

Fighting Anti-Semitism, Both Left and Right

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ABSTRACT

Many in the West are confused by the new, historically unprecedented anti-Semitism of the political left. However, this contemporary anti-Semitic libel of the Jewish State parallels classic anti-Semitism against Jews. Jews who lived in Stalinist Russia easily identify this symmetry. Soviet propaganda regularly vilified Jews by accusing them of being “Zionists.” This anti-Semitic tool gained international credibility in the United Nations’ infamous “Zionism is racism” resolution in 1975.

Paradoxically, the world now uses rhetoric identical to Stalin’s in the name of postmodernism, an outgrowth of neo-Marxism, guided by the noble ideas of equality, human rights, and universal peace. This view sees nationalism as an evil relic of the dark past, and Israel as the epitome of a combative ethnic nation-state, a remnant of colonialism, as “deplorable.” This serves as the basis for vicious anti-Zionist propaganda that views Israel as an undesirable and illegitimate entity.

We formulated the 3D Test in response to the anti-Semitic defamation of Israel, to reveal how anti-Israel propaganda parallels anti-Semitic propaganda against individual Jews, repeating the historical pattern of anti-Semitism, now aimed at Israel. It includes three criteria: 1. Demonization, 2. Delegitimization, and 3. Double Standards.

The 3D Test helps diagnose and unmask unacceptable anti-Semitic statements, noting their style and pattern, while allowing for legitimate criticism, which is good, productive, and acceptable.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two millennia, anti-Semitism has infected peoples, religions and civilizations, battering its Jewish victims on religious, racial, nationalist and post nationalist grounds. Whether it's the massacre and expulsion of Jews from ancient Jerusalem, the assault on Alexandria's Jewish community in the year 38 of the common era, the trumped-up charges against French officer Alfred Dreyfus in the 1890's, or Germany's *Kristallnacht* in the late 1930's, each episode is seen to emanate from a mix of political, social, economic, cultural, and religious factors, that seem to elude one deeper cause.

However, a closer look at the historical processes that have led to the current alarming state of anti-Semitism against Jews whether in Israel, Ireland, or Indiana reveals an eternal truth; throughout the ages anti-Semitism has consistently targeted and undermined each era's center of Jewish identity. Religiously-based hatred of Jews during the Middle Ages was distinct from the racially-based anti-Semitism of the modern era. Today, anti-Semitism assaults Jews by attacking Israel, the center of Jewish collective identity. However, it is more difficult for many to understand Israel-centered anti-Semitism, because it is not as self-evident.

Many in the West are confused by the “new” Left anti-Semitism, since it is historically unprecedented. However, contemporary anti-Semitic libel of the Jewish State parallels classic anti-Semitism against Jews. Jews who lived in Stalinist Russia easily identify this symmetry. Soviet propaganda regularly vilified Jews by accusing them of being “Zionists.” This anti-Semitic tool gained international credibility in the United Nations’ infamous “Zionism is racism” resolution in 1975.

Paradoxically, the world now uses rhetoric identical to Stalin’s in the name of postmodernism, guided by the noble ideas of equality, human rights, and universal peace, which sees nationalism as the obstacle to an ideal world without nations and borders. In this “dream,” Israel as a Jewish national state is “problematic,” and symbolizes the last remnant of colonialism and the dark past.

STALIN’S ANTI-SEMITISM/ANTI-ZIONISM

In my childhood in the 1950’s Soviet Russia, “Zionists” was a code word for Jews. In the 1940’s, the Stalinist government placed restrictions on and conducted purges of Jews, calling them “Zionist agents” or “*kosmopolit*,” a term referring to the cosmopolitan, international, and rootless nature of Jews.¹ In Stalinist Russia, anti-Semites did not bother to hide their hatred of the Jews; it was clear to us. “Zionists” and “cosmopolitans” that the terms represent two ironically opposite criticisms: “Zionists” implies that the Jews are disloyal because they are *nationalists*, loyal to Israel instead of the Soviet Union, and “cosmopolitans” suggests that the Jews are disloyal because of their *internationalist* nature. In Communist Party documents, the Soviets officially claimed to vehemently oppose all types of racism, but ironically, they included both anti-

Semitism and Zionism. This would lay the foundation for Soviet propaganda “conquering” the United Nations and the international community’s vindication of Soviet anti-Semitism.

1975 UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 3379: ZIONISM IS RACISM

The international community ratified Stalin’s anti-Semitic propaganda by equating Zionism with racism in UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 of November 1975.² This was the sequel to the anti-Israel battle that had begun in 1965 when the Soviets tried to push for the inclusion of Zionism as a kind of racial discrimination, as they proposed it be included in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.³ The Convention was affirmed, but the Russian proposal failed. However, this would change in 1975 when the international community vindicated Stalin’s anti-Semitism by passing UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 affirming that “Zionism is racism.” The American ambassador to the United Nations, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, noting the Soviet-sponsored resolution, admonished the UN assembly, saying “the abomination of anti-Semitism has been given the appearance of international sanction.”⁴ In fact, at the time, the free world, including Europe, stood with Israel against the “Zionism is racism” resolution.

