

**Neither Auschwitz nor the Brotherhood of Mankind:
Some Reflections on European Anti-Semitism
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In the last five years Europe experienced a dramatic increase in anti-Semitic incidents. Discourse once reputed unacceptable is now routinely voiced in mainstream circles, the press, and the corridors of power. This article sets out to explain the nature of this phenomenon, the reasons for its recurrence, and its severity.

What kind of anti-Semitism?

Anti-Semitism has resurfaced in Europe. Though attacks against Jewish persons, institutions and property have been steadily on the rise since late 2000, there is much disagreement about their nature. Surveys show that traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes are resilient.¹ Nevertheless, the bulk of incidents, whether involving physical violence or abusive literature, are not easily recognized as anti-Semitic due to the context in which they usually emerge, namely the return of conflict in the Middle East and its emotional impact on European audiences. When the motives behind the incident appear rooted in some grievance – real or imaginary – arising from the Middle East, most Europeans are inclined to dismiss them as merely ‘anti-Israel’ and not anti-Semitic.² John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt have recently endorsed this view in the *London Review of Books*:

¹ Since October 2000, surveys on European anti-Semitism abound. See below for specific references to some of them.

² Four European surveys were conducted to date by the Anti-Defamation League: two in 2002, one in 2004 and one in 2005. Thus, the 2002 survey is divided into two: one five-country poll was done in June 2002, including Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, and the UK: see http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/European_Attitudes.pdf; a second one, including Austria, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland, was conducted in September 2002; see http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/EuropeanAttitudesPoll-10-02.pdf. The 2004 survey polled all ten countries together. See *Attitudes Toward Jews, Israel and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in Ten European Countries*, April 2004, available at http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/european_attitudes_april_2004.pdf. The most recent release, in June 2005, covers 12 countries, including for the first time data from Poland and Hungary: see *Attitudes Toward Jews in Twelve European Countries*, June 2005, available at http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/european_attitudes_may_2005.pdf. Several other surveys, taken by different agencies and media outlet confirm these findings, both at the national and European levels. See below.

² The 2002 ADL surveys found that 62% of Europeans believed that recent acts of violence against Jews were the product of anti-Israel sentiments, not of anti-Semitic or traditional anti-Jewish feelings.

No one would deny that there is anti-Semitism among European Muslims, some of it provoked by Israel's conduct towards the Palestinians and some of it straightforwardly racist. But this is a separate matter with little bearing on whether or not Europe today is like Europe in the 1930s. Nor would anyone deny that there are still some virulent autochthonous anti-Semites in Europe (as there are in the United States) but their numbers are small and their views are rejected by the vast majority of Europeans.³

The tendency to minimize the nature of a threat hinders efforts to formulate a right response.

Along with the prejudice therefore comes denial of its occurrence. Extreme right wing and neo-Nazi manifestations of anti-Semitism are readily recognized and universally condemned, but there is disagreement on other expressions of anti-Jewish prejudice, due to its source as well as its substance. Some disagreement may no doubt depend on definitions. Anti-Semitism, after all, is a term coined in 1879 by German author, Wilhelm Marr, to define a racially-based hatred of Jews. The prejudice he advocated was rooted in racial theories, and surmised that Jews were characterized by certain innate traits – degenerate and pernicious for society. The corollary to this new type of anti-Jewish hatred, which had only scant historical precedents before Jewish emancipation at the turn of the 19th Century, was Nazism: if Jews had innate (and sinister) qualities, assimilation or conversion could not redeem them. Their pernicious influence on society could only be contained through extermination. All prior forms of anti-Jewish prejudice assumed that the Jews could become acceptable to society if they only divested themselves of their beliefs or social patterns. Racially based prejudice assumed that Jews were incorrigibly dangerous – hence unredeemable – and therefore had to be exterminated. Previous hatred, whether inspired by Christian theology or by liberal or Marxist doctrines, postulated that Jews could be redeemed – by embracing the dominant culture or faith – and could be discriminated and persecuted for their refusal to conform. Therefore, anti-Semitism is a term that expresses only a certain prejudice against Jews – and it is therefore grossly

³ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, 'The Israel Lobby', in *The London Review of Books*, 28, 6, 23 March 2006, available at http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01_.html.

inaccurate to suggest that it applies to other ‘Semites’ as well.⁴ Some among those who deny that there is a serious anti-Semitic threat in Europe today may indeed be using the term in its accurate meaning – and in a sense may therefore have a point. At the same time, the term has become accepted in common parlance to refer to other kinds of anti-Jewish prejudice,⁵ and while anti-Semitism proper may be a marginal phenomenon, other forms of anti-Jewish hatred are not: referring to them as ‘anti-Semitism’ may not be historically accurate, but it is both understandable and sensible.

Even as much of the bickering is about terminology, the refusal to acknowledge a return of anti-Jewish prejudice in mainstream European society is about substance as well. Presuming that anti-Jewish prejudice can only manifest itself under the guise of a racially driven hatred that always and invariably leads to Auschwitz prevents European societies from acknowledging anything but the most glaring expressions of anti-Jewish outrage, preferring to downplay or ignore its other, and currently more widespread manifestations. It should be self-evident that between Auschwitz and social harmony there are infinite shades of gray. Yet the problem is precisely in recognizing that the racially-driven anti-Semitism that eventually begat Nazism was neither the first nor the only form of anti-Jewish prejudice in the history of Europe. And that immunization against it does not necessarily guarantee that other forms of prejudice will not recur.

Defining current anti-Semitism thus requires caution. Not everyone agrees on its nature, causes, and possible remedies, despite a clear correlation between the Middle East news cycle and the resurgence of anti-Semitic prejudice. Even strong critics of Israel acknowledge that correlation. What is disputed is its nature: What constitutes an act of anti-Semitism; what causes it; and what can be done about it.

Clarity is therefore required.

⁴ Despite claims to the contrary, the term does not refer to ‘Semite’ people, which, as much as Aryans, exist only in the discredited theories that gave rise to scientific racism. Arab peoples, thus, are not ‘Semites’ (neither are Jews). There are only Semitic languages. Anti-Semitism however, plainly focused on Jews only. See Bernard Lewis, ‘The New Anti-Semitism’, in *The American Scholar*, Vol. 75, Number 1, Winter 2006, pp 28-33.

⁵ For simplicity’s sake, anti-Semitism will be used to refer to all forms of anti-Jewish hatred.

There are two schools of thought. The first claims that there has not been such a poisonous anti-Semitic atmosphere since the 1930s. This time, Israel is in the eye of the storm: unfavourable, if not outright hostile, characterisations of Israel in the public sphere are imbued with anti-Semitic prejudice. Behind them there sometimes lurks a more sinister agenda, masquerading hatred as the right to criticise the Jewish state. Increasing anti-Jewish hostility results from Israel's characterization as evil in media reports and public utterances, which sometimes conflate anti-Semitic tropes and anti-Israel rhetoric. Pointing this out does not aim to gag criticism of Israel. It aims to expose its worst excesses and their resemblance to traditional anti-Jewish prejudice.

There is much evidence to back this view. Literature,⁶ newspapers' cartoons,⁷ politicians' statements,⁸ public attitudes and opinion polls show the ubiquity of prejudice, the return of old anti-Semitic tropes in the public sphere, and the complicit silence of pundits and policy makers in creating this atmosphere. One example captures the mood in Europe today: in late September 2004, UK Ambassador to Italy, Sir Ivor Roberts, was reported to have made, at a closed door conference, a number of controversial remarks, among which one stood out as anti-Semitic. The Times of London said the ambassador had said that 'the Bush Administration was subject to "conditioning" and "pressure" from Israel and "the Jewish lobby"'. Senior diplomats were stunned at the remarks, even though they were made under what he assumed to be the protection of anonymity rules.'⁹ The ambassador did not incur in the kind of sanctions that an ethnic slur against other minorities would have earned him and this despite the fact that there was no official denial that those

⁶ An article posted on its website by MPACUK (at www.mpacuk.org) recently stated that 'The Jewish campaign to effectively silence any critic of Israel may well be the biggest contributing factor in this birth of world terrorism we see today.' James J. David, 'War on Terror should focus at source'.

⁷ For a selection of anti-Semitic cartoons published in mainstream Western media, see for example http://www.honestly-concerned.org/Infomaterial/Western_Cartoons.pdf; for anti-Semitism in the Arab media, see http://www.adl.org/cartoon_campaign/default_slide_show.asp.

⁸ Labour MP Tam Dalyell (his remarks appeared in Vanity Fair soon after the Iraq war) accused Prime minister, Tony Blair, of being unduly influenced by a 'cabal' of 'Jewish advisors'. Dalyell was subsequently defended by groups on the extreme left (see <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/may2003/lab-m22.shtml>), extreme right (<http://www.nationalvanguard.org/story.php?id=119>), and by Islamist sites such as Islam Online (<http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2003-05/04/article07.shtml>), and Radio Islam (<http://www.radioislam.org/islam/english/jewishp/britain/dalyell1.htm>).

