

Anti-Zionism as a Postmodern Ideology

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ABSTRACT

Anti-Zionism is an ideology, that can be deconstructed, but it is not an erroneous opinion that one can criticize. We may fight it, but we cannot argue with it. Serious intellectual and academic proofs, our previous strategies as academics, have not convinced the true believers of “Palestinianism,” which has become a kind of Western progressive religion.

The anti-Zionist ideology facing us is not just a passing phase nourished by the manipulation of history by Palestinian nationalism; it is part of a societal configuration within the framework of what has become Western global democratic society. We are entering a new age of Jew-hatred.

The best way to counter an ideology is to attack it. You cannot fight a myth or a lie with a simple defense or justification. You must instead pit the myths of the ideology against themselves. It is important not to respond to invented accusations and not to accept the terms of the opponent, but to target the same objects that in turn target the ideology.

To imagine that one can draw a border—even a fine one—between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism is to think that the controversy over the latter is based on rational argumentation and historical knowledge. This is what we did in France and Western Europe for 20 years,¹ without success in debunking it. Anti-Zionism is a belief, and therefore it is impervious to rationality and facts

that contradict it. How can one argue about whether someone's judgment on Israel goes beyond the measure of a "legitimate criticism" if the facts he uses as proofs are shameful lies? One obvious example is calling Israel an "apartheid" state when the Israeli Arab party is the third largest party in the Knesset and its political ideology denies the State of Israel's legitimacy. The discussion turns nonsensical when based on lies.

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Everything has been said *ad nauseam* against this ideology, especially in recent years, after witnessing new heights of anti-Semitic activity originating from the anti-Zionist Left. If indeed, logical speech has become ineffective, only direct confrontation remains an option.² American Jewry must waste no time in learning from the historical and recent experiences of European Jews and take heed.

These conclusions do not stem solely from empirical judgments, but from analysis. The anti-Zionist ideology facing us is not just a passing phase nourished by the manipulation of history by Palestinian nationalism; it is part of a societal configuration within the framework of what has become Western global democratic society. We are entering a new age of Jew-hatred.

Throughout history, Jews have experienced three modes of hatred which correspond to three ages of civilization: traditional society, democratic modernity, and postmodernity. Each of these



Women's March leadership Ginny Suss, Carmen Perez, Mia Ives-Ruble, honorary co-chair Gloria Steinem, Linda Sarsour, and Tamika Mallory stand together in Washington, DC, on January 21, 2017.

Photo: Theo Wargo/Getty Images NA/AFP

epochs, respectively, fostered a different type of hatred: religious, racial, and today, “humanist.” Before the modern age, the Jew was hated as a deicide (or traitor to Muhammad or Luther); in modernity, as a foul race and international conspirators; and today, Jews are perceived as racists who infringe on *human* rights.

In all three ages, the Jews were attacked as a collective, yet in different ways. In the medieval empires, the Jews were the captive nation, shut up in the ghetto as a target. In the democratic nation-state, it was the Jewish community, defined as a people hidden among the national citizenry. Today, in the age of the global village, it is the State of Israel that is considered intrinsically racist. Each of the three cases, respectively, is typified by different

forms of the collective existence of the Jews: ghetto or *mellah*, denomination, or nation-state. Today the target of the attack is, above all, the sovereignty of the Jewish people in the form of a nation-state. This creates a *political* hatred.

THE ULTIMATE IDEOLOGY OF ANTI-ZIONISM

Anti-Zionism is backed by a broader ideology, dominant today in Western democratic countries, which sustains it, legitimizes it, and guarantees its worldwide impact. This ideology is called postmodernism, which also has numerous satellites: postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and gender doctrine, with “deconstruction” being the keyword. Objectively, its aim is to dismiss all the “narratives” of the West in order to promote the “Other,” or, rather, the non-Western “Others” narratives. Contrary to modern anti-Semitism, which considered the Jew to belong to a foreign race, the new anti-Semitism classifies Jews as belonging to the “Same” and not the “Other.” This creates an intense paradox: the new hatred of the Jews is born and develops in the multicultural environment, on the basis of the apologetics of “diversity.”

