

THE ACADEMIC AND PUBLIC DEBATE OVER THE MEANING OF THE “NEW ANTISEMITISM”

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From the end of 2000 the number of violent incidents and acts of vandalism rose quite steadily, reaching a peak in 2006 when about 590 cases of violence and vandalism were registered worldwide. In addition, there was a considerable increase in verbal insults and threats directed against Jews, as well in the publication of antisemitic articles. Thus, between the end of the 1990s and 2006 the number of antisemitic incidents rose by about 300 percent. Moreover, in 2004, Tel Aviv University's Stephen Roth Institute gathered information on more than 500 incidents of violence and vandalism; about 40 percent of them were physical attacks on Jewish individuals compared to only 20 percent in 1999. This significant shift in targeting of antisemitic attacks has been one indicator of the growing involvement of young Muslims in street violence against Jews (see below).²

This dramatic escalation has been accompanied by a vigorous discourse regarding the significance of these developments to Jews worldwide. Researchers, intellectuals, writers and public figures have debated several fundamental questions which result from differing and even contrasting interpretations of the events. The discussion has extended far beyond antisemitism per se to basic questions regarding contemporary Jewish life in the Diaspora, Jewish relations with various segments of the surrounding society – particularly in Europe, where most of the antisemitic incidents occurred – the connection and allegiance of Jews worldwide to Israel and the commitment of Israel to the safety and welfare of Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Since the beginning of the debate dozens of articles, as well as several collections of essays and books have been published on these issues.³ This article discusses some of the fundamental disagreements revealed during this polemic.

¹ Director and senior researcher, Stephen Roth Institute. This article is based on a paper delivered on April 24, 2008, at the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism. I would like to thank Ms. Sarah Rembiszewski from the Stephen Roth Institute at Tel Aviv University for her most valuable comments.

² <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/statistics/statistics.htm>.

³ See for example: Ron Rosenbaum (ed.), *Those who Forget the Past*, New York, 2004; Paul Iganski and Barry Kosmin (eds) *New Antisemitism?*, London, 2003.

The 1990s: The preparatory years

Antony Lerman, executive director of the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (JPR), is a conspicuous opponent of the view that in recent years Jews have faced a new trend of antisemitism. In his article “Sense on Antisemitism,” published in the British magazine *Prospect*, in August 2002, he wrote that this argument began with the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in October 2000.⁴ This claim is inaccurate. Although the term the “new antisemitism” became common in the public discourse only after the outbreak of the second intifada at the end of 2000, the warnings that Jews worldwide were facing a new form of hate can be traced back to the beginning of the 1990s.

In 1994 Martin Kramer, a prominent Middle East researcher at Tel Aviv University, observed in an article titled “Jihad against the Jews” a dramatic change in the view of many Muslim fundamentalists (hereafter: Islamists) regarding the Jews. He warned of a growing tendency among Islamists towards embracing the concept of a worldwide war, jihad, against them. “This anti-Semitism seems to me so widespread and potentially violent that it could eclipse all other forms of antisemitism over the next decade,” he said.⁵

In the same year, Kramer presented a paper at a conference hosted by JPR (Lerman was one of the main organizers), in which he emphasized that the alleged worldwide Jewish plot to destroy Islam already occupied a central role in the Islamist worldview and that there were clear signs that it was about to become a cornerstone of their teachings. Shortly after the bombing of the AMIA, the Jewish community building in Buenos Aires, in 1994, Kramer noted that there should no longer be any doubt as to where the most serious threat to Jewish security lay – in Islamic fundamentalism: “Hard evidence is rapidly replacing speculation,” he warned. “It is evidence we can no longer ignore or deny.”⁶

Indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s there were several indications of the rise of a new type of Islamic antisemitism that perceived Jews as global enemies. In 1993 members of a militant

⁴ Antony Lerman, “Sense on Antisemitism,” in *The New Antisemitism?*
<http://www.axt.org.uk/essays/Lerman.htm#About%20the%20>

⁵ Martin Kramer, “The Jihad against the Jews,” *Commentary*, October 1994, pp. 38-42,
<http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/JihadAgainstJews.htm>

