has led to Israel's conclusive victories in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. To this, he might now add Iran.
3. "From Patronage to Partnership: Re-envisioning US-Israel Strategic Cooperation during the Second Trump Administration," by Dr. Raphael Ben-Levi (Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy). A brave and deep dive into the future of American military assistance to Israel. The scholar argues that Israel must transition over the next decade from US military financing toward greater independence in defense acquisitions and its own defense industrial base, alongside more

cooperation with the US in defense innovation and start-ups.

4. "The Dramatic Operations Israel Coordinated with the US – and Those It Didn't," by Itay Ilnai (*Israel Hayom*). The longest and most in-depth investigation (in two parts) of US-Israel relations during the Gaza war, specifically the restraints that the Biden administration slapped on Israel and how Israel maneuvered with and around them. Also, how Jerusalem managed to persuade Washington to support the ground invasion of Lebanon.
5. "The Israeli Raid on Syria that Exposed the Weakness of Hardened Targets," by Maj. (ret.) John Spencer, chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute at West Point (Mosaic). A revealing and detailed study of the September 8, 2024, IDF commando assault on the underground missile-production facility near Masyaf, which was making precision-guided missiles for Hezbollah. Spencer says that the raid was a spectacular demonstration of Special Forces capability with profound strategic implications, showing that Iran and its network of proxies must reassess the survivability of even their most hardened infrastructure.
6. "Hamas's Human Shield Strategy in Gaza," by Andrew Fox and Salo Aizenberg (Henry Jackson Society). This study represents the chapter that is missing in all UN and NGO reports – a comprehensive analysis of the use of human shield tactics by Hamas: how Hamas has systematically weaponized Gaza's population and urban landscape to achieve both tactical and strategic objectives.
7. "The Gaza Famine Myth," by Michael Ames (Free Press). How lazy journalism, bad data, and skewed statistics fueled accusations of war crimes against Israel. A key culprit in this calumny: Samantha Power, Biden administration director of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
8. "To Save Itself from International Isolation, Israel Must Hold on to the West Bank," by Rafi DeMogge (Mosaic). The author makes the diplomatic case against territorial concessions, arguing that a Palestinian state would lead to war, not peace. Any Palestinian state would almost certainly find itself in armed conflict with Israel, either as a belligerent party or as a passive victim unable to exert full sovereignty within its borders and restrain terrorist groups like Hamas.
9. "The Golden Age of American Jews Is Ending," by Franklin Foer (*Atlantic*). A sad but undeniable chronicling of how antisemitism on the Right and

the Left threatens to bring to a close an unprecedented period of safety and prosperity for Jewish Americans – and to demolish the liberal order they helped establish.

10. "They're Coming After Us," by John Podhoretz (Commentary). A searing lament of how emotionally unprepared American Jews were for the outbreak of anti-Jewish activism on October 7 – on college campuses, at the businesses they own and work at, at the shuls in which they pray, and in their homes and on the streets. It is a national onslaught that has no precedent in American history or American life.
11. "Antisemitism and the Politics of the Chant," by Cynthia Ozick (*Wall Street Journal*). This sizzling indictment, the shortest article on my list, is by who many consider to be the greatest American Jewish writer of this generation. It ruminates on the novel sounds of today's hatred, like the beat of drums to sloganeering such as 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' and 'Say it loud, say it clear, we don't want no Zionists here.'

    - "Multiplied by a thousand throats, these rumbles and roars let out a crashing thunder, a delirium of dervishlike self-intoxication, rushing on in oceanic waves, undermining reason and drowning thought. Here there is no history, no honest journalism, no honorable discourse, no argument, no analytic engagement. Not so much as a coherent sentence. What we are hearing is the cruel zeal of an up-to-date hypnotic cultism: the politics of chant."

12. "Antisemitism Is an Early-Warning Siren for Western Society," Douglas Murray, interviewed by Brendan O'Neill (Spiked-UK). On the scapegoating of Israel, the fascism of Hamas, and the moral disintegration of the West – based on Murray's upcoming book on these topics. "In Britain, we have hundreds of thousands of people who are sympathetic to Hamas.… We need to be able to say that if you want to bring down the West, if you want to kill the Jews, if you hate liberal democracy and you want to subvert it, then there are lots of places you can live, but this ain't one of them."
13. "The War Against the War Against the Jews," by Danielle Pletka (Commentary). The American Enterprise Institute scholar outlines necessary countermeasures to antisemitism – "to weaponize antisemitism

against its perpetrators and sponsors" and to institutionalize the kinds of protections imperative to keeping Jews safe in America. These range from congressional investigations and administrative sanctions to far-reaching legislative action and immigration reform.

14. "How Qatar Bought America," by Frannie Block and Jay Solomon (Free Press). The definitive, exhaustive study of how the tiny Gulf nation spent almost $100 billion to establish its influence in Congress, universities, newsrooms, think tanks, and corporations – and what it wants in return. Frightening.
15. "How Harvard Can Reform Itself," by Prof. Gil Troy (Tablet). A bold, near-heretical call for ending the tenure system! The prominent public intellectual and presidential historian, who is also one of Israel's greatest defenders on the global stage (as well as being a regular op-ed contributor to The Jerusalem Post), builds on the failures of Harvard to combat antisemitism and anti-Americanism to argue that lifetime guarantees of academic employment produce torpor and ideological extremism.
16. "The Israeli Reservists Who Just Won't Quit," by Daniel Polisar (Mosaic). The Shalem College leader painstakingly and upliftingly demonstrates how the IDF's citizen soldiers are revitalizing the Zionist ideal. He details the sacrifices of these "unsung heroes" and their families, and he demolishes the misleading claim frequently made in the media that reservists are showing up for duty in ever-declining numbers and that the reserve army is "on the brink of collapse."
17. "Why Are Israelis So Happy?" by Natan Sharansky and Gil Troy (*Tablet*). In a world of globalized alienation, secular and religious Israelis alike remain proudly connected to their story as a people, through rituals as old as the Passover Seder and as new as the letters soldiers write before they go into battle, sometimes sadly their last. "A healthy commitment to community, connectedness, and history anchors us. It motivates us to defend ourselves when necessary, while inspiring us always to build a better world.

Published in the Jerusalem Post, on July 11, 2025