

THE ISRAEL LOBBY, ISLAMOPHOBIA AND JUDEOPHOBIA IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE AND BEYOND: MYTHS AND REALITIES

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ABSTRACT

Accusations of anti-Semitism have become the habitualised weapon used against critics of Israeli war crimes. Most of such claims are built on the argument that there is a ‘New anti-Semitism’ of the political left, as this is where the most critics of Zionism are based. This article maps the development of such bogus claims, originating in France and the US, where the two varieties of the argument are based; by analyzing such claims, it becomes clear that these are defence mechanisms of Zionism, designed to silence both the supporters of Palestine, as well as obscure the much more meaningful racism and xenophobia directed against Arabs and Muslims.

KEYWORDS: New Anti-Semitism, Israel Lobby, Zionism, Islamophobia, ‘Zionophilia’, Modern Racism, Palestinians, Conspiracy Theories, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

The Resurgence of Modern Judeophobia

In normative Zionist discourse the argument made about anti-Semitism is both simple and ahistorical. Anti-Semitism is conceived as a permanent feature of non-Jewish communities—a hatred of Jews as Jews, both innate and irrational, omnipresent, waiting to engulf society. Hence, the argument goes, there is no real reason or point in confronting or opposing it—there is no way of ridding the ‘Goyish’ society of its Jew-hatred—it is part and parcel of its identity, a crucial element of its being, supposedly

strengthened by two millennia of anti-Semitic sentiment. The only answer to it, ever since Herzl started his Zionist movement, is the removal of the Jews to Palestine, and building a Jewish-only society. In other words, the first tenet of Zionism is an acceptance of the anti-Semitic maxim: Jews cannot and should not live amongst the non-Jews.

This narrative, mainly launched by Herzl in his *Diaries*, has provided the mainstay of Zionist action and analysis for over a century. It also includes another register of argumentation, somewhat less obvious and almost hidden. The Jews, this argument goes, are the people chosen by the Deity, and hence envied and hated for their 'select' position. Living within the non-Jews, this envy and hatred are understandable, and hence, the removal of the Jews from among the Gentiles will also remove the sentiment which gives rise to anti-Semitism. Such tension was built on the wreckage of the European Enlightenment project, starting in the eighteenth century and reaching a kind of apotheosis during the French Revolution, when the demands for equality for Jews were part of the demand for universal equality, and were also treated as its litmus test (Laqueur 2003: 3). The French Revolution led to increasing freedom and equality for Jews across Europe, and also to greater social integration—leading in the end to their equality in many European countries; it also made it possible for many Jews to achieve leading positions in the areas of politics, finance, science, culture and the arts.

Herzl argued that it was exactly this greater integration that had caused an increase in anti-Semitism. The Jews of the middle class, who, before the opening of ghettos and the emancipation which followed, were limited to the sphere of Jewish life and economy, now posed a 'threat' to the Gentiles around them—they competed in all areas of the economy, and later, in culture, academia and politics. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Jews in Western Europe 'came to feel that they had at last found a secure haven and were accepted' (Laqueur 2003: 27). Laqueur ascribes the change in public mood in Germany to the downswing of the economy in 1870, and the involvement of wealthy Jews in the financial speculations that brought about the collapse of markets.

The fact that this explanation is actually historical and specific, and anchors the tension between Jews and Gentiles in European societies within a rational framework, did not move most Zionist historians to abandon their a-historical arguments about the eternal and immutable nature of Judeophobia. This is fascinating indeed; the ability to contain two opposing views is an odd skill in intellectuals; after all, they cannot be blamed for being unable to recognise a contradictory argument, like some of the less educated followers of nationalist movements. One meets such impressive ability also today, of course; the support Zionism enjoys from racist and anti-Semitic right-wing Christians in the US is a case

in point—at the same time that Zionist propaganda against left-wing supporters of Palestine dubs them as anti-Semitic for criticising Israel, Zionist leaders like Netanyahu see no difficulty in receiving the backing of real anti-Semitic parties and organisations in Europe and the US, some who require Jews to return to the holy land so that their future destruction, foretold in the Book of Revelations, can take place and bring about the Second Coming.

The fact that Judeophobic sentiments arose sharply during the period of advancement and enlightenment—full legal emancipation was achieved by 1869 in Germany—the country where they had achieved the most progress at the time—were a great shock for most Jews. Sentences like ‘Die Juden sind unser Unglück’ (‘the Jews are our misfortune’) uttered by one of Germany’s leading historians, Heinrich von Treitschke (Laqueur 2003: 28) served to clarify to German Jews the depth of contempt felt for them, not only by the poor and disadvantaged, but by the social elite they wished to join and integrate into; they were greatly mystified by its appearance, and could not understand where it had emerged from (Laqueur 2003: 30–2). It was seemingly easier to accept that anti-Semitism was innate in Gentiles than to inquire into the specific historical conditions supporting the rise of modern anti-Semitism. This seems to also be the case nowadays, as most Jews prefer to think that the rise in Judeophobia is anything but connected to Israel’s behaviour towards the Palestinians, for example, however clear the evidence to the contrary might be. It would thus be important to inquire into the historical conditions which had created the formulations and arguments of modern racism in Europe.