⁶ Martin Kramer, “The Saliency of Islamic Antisemitism,” *Institute of Jewish Affairs Report*, no. 2, October 1995,
<http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/Antisemitism.htm>

However, the emergence of this new type of antisemitism among extreme Muslims and its threat to Jewish communities was not widely discussed in the 1990s; then, the spotlight focused on the formation of new ultra-nationalist and antisemitic groups in the former Soviet bloc, especially Russia and the antisemitic incitement of prominent leaders of the Communist Party there; the strengthening of nationalist and extreme right-wing parties in Western and Central Europe, particularly the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ); the question of Holocaust victims' assets, particularly pre-war deposits in Swiss banks; Holocaust denial; and the growth of hate propaganda of extreme right and neo-Nazi groups on the Internet.

The antisemitism of radical Islam and the threat it posed received only scant attention in the 1990s.¹¹ Moreover, towards the end of the decade monitoring organizations reported a

⁷ Ely Karmon, "International Terror and Antisemitism – Two Modern Day Curses: Is there a Connection?" <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2005/karmon.html>.

⁸ Database of the Stephen Roth Institute, <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/database.htm>.

⁹ Esther Webman, *Anti-Semitic Motifs in the Ideology of Hizballah and Hamas*, Tel Aviv, 1994

¹⁰ *Antisemitism Worldwide 1993-1994*, Tel Aviv, 1994.

¹¹ See for example, Simon Epstein, *Cyclical Patterns in Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Anti-Jewish Violence in Western Countries since the 1950s*, Jerusalem, 1993; *Antisemitism World Report*, London, 1997, <http://www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/documents/antsem97.htm>; *Antisemitism Worldwide*

continuing decline in antisemitic manifestations. Commenting in 1997 on the findings of a joint publication of the JPR and the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the latter's executive director, David Harris, stated: "We are indeed gratified to see that current trends indicate a decline in antisemitism around the world and that the general population has increasingly little tolerance for this cancerous hatred."¹²

Understanding and defining new historical developments or trends and their potential impact has always been a difficult task for contemporaries, particularly when longstanding phenomena such as antisemitism lie at the core. The renowned Jewish scholar Jacob Katz called the six years that preceded the eruption of the racial and political antisemitism of 1879, "the preparatory stage" of modern antisemitism.¹³ Similarly, the dramatic eruption of antisemitism at the beginning of the new millennium was preceded by ominous manifestations in the last decade of the 20th century. Notwithstanding these signs, the magnitude of the upsurge came as a surprise to almost everyone.

The difficulty of evaluating new political or social developments results from the simple fact that different stages frequently contain elements from previous ones. Ely Karmon, an expert in international terrorism, pointed out that from the end of the 1960s Jewish sites were the target of terror attacks of Palestinian groups, frequently in collaboration with the radical left (German, French, Japanese and others). Although antisemitism was quite common among members of the French and German extreme left, striking at Jewish targets in Europe was based on the concept that terror against the Jews was part of the war against Israel, conveying the message that the life of Jews would not be safe until the Palestinian problem had been solved. Secular Palestinian terrorist groups targeted some of the same sites attacked later by Islamists. In September 1986, Palestinian terrorists from the Abu Nidal group struck at the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, killing 22 Jews. Seventeen years later, in November 2003, the same synagogue was attacked, this

1999- 2000, Tel Aviv, 2000, <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/genanalysis.htm>.

¹² "Anti-Semitism World Report 1997 Reveals Declining Levels of Anti-Semitism around the World; Increased use of Internet for dissemination and monitoring of antisemitism," AJC, July 1997, <http://www.charitywire.com/charity11/00327.html>.