⁹ See Philip Webster, Tom Baldwin and Richard Owen 'Envoy's al-Qaeda gaffe sows discord' in *The Times of London*, September 21, 2004, p. 14.

remarks had been made. The Foreign Office official line was to hide behind the fact that the remarks were made under Chatham House rules.¹⁰ As of March 2006, Sir Roberts is still serving as UK ambassador to Rome.

The Roberts incident illustrates one growing trend in Europe: traditional themes of anti-Semitic prejudice—the Jewish conspiracy to rule the world,¹¹ linking Jews with money and media,¹² the hooked-nose stingy Jew,¹³ the blood libel,¹⁴ the disparaging use of Jewish symbols,¹⁵ or traditional Christian anti-Jewish imagery¹⁶—are used to describe Israel’s actions, and are becoming acceptable again in mainstream circles. Jewish support for Israel is questioned on grounds of dual loyalty¹⁷ – another typical anti-Jewish theme. An example of how anti-Semitic tropes creep into discourse on Israel is provided by an Op-Ed written by Jemima Khan in November 2000 – when the Palestinian Intifadah was barely a month old. Khan’s article contains all the classic elements of current anti-Semitism: she first denies that she believes in conspiracy theories, but then clarifies that when it comes to the media coverage of the Middle East conflict she has to make an exception due to the ‘influence of the Zionist lobby’. She then proceeds to remark, matter-of-factly, that Jews control much of the media and Hollywood in the US, surmising that it is the Jews who conspire to distort information. When she mentions her horror for Muslim calls to kill the Jews, she blames extremism on the understandable rage Muslims must feel vis-à-vis American foreign policy (and American media coverage): if the Jews are in danger, it is because of their misdeeds and consorting in the shadows. She then gives a finishing touch to the article by pre-emptively dismissing any

¹⁰ UK Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, in a letter to the British Board of Deputies representative, Neville Nagler, wrote that ‘Given this, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an article written by someone who did not take part in the conference, based on selective quotation of alleged remarks.’ Jack Straw, unpublished letter to Neville Nagler, 18 October 2004.

¹¹ See Jemima Khan, ‘Telling the Truth about Israel’, in *The Guardian*, 1 November 2000.

¹² See the *New Statesman*’s cover story (see Appendix I, slide 3), Dennis Sewell, ‘A Kosher Conspiracy?’, in *The New Statesman*, 14 January 2002.

¹³ See cartoon selection on <http://holywar.org/>.

¹⁴ See Michele Giannelli, ‘Non Resurrexit’, Cartoon, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 31 March 2002 and Giorgio Forattini, ‘Tanks at the Manger’, Cartoon, *La Stampa*, 3 April 2002.

¹⁵ See for example the front cover of *The New Statesman*, 14 January 2002, with its cover story, ‘A Kosher Conspiracy?’, which pictured a golden Star of David piercing through the Union Jack, Great Britain’s flag.

¹⁶ See above, Footnote 14.

¹⁷ Melanie Phillips, ‘Answer Time’, in *The Jewish Chronicle*, 14 December 2001.

possible accusation of anti-Semitism: many of her friends, she reassures the reader, are Jewish.¹⁸

Interpreting such occurrences in the media coverage of the Middle East, many argue that Israel has become the collective Jew of the world. By transferring anti-Semitic prejudice from the Jewish individual to the Jewish state anti-Semitism is becoming once again respectable. Jews are not being deprived of property, expelled or deported. But the road to Auschwitz started with a libellous article in the press, a trial of a lonely Jew accused of disloyalty, an insult hurled in the street and a stone thrown at a window. We are already past libellous articles, insults and stones in Europe today. Accusations of disloyalty abound. Is the path not open for the past to repeat itself?

The second view argues that — alongside right-wing extremism — anti-Jewish incidents are mostly the misguided reaction of disaffected Muslim immigrant youth—they themselves the target of European prejudice — to the injustice that Israel inflicts on Palestinians. They target Jews due to their understandable rage for Palestinian suffering. Anti-Semitism is not at all what it used to be — Europe is by and large immune from it. Neo-Nazi anti-Semitism horrifies everyone and is met with ready condemnation and swift countermeasures. Attacks on Jews mostly result from Israel's misguided policies. Because they derive from legitimate Palestinian grievances, such attacks should not be treated as anti-Semitism and thus become an excuse to cover up Israel's misdeeds. The real concern should be about Israel's behaviour, not about its repercussions in Europe. For Israel's critics, the best answer to anti-Semitism is renewed efforts to bring peace to Israelis and Palestinians, mostly through Israeli concessions and change of policies, and not, as those who denounce anti-Semitism these days, through a less critical media treatment of Israel: that is just an excuse to gag critics.¹⁹ Robert Fisk, who during the run-up to the Iraq war surmised that US foreign policy was run by Israel and evoked the ghost of a neo-conservative conspiracy serving Ariel Sharon's dark designs, expressed this most clearly in early 2003: 'The all-purpose slander of 'anti-Semitism' is now used with

¹⁸ Jemima Khan, 'Telling the Truth about Israel', in *The Guardian*, 1 November 2000.

¹⁹ See Robert Fisk, 'How to Shut Up your Critics with a Single Word', in *The Independent*, Monday 21 October, 2004, p. 15.

ever-increasing promiscuity against anyone - people who condemn the wickedness of Palestinian suicide bombings every bit as much as they do the cruelty of Israel's repeated killing of children - in an attempt to shut them up.²⁰

This explanation dismisses Jewish concerns about rising anti-Semitism: though anti-Semitism is there and it mostly happens in conjunction with the Arab-Israeli conflict, the end of the dispute would also bring a halt to most abuse against Jews.²¹ Violence, though misguided, stems from legitimate grievances to which — just like ignorance needing education — there is a solution, namely a just peace in the Middle East. Besides, it is often the scheming of influential and right-wing Jews, usually associated with Israel, which affects policy in a way that, according to critics, ultimately causes anti-Semitism. If these Jewish individuals – not to mention organizations – were to withdraw what is seen as uncritical support for Israel, a solution to the Middle East tragedy could be found, and the Jews of Europe would benefit as well.

The left in particular sees itself as immune from anti-Semitism, which it considers the exclusive province of the xenophobic right. An example of this view is offered by what the Op-Ed editor of the London's daily *The Guardian* wrote in a May 2002 column. For Seumas Milne,

The left is certainly not immune from racist currents in society; and it needs aggressively to police the line between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, taking into account Jewish sensitivities in the way it campaigns for justice in the Middle East. But none of that excuses the smear that left or liberal support for Palestinian rights is somehow connected to resurgent anti-Jewish racism - an absurd slur which is itself being used as an apologia for Israel's brutal war of subjugation in the occupied territories. All the evidence is that it is the far right, the traditional fount of anti-Semitic poison, which has been overwhelmingly responsible for attacks on both Muslim and Jewish targets in Europe. Violence from the Islamist fringe no doubt also poses a threat, but not even in the wildest rantings of Israel's cheerleaders has it been suggested that any group on the left could have had anything to do with, say, the trashing of the Finsbury Park synagogue. Nor is it

²⁰ Robert Fisk, 'The threat of war: the case against: A conflict driven by self-interest of America', in *The Independent*, Saturday, February 15, 2003, p. 7.

²¹ See Antony Lerman, Letters to the Editor, *Ha'aretz*, 21 March 2006.

hostile media coverage that is fuelling criticism of Israel, but what is actually taking place on the ground in Bethlehem, Nablus and Ramallah.²²

Those crying wolf over criticism of Israel are depicted as seeking an excuse to uncritically justify Israel's actions.²³ As evidence, Israel's critics – especially though not exclusively on the left – cite their stance alongside Jews in the common struggle against Fascism whenever it raises its ugly head. Commitment to Palestinian independence comes not from anti-Jewish prejudice but from a sense of justice and the need to redress grievances in what is increasingly seen as unfinished post-colonial business. Jews would be better off using their voice to persuade Israel to mend its ways, rather than lending their support to a questionable moral endeavour and using anti-Semitism as a convenient excuse. Anti-Jewish behaviour should be condemned, no doubt, but its root-causes should be understood. If criticism sounds too harsh that is because Israel's conduct invites such harshness. Instead of crying wolf and allowing Israel to use the charge of anti-Semitism to deflect criticism, Jews should denounce both Israel and the misuse of anti-Semitism as a smoke screen for injustice.

While vigorously condemning anti-Semitism many critics of Israel insist on separating anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. In fact, they see fighting Zionism and anti-Semitism as two sides of the same coin:²⁴ Israel, they claim, is a racist state, and it follows that Jews should fight racism alongside them, just as they see it natural to stand against anti-Semitism alongside the Jews.²⁵ Many Jews would cringe: Zionism is the expression of a Jewish right to self-determination, and denying that right to Jews while bestowing it onto all other groups—first and foremost the Palestinians—singles Jews out and denies them a

²² Seumas Milne, 'This slur of anti-Semitism is used to defend repression' in *The Guardian*, Thursday 9 May 2002.