Modernising the Other: From Religious Conflict to Modern Racism

In his genre-forming novel *Don Quixote*, writing the second part of the book just after the decree to expel the *Moriscos* (Christianised Moors) from Spain between 1609–1614, Miguel de Cervantes untypically gives voice to a few *Moriscos*, including the presumed original author of the narrative, Cid Hamette. Ricote, one of the *Moriscos* who speaks towards the end, and relates directly to that traumatic event for hundreds of thousands of Christians of Moorish origin, is a neighbour and friend of the squire, Sancho Panza, very pleased to meet Sancho on the road, as he returns under cover from France where he fled after 1609, Ricote tells him:

‘Well, you know, Sancho Panza, my neighbour and friend, what a terror and dismay the proclamation and edict which His Majesty commanded against those of my nation struck into us all. At least it had that effect on me, so much so that I almost imagined its dreadful penalty already inflicted upon

my family, even before the time allowed us to leave Spain has expired . . . I could not help believing this, knowing, as I did, our people desperate and foolish intentions; which made me think it was divine inspiration that moved His Majesty to adopt such wise measures. Not that we were all guilty, for some of us were true and steadfast Christians. But we were so few that we could not make head against those who were not; and it no good thing to nourish a snake in your bosom, and have enemies within your own house. (Cervantes 1980: 819)

Thus Cervantes puts the onus of the expulsion on its victims, the ‘snake in the bosom’ – the ‘enemy within the house’, or as Nigel Farage put it in 2015, ‘the fifth column in our midst’.¹ When a Morisco calls the expulsion of his brethren from Spain a ‘divine inspiration’, who indeed could question him? Thus the novel considered by many researchers to have invented the genre, is also the voice of Christian Europe after the painfully failed Crusades, justifying the various expulsions, not just of the *Moriscos*, but also the earlier ones, of Jews and Muslims, and of course the Spanish Inquisition itself.

However, as Mazower argues, it would be inaccurate to ‘honour’ the Spanish Christians with the inauguration of modern anti-Semitism. As claimed in a recent magisterial history of modern Thessaloniki, that questionable record belongs to Britain. “When the English expelled their Jews in 1290, they inaugurated a policy which spread widely over the next two centuries. In 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella’s edict of banishment forced thousands from a homeland where they had known great security and prosperity. Sicily and Sardinia, Navarre, Provence and Naples followed suit. By the mid-sixteenth century, Jews have been evicted from much of Western Europe (Mazower 2004: 47). Thus, the English expulsion, the first in history, of all its Jewish inhabitants – following much murder and abuse of Jews especially in the north – can be seen as a ‘pioneering’ act of modern anti-Semitism coming early, only being followed by the rest of Europe at least two centuries later. This historical reading, however, does not remove the innovatory nature of Spanish racism, especially as it was directed at both Jews and Muslims alike.

Thus the Spain of Cervantes’ era invents modern racism, through the notion of *‘limpieza de Sangre’*, or the Purity of Blood. No longer is the difference between communities merely a religious one, between Christians and those of other faiths – it has been transformed into hatred based on *blood*, denoting a ‘racial’ difference, one inbred and immutable, which today we tend to think of *genetic*. Pure blood is of course only that of the *Old Christians*, the ones whose antecedents did not convert

1 BBC News website, ‘UKIP’s Nigel Farage urges ‘Judeo-Christian’ defence after Paris attacks’, 12 January 2015, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30776186>, accessed on 6 February 2015.

to Islam after the Moorish conquest, keeping their 'racial purity' until the *Reconquista*, thus being able to prove that there is not a drop of 'unclean' (Jewish or Muslim) blood in their veins through family records. This innovation of the *register of difference* shifted the social process of disenfranchisement of Jews and Muslims after the *Reconquista* from the medieval tradition of public debate between Christian and Jewish theologians or religious scholars, designed to prove the inferior foundation of the Jewish faith, towards an *a priori rejection* of Jews and Muslims as *unclean*, doomed populations, forever tainted through their bloodline. Hence, no longer is it views and beliefs held by Jews or Muslims that are at issue, but their very nature, the physical presence of such 'inferior' groups in the midst of a Christian community, which is at stake. This notion was to be adopted by modern anti-Semites, and given a 'scientific' gloss during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

It is also important to realise that Cervantes himself uses concepts like nation, race or faith as interchangeable: he discusses a Polish race, or Turkish faith, or Moorish nation – a *mélange* of identities and distinctions which today include religion, nationality, ethnicity and culture. The blurring of such distinctions is typical of racists of all descriptions.