¹³ Jacob Katz, "The Preparatory Stage of the Modern Antisemitic Movement (1873-1879), in *Antisemitism through the Ages*, ed. S. Almog, Oxford, 1988, pp. 279-289.

time by Turkish Islamists linked to al-Qa`ida. Twenty three people were killed, among them six Jews, and about 330 were injured.¹⁴

Nevertheless, even Karmon who emphasizes the continuum between secular Palestinian terror against Jewish targets and murderous Islamist attacks, accepts Kramer's basic claim regarding the difference between the two groups: While Palestinian terror organizations perceived their brutal deeds against Jewish targets as part of their war against Israel, Islamist leaders posit the conflict in terms of a struggle between Islam and the Jews – with a new vision of the Jews and Israel as the supreme enemy and an existential threat.¹⁵

Between demonization of Israel and the war against the Jews

The concept that the Jews were facing a new stage in the history of antisemitism entered the public discourse due mainly to three developments:

1. The dramatic increase in numbers of antisemitic incidents, particularly in Western Europe, following the outbreak of the second intifada in October 2000.
2. The 2001 UN World Conference against Racism at Durban, South Africa, where an orchestrated attack of Arab delegations, with the support of numerous NGOs, against the very existence of the State of Israel, was accompanied by clear antisemitic motifs. Jewish delegates from various countries were stunned by the level of hatred they witnessed towards Israel and the Jewish people, including cries of "Death to the Jews."¹⁶
3. The 9/11 attacks by al-Qa`ida in New York and Washington which took place only a short while after Durban.

These events and others that occurred in the following years, including attacks on Jewish targets (see below), demonstrate the global concept of the jihad waged by Islamists. Historians, whose expertise lay in National Socialism, the Holocaust and modern antisemitism rather than Oriental studies or Islam, spoke of the genocidal aspect of the antisemitic worldview of Islamists. Yehuda Bauer and Robert Wistrich, for example, emphasized the similarity between the desire for global domination of radical Islam and the secular totalitarian ideologies National Socialism

¹⁴ Ely Karmon, "International Terror and Antisemitism – Two Modern Day Curses: Is there a Connection?" <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2005/karmon.html>.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Pierre-Andre Tauguirff, *Rising From the Muck*, Chicago, 2004, pp. 70-72; A conversation with Dr. Karen Mock who was a member of the Canadian delegation to Durban, February 2006.

Since the end of 2000, there have been several attempted and actual terror attacks against Jewish targets committed by members of Islamist groups, in some cases connected to or inspired by al-Qa`ida, such as the strike on the Neve Shalom and Beth Israel synagogues in Istanbul, the attack on the historic synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia in 2002, and plans to hit Jewish targets in Germany and Norway.¹⁹ However, what characterizes the new wave of antisemitism is not an increase in numbers of terror incidents or large-scale acts of violence organized by groups that sought to hurt as many Jews as possible, but rather assaults on Jewish individuals by persons acting spontaneously even without the use of a weapon and shouting antisemitic slogans in the process.²⁰ The fact that most incidents were perpetrated randomly is a significant finding that will be discussed in the conclusions.

With the dramatic rise in street violence, an important question has been raised regarding the identification of the perpetrators, an essential element in the effort to explain the upsurge. Although there are few cases in which the police succeeded in establishing the identity of the perpetrators of physical attacks, the involvement of Arabs and Muslims, according to victim testimonies, is significant.²¹ Jewish leaders and historians who emphasize the threat posed by radical Islam as a major component of the "new antisemitism," see a clear connection between the street violence perpetrated against Jewish individuals or Jewish property, particularly in

¹⁷ Yehuda Bauer, "From Propagating Myths to Holocaust Research: Preparing for an education, in *Europe's Crumbling Myths*, ed. Manfred Gerstenfeld, Jerusalem, 2003, pp.115-117; idem, "Problems of Contemporary Antisemitism," <http://humwww.ucsc.edu/JewishStudies/docs/YBauerLecture.pdf>; Robert Wistrich, *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger*, <http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/%7B42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF%7D/WistrichAntisemitism.pdf>, pp. 15-22;

¹⁸ Matthias Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew Hatred*, New York, 2007.

¹⁹ Karmon, "International Terror and Antisemitism."

²⁰ See "Trends in Antisemitic Violence" in *Antisemitism Worldwide 2005*, <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2005/general-analysis.htm>.

