

The Second Mutation: Israel and Political Anti-Semitism

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inFocus Quarterly

Spring 2008

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/114/the-second-mutation-israel-and-political-anti>

In 1948, the creation of the State of Israel appeared a viable solution to the age-old problem of anti-Semitism. After the Holocaust, it was reasoned, the world's Jewry would have a safe haven from hatred.

This was not to be, however. Over the 60 years of Israel's existence, a new strain of anti-Semitism has evolved that targets Israel and Zionism. Virulent attacks on the Jewish state have assumed the trope of a political discourse. This allows such attacks to pass as constitutionally protected and socially-acceptable criticism. In truth, this new form of attack is merely a new adaptation of the age-old virus of anti-Semitism. But, as the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently declared: "Anti-Semitic bigotry is no less morally deplorable when camouflaged as anti-Israelism or anti-Zionism." The virus has already spread throughout America's institutions of higher learning and is poised to infect the country at large.

The Two Mutations

Generally speaking, viruses persist when they evolve faster than their hosts' immune system. Anti-Semitism has persisted over the last two centuries by evolving with changing social attitudes. The hatred of Jews adapted to 19th century attitudes toward religious discrimination, and 20th century sensitivities toward racial discrimination.

During the mid-19th century, changing European attitudes towards religion made anti-Semitism appear somewhat antiquated. The term "anti-Semitism," itself, was popularized by German intellectuals in an effort to eschew Jew-hatred for religious reasons. With the help of theories popularized by German journalist Wilhelm Marr, anti-Semites responded by injecting a pseudo-scientific racial component into the debate. Marr and his associates founded the Anti-Semitic League in order to "save our German fatherland from becoming completely Judaized, and render residence in it supportable to the posterity of its aborigines." This new racist mutation provided those who hated Jews with a new justification that deflected charges of religious backwardness, thus enabling the virus of anti-Semitism to adapt and spread.

A century later, anti-Semitism evolved again in response to changing social sensitivities. In the post-Holocaust environment, with fresh memories of Adolf Hitler's "final solution" for the "Jewish race," racist Jew-hatred was no longer acceptable. Indeed, it had become abhorrent in the Western world. In order to adapt to this change, anti-Semitism mutated for a second time - this time from racist to political. The mutation began in the Soviet Union, but quickly spread worldwide. Thus began the new form of anti-Semitism in the 20th century: an old bigotry disguised as a substantive political ideology that justified hatred of the Jewish state of Israel.

Through this second mutation, traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes and defamations are repackaged in contemporary political terms. Attacks against Israel are launched in language previously employed to demean Jews. As Harvard's Ruth Wisse observed, "contemporary anti-Zionism has absorbed all the stereotypes and foundational texts of fascist and Soviet anti-Semitism and applied them to the Middle East." Specifically, Israel is castigated in familiar stereotypes: greedy, power-hungry, malignant, and conspiratorial.

The French philosopher Pierre-Andre Tagueref explains further, "The charge that Jews have a will to dominate, or are involved in a 'plot to conquer the world,' is recycled in this fantasy, as is the long-stereotypical rumble of accusation: 'The Jews are guilty,' which for more than half a century has been

repeatedly translated into 'the Zionists are guilty,' 'Zionism is guilty,' or 'Israel is guilty.'

Israel and Contemporary Global Anti-Semitism

In under six decades, anti-Zionism has become the dominant form of anti-Semitism around the world. In 2004, the U.S. Department of State identified four sources of global anti-Semitism:

- *Traditional European Anti-Semitism.* This form of anti-Semitism is associated with stereotypes of Jews as powerful and conspiratorial. Although not explicitly acknowledged by the State Department, this form of anti-Semitism has deep roots in Christianity.
- *Muslim Anti-Semitism.* This form of Jew-hatred has substantially worsened in recent years, thanks to the rise of the ideology of radical Islam, which exhibits equal hatred toward Jews, Israel, and Zionism.
- *Anti-Israelism.* This form of hatred against the Jewish state, in the State Department's analysis, "crosses the line" into anti-Semitism.
- *Anti-Globalism.* This frequently blurs the borders of anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Zionism into a lethal form of hate. For example, at one anti-globalism rally in Porto Allegre, Brazil, marchers wore t-shirts showing the Star of David twisted into Nazi swastikas, and two Jewish peace activists were assaulted.

Of these four, all but one (the traditional European strain) synthesizes anti-Jewish sentiments with anti-Israel invective. Thus, while traditional European anti-Semitism is conceptually and historically distinct from anti-Zionism, it supplies many of the stereotypes and defamations upon which contemporary anti-Zionism is based.

Anti-Zionism vs. Anti-Semitism

Critics of Israel insist that criticism of Israel is distinct from anti-Semitism. To a large degree, they are correct. However, some forms of Israel-bashing are merely anti-Semitism in disguise. Anti-Zionism can become covert or political anti-Semitism when the criticism casts Israel as the "Jew of nations."

In terms of formal anti-discrimination principles, anti-Zionism becomes anti-Semitic when it instantiates lesser treatment of the Jewish nation on the basis of its Jewish character. This would include cases in which anti-Zionism is based on a conscious or even unconscious anti-Judaism that manifests itself in the maligning of the Jewish state.

In terms of substantive anti-discrimination principles, anti-Zionism becomes anti-Semitic when it promotes the moral, political, or military subordination of Jews and the Jewish state. This would include the notion of *Dhimmitude*, in which Muslim states are seen as superior to a Jewish one. Indeed, Islamists view Israel as a lesser state simply because of its Jewish character. Anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism can also be observed in recent claims, made by Palestinian mouthpieces from the Fatah and Hamas factions alike, that Israel should not be a Jewish nation.