²³ See Max Hastings, 'A Grotesque Choice', in *The Guardian*, 11 March 2004.

²⁴ See for example Avi Shlaim, 'Is Zionism Today the Real Enemy of the Jews? Yes.' In *The International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2005, p. 6.

²⁵ Thus writes, for example, Deborah Maccobi, a *New Statesman's* reader, in a letter responding to an article sympathetic to Israel: 'I believe it is incumbent on Jews to speak out against Israel's politicide against the Palestinians. Doing so will help to reduce anti-Semitism.' In *The New Statesman*, Letters' section, 5 July 2004. See also Miriam Margolyes' statement endorsing *The Skies are Weeping* (<http://weepingskies.blogspot.com>): 'I support the event because I think what happened to Rachel was wrong — and I — who am a proud Jew — am not proud when we do wrong.'

right to define their collective identity as they wish. Whether Jews agree with Israel's conduct at any given moment is a different matter.

Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism

Whether or not anti-Zionism is equivalent to anti-Semitism, there can be little doubt that anti-Zionism engenders anti-Semitism among Europe's most virulent Israel-haters. Their anger is not aimed at the Jews as a whole. Their attacks are selective, focusing 'only' on Israel and its "Zionist" allies abroad, mainly Diaspora Jewry and the United States.

To understand anti-Zionism and demonstrate that, contrary to anti-Zionists' indignant protests it is coterminous with anti-Semitism, one needs first to define what anti-Zionists oppose. To criticize Israel for specific policies is not anti-Zionism. Anti-Zionism is the rejection of Zionism, which therefore needs definition. Zionism consists of four crucial claims:

- (1) Jews are a collective bestowed with the distinct features of a *nation* in the modern, secular sense;
- (2) The Diaspora condition—living as a minority in exile—is defective;
- (3) A national project leading to at least national autonomy and at best national sovereignty is therefore desirable; and
- (4) This project has a worldly goal, namely the achievement of 'extensive social results and continuous social development.'²⁶

As an essentially secular national movement Zionism advocated the creation of an independent society, the revival of the Hebrew language, the growth of a distinctive national culture and national life, and through the development of an independent Jewish society, the return of the Jewish people to a condition of normalcy, i.e. the return of the Jews to history as 'a people like all peoples'. Accordingly, it should be clear that anti-

²⁶ Gideon Shimoni, *The Zionist Ideology*, Brandeis University Press, 1995, p. 85. See also www.zionism-israel.com: 'Zionism is the national revival movement of the Jewish people. It holds that the Jews have the right to self-determination in their own national home, and the right to develop their national culture. Historically, Zionism strove to create a legally recognized national home for the Jews in their historical homeland. This goal was implemented by the creation of the State of Israel. Today, Zionism supports the existence of the state of Israel and helps to inspire a revival of Jewish national life, culture and language.'

Zionism does not merely consist of criticism of Israeli policies. It does not even consist of disagreement on the whereabouts of the Zionist project – after all, for much of its early history, Zionism included advocates of Jewish nationalism who did not insist on Palestine as the exclusive and non-negotiable locus of Jewish self-determination. Anti-Zionism goes further and denies either the right of the Jewish people to define themselves as a nation, with all the attendant social and political consequences, or the desirability of such a collective endeavour on the part of the Jews. Anti-Zionism not only opposes the creation and continued existence of the Jewish state but also rejects the idea that the Jews are a people and as such are, at least in principle, entitled to self-determination.²⁷ Even when it recognizes that Jews may be a distinct collective, it still postulates that it is in the Jews’ best interest to remain a Diaspora community, extolling the myth of Jewish powerlessness in history as a moral quality and a trait that Jews should do well to keep, rather than compromising it through the pitfalls of statehood.²⁸

Anti-Zionism also explains Israel’s policies as a product of its essence as a Jewish state. What follows is not that Israel should act differently: it should cease to exist *as a Jewish state*.²⁹ This view is frequently articulated by the liberal press and by liberal scholars. As Tony Judt recently wrote,

In a world where nations and peoples increasingly intermingle and intermarry at will; where cultural and national impediments to communication have all but collapsed; where more and more of us have multiple elective identities and would feel falsely constrained if we had to answer to just one of them; in such a world Israel is truly an anachronism. And not just an anachronism but a dysfunctional one. In today’s “clash of cultures” between open, pluralist democracies and belligerently intolerant, faith-driven ethno-states, Israel actually risks falling into the wrong camp. To convert Israel from a Jewish state to a binational one would not be easy, though not quite as impossible as it sounds: the process has already begun de facto.

²⁷ Ted Lapkin, ‘The Strange Mythology of Anti-Zionism’ in *Quadrant*, December 2005.

²⁸ *Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History* [FIND EXACT REFERENCE]; see Emanuele Ottolenghi, ‘Paradise Lost’ A review article of *The Postzionism Debates*, by Laurence Silberstein, in *Israel Studies* 8,3, Summer 2003.

²⁹ See for example Ahmed Samih Khalidi, ‘A One-State Solution: A Unitary Arab-Jewish Homeland Could Bring Lasting Peace to the Middle East’, in *The Guardian*, 29 September 2003. See also Michael Tarazi, ‘Two People, One State’, in *The New York Times*, 4 October 2004.

But it would cause far less disruption to most Jews and Arabs than its religious and nationalist foes will claim.³⁰

Anti-Zionism attacks the expression of Jewish identity through identification with Israel, by denying that authentic Jewish identity has any linkage to Israel, by denying that the Jews are a nation, by denying that as a nation they enjoy the rights of other nations and only in the last instance by criticising Israel's actions on merits. Israel's conduct, even of the worst kind, is, for anti-Zionists, a symptom of the evil they fight, not its essence. Therefore anti-Zionists expect Jews to join them in their fight against Zionism, for their own interest. Non-compliance earns scorn and releases anti-Zionists from the responsibility to condemn anti-Semitism. In this case, for the anti-Zionist, the Jews are the cause of their own suffering.

In England, this view has been popularised, most recently, by the writings of John Pilger, for whom Israeli new historians like Ilan Pappé have assumed iconic status as 'good' Jews, intent on working for the demise of Zionism:

In understanding Israel's enduring colonial role in the Middle East, it is too simple to see the outrages of Ariel Sharon as an aberrant version of a democracy that lost its way. The myths that abound in middle-class Jewish homes in Britain about Israel's heroic, noble birth have long been reinforced by a "liberal" or "left-wing" Zionism as virulent and essentially destructive as the Likud strain. In recent years, the truth has come from Israel's own "new historians", who have revealed that the Zionist "idealists" of 1948 had no intention of treating justly or even humanely the Palestinians, who instead were systematically and often murderously driven from their homes. The most courageous of these historians is Ilan Pappé, an Israeli-born professor at Haifa University, who, with the publication of each of his ground-breaking books, has been both acclaimed and smeared. The latest is *A History of Modern Palestine*, in which he documents the expulsion of Palestinians as an orchestrated crime of ethnic cleansing that tore apart Jews and Arabs coexisting peacefully.³¹

Pilger's revisionism does not stop at romanticizing the role of individual scholars in the struggle against Israel, but goes beyond. In a letter to the editor he wrote that 'Among the

³⁰ Tony Judt, *Israel, The Alternative*, in *The New York Review of Books*, 50, 16, October 23, 2003.

³¹ See John Pilger, 'The Unmentionable Source of Terrorism' in *The New Statesman*, 19 March 2004.

founders of the Jewish state were many socialists - men and women who came out of the rich and often courageous tradition of the Jewish left in Europe, whom Hitler loathed more for their politics than their Jewishness.’³² Pilger distorts the nature of Nazi anti-Semitism, reducing it to a hatred for socialism, and flirts with the old right-wing anti-Semitic argument that the Jews were behind Socialism and Communism. But he also reiterates a central point of today’s anti-Zionist rhetoric that blurs the line separating legitimate criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism. The Jews Pilger likes belong to a ‘courageous tradition of the Jewish left in Europe’; they are still his and his comrades’ Jewish heroes. Together they must fight the same old enemy – still Nazism – though it now manifests itself under the disguise of Zionism. That is why Jews who stand up against Israel and denounce it as an aberration of Judaism, become its authentic voices, Judaism’s new prophets. Turning them into heroes enables Pilger – as so many others like him – to vilify those Jews who insist on Israel as a core component of their identity without fear of being recognized as anti-Semites.

When Jews are expected to condemn Israel, lest sympathy be denied, the argument that it is Israel’s behaviour and Jewish support for it that invite prejudice sounds hollow at best and sinister at worst. What that argument means is that sympathy for Jews is conditional to the kind of political views they espouse. In a world that advocates political freedom for all, this is hardly an expression of tolerance. It singles Jews out. It is anti-Semitism.