²¹ "The Perpetrators," in *Antisemitism Worldwide 1994*, <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2004/general-analysis.htm>.

Western Europe, and the campaign waged by radical Islam against the Jews. ADL National Director Abe Foxman, for example, states in his book *Never Again?*: “The message of hate preached in the Middle Eastern mosques and broadcasted electronically around the world, is influencing Muslim immigrants in Europe to commit acts of vandalism and violence against Jewish victims.” Similarly, in a lecture he gave in the UK to the Inter-parliamentary Committee against Antisemitism at the beginning of 2002, Jonathan Sacks, chief rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, pointed to "radicalized Islamist youth inflamed by extremist rhetoric" as the principal perpetrators of violent acts against Jews in Europe.²²

The left, particularly in the US and Europe, including Jewish intellectuals, has played a significant role in the emergence of the “new antisemitism.” Jewish philosophers and researchers such as Peter Pulzer, Alvin Rosenfeld, Pierre-André Taguieff and Alain Finkelkraut emphasize the impact of the demonization of the State of Israel on the creation of what Pulzer labels an "antisemitic atmosphere."²³ The equation of Israel with Nazi Germany, which in the past was confined to Arab and Soviet propaganda and to the extreme left on the margins of Western society, has infiltrated mainstream papers.²⁴ Thus, for example, in July 2006, Finn Graff, a cartoonist for the popular Norwegian tabloid daily *Dagbladet*, portrayed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert as a concentration camp commander firing at random at Palestinian inmates. The cartoon was inspired by a scene from Steven Spielberg's movie *Schindler's List*, where Commandant Amon Goeth of the Plaszow concentration camp fired from his balcony at Jewish prisoners for fun.²⁵

Taguieff and others claim that extreme anti-Israel propaganda encourages and even incites to commit violence against Jewish targets.²⁶ In this respect, the reference made by Lawrence Summer, former president of Harvard University, to “actions that are antisemitic in their effect if

²² Abraham H. Foxman, *Never Again?* New York, 2003; Jonathan Sacks, "A New Antisemitism?" in, *A New Antisemitism?* pp. 39-40; see also, Bauer, *From Propagating Myths to Holocaust Research*, pp.116-117; Robert Wistrich "Muslims, Jews and September 11: The British Case," *A New Antisemitism?* p.180;

²³ See for example Peter Pulzer, “The New Anti-Semitism, or When Is a Taboo not a Taboo?” in Iganski and Kosmin, *A New Antisemitism?* pp. 97-112; Taguieff, *Rising From the Muck*; Alain Finkelkraut, "In the Name of the Other: Reflections on the coming anti-semitism," *Azure*, no.18, Autumn, [5765/ 2004. http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=19](http://www.azure.org.il/magazine/magazine.asp?id=19).

²⁴ Pulzer, “The New Anti-Semitism”; Bauer, "Problems of Contemporary Antisemitism"; Roni Stauber, "Anti-Zionism as an Expression to Judophobia after the War, *Masua* 31, 1993, pp. 37-53 (Hebrew).

²⁵ See Norwegian report, *Antisemitism Worldwide 2006*, <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2006/norway.htm>.

²⁶ Taguieff, *Rising From the Muck*, pp. 97-100

not their intent,” particularly when accusing Israel of using Nazi methods against the Palestinians, is illuminating.²⁷ Finkelkraut, Pulzer and others emphasize the deep identification of intellectuals on the left with both the Palestinian cause and "underprivileged" Muslim youth in Europe – second or third generation immigrants mainly from Africa. In the eyes of these intellectuals, Palestinians and Muslims in Europe have replaced the Jews as the new persecuted minority. They, according to Finkelkraut, are the new “other.” Moreover, they have become the new victims of the old ones – the Jews.²⁸

As an outcome of this perception, intellectuals on the left tend to tolerate extreme deeds against Israel and the Jews when they are perpetrated by the alleged victims of the Jews and of Western civilization. Pulzer writes that according to the pro-Palestinian left, “If antisemitism is not the fault of the far right, then its perpetrators should be pitied rather than condemned... They are not the heirs of Vichy.”²⁹