Accordingly, the following can be characterized as anti-Semitism:

- Anti-Jewish stereotypes and defamations to characterize the Jewish state, such as notions of the Jew as greedy, devious, conspiratorial, and power-hungry. This includes the canard of the "Jewish cabal."
- Double standards for Israel vis-a-vis the other countries to evaluate the claims of the Jewish people to national self-determination or statehood. Demonization and double standards may be combined in

various ways, including attempts to equate Israel with Nazi Germany or other historically maligned regimes.

- Conflation of Jews with Israel for purposes of special castigation or attack. A recent example is the allegation of "neo-conservative" Jews in the U.S. government acting on Israel's behalf. It might also include explicitly or implicitly holding individual Jews responsible for Israeli actions, regardless of actual complicity. Similarly, it would include cases in which American Jewish college students are accused of killing Palestinian babies, just as their parents may have been accused of killing Jesus.

Given the extent to which recent anti-Zionism meets one or more of these criteria, it is not surprising that anti-Zionism has a direct correlation with anti-Semitism. In a 2006 study, Edward H. Kaplan and Charles A. Small surveyed citizens of 10 European countries and found a close correlation between anti-Israeli views and anti-Semitic views. In a sense, the anti-Zionist who denies being an anti-Semite is like the anti-papist who denies being anti-Catholic. The two forms of animus may be conceptually distinct, but they have a high rate of correlation.

The U.S. and the New Anti-Semitism

Domestically, the U.S. has not experienced political anti-Semitism to the extent that the Middle East, Europe, Australia, and Canada have in recent years. Nevertheless, the new anti-Semitism has made inroads on American college campuses.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recently declared that anti-Semitism has become, once again, a "serious problem" on many college campuses nationwide, requiring further attention. In its 2006 report, the Commission noted a number of disturbing incidents nationwide.

At San Francisco State University, a peaceful 2002 Jewish peace rally turned ugly when a mob of counter-demonstrators threatened violence, yelling, "Hitler did not finish the job," and "Get out or we will kill you." On that same campus, an anti-Israel flyer was distributed portraying a dead baby and the words, "Canned Palestinian Children Meat. Slaughtered According to Jewish Rites Under American License..."

At the University of California at Irvine, pro-Israel and Jewish students have been subjected to stalking, rock throwing, and various forms of intimidation. A Holocaust memorial was damaged, and signs have been posted on campus showing a Star of David dripping with blood. Speakers at campus events have chastised Jews for arrogance, and even spoke of the distinction between "good Jews" and "bad Jews." Last year, a Jewish student at a Palestinian rally was told, in a chilling reference to Zionist Jews, "There will be peace when you are gone."

More recently, at the University of California at Santa Cruz, a group of campus demonstrators accosted a Jewish freshman wearing a Star-of-David necklace. The hecklers demanded: "Do you know how many Palestinian babies are dead because of you?"

On some university campuses, Jewish students have been so harassed by anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism that they refrain from identifying themselves as Jewish; avoid speaking in support of Israel; or decline to attend campus events where anti-Israeli or anti-Jewish agitation is anticipated. Some even transfer out of institutions where they are uncomfortable as Zionists or Jews.

Anti-Semitism and Academic Freedom

Ironically, American Jewish college students fear not only the anti-Semites themselves, but also the anti-Semites' academic defenders, who attack, discredit, and marginalize anyone who speaks out against those who promote anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. If anyone dares challenge these professors, they are branded as

enemies of academic freedom.

Similarly, those who complain of anti-Semitism on campus are branded as "silencers" or "bullies." Professors Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer, authors of the much-maligned book, *The Israel Lobby*, dubbed anti-Semitism complaints as "the Great Silencer." Yet these charges did not silence Walt and Mearsheimer's international book tour or halt their October 2007 appearance before the British House of Lords.

Recently, a self-styled "Ad Hoc Committee to Defend the University" circulated a petition condemning "defenders of Israel" for their putative "attacks on academic freedom." The Ad Hoc Committee condemned recent allegations of anti-Semitism, the efforts to broaden the definition of anti-Semitism, the filing of certain civil rights lawsuits, and even attempts to achieve intellectual balance and diversity in academia. The Ad Hoc Committee has gathered more than 600 signatures for their petition, including a number of well-known, influential academics from institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Brown, Cornell, Pennsylvania, M.I.T., Michigan, Northwestern, and Berkeley.

Increasingly, due to this type of on-campus bullying, students have been warned not to use the word "anti-Semitism." This is a particularly dangerous development. In the words of the Civil Rights Commission's Campus Anti-Semitism Public Education Campaign: "Silence is an Ally of Hate."

According to pro-Israel professors, it is now adventurous, if not risky, to speak out against anti-Semitism in America's institutions of higher learning. On one campus, it was even considered risky to openly discuss recorded acts of anti-Semitism; members of the faculty met in secret to discuss the rise of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism on campus.

The "Most Dangerous" Anti-Semitism

This spread of political anti-Semitism, shrouded under the cover of anti-Zionism, should not be surprising. As author Susan Sontag observed, "everything that can circulate does, and every problem is, or is destined to become, worldwide." The spread of this mutation is particularly troublesome at a time when most Americans are not old enough to remember the Holocaust or the founding of the state of Israel. By adopting the characteristics of socially acceptable and legally protected activity, this political form of anti-Semitism is harder to identify and to defeat than its earlier forms. As such, it might be the most dangerous mutation of anti-Semitism yet. But it can be defeated, as long as we are unafraid to call it by its true name.

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