Postmodernist ideology is founded on a series of antinomies: the collective and the individual subject, as well as the nation and the individual, are its elective targets. It positions minorities against nation; gender against identity; participative democracy against representative democracy; “international community” against the state; tribunal against executive power; governance against government; human rights against civil rights.³ Clearly, the State of Israel stands on the dividing line of this series of antinomies, appearing to be the quintessence of the enemy.

Anti-Zionism thus is postmodernism applied to the State of Israel, to the Jews as a people, to the Jewish people as a nation, to the Jew as gender-related (as in the idea that Judaism is a source of “phallocracy”), to the Jew as a singular identity (as opposed to the “Other”), to Judaism as a coherent and integrated system, to Israel as territory, and so on. “Zionism” is viewed as conjoining all that resists this new ideology and power system. The Jew targeted by anti-Zionism is thus wholly the opposite of the post-Holocaust philo-Semitic myth that idealized the Jew as a victim, and more precisely, an undifferentiated (so-called “universal”) victim, a figure that aims at lessening European guilt and allows European consciousness to absolve itself of its culpability by identifying with the “victim.” The greater the adoration of the “wandering” or “victim” Jew, the greater the hatred of the sovereign Jew.

Thus, when we put anti-Zionism in the global framework of postmodernist ideology, the argument against Israel also applies to all the democratic nation-states of the West. Israel is a vector of an issue far greater than that of the Jews. Postmodernism is essentially the ideology suitable to the European Union, the cradle of anti-Zionism; a society in which a new power tries to establish a new order, where a profound crisis of nation-states and national identity coincides with simultaneous massive immigration from states under the threat of *jihad* that announce a possible war of identities.

This state of affairs allows European Islamic activists to legitimately join the current dominant ideology via its “postcolonial” annex. Anti-Zionism thus becomes the banner of Muslim fundamentalists, the extreme Left, of the alternative and so-called “progressive” movements that have found in Palestine the mythical hero, the “universal class” that the proletariat was for Marxism, and that

Catholics see as the “New Israel” of their supersessionist theology. For the same reason, for governments, anti-Zionism plays the role of a system of symbolic communication and negotiation with their Muslim population, which has made Palestine its emblem. This is what has been called “intersectionality,” the key to the success of Palestinianism, which contributes to making Palestine the embodiment of all frustrations and claims.

THE WAR OF THE JEWS

The recent development of anti-Zionism in both Israel and the Diaspora has seen the phenomenon of Jewish elites rising to accuse other Jews of racism and tribalism, in an attempt to discredit Israel by using the claim that Zionism has created an “apartheid” Jewish state. Israel’s postmodern intelligentsia hatched these accusations through ideologies of “post-Zionism,” “new history,” “new sociology,” “new archaeology,” and other postmodern academic movements. These are the mainstay of the new anti-Semitism, providing it with false accusations in addition to moral immunity since it emanates from Jews who authorize its legitimacy. It is particularly sad to see the basis of hatred against Israel originating from within Israel itself.

This is a sign of the gravity and reality of the anti-Jewish threat from the outside. We can understand this phenomenon as a consequence of the hostile pressure exercised by the environment. Such a situation, classically, causes the collapse of the Jewish social bond. It is expressed first by a rupture between the Jewish elites and the Jewish masses.

Indeed, the elites are in structural contact with the oppressing milieu: in making concessions on their link with the rest of the Jews and condemning them, they hope to continue to belong to the now globalized, dominant elite and true center of postmodernism. Hannah Arendt called this typically modern Jewish tendency “Jews by exception.” Such a phenomenon existed in periods of persecution and oppression: the Spanish Inquisition and its apostates; Nazism’s phenomenon of 1930s *Jüdischer Selbsthass* (Jewish self-hatred), discussed in Theodore Lessing’s book of that name; and other similar historical incidences.