Based on the arguments that support the assumption that particularly since the end of 2001 Jewish communities have faced probably the largest wave of antisemitic manifestations since World War II, the term "new antisemitism" can be defined as *a clear identification between Jewish communities and individuals and Israel, which are perceived as a single evil entity*. According to this concept, Israel is at the forefront of Western civilization and world Jewry, which racially oppress underprivileged elements in both Israel-Palestine and Europe. Thus, antisemitism has become interchangeable with anti-Zionism and the word “Zionist” is identified with Jew. Three groups play a major role in the various manifestations of the “new antisemitism”:

1. Islamists, who perceive Israel as the spearhead of Western civilization and world Jewry;
2. Young Muslims who are incited by extreme anti-Israel propaganda and the antisemitic messages of both Arab and Muslim, as well as European, media to commit acts of violence and vandalism against Jewish sites and Jewish individuals;
3. Left-wing intellectuals and human rights champions who, on the one hand, contribute considerably to the demonization of Israel, occasionally by explicit or implicit use of

²⁷ Lawrence Summers, “Address at Morning Prayer,” in Rosenbaum, *Those who Forget the Past*, p. 59.

²⁸ Finkelkraut, "In the Name of the Other."

²⁹ Pulzer, “The New Anti-Semitism,” pp. 86, 87, Finkelkraut, "In the Name of the Other.”

antisemitic symbols, and on the other, tolerate terror and violent actions against Israel and Jewish targets.

"The Jews pay the price" – anti-Jewish manifestations in retaliation for Israel's deeds

The widely accepted assumption that since the end of 2001 antisemitism has grown dramatically has been rejected by a number of researchers and public figures, prominent among them left-wing Jewish intellectuals who strongly disapprove of Israel's policies.³⁰ They also criticize the Jewish establishment in the Diaspora for what they perceive as its automatic support for Israel and explain the violence against Jews and extreme anti-Israel propaganda in the context of anti-Israel or anti-Zionist activities and not as a new wave in the history of antisemitism.

While Kramer and Karmon point out the inclusion in the Islamist concept of a global war – jihad – against the Jews, and Wistrich and others emphasize the impact of this hatred on violence against Jews committed by young descendants of immigrant families, Brian Klug, a senior research fellow in philosophy at St Benet's Hall, Oxford, completely rejects the former claim.³¹ Klug is the co-founder of Independent Jewish Voices, a group of British Jewish liberals who seek to create an alternative Jewish voice to the official leadership of the Jewish community in Britain. They accuse the leadership of Jewish communities and organizations worldwide, and particularly in the UK, of abandoning the basic struggle for human rights, "the tradition of Jewish support for universal freedoms, human rights and social justice." Moreover, the Jewish leadership's automatic support for Israel is perceived by them as immoral: "[The Jewish leadership] put support for the policies of an occupying power above the human rights of an occupied people."³²

Klug views the attacks against Jewish targets perpetrated by Islamist terror groups, as well as violent attacks by young Muslims, as retaliation against Israel, namely as a continuation of the terror attacks of the 1970s and 1980s, in which the Jews are being forced to pay for Israel's deeds. The war against Israel being waged by Islamic terrorist groups is not, according to Klug, a war against Israel as a Jewish state, but rather against "a European interloper or as an American

³⁰ Some of these views were expressed in a special collection of articles, *The Politics of Antisemitism*, ed. A. Cockburn and J. St. Clair, Petrolia/Oakland, CA, 2003.

³¹ Brian Klug, "The Myth of the New Anti-Semitism," *The Nation*, February 2, 2004, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20040202/klug/5>.