Before this turning point in 1975, the Soviet Union’s attacks on Israel were disregarded as bogus. Yet now, if Zionism was racism, and racism was a crime, it followed that Zionism was also a crime. This justified, popularized, and mainstreamed Soviet anti-Semitic propaganda. This resolution lent credibility in the international



Anti-Semitic graffiti in Warsaw, Poland, 2019.

Photo: Jaap Arriens/Nur Photo

community to the Soviets' obscured messages regarding the Jewish state, which clouded the similarities between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

In 1975, most of the nations who supported the “Zionism is racism” resolution were third-world countries and Soviet satellites. Today, however, many in the free world have changed sides. Due to the popular human rights and global discourse of leftist postmodernism, Israel’s detractors come from the developed Western world and insist that anti-Zionist polemics are legitimate criticism of Israel.

THE “3D TEST” AS A RESPONSE TO ANTI-ISRAEL INVECTIVE IN THE SECOND INTIFADA

When I was a minister in the Israeli government during the start of the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, disturbing anti-Israel media agitation encouraged a worldwide wave of anti-Semitism. A cartoon of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon,⁵ monstrously eating Palestinian children, won a prize for the best caricature of the year. Jose Saramago, a Nobel laureate, visited Israel and spoke of “concentration camps” and “the spirit of Auschwitz.”⁶ However many people in the free world did not recognize the rhetorical and political attacks on Israel as anti-Semitism. It became clear that we needed objective criteria.

In response to defamation of Israel, Ron Dermer, Israel’s ambassador to the United States, and I formulated the “3D Test” to show how anti-Israel propaganda paralleled anti-Semitic propaganda against individual Jews. The 3D Test is a formula to recognize the repetitive historical pattern of anti-Semitism, now aimed at Israel. It includes three criteria for detecting anti-Semitism in the form of “anti-Zionism:” 1. Demonization, 2. Delegitimization, and 3. Double Standards.

These are tools with which to reveal anti-Israel bias and hatred that takes the form of classic anti-Semitic speech. The “3D Test” is a metaphor for “3D glasses,” worn by moviegoers at a three-dimensional film. Without these “3D spectacles,” the movie appears distorted, unclear, or blurred.

Now internationally accepted, the 3D Test clarifies and sharpens the parallels of classic anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, bringing them into full focus and facilitating the unmasking of the new anti-Israel face of Jew hatred. The same arguments that were



Author and Israel detractor Peter Beinart speaks in Atlanta, Georgia in 2012.

Photo: David Goldman/AP

historically used against Jews are now being brought up against Israel as the “collective Jew.” This is especially important in the postmodern world, which denies a connection between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Examples of the 3Ds abound: anti-Israel protest signs depicting Jews with horns and tails, perpetuating the belief that Jews are demonic or satanic,⁷ anti-Israel cartoons with classic anti-Semitic themes, such as one of a dying Jesus, represented as a Palestinian, in his mother Mary’s arms, with the text, “Do not kill him twice,”⁸ or depicting Jews as a Christ-killers, now applied to the Jewish State, are all examples of demonization.

Depicting an Arab Palestinian as Jesus, at the same time delegitimizes Israel by distorting and manipulating Jewish history, reminiscent of the supersessionary Christian claim that Judaism was replaced by the New Testament. The reversal of historical “victim” roles as in the “Zionism is Nazism” inversion claim, the denials of ancient Jewish archeological discoveries, Jewish indigeneity, Jewish peoplehood, all common in traditional and social media sources, all aim to delegitimize the Jewish State and its connection to the Jewish people.

The third measure, “double standards,” are commonly reflected in UN resolutions exclusively condemning or censuring Israel, over the course of decades since the organization’s inception. This singling out of the Jewish State has occurred while representatives of the world’s most oppressive dictatorships sit on UN councils and committees that condemn Israel. This double standard is reminiscent of the thousand-plus discriminatory laws of czarist Russia against Jews.

POSTMODERNISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

Why, when in 1975 the free world knew that Zionism was not racism, now, in the postmodern world, do they think that Zionism is racism? Additionally, today, just like in Soviet Russia, it has become common for people to use the word “Zionism” as a slur. However, the difference today is that it has become more difficult to recognize anti-Zionism’s connection to anti-Semitism. Stalinist Russia and today’s postmodern worldview reach similar conclusions about Zionism. The postmodern world, born of respect for the noble causes of human rights, social justice, and peace, uses the same formulas to blast Zionism as did the Stalinist anti-Semitic regime.