Anti-Zionists are prepared to treat Jews equally and fight prejudice against them only if Jews are prepared to give up their distinctiveness as a nation: Jews as a nation earn no sympathy and no rights, although Jews as individuals deserve both. Those who support this view love Jews, but not when Jews assert their rights as a national group. As Nick Cohen recently wrote in *The New Statesman*,

I learned it was one thing being called “Cohen” if you went along with liberal orthodoxy, quite another when you pointed out liberal betrayals. Your argument could not be debated on its merits. There had to be a

³² *The New Statesman*, Letters to the Editor, 14 October 2002.

malign motive. You had to support Ariel Sharon. You had to be in the pay of “international” media moguls or neoconservatives. You had to have bad blood. You had to be a Jew.³³

Denouncing Israel becomes the passport to full European membership.

The notion that Zionism entailed a loss of innocence, which only its abandonment can ever restore, is central to current anti-Semitism.³⁴ Israel’s ‘conversion’³⁵ – the loss of its Jewish character through a process of political and moral rehabilitation that involves renouncing Zionism³⁶ – has been advocated. This salvation language is ubiquitous in the scholarly literature used across Middle East departments to teach the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.³⁷ It follows that if Zionism is sinful its Diaspora Jewish supporters are equally evil. Only by denouncing Israel, renouncing their attachment to it and promoting a Jewish identity devoid of Zionism can they be entitled to protection against anti-Semitism.

³³ Nick Cohen, ‘Anti-Semitism isn’t a local side effect of a dirty war over a patch of land smaller than Wales. It’s everywhere from Malaysia to Morocco, and it has arrived here’ in *The New Statesman*, 10 October 2005.

³⁴ This has been variously described as an ‘original sin’ (see Benny Morris, *The New Historiography: Israel Confronts Its Past*, in *Tikkun*, November/December 1988, 21a. As Benny Morris put it, ‘How one perceives 1948 bears heavily on how one perceives the whole Zionist/Israeli experience. If Israel, the haven of a much-persecuted people, was born pure and innocent, then it is worthy of the grace, material assistance, and political support showered upon it by the West over the past forty years – and worthy of more of the same in years to come. If, on the other hand, Israel was born tarnished, besmirched by original sin, then it was no more deserving of that grace and assistance than were its neighbours.’) or as not exactly ‘an immaculate conception’ (See Avi Shlaim, *Debate about 1948*, in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, 1995: p. 292). The use of terms borrowed from Christian theology leave little doubt as to what subtext informs this discourse, reflecting as it does a vision of Israel that finds echoes in the very theology from which it borrows its terminology. See Emanuele Ottolenghi, ‘Europe’ “Good” Jews’ in *Commentary*, December 2005, pp. 42-46.

³⁵ Tony Judt, *Israel, The Alternative*, in *The New York Review of Books*, 50, 16, October 23, 2003.

³⁶ This is the main argument made by Jacqueline Rose in her recent polemics, *The Question of Zion*, Princeton University Press, 2005. Rose participated in a public debate sponsored by Intelligence², where she defended, along with Professor Avi Shlaim (Oxford University) and Israeli journalist, Amira Hass, the proposition that ‘Zionism is today the worst enemy of the Jews’. The motion won by a narrow majority and went on to become the title of an article in the *International Herald Tribune* (Avi Shlaim, ‘Is Zionism Today the Real Enemy of the Jews? Yes.’ In *The International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2005, p. 6) and more recently of a book by Alan Hart, *Zionism, the Great Enemy of the Jews* (2 Vols.), World Focus Publisher, 2005.

³⁷ See for example how Avi Shlaim (*The War of the Israeli Historians*, lecture delivered at Georgetown University, 1 December 2003, courtesy of the author) derides his scholarly opponents: ‘[They] put so much store by Israel’s claim to moral rectitude that they cannot face up to the evidence of cynical Israeli double-dealings or brutal dispersal and dispossession of the Palestinians. It is an axiom of their narrative that Israel is the innocent victim. Not content with the thirty pieces of silver, these people insist on retaining for Israel the crown of thorns.’

Denying Jews the right to define their own identity and freely express their own views of the Middle East, in today's climate, has paradoxically acquired an aura of respectability. Through the prism of the Middle East conflict and the filter of liberal discourse, anti-Semitism, is respectable once again.

The Nexus between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism

The main difficulty thus is that today's prejudice focuses on Israel's role in modern Jewish identity. Despite its centrality in their communal identity,³⁸ Jews are targeted for their attachment to and support for Israel and are asked to relinquish them in exchange for legitimacy. This demand, far from being seen as anti-Semitic, is vigorously pursued in certain quarters in the name of a liberal vision that rejects nationalism and religion as foundations of a collective identity. Europe is today guided by a post-national, secular and pacifist vision of international politics – a 'brotherhood of mankind' worldview. Once again, Jews seem out of step with the dominant ethos of society, and for this they are chastised and under pressure to conform.

Israel is perceived as evil,³⁹ both for its conduct and for its essence as a nation-state based on an ethno-religious identity. Israel's policies – understood as the product of Israel's Zionist identity – are blamed for the rise of anti-Semitism, as Oxford don Avi Shlaim

³⁸ With regard to British Jewry and the role Israel plays in its Jewish identity, See Barry Kosmin, Antony Lerman and Jacqueline Goldberg, *The Attachment of British Jews to Israel*, JPR Report No. 5, 1997 (available at http://www.jpr.org.uk/Reports/IS_Reports/no_5_1997/index.htm): 'overall, 43 per cent felt a strong attachment and 38 per cent felt a moderate attachment to Israel. Thus while over 80 per cent of respondents expressed special feelings of attachment to Israel, only 3 per cent expressed negative feelings. US figures on a similar survey question revealed that 67 per cent felt either 'very close' or 'fairly close' to Israel, while 6 per cent reported themselves to be 'very distant' (AJC, 1995).'

³⁹ As many surveys have shown over the past five years, Europeans variously view Israel as 'a threat to world peace' (59% said so in late 2003, in a EU sponsored poll: see Flash Eurobarometer 151, European Commission, *Iraq and Peace in the World*, November 2003, p. 80); consider Israel as an oppressive and undemocratic regime akin to Apartheid South Africa (See the Anti-Defamation League surveys on European attitudes toward Jews and Israel from 2002, 2004 and 2005, available at www.adl.org); and in more extreme (but by no means marginal) cases, endorse Israel's comparison to Nazi Germany, as a European-wide survey conducted by the Italian daily *Il Corriere della Sera*, in January 2004, conclusively showed (*Il Corriere della Sera*, 26 January 2004).

postulates. Answering to the question ‘Is Zionism today the real enemy of the Jews?’, Shlaim replies in the affirmative:

It is this brand of cruel Zionism that is the real enemy of what remains of liberal Israel and of the Jews outside Israel. It is the enemy because it fuels the flames of virulent and sometimes violent anti-Semitism. Israel’s policies are the cause; hatred of Israel and anti-Semitism are the consequences’.⁴⁰

According to such view, Israel today deserves utter condemnation. It follows that as ‘accomplices’ in Israel’s behaviour, Jewish supporters of Israel are blamed for their own suffering: Referring to Jewish support for Israel, British historian and columnist, Max Hastings had this to say:

If Israel persists with its current policies, and Jewish lobbies around the world continue to express solidarity with repression of the Palestinians, then genuine anti-Semitism is bound to increase. Herein lies the lobbyists’ recklessness. By insisting that those who denounce the Israeli state’s behaviour are enemies of the Jewish people, they seek to impose a grotesque choice. The Israeli government’s behaviour to the Palestinians breeds a despair that finds its only outlet in terrorism. No one can ever criticise the Jewish Diaspora for asserting Israel’s right to exist. But the most important service the world’s Jews can render to Israel today is to persuade its people that the only plausible result of their government’s behaviour is a terrible loneliness in the world.⁴¹

Jews are therefore invited to stand against Israel *as a moral Jewish imperative*, denounce Israel to save themselves from moral complicity with its policies and in order to escape ‘the blackmail of anti-Semitism’ – the crude equation of any criticism of Israel to anti-Semitism which, critics say, is used to silence Israel’s detractors. Many Jewish voices indeed comply. Asked about opposition to Israel in an interview, South African Minister Ronnie Kasrils said: ‘As a person who was born Jewish, I am morally obliged to speak out against what is being done by the Zionist State of Israel to the Palestinian people’⁴²

⁴⁰ Avi Shlaim, ‘Is Zionism Today the Real Enemy of the Jews? Yes.’ In *The International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2005, p. 6.

⁴¹ Max Hastings, ‘A Grotesque Choice’, in *The Guardian*, 11 March 2004.

⁴² Gamal Nkrumah, ‘A Matter of Morality’, Interview with South African Minister for Water, Ronnie Kasrils (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, English version, 13-19 February 2003, Issue No. 625).

thus suggesting that those Jews who failed to speak out against Israel were betraying their moral obligations as Jews.