³² "A Time to Speak Out: Independent Jewish Voices," <http://jewishvoices.squarespace.com>.

client or as a non-Arab and non-Muslim entity; moreover, as an oppressive occupying force." According to this view, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the only reason for the violent attacks against the Jews of Europe. Similarly, Anthony Lerman claims that in contrast to the antisemitism of the past, "the hostility to Jews is grounded today in a real political grievance; it can increase or decrease according to events."³³

Michael Neumann, professor of philosophy at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, and author of the book *The Case against Israel*, also explains Arab and Muslim hostility towards the Jews solely as a response to what he calls Israel's racial attitude towards the Palestinians. "The progress of Arab antisemitism fits nicely with the progress of Jewish encroachment and Jewish atrocities... It came to the Middle East with Zionism and it will abate when Zionism ceases to be an expansionist threat."³⁴ Neumann's article was published in a special collection aimed, according to its editors, at "confront[ing] how the slur of 'antisemite' has been used to intimidate critics of Israel's abuse of Palestinians."³⁵

Why did Jews worldwide become a target of Muslim rage? Klug blames Israel. He sees the attacks as an almost reasonable reaction to the basic concept of Israel, stated repeatedly by its leaders: that Israel is "the Jewish collective," the sovereign state of the Jewish people as a whole, and in light of the fact that Jews gather in large numbers in cities of the world to demonstrate their solidarity, as Jews, with Israel.³⁶

Tony Judt, professor of European Studies at NYU, expresses this idea more blatantly: "Israel's leaders purport to speak for Jews everywhere. They can hardly be surprised when their own behavior provokes a backlash against Jews." Moreover, according to Judt, violence against Jews in the Diaspora is an outcome with which many Israeli politicians are far from unhappy. They try to delegitimize and silence criticism against Israel by labeling it antisemitism.³⁷ Similarly, Neumann blames Israel for "decades-old, systematic and unrelenting efforts [of Israel] to implicate all Jews in its crimes." Further, he blames not only Israel and the Jewish leadership for

³³ Antony Lerman, "Sense on Antisemitism."

³⁴ Michael Neumann, "What is Anti-Semitism?" in *The Politics of Anti-Semitism*, <http://www.counterpunch.org/neumann0604.html>

³⁵ *The Politics of Antisemitism* ed. A. Cockburn and J. St. Clair, Petrolia/Oakland, CA, 2003, http://www.modkraft.dk/spip.php?page=tc-artikel&id_article=7449

³⁶ Klug, "The Myth of the New Anti-Semitism."

³⁷ Tony Judt "Goodbye to All That?" *The Nation*, January 3, 2005, <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050103/judt>.

the violence committed against Jewish targets, but claims that most Jews living in the Diaspora bear moral responsibility because of their support for Israel. They are being punished for their complicity with Israel's criminal acts. This, according to him, is more serious than the Germans' support for the Nazi regime. While many Germans did not know about the crimes committed by their government, Jews worldwide have all the information and still "many, perhaps most adult Jewish individuals, support a state [Israel] that commits war crimes."³⁸

The conceptual linkage between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is one of the most arguable issues between the two camps.³⁹ Researchers and Jewish leaders who claim that the Jews have suffered a severe wave of antisemitism view anti-Zionism as a major component of this trend. They claim that anti-Zionism, particularly since the establishment of the State of Israel, is identical with antisemitism. Moreover, they associate the current campaign to de-legitimize the State of Israel with the classical antisemitic campaign to deprive Jewish individuals of their civil rights. Wistrich already made this equation in the 1980s during one of the first serious debates about the conceptual linkage between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, which took place at the residence of the president of Israel.⁴⁰ "Anti-Zionism," he said, "seeks to de-emancipate the Jews as an independent nation, much as modern secular European antisemitism insistently sought to de-emancipate the Jews as free and equal individuals" – meaning that they both try to undermine Jewish political achievements.

On the other hand, those on the left who reject the thesis regarding the new threat, assert that antisemitism has always been defined as racial or religious hatred against the Jews and Judaism and cannot be confused with political opposition to the Zionist idea and to the existence of the State of Israel. Moreover, they claim that since the establishment of the Zionist movement, anti-Zionism has been part of the internal Jewish debate and has never been labeled as antisemitism. In response to the allegation that anti-Zionism discriminates against the Jews by denying their rights to self-determination as a nation, Klug maintains that the Jewish people do not "constitute a nation in the relevant sense, the sense in which the principle of self-determination applies. Traditionally, the idea of the Jewish people was centered not on a state but

³⁸ Neumann, "What is Anti-Semitism?"