Its apparition in Israel was not just a disagreement and a political debate but a *Kulturkampf*. The dramatic way in which the former Israeli ambassador to France, Tel Aviv University historian and well-known *JCall* speaker Professor Eli Barnavi, described this conflict is significant:

Yes, there are two Israels, my Israel, oriented to the secular and rational world; and the other, idolatrous Israel, focused on a deified land and prisoner of archaic beliefs.... Between the two, there is no possible compromise.... In the combat opposing them, each camp has its allies in the Jewish world and among the Gentiles. They have their followers, Jews of the Diaspora entrenched in their ancestral fears who scent anti-Semitism everywhere and are ready to fight for Abu Dis, to the last Israeli, or American evangelists.... We have our followers, “moral Jews...” and Gentiles who still agree to maintain a balance.⁴

These elites call for an intervention by Western powers against their own country to “save” it from fascism. On October 1, 2009, Eli Barnavi called for international intervention in the radio

broadcast *Les Matins de France Culture*. Among other statements, he declared: “James Baker...said, it was recorded...‘We will screw the Jews.’ It was music to my ears.”

This has awoken the eternal demons of the Western world. The conflict of the two Israels has thus become quasi-international with, at its center, the best “Israel”: Palestine. The discourse of the post-Zionist and postmodernist Jewish milieus has helped to ruin, and even criminalize, the identity of the Jews as a people and the rational coherence of Jewish civilization, among other things, in an attempt to rewrite Jewish history and identity. Thus, this enterprise has joined that of the European postmodernists at war against their own cultures and nations, especially European nation-states, at one with the logic of a European Union “empire” in the making.

Hatred Systems	Anti-Judaism	Anti-Semitism	Anti-Zionism
Types of Civilization	Traditional Society	Democratic Modernity	Postmodernity
Types of Hatred	Religious	Racial	Humanist
Types of Accusation	Deicide	World Conspiracy	Fascism and Racism
Jewish Collective Dimension	Ghetto	Denomination	Sovereign State Ethnic Communities (Diaspora)
Political Regimes	Empire	Absolute Monarchy and Nation-State	Global Village

HOW CAN WE FIGHT ANTI-ZIONISM TODAY?

The best way to counter an ideology is to attack it. You cannot fight a myth or a lie with a simple defense or justification. You must instead pit the myths of the ideology against themselves. It is important not to respond to invented accusations and not to accept the terms of the opponent, but to target the same objects that in turn target the ideology.

In this, Israeli and Jewish elites have failed miserably in neglecting the considerable history of violent liquidation of eleven significant Jewish communities in the Arab-Muslim world, most of whom became Israelis (600,000 Jews in the 1950s). The *Nakba* (the dispersal of Palestinian Arab families), an absolute source of the delegitimization of Israel in today's anti-Zionism ("original sin" in the words of the post-Zionists), does not resist this comparison. Similarly, accusations of apartheid and racism cannot stand up to the turpitude of the Palestinians and the current status of non-Muslims throughout the Muslim world. The accusation against Israel is "moral," yet this "morality" is instrumentalized for wrong. This is one of the main characteristics of anti-Zionism. Moralistic and scholarly discourses are useless in what is a real confrontation, with every ideological attack announcing a future, violent one. If your opponent calls you a "fascist," he will not repeat it again if you call him a "Stalinist."

Endnotes

- 1 In 2000, I created the Observatory of the Jewish World and published an alert bulletin for politicians (obs.monde.juif.free.fr). <http://obs.monde.juif.free.fr/>
- 2 After 18 thick issues of a review devoted to the study of anti-Zionism, *Controverses*, I concluded that everything had been said and that it was necessary to end its publication (<http://controverses.fr/>).
- 3 I have developed this analysis elsewhere: S. Trigano, “La nouvelle idéologie dominante.” *Le postmodernisme* (Paris: Hermann, 2011).
- 4 *Le Point*, no. 1965 (May 13, 2010), 54.