Writing in Britain's conservative weekly *The Spectator* about Holocaust Remembrance Day and those survivors participating in the 60th anniversary Auschwitz commemorations, Anthony Lippman commented that

'This little band of [survivors] has a terrible responsibility — to live well in the name of those who did not live and to discourage the building of walls and bulldozing of villages. Even more than this, they — and all Jews — need to be the voice of conscience that will prevent Israel from adopting the mantle of oppressor, and to reject the label 'anti-Semite' for those who speak out against Israel's policies in the occupied territories.'⁴³

The author, an active member of the Church of England and the son of a Holocaust survivor who converted to Christianity, felt entitled to speak on behalf of the Jewish people. By Hitler's standards, a Jew for sure; by the standards of most Jewish communities though, he would hardly make it onto the roster. Nevertheless, the example is telling: for what the author had to say no less than for the fact that a mainstream publication such as the *Spectator* sought him. Apparently for the British conservative weekly, the best way to commemorate the Holocaust is to have a Jewish convert to the Church of England claim to represent the Jewish people, and then proceed to fulfil his task by comparing Israel to Nazism and lecturing the Jewish people on what the right code of conduct vis-à-vis Israel is. This example encapsulates the ideal Jew of 21st century Europe. Jews are expected to abandon the main trademarks of their religious and ethnic identity, turning Jewish identity into a commitment to universal, secular, post-national humanism, and a duty to denounce nationalism. As Jacqueline Rose writes about Zionism in her book *The Question of Zion*, 'What is it about the coming into being of this nation and the movement out of which it was born, that allowed it—and still allows it—to shed the burdens of its own history, and so flagrantly to blind itself?'⁴⁴ For Rose, the Jewish embrace of nationalism is a catastrophe that needs to be undone: '[I]n the

⁴³ Anthony Lippman, 'How I became a Jew' in *The Spectator*, 22 January 2005.

⁴⁴ Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion*, Princeton University Press, 2005, p. xii.

ascendant today is a vision of the Jewish nation that is, I believe—precisely because it has, as it so fervently desired, made itself master of its own destiny—in danger of destroying itself.’⁴⁵ To save themselves, Jews must discard Israel from their own collective identity. This step, and an active denunciation of Israel as the antithesis of liberal and Jewish values (themselves, in this vision, synonymous with one another), will gain them full acceptance in European societies.

In the process, the only uncontroversial way to express a proud Jewish identity is through the experience of suffering and victimization from the past, which the Holocaust has come to embody more than anything else. The Jew as a victim and as a witness of the quintessential, archetypal experience of suffering emerges as the positive Jewish role-model, in sharp contrast to the Jewish pro-Israel or even Zionist voice, which Europe chastises for having betrayed both European values and what Europe sees as the authentic Jew.

Indeed, Jews opposing Israel and making the denunciation of Israel ‘a Jewish imperative’ are showcased as evidence that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitic – on account of Jewish support and regardless of the way attacks on Israel are voiced.

Current anti-Semitism therefore does not target Jews indiscriminately. Racial anti-Semitism hates Jews for what they are, in the minds of their haters, and will always be, making no distinction based on faith or persuasion. Current anti-Semitism discerns, as before the rise of racial hatred, between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Jews.⁴⁶ ‘Bad’ Jews like Israel and are chastised for making it central to their identity. ‘Good’ Jews reject Israel in exchange for full inclusion in society and dispensation from hatred: discarding Israel from Jewish identity is the price of integration.⁴⁷ When Christianity was Europe’s

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 155.

⁴⁶ See Emanuele Ottolenghi, ‘Europe’s ‘Good’ Jews’ in *Commentary*, December 2005, pp. 42-46. See also Alvin Rosenfeld, ‘Modern Jewish Intellectual Failure’ in *Society*, Vol. 43, No. 1, November/December 2005, pp. 8-21.

⁴⁷ See a recent posting by the Muslim Public Affairs Committee of the UK (MPACUK) reviewing Alan Hart’s book, *Zionism, The Real Enemy of the Jews*: ‘As some courageous anti-Zionist Jews and Israelis have said, mainstream Diaspora Jewish silence on the matter of the Zionist state’s behaviour is, effectively, “complicity” in its crimes and its preference for land without peace. So why the silence? As noted in the

defining value, Jews had to embrace Christian salvation doctrines; when liberal, enlightenment values were, Jews had to assimilate. Now, the ethos of post-nationalism and anti-religious sentiment pervading mainly the hard left and sectors of the liberal left sets the tone for the current wave of anti-Jewish prejudice and the criteria to which Jews are expected to conform. As Anatol Lieven remarked in his book, *America Right or Wrong*,

For equally valid and legitimate reasons, Western Europe and parts of the liberal intelligentsia of the United States on one hand and the greater part of the world's Jewish population on the other drew opposing conclusions from the catastrophe of Nazism... The Western European elites and many US liberal intellectuals essentially decided that the correct response to Nazism and to the hideous national conflicts which preceded, engendered and accompanied it was to seek to limit, transcend and overcome nationalism.⁴⁸

There are two problems with this argument. One is of historical inaccuracy: as a movement, Zionism preceded the catastrophe of Nazism by well over six decades. Israel was not borne out of the Holocaust, but perhaps despite it. The second problem is more sinister: Lieven never fails to mention the Jewish ancestry of the people he disagrees with,⁴⁹ insinuating that their views are vitiated by an allegiance that blinds them to truth

updated Acknowledgments of my book, the main reason is fear of the future and thus the perceived need, perhaps, one day, for Israel as a refuge of last resort. I write that, because of the past, mainstream Diaspora Jews are so fearful of the future - unspeakably terrified not just frightened - that they are frozen in silence, unable more than unwilling to criticise Israel. They fear that if they do, they could undermine the wellbeing and security of Israel as their insurance policy. Effectively, silence on the matter of the Zionist state's behaviour is the Diaspora's contribution (at least as important as the money) to the maintenance of the insurance policy. The tragedy is that the Zionist state's behaviour has re-awakened the sleeping giant of anti-Semitism, and by their silence and complicity mainstream Diaspora Jews are assisting Zionism to become a self-fulfilling prophesy of doom. They are also standing idly by while Zionism demolishes the moral foundations of Judaism. Is there a way to encourage mainstream Diaspora Jews to end their silence? (And play their necessary and essential part in persuading Israel to make peace on the basis of a genuine two-state solution, a proposition almost all Palestinians and most other Arabs accepted many years ago, mainly because of Arafat's pragmatism and courage). The only possible way I can see is with the assistance of a NEW COVENANT, not between the Jews and their God but between the Jews and the Gentiles. I call for this in the Epilogue of my book which is titled *The Jews as the Light Unto Nations*. Available at <http://www.mpacuk.org/content/view/1163/103/>.

⁴⁸ See Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*, London, Harper Collins, 2004, p. 192.

⁴⁹ See Walter Laqueur's posting on Lieven in *Free West*, the Blog for Die Welt (<http://www.welt.de/z/plog/weblog.php>): 'Mr. Lieven's writings have another peculiarity, namely mentioning the racial-ethnic-religious background of those whom he attacks, especially if they happen to be of Jewish descent. This kind of practice was common in Stalin's last days; Jews should not hide their true identity behind Russian sounding names (or earlier on in Nazi Germany behind Aryan sounding names.)

and implying therefore that Jewish intellectuals can only agree with him to escape a similar kind of abuse.⁵⁰ Jews, according to this view, can only hold one opinion to enjoy full acceptance: the view of the liberal elites, a view that sees Israel as the villain of the piece, and its supporters the accomplices in what is often perceived as the root of all world problems.

Only thus, can Lieven surmise that Jews embraced nationalism in 1945, while the enlightened elites of the West were busy rejecting it – an equally dubious historical proposition. And so the myth goes that while Europe understood the perils of nationalism and sought ways to transcend it, thereby succeeding to usher in the most peaceful and

Since we know since Heine that being of Jewish descent is a horrible stigma, Lieven should have perhaps shown a little Christian charity but this admittedly, is a matter of personal taste.’ See also Jonathan Tepperman, ‘The anti-anti Americans’ in *The New York Times*, 12 December 2004, p. 24: ‘Also disturbing is the way many of these writers emphasize America’s relationship with Israel. There’s nothing wrong with complaining about Washington’s strategy in the Middle East; reasonable people can disagree. But one should be skeptical of a writer like Lieven who refers to the pro-Israel lobby as having an “iron grip” on Washington or who labels a contemporary pro-Israeli Lebanese-American writer an “Arab Josephus” -- a comparison (to Flavius Josephus, the Hellenized Jewish historian of the ancient world often known for his cowardice and treachery) that manages to combine several layers of racial condescension in two words. Such language is not new; anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism have run together at least since the 1930’s, when French writers denounced the avaricious United States as “Uncle Shylock.” But the modern anti-Americans would serve themselves better by taking care to untangle the two.’ Lieven sent an angry reply to the *New York Times*, protesting the way Tepperman had characterized him, but failed to address his use of ethnic characterization to detract from his intellectual opponents. Tepperman responded that ‘Speaking of mischaracterizations: if Lieven is truly concerned about the appearance of anti-Semitism in his treatment of Israel, he should stick to straight policy critiques -- as he does in his letter -- and shun the inflammatory language he uses in his book, such as sinister descriptions of “the Israeli lobby” with its “iron grip” on United States policy making. Not only are such phrases inaccurate; they are also popular code words often used by actual anti-Semites.’