³⁹ On basic stands in this dispute, see David Hirsh's comprehensive analysis, "Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan reflections," Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism, November 2007, <http://www.yale.edu/yiisa/workingpaper/hirsh/David%20Hirsh%20YIISA%20Working%20Paper1.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Robert Wistrich, *Anti-Zionism as an Expression of Antisemitism in Recent Years*, Jerusalem, 1984.

on a book, the Torah, and the culture (or cultures) that developed around that book.” Thus denying the right of the Jews to self determination, according to Klug, is a legitimate claim and cannot be defined as an antisemitic manifestation.⁴¹

Conclusions

Particularly in Europe, the question of continuity and change lies at the core of the debate over the interpretation of violence against Jews, as well as extreme anti-Zionist propaganda and demonization of the State of Israel. Rejecting the assumption that these are antisemitic manifestations, left-wing intellectuals perceive them as an escalation of the anti-Zionist and anti-Israel campaign from previous decades.

In my opinion this assertion is a clear misinterpretation of the Islamists’ intentions and deeds. It is generally agreed that antisemitism intensified in the Arab and the Muslim world as a consequence of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that some of the main motifs of current antisemitism in the Arab world were absorbed from Europe. Nevertheless, the claim that Islamist terror attacks against Jewish targets are only retaliation for Israel's deeds – “The Jews must pay” – is contradicted by both the statements and deeds of Islamist groups. While secular Palestinian groups, assisted by radical left organizations, were the first to perpetrate terror attacks against Jewish targets at the end of the 1960s, there is a clear distinction between the goals of these attacks, which were part of the struggle against Israel, and the Islamist perception of the Jews and Israel as a single evil entity, a central pillar of corrupt Western civilization. Islamist declarations, anti-Jewish terror and monstrous plans to strike at Jewish concentrations, demonstrate the new genocidal concept. The last words of Daniel Pearl to his Islamist kidnappers in Pakistan, the "confession," "Yes, I am a Jew," is a harrowing expression of the similarity between Nazis and Islamists with their notion of global war against the Jews.

The debate over the conceptual linkage between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is not new. The question was discussed widely in the 1980s. The claim that anti-Zionism is a legitimate view, espoused by some Jewish leaders and intellectuals since the establishment of the Zionist movement, has always been one of the main arguments of intellectuals on the left, particularly Jews. Moreover, they emphasized that while at the end of the 19th century and the first decades

⁴¹ Klug, “The Myth of the New Anti-Semitism.”

of the 20th century eminent Jewish figures were the most ardent opponents of Zionism, some leading European antisemites supported Zionism as a way to evacuate the Jews from Europe.

Historically, anti-Zionism and antisemitism were indeed antithetical concepts. However, this assertion is irrelevant to the present anti-Zionist campaign and its relation to antisemitism. The aims and motives of contemporary anti-Zionists differ from those of German Jewish liberals at the end of the 19th century or members of the Bund in Eastern Europe, or even Jews in Communist parties. German Jewish liberals sought to improve the legal status of the Jews, while members of the Bund and Jewish Communists felt that Zionism and Palestine could not be the answer to the miseries of the Jewish masses and only revolution was the cure.

Today, however, in the pluralistic societies of Europe such confrontations between Zionists and their opponents are irrelevant and the aim of contemporary anti-Zionism is not to improve the Jewish situation but to deprive the Jews of their rights, which at least in principle are given to other nations, whether historical or newly created ones. Today, 61 years after the UN resolution to establish an internationally recognized Jewish state, and when most Jews around the world view Israel as a Jewish nation, opposition to the right of the Jews to have a state of their own is no longer a theoretical argument, but an actual intention to destroy it. Israel has become the main embodiment, in both Jewish and non-Jewish eyes, of modern Jewish identity. Therefore, delegitimizing Israel is the most effective way of damaging Jewish identity and Jewish political achievements since the Holocaust.