Postmodern political thought, popularized, and postulated by French intellectuals, rejects nation-states as antithetical to its sacred aims. This was well expressed in John Lennon's signature song, "Imagine:" "Imagine there's no countries....no religion, too...Imagine all the people sharing all the world."⁹ Postmodernism was largely an outgrowth of neo-Marxism, in which nationalism, group identity, and religion are considered the obstacles to achieving the ultimate goal of world peace. Israel, the epitome of a combative ethnic nation-state, a relic and remnant of the colonial past order, is "deplorable." This serves as the basis for vicious anti-Zionist propaganda that views Israel as an undesirable and illegitimate entity.

As opposed to Stalinist communism, in which individual citizens were cogs in the Soviet machine in which no individual had rights beyond their instrumental value, in the postmodern ideal, individual human rights embody the highest value. The postmodern ideological frame will deny any connection to anti-Semitism because it views Judaism as a faith and an individual choice. Any form of national identity of Jews or others is considered antithetical to the ultimate postmodern vision for the world. Soviet communism and postmodernism reach the same conclusion in opposing Zionism, each from an opposite angle, as if the ideas of Stalin's Russia have revisited the free world, now manifested in the language of peace, equality, and freedom.

There has been a counter-reaction to the postmodern denial of nationalism, as witnessed in ultra-nationalism and neo-fascism on the right-wing extreme of the political spectrum. Forces on the Left say they love Jews, but hate Israel, while those on the Right admire Jewish nationalism, but hate Jews. Extremism on both sides has inflamed anti-Semitism.

Nationalism is still a self-evident phenomenon, as is liberalism, and both can be positive forces but can also be driven to negative extremes. In Europe, we observe obvious expressions of nationalism, from Brexit to the Eastern European countries, with many far-right parties gaining power and momentum. In the United States, the Alt-Right movement has gained traction.

Today, both in the United States and in Europe, neither anti-Semites nor anti-Zionists bother to mask their hatred of Jews and the Jewish State. A Belgian parade float recently depicted big-nosed Hasidic Jews with rats and money bags,¹⁰ demonstrating that conventional, classical anti-Semitism is still acceptable. On the other side of the spectrum, anti-Zionist hatred is still less recognized as anti-Semitism. Why is this? Anti-Zionists still view Israel as a vestige of nationalism and “colonialism.” This postmodern mindset justifies anti-Israel harassment and even violence on college campuses directed at Jewish students, which, as expressions of anti-Semitism, have become increasingly more common.

The 3D Test has been an effective tool to expose the anti-Israel form of anti-Semitism. However, today since classic anti-Semitic statements are openly being used to demonize the Jewish state, the 3D Test may become obsolete. We don’t need a 3D Test to understand that U.S. Congresswoman Ilhan Omar’s statements that “Israel hypnotizes the world” and that American Jews are loyal to a foreign power¹¹ are anti-Semitic tropes.

However, 3D is still unexpectedly valuable when Jews in today’s public discourse misrepresent anti-Israel and anti-Semitism as political critique. For example, Jewish author and perennial Israel detractor, Peter Beinart, denied the anti-Semitic nature of Omar’s statements.¹² This is a fundamental error. The 3D Test still helps

us to diagnose and unmask unacceptable anti-Semitic statements, noting their style and pattern, while allowing for legitimate criticism, which is good, productive, and acceptable.

In today's world, in the world of the new nationalism on the Right and postmodernism on the Left, anti-Semitism exists in two parallel realities. Anti-Semitism exists on the extremes of both the political Left and Right, with each camp recognizing it in their opponents, while denying it in their own spaces. Both sides should be held responsible for energetically fighting anti-Semitism and denouncing it with moral clarity in their own political camp.

Endnotes

- 1 “Rootless cosmopolitan” was a pejorative term widely used during the Soviet anti-Semitic campaign of the late 1940s and early 1950s, culminating in the infamous “Doctors’ plot” against Jewish doctors. *Kosmopolit* referred especially to Jewish intellectuals, and their alleged lack of allegiance to the Soviet Union. <https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~hpcws/egorov.htm>
- 2 https://ecf.org.il/media_items/1395
- 3 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CERD.aspx>
- 4 <https://unwatch.org/moynihans-moment-the-historic-1975-u-n-speech-in-response-to-zionism-is-racism/>
- 5 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Brown_\(cartoonist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Brown_(cartoonist))
- 6 <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5224268> In 2002, renowned Portuguese writer and Nobel Prize-winner Jose Saramago, drew comparisons between Israel’s blockade of the West Bank city of Ramallah and the Holocaust. Referring to the IDF’s siege on Ramallah, Saramago said that it had the “the spirit of Auschwitz,” and “This place is being turned into a concentration camp.”
- 7 http://www.zombietime.com/sf_rally_february_16_2003/
- 8 <https://www.theguardian.com/global/gallery/2008/dec/19/middleeast-israelandthepalestinians>
- 9 <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/3403160/John+Lennon/Imagine>
- 10 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/world/europe/belgium-carnival-anti-semitism.html>
- 11 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/11/opinion/ilhan-omar-antisemitism.html>
- 12 <https://forward.com/opinion/national/419206/the-sick-double-standard-in-the-ilhan-omar-controversy/>