⁵⁰ See Emanuele Ottolenghi, ‘Anatol Lieven, Right or Wrong’, *OpenDemocracy* (www.opendemocracy.net), 20 October 2004: ‘Referring to *Washington Times* columnist Arnaud de Borchgrave, Lieven mentions that de Borchgrave is “in part of Jewish descent”, as if ethnic origin somehow makes opinions more or less valid. Lieven uses de Borchgrave’s origins to support his own arguments: this Jew agrees with him, making his Jewishness a crucial asset that validates Lieven’s viewpoint. But if being Jewish lends legitimacy to opinions (itself a highly questionable implication), why is Jewish descent good only when Lieven agrees with de Borchgrave but not good when other Jews disagree with Lieven? Lieven labels Melanie Phillips a “British Jewish journalist” and Phyllis Chesler a “Jewish liberal American feminist” to insinuate the partisan nature of their support for Israel, and thus discredit their writings in its favour. Why in these cases too is it necessary to know their ethnic affiliation and religious persuasion? The point is that being Jewish is immaterial to an opinion’s validity. Reference to ethnic origin should never appear in a serious polemic: ideas are at stake, not the skin-colour, religious beliefs, gender, sexual inclinations or ethnic origin of our supporters and opponents. To make these factors relevant to arguments reflects an intellectual confusion that dangerously borders on prejudice. Lieven’s discrediting efforts are grave enough when he labels opponents for their ideas, graver still when the label refers to their ethnic or religious affiliation.’ (<http://www.emanueleottolenghi.com/OtherArticles/AnatolLievenrightorwrong.html>).

most prosperous period in its own history, Israel was born under the banner of nationalism as a knee-jerk, instinctive reaction to the tragedy of the Holocaust, which nationalism itself engendered. Inevitably, the myth continues, a nationalist Israel would commit, in due course, crimes and misdemeanors inherent to nationalism.

The Jews' stubborn refusal to renounce their nationalism in favor of the liberal, post-national and post-faith model Europe created, is at the root of conflict in the Middle East today. It therefore must be ultimately blamed for anti-Semitism in Europe. Once more, Israel's critics clarify that the Jews have only themselves to blame for their own suffering.

It is no coincidence that those who mount this argument frequently refer, as Lieven and others do, to Israel's new historians and their works.⁵¹ According to their narrative, Israel is borne out of ethnic cleansing, which in the critique of nationalism that informs Europe today, is inherent to nationalism and its claims. Israel could not have done otherwise, if it wanted its nationalism to work. Thus, the crimes of nationalism, which Europe knows all too well, are inherent to Zionism and its political offspring, Israel. It follows naturally that anti-Zionism is not viewed by Europeans as a denial of the Jewish people's right to self-determination—a right that, curiously, critics of nationalism in general and of Jewish nationalism in particular all too zealously invoke for the Palestinians—but as a re-assertion of their commitment to fight Nazism and all similar phenomena henceforth.

It is because of that principle that hatred for Israel is rampant in Europe. Israel's conduct embodies in Europe's mind the kind of horrors the Jews suffered from. Europe believes that the ideology that made Israel a possibility engendered those horrors. It is not just that Israel misbehaves. It is that Israel, by its very nature, character and self-definition as a Jewish nation-state, could not have behaved otherwise. As Israeli new historian Ilan Pappé postulates,

⁵¹ See, most recently, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, 'The Israel Lobby', in *The London Review of Books*, 28, 6, 23 March 2006, available at http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01_.html.

Towards the end of the British Mandate, there was a need to make these more theoretical and abstract ideas about expulsion into a concrete plan. I have been writing about 1948 since 1980, and for much of that time have been concerned with the question of whether there had or hadn't been a Zionist master plan to expel the Palestinians in 1948. Then I realized, (largely as a result of what I have learned in the last two years), that this was not the right track: neither for academic research nor from more popular ideological research of what has happened in the past. Far more important for ethnic cleansing is the formulation of an ideological community, in which every member, whether a newcomer or a veteran, knows only too well that they have to contribute to a recognized formula: the only way to fulfil the dream of Zionism is to empty the land of its indigenous population.⁵²

It was not just that, in the words of another Israeli new historian, Benny Morris, 'The Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab.'⁵³ This view of history claims that Zionism engenders that kind of result. It was inherent to Zionism and inevitable to its goals, in this version of the argument, that ethnic cleansing would occur.

It follows that Europe wants Israel to redeem itself from such terrible conduct and wants the Jews to condemn Israel while it doesn't. The evil that Israel represents in the European mindset is not an evil that is so inherent to the Jewish people that it can only be dealt with by destroying them. To the contrary, they are worthy of preservation. It is their nationalism that is inherently evil (just as their religion was once thought to be). It is their nationalism that is worth destroying, to save the world from further turmoil and the Jewish people from the perceived aberration that Israel has become.

Present anti-Semitism therefore manifests itself mainly under the guise of anti-Zionism. According to this doctrine, Jews are denied, contrary to all other religious and ethnic minorities present in Europe's cultural mosaics, the prerogative to define their own collective identity in their own terms because the role that Israel plays in their own

⁵² Comments made in a lecture at SOAS, 16 October 2002 and published in *Between the Lines*, October 2002, available at http://www.bintjbeil.com/articles/en/021020_pappe.html. Ilan Pappé and other historians who adhere to this view have so far failed to produce hard evidence backing their theory. Hence the need to recur to the concept of an 'ideological community' to obviate the need for archival proof of such interpretation.

⁵³ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 286.

identity is seen as contrary to Europe's dominant ethos. This has nothing to do, it should be emphasized, with a debate, even a robust and very critical one, about the merits of this or that Israeli government policy. At stake is not a matter of policy – what Israel does – but a matter of existence – what Israel is – and the linkage drawn between Israel's existence and Jews in the Diaspora.

The remainder of this article will offer data to quantify the severity of anti-Semitism, but also suggest explanations of the coterminous nature of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Having done so, it will reflect on some of the mechanisms through which old features of anti-Jewish prejudice find a way into the mainstream through the prism of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric, the volume of which was amplified by the return of conflict to the Middle East arena in late 2000.

Anti-Semitism: How Severe?

Prejudice does not occur in a vacuum. The context for the recent rise of anti-Semitism is the return of conflict into the Israeli-Palestinian arena in late 2000. All reports released to date concur that most anti-Semitic incidents in Europe occurred in conjunction with the conflict and/or other Middle East crises. A 2003 EU-sponsored report on anti-Semitism showed how this steady upsurge is closely correlated to the blood curve of violence and the blame game in the media coverage of events from the region:

Although we know – and opinion polls show – that anti-Semitism is permanently present in Europe in a more or less hidden way, many of us have hoped that manifest forms of anti-Semitism will not see any revival in Europe again. At present, Jews are rather well integrated economically, socially and culturally in the Member States of the European Union (EU). But the attacks in New York and Washington on September 11 and the conflict in the Middle East have contributed to an atmosphere in Europe, which gives latent anti-Semitism and hate and incitement a new strength and power of seduction. Even rumours that Israel was responsible for 11 September 2001, for the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, and that Jews bring about a situation in their interest in order to put the blame on somebody else, found a

receptive audience in some places. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories are spreading over the Internet, which provides a cheap vehicle for the distribution of hate.⁵⁴

Every time an outrage occurs in the Middle East, someone is fanning the flame of hatred, by pointing a blaming finger at the Jews.⁵⁵ Statistics reveal this European trend: violence and turmoil in the Middle East make front page news; soon after, attacks increase.⁵⁶ Even when violent incidents are far rarer, the EUMC documented “extremely nasty anti-Semitic everyday discourse which is relatively widespread amongst the general population.”⁵⁷ Monthly statistics from Great Britain’s Community Security Trust (CST) further confirm this trend. Incidents increased nearly five-fold—from 23 to 105—between September and October 2000, as the Intifadah began; more than two-fold, from 20 to 50, between August and September 2001, in conjunction to 9/11, and remained to that level in October 2001 as the US launched its Afghan campaign. In September 2002, as the Iraq War debate intensified in Europe, incidents peaked again—from 15 in August to 47 in September and 45 in October. The drums of war—and even more so the anti-war drums—that accompanied the US invasion of Iraq saw anti-Semitic incidents rise, from 24 in February 2003 to 48 the following month. From then on, the number remained high, never shrinking below 20 a month, and peaked again in October with 57 incidents—from 22 the previous month—as the European coverage of Israel’s West Bank fence picked up momentum. In March 2004 there was yet another sudden hike, in coincidence with Israel’s targeted killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin—100 incidents, nearly a four-fold increase from 28 the previous month. April 2004, with Israel killing Yassin’s

⁵⁴ *Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in the European Union*, European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Preface, p. 3.

⁵⁵ A striking example of this is the rise in anti-Semitic acts seen in the spring 2002 surrounding increased violence between Israelis and Palestinians, including Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield, one of Israel’s more aggressive responses to Palestinian terror. In France, this rise was particularly pronounced: in April 2002, the peak of Israel’s Operation Defensive Shield, 118 “physical acts of violence towards Jews, their communities, organizations or property,” were reported, while 32 such acts were reported in March, and 12 in May. EUMC, “Manifestations....: Part on France”, p. 9.