The roots of the equation between Jew and Zionist, and between Judaism and Zionism, can be found in the anti-Zionist propaganda of the Soviet Union as early as the early 1950s, as part of the attack on Jewish nationalism. In 1952-53, during the so-called Doctors' Plot and Slansky trial in Moscow and Prague, respectively, it became clear that anti-Zionism had provided a new vehicle for the re-emergence of antisemitic attitudes. The accusations of Jewish nationalism and cosmopolitanism were fused by means of an explicitly Zionist conspiracy theory, which linked Israel and Western imperialism. However, while the equation between Judaism and Zionism in Soviet and Eastern bloc propaganda was part of the struggle against Jewish culture and Jewish nationalism, the Islamist perception has more far-reaching and dangerous implications – an all-out war against both Israel and Jews worldwide.

The comparison between Israel and Nazi Germany, which left-wing intellectuals deny is antisemitic,⁴² can also be traced back to the 1950s. Demonization of the Jew and alleged Jewish cruelty, particularly against innocent children, has played a significant role in the history of antisemitism since the early Middle Ages. Again, it was the Soviets who were responsible for the re-emergence of this classic negative Jewish stereotype. The Soviets' attempt to link Nazism and Zionism and to equate Israel with the Third Reich began at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s. Central to their campaign was the allegation that the Zionists collaborated with the Nazis during the war against the interests of their brethren. This attempt to re-write the history of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust was adopted at the end of the 1960s by the European radical left, who wrote numerous articles about the alleged cooperation between Zionists and Nazis. The Soviet campaign, directed originally against the growing ties between the Federal Republic of Germany and Israel orchestrated by Ben-Gurion and Adenauer, was taken up at the beginning of the 1960s by the Arabs and their delegates to the UN, although during the Nazi era and even after the war Arab leaders expressed their admiration for Nazi Germany and some hard-core Nazi war criminals found refuge in Egypt, Syria and Libya.

The infiltration of anti-Zionist claims, and particularly the equation between Israel and Nazi Germany, into the mainstream discourse, particularly in Europe, was undoubtedly influenced by the prolonged anti-Zionist campaign of the Soviet Union, Arab countries and the radical left in the 1970s and 1980s. In this respect the Lebanon War should be viewed as a watershed since it unleashed markedly anti-Jewish reactions in many countries. This process culminated in the last decade with the publication of virulently antisemitic caricatures in mainstream publications. Opinions which had been confined to Arab and Soviet propaganda, as well as to the margins of Western society, had now acquired respectability.

As to young Muslims in Europe, as noted, both schools of thought emphasize external factors to explain the violent incidents against Jews in Europe perpetrated in many cases by youth from immigrant families. Those who support the thesis of the "new antisemitism," view it as part of the campaign waged by radical Islam against the Jewish people and the West in general, stressing the influence of Islamist propaganda. Their opponents, however, claim that it is fury against Israel's unjust policies towards the Palestinians that incites young Muslims to commit

⁴² See for example, Lerman, "Sense on Antisemitism."

violence. Thus, based on this assumption, a change in Israeli policy, or a more balanced attitude on the part of European governments to the conflict, could mitigate the violence. Both camps, however, tend to underestimate local socio-economic problems in Europe as a background to acts of violence against Jews, as clearly shown in studies that rely on data of the London police and the French interior ministry. These analyses conclude that extreme anti-Israel propaganda is only one cause for the animosity of young immigrants towards the Jews. Most of the perpetrators did not belong to an extremist group and carried out their actions spontaneously.⁴³ These findings lead to a very pessimistic evaluation of the extent to which antisemitic stereotypes are adopted by immigrants and their children in Europe, as demonstrated by the horrendous murder in France of Ilan Halimi in February 2006.

⁴³ *Hate Crimes against London's Jews*, ed. P. Ignaski, V. Kielinger and S. Paterson, London, 2005; Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Action in the Fight against Antisemitism and Racism*, Paris, 2004; see also, Roni Stauber, "Learned hostility," *Haaretz*, July 10, 2005, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=632622>.