⁵⁶ In Germany, anti-Semitic acts increased by 69% from 1999-2000 and, although there was a slight decrease in 2002, between 2000 and 2003, the number of anti-Semitic violent crimes rose significantly over that time. EUMC Report, “Manifestations in the EU 2002-2003: Executive Summary,” p. 10. In France, of the 313 racist, xenophobic or anti-Semitic incidents reported in 2002, 193 were directed at Jews, six times more than in 2001.

⁵⁷ In Greece, Italy, and Spain for example. One should note that all three countries are hosts to a much smaller Jewish population than Germany, France, or Great Britain. Community size and visibility may be factors that explain the lower incidence of attacks. *Ibid*, p. 14.

successor only three weeks later, saw 62 incidents. After a brief ‘lull’ in May with 39 incidents, numbers climbed again to 64 in June and 48 in July 2004, as the anti-barrier campaign climaxed with the ICJ decision in The Hague on July 9 and a UN General Assembly condemnation of Israel less than a week later.⁵⁸

The close causal correlation between events, media coverage and anti-Semitism indicates how problematic certain criticism of Israel’s conduct has become.⁵⁹ Surveys commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League show that the more informed citizens are, the more likely they are to view Israel unfavourably; and the more closely they follow coverage of the events, the more sympathetic they are to the Palestinian side.⁶⁰ This alone does not incriminate media reports, exposing only a tendency in European media to take the Palestinian side more than Israel’s.⁶¹ Robust criticism of Israel’s conduct is not in itself anti-Semitic. There exist nevertheless discursive boundaries beyond which criticism may morph into hate speech:⁶² criticism should not demonize Israel by wildly exaggerated characterizations of its actions or motives; it should not use this tool to deny Israel’s legitimacy and right to exist; and it should therefore not impose a uniquely stringent standard for Israel that other nations do not endure. Israel should be judged by the standards of democracy, not by the standards of utopia. Equally, there is no need to adopt anti-Semitic imagery in order to criticise Israel; and there is no need to impose loyalty tests on Jews for their support of Israel. Yet, in several European countries the intellectual climate frequently crosses these lines.

⁵⁸ Full statistics are available at www.thecst.org.uk/incidents_statistics.htm.

⁵⁹ See Emanuele Ottolenghi & Suzanne Gershowitz, ‘Europe’s Problem with Ariel Sharon’, in *The Middle East Quarterly* XII, 4, Fall 2005 (available at <http://www.meforum.org/article/743>); Emanuele Ottolenghi, ‘Anti-Zionism is Anti-Semitism’, in *The Guardian*, Saturday, 30 November 2003. Peter Pulzer, ‘When is a Taboo not a Taboo?’ in Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin (Eds), *The New Anti-Semitism?* London, 2002.

⁶⁰ See above, note 2.

⁶¹ Curiously, similar data from the US shows the opposite: Americans sympathise with Israel more, suggesting a different treatment of the Middle East story in American media.

⁶² A set of criteria on how and where to draw the line is offered by Peter Pulzer ‘When is a Taboo not a Taboo?’ in Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin (Eds), *The New Anti-Semitism?* London, 2002.

Characterizations of Israel in sinister and demonic terms – including but not limited to comparisons to Nazism⁶³ – through the sometimes unconscious and sometimes shrewd use of anti-Semitic tropes, produce a fertile terrain for the resurgence of prejudice. Parallels between Jewish suffering under Nazi oppression and Palestinian suffering under Israeli occupation, in particular, are rife: discussing the conflict in October 2002, leading European authors so described Israel's conduct in the conflict. Louis de Bernières wrote that 'Israel has adopted tactics which are reminiscent of the Nazis'. Irvine Welsh stated that 'Thus the Israelis were educated by the Nazis and the Palestinians suffer'. Benjamin Zephaniah compared Palestinian suffering to genocide, commenting that while

Palestinians are no angels, but an occupied people will use all means necessary to gain freedom; they are desperate. Israel and its apologists must face up to the fact that they are an illegal occupying force. And shame on the rest of the world for standing by and allowing this genocide to continue; if this were any other region there would at very least be a UN presence there.⁶⁴

Portuguese author and Nobel laureate Jose Saramago compared Ramallah to Auschwitz – although he could not show any evidence that Auschwitz – a place where up to 30,000 defenceless Jews were murdered daily – and Ramallah were qualitatively similar as experiences of human suffering.⁶⁵ This list is by no means comprehensive.

⁶³ The most common of which is the comparison of Israel to Nazi Germany. This trend is confirmed by a recent German survey from December 2004: 51% of respondents agreed that 'there is not much of a difference between what Israel is doing to the Palestinians today and what the Nazis did to the Jews during the Holocaust'. 68% of Germans believe, according to the same poll, that Israel is waging 'a war of extermination' against the Palestinians; see Etgar Lefkowitz, 'Poll: Over 50% of Germans equate IDF with Nazi Army', *The Jerusalem Post*, Dec. 7 2004. Similar trends emerge in Italy: a November 2003 survey published in the daily *Il Corriere della Sera* showed that while only 11% of respondents subscribed to Holocaust denial, 38% thought that Jews 'should stop acting like victims because of the Holocaust and persecutions of 50 years ago', in *Il Corriere della Sera*, 10 November 2003. A further, European-wide poll conducted by the same broadsheet in January 2004 revealed similar results: the survey indicated that 35.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that 'the Israeli government is perpetrating a full-fledged genocide and is acting with the Palestinians the way the Nazis did with the Jews.' The *Corriere della Sera* poll, surveying attitudes to Jews as well as views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, revealed the inextricable relation between anti-Israel sentiment and anti-Semitic prejudice; *Il Corriere della Sera*, 26 Gennaio 2004. See also Emanuele Ottolenghi, 'The New Truth about Good and Evil', in *The Jerusalem Post*, 7 November 2005.

⁶⁴ *The Independent*, 10 October 2002.

⁶⁵ Ellis Shuman, 'Storm over Nobel Prize laureate's Auschwitz comparison' in *Israel Insider*, 26 March 2002, available at http://www.israelinsider.com/channels/diplomacy/articles/dip_0184.htm (page accessed on March 22, 2006). Saramago was quoted as saying that "We must ring all bells in the world to tell that what is happening in Palestine is a crime, and it is within our power stop to this... We can compare it to

Politicians sometimes draw the same parallel. In the UK, Former Labour MP Oona King, in an article published in *The Guardian*, compared Israel's treatment of Palestinians in Gaza — which she visited in 2003 — to the Nazi creation of the Warsaw Ghetto, and went on to say: 'No government should be behaving like that – least of all a Jewish government... As a Jewish person, I hoped I would never live to see the day I was ashamed of the actions of the Jewish state.'⁶⁶ King felt the irresistible urge to compare Israel to the ultimate evil – Nazism – and invoke her origins to shield herself from the anticipated criticism over this dubious hyperbole.

Cartoonists followed suit, frequently using this theme. A Greek caricature appeared in the April 7, 2002 edition of *Ethnos*, depicting two Israeli soldiers intent on massacring helpless Palestinians and telling one another that the Jews had been to Auschwitz 'to learn, not to suffer'. A similar theme appeared in the Austrian *Kleine Zeitung* on 19 May, 2004 suggesting the same parallel: an SS guard was depicted staring at a wary Jewish child against a background of destruction – a clear reference to the famous picture of a Jewish child held at gunpoint in the Warsaw Ghetto; next to the two, as its mirror image, the two characters reappear in the same setting but in different dresses – the soldier now an Israeli, the child a Kafiya wearing Palestinian.

The frequent comparison between Israel and Nazism gives credence and legitimacy to the call for war against Israel until its destruction as a Jewish state. After all, if Israel is as evil as Nazism, why should it deserve a better fate? Advocating the end of the Jewish state, far from being anti-Semitism, has thus become a crusade against racism, a struggle for freedom and a means to rescue the Jews from the perils of 'Jewish power'.⁶⁷ The

what happened in Auschwitz... Even if we consider the differences in place and time, it is still the same thing. From the military point of view... Ramallah is the barracks of the camp, and the Palestinians are the prisoners inside."

⁶⁶ 'Israel can halt this now', *The Guardian*, 12 June 2003.

⁶⁷ Christopher Hitchens, 'Jewish Power, Jewish Peril', in Christopher Hitchens, *Essays on Love, Poverty and War*, New York, Nation Books, 2004, p. 331: 'Myself, even as a wretchedly heretic and bastard member of the tribe, I perhaps conceitedly think that there may be something to the cliché about Jews' being inherently and intuitively smart. Smart enough to see that if ethno-religious nationalism isn't good for other people, it may not even be good for the Jews. Smart enough to doubt the divinity of antique man-made scrolls. Smart enough even to see that the Promised Land may be a secular multi-ethnic democracy,

comparison is not just historically inaccurate, but pernicious on a number of levels, because turning Israel and the Jews into the Nazis of the 21st Century is an attempt to do three things:

- The equation between the victims and the murderers belittles the Holocaust.
- The equation between the victims and the murderers provides a retroactive justification for the Holocaust.
- The equation of what Nazis did to Jews and what the Jews are supposedly doing to the Palestinians gives credence and legitimacy to the call for a war of annihilation against Israel and provides justification for terrorism, once both are disguised as an expression of grievance and as a struggle for freedom against barbarism.

Those who describe Israel as the root of all evil provide the linguistic mandate and the moral justification to destroy it. By the same logic, Jews everywhere may deservedly become legitimate targets, unless they publicly dissociate themselves from Israel. Those who demand that Jews condemn Israel lest this happens are simply providing a rational excuse for anti-Semitism.

Several factors reinforce this trend: Disproportionate coverage of the conflict in relation to other news stories,⁶⁸ insistence on the centrality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to world stability⁶⁹ and promotion of a narrative of the conflict that questions Israel's right

none the worse for being a second home to many other wanderers and victims too. America, in a word. The best hope and, yes, perhaps the last one.'

⁶⁸ See Emanuele Ottolenghi, 'To Go Where No Hilton Is', in *The Jerusalem Post*, 13 August 2004.

⁶⁹ On the view that a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict will have regional and global positive repercussions, see MP Clare Short's recent statement, posted on the official website for *The Skies Are Weeping* (<http://weepingskies.blogspot.com>), a Cantata written in memory of International Solidarity Movement, Rachel Corrie: 'I am supporting the World Premiere of the cantata for Rachel Corrie because there has been the usual campaign to silence even a cantata to commemorate a young woman who gave her life in order to stand for justice. I also believe that US backing for Israeli policies is the major cause of bitter division and violence in the world.' See for a more mainstream formulation of this view, official EU positions: See the official EU position on the 'Middle East Peace Process', i.e. the Palestinian-Israeli peace process: 'The achievement of lasting peace in the region is of vital importance for Europe. The Middle East is a neighbouring region, with which Europe has long-standing political, historical, cultural, economic and commercial ties, and whose stability and security are essential to Europe's own stability and security. This is why the Community and its Member States are fully committed to playing a consistent role in this

to exist and the legitimacy of Jewish support for Israel. And while excessive focus on the Middle East needs not be explained by sinister motives, centrality of the conflict to world stability and the questioning of Israel's right to exist indicate an agenda that transcends mere criticism of policies on their merit:

'The truth is that the West, which created Israel, cannot bear to see what it has done. In trying to solve the problem of Jewish persecution in Europe, which culminated in the Holocaust, Western powers helped to establish the Jewish state as a refuge for the Jews and their own consciences. A compelling argument at the time, it became unassailable when Old Testament stories about the ancient Israelites and their exploits in the Holy Land were thrown in. But these were European sensitivities arising from European events that had nothing to do with the people who paid the price for Israel's establishment. Most Palestinians are Muslims who do not accept the Biblical version of events. So why were they sacrificed to assuage European guilt and fulfil Zionist ambitions?',⁷⁰

The recent statement from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, calling for Israel to be 'relocated' in Europe on land volunteered by countries that were responsible for the

process.' Statement available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mepp/faq/index.htm. This position was confirmed by Luxembourg's Foreign Minister, Jean Asselbourn, in his January 2005 visit to Israel: 'I am delighted to be here in Israel today. This is my first trip abroad as President in Office of the Council of the European Union and I was determined to come here at the beginning of the Luxembourg Presidency to emphasize again to the Israeli authorities the immense importance that the EU attaches to its relationship with Israel and to finding a just and durable solution in the Middle East.' Available at <http://domino.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/8ff1b7196131b25b85256f8f005468c5?OpenDocument>. Luxembourg was then holding the rotating presidency of the EU. See also Adar Primor, 'President of EU Council of Ministers: The Arafat excuse has disappeared', in *Ha'aretz*, Internet English Edition, 18 January 2005: '[Luxembourg Prime minister] Asselborn attributes unusual significance to the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He views it as the key to regional stability, to the rapprochement of the Arab world and the Western world, to healing trans-Atlantic wounds and even to world peace. Like his French colleague, Foreign Minister Michel Barnier, Asselborn believes that the establishment of an Israeli-Palestinian peace should take precedence over the stability of Iraq. Despite America's opposite stance on this issue, Asselborn believes that during his country's presidency of the council, trans-Atlantic relations will finally thaw.' See also French Foreign minister Michel Barnier's interview with *Liberation*, on February 7, 2005: 'There's a new atmosphere reigning today in the Middle East. Yasser Arafat isn't there anymore, a new leader, Abu Mazen, has been elected; he has genuine legitimacy and is making clear statements. The Israeli Prime minister is displaying courage by deciding to pull out of Gaza. There's an opportunity to start moving again towards peace if this withdrawal is indeed the first stage of a more general process. But the Americans will have to understand that this is a pivotal conflict and that, without peace in the Middle East, there won't be a democracy movement in the broader Middle East.' See also Javier Solana's statement on January 12, 2005: 'We know from experience that the search for peace in the Middle East is hard, and that the absence of peace hurts Palestinians and Israelis and also all of us, inside the region and beyond. That is why the EU, directly and through its role in the Quartet, will do all it can to use this political opening to maximum effect.'

⁷⁰ Ghada Karmi, 'Ugly Reality of Israel's Atrocities.' In *The Times* (London), *Times2*, 24 November 2004, p. 4.

Holocaust (despite the fact that he denies it), logically follows from this historically flawed argument. Nevertheless, its appearance in mainstream media indicates how far a discourse of delegitimation of Israel has gone in Europe.

Israel's increasingly negative image has a perverse effect: as hostility against the Jewish state swells to the point of vilification and demonizing of its leaders, its policies and its very nature, so do attacks on Jewish targets in Europe.

The nexus between newsworthy items and an increase in attacks against Jews is not confined to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: this fact alone offers further evidence of a correlation between public discourse and anti-Semitic sentiment. Incidents rise also in conjunction with other regional tensions, suggesting a growing perception according to which much of the current world problems are caused by Israel's conduct in the region – and by extension can be blamed on Israel's supporters.⁷¹ Thus, as noted, anti-Semitic incidents increased in conjunction with 9/11 and with wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Conclusion

A comprehensive view of the intensity of anti-Semitism country by country in Europe is beyond the scope of this article, but charting anti-Semitic incidents against a backdrop of the ebb and flow of violence related to the Middle East news cycle reveals the inextricable relationship between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. When Israel and the Middle East are in the news, somehow anti-Semitic incidents dramatically increase. Vigorous – and legitimate – criticism of Israel's conduct alone does not explain this outcome. Violence is a by-product of a predominantly hostile – and at times vituperative

⁷¹ In more extreme versions of this worldview, Jews are accused of being behind the 9/11 terror attacks, and in general of conspiring to destabilize the world to their own advantage. See websites such as www.jewwatch.com, <http://holywar.org>, <http://www.answering-christianity.com/jews.htm>, <http://rami.tv>, <http://www.catholicvoice.co.uk/>, among others. But as the recent paper by Mearsheimer & Walt indicates, the view that America's 'misguided' policies in the Middle East are the result of the excessive influence of Israel's lobby – that is, that American foreign policy serves a foreign government – do not help. It is hardly surprising that White Supremacist and vintage anti-Semite David Duke endorsed their work (www.davidduke.com, visited on 23 March 2006), giving a new poignancy to the saying, that one shall be judged by who their friends are no less than by their enemies.

discourse offered through the medium of political activism, newspaper commentary and literature, uniformly depicting Israel as evil, often conflating Israel and the Jews and even occasionally borrowing from anti-Semitic imagery.

The limited range of examples provided should nevertheless highlight the mechanism at play: dramatic events in the Israeli-Palestinian arena and the broader region are presented to the public according to a narrative that argues that the Palestine question is central to regional ills, which can be addressed and overcome only if that issue is first resolved. Israel usually emerges either as the villain of the story or the main obstacle to achieving peace, either as the sinister influence behind America's Middle Eastern 'misadventures', or an evil power to be confronted. Jewish support for Israel is then decried and Jews who 'break ranks' and join the chorus of condemnation are hailed as heroes and the authentic representatives of Judaism.

Conflict awakens prejudice when the right buttons are pushed. It is not enough that the story is in the news. The cumulative effect of how the story is told acts as a rabble-rouser. If anti-Semitism is the prism through which the Arab-Israeli conflict is described, then it is no wonder that some feel encouraged to pour their wrath on Jews with impunity. That a genuine sense of grievance for Palestinian rights explains deplorable behaviour is also a hollow explanation. There is no justification for violence, nor is there an excuse for the prejudice fuelling it. Passions run strong on the Middle East conflict. It is imperative on all those involved in reporting, debating and influencing the conflict, that a moderate language is applied that sticks to the merits and does not slide into the temptation of demonizing one's adversaries. Good causes do not need prejudice to advance their goals.