This new form of social distinction, based on the concept of 'race' rather than on differences of faith, would become popularised in France by *Action Française*, the proto-fascist movement founded by Maurice Pujo and Henri Vaugeois in 1899 and influenced by Ernest Renan's views on race a short time before the *Dreyfus Affair* in Paris, and by Karl Lueger, the populist anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna; It is quite likely that this background in Vienna also formed the cornerstone of Hitler's thought, and of the Nazi party official ideology in the late 1920s. It would later be adopted by the SS elite organisation – candidates for membership had to prove 'pure blood' – a bloodline untainted by Jewish blood – for officers, at least since 1750, for enlisted men, since 1800, by evidence of their family records (Goldsworthy 2007: 33).

Thus in seventeenth century Spain is set the foundation for what later would be termed anti-Semitism, a term invented apparently by the Jewish scholar Moritz Steinsneider, who challenged Ernest Renan in 1860 on what he termed *antisemitische Vorurteile* (anti-Semitic prejudices) – Renan's own derogation of 'Semites' as a 'race', an inferior race at that, to the superior *Aryan* 'race' (Bein 1990: 594; Poliakov 2003: 404). Ironically, Renan saw the Jews, or the 'Semitic race' as he preferred to call them, as people who were incapable embracing the concept of cosmopolitan civilisation, owing to their practical mindset and dogmatism; yet it was exactly at that point in time that true cosmopolitanism was articulated and represented by many Jewish writers, authors and artists (Miller and Ury 2014).

Anti-Semitism became a scientific-sounding definition of Jew-hatred (*Judenhass*) in Germany in 1873 (Rattansi 2007: 4–5), and was widely used after a racist pamphlet by Wilhelm Marr used the terms of *Semitismus* and *Judentum* (Jewry) as interchangeable, denoting both *Jewishness* and *Jewry*. Marr, even more than Renan, treats the Jews as a race apart with its own *Weltanschauung* (World view) that he poses as the antithesis of the German one. His concept of the anti-Semitic was of a ‘positive’ force – German opposition to the corruptions by the Jewish *Weltanschauung*, an active rejection of the negativity he reads into his concept of the *Semitismus*.

While a full history of anti-Semitism is both beyond the scope of this article – and beside the point, as substantial standard histories abound – it was accepted by all such histories that anti-Semitism, or more accurately, *Judeophobia*, was a form of racism directed at Jews, especially in Europe. The main argument amongst historians and theorists of anti-Semitism was between those who saw it as immutable and thus timeless – a part of human nature and impossible to eradicate, and those who saw it as a socially-defined and formed anti-Jewish racism, the result of a large range of specific historical conditions, and hence mutable and changing, and also eradicable.

The ahistorical view of anti-Semitism is held even by some Zionist historians, ironically, such as Walter Laqueur, for example (2003: 86). In his exposition of the problem, he quotes from Herzl’s introduction to the seminal Zionist text, *Der Judenstaat*:

The Jewish question still exists. It would be foolish to deny it. It is a misplaced piece of medievalism which civilised nations do not seem able to shake off, try as they will. . . . The Jewish question persists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Wherever it does not exist, it is brought in by Jewish immigrants . . . I consider the Jewish question neither a social nor a religious one, even though it sometimes takes these and other forms. It is a national question. (Laqueur 2003: 86, quoted from Herzberg 1959: 209)

That Laqueur himself is of the same opinion, despite his arguably wider historical knowledge, may be gleaned from a number of his claims, especially in the introduction to his book. When examining challenges faced by Zionism, he comes to an important one, an apparent transformation or mutation of the old foe:

Zionism’s other long-time antagonist is also an old acquaintance that now appears in a new guise and has been renamed post-Zionism. In the early years of the twentieth century, Communists, Trotskyites, and related political groups waged ideological war against Zionism (including left-wing Zionism) because of what they termed its reactionary, imperialist, and colonialist nature. (Laqueur 2003: 86)

Laqueur then goes on to typify the post-Zionists, in his view *not* limited to the Israeli historians named thus, but includes the mainstream left in Europe, as a ‘modernising’ anti-Semitic movement. That this movement has apparently (so he claims) led to a following in Israel by post-Zionist historians is lamentable; thus he joins the broad front of Zionist historians and others, invested in proving the existence of a new anti-Semitism as another tenet necessary in the supporting arguments for Zionism and its iniquities; such are presented as normal, of course: ‘Nation-states are rarely born without violence. They have from time immemorial produced innocent victims, and there is no reason to assume that the birth of an Israeli nation would be any different in this respect’ (Laqueur 2003: xxi). With that utterance in the introduction, Laqueur sees the subject closed, and also the need to mention such ‘violence’ or its ‘innocent victims’ totally fulfilled; this short sentence frees him from discussing any further violence as an important part of Zionist history. There is seemingly no need – it is normal, it happens all the time and one may regret it, but there is nothing further to discuss; an incredible position for an historian to take.

Laqueur is not alone, of course. For example, Robert Wistrich, another Zionist historian, in his famous address in 1984, was speaking of widespread left-wing anti-Semitism, endangering the links between Israel and Diaspora Jews:

The Jews of Israel have perhaps tended in the past to dismiss the seriousness of the ideological and political enmity that has built up in the outside world towards them. Unfortunately, as recent developments have shown, what the gentiles think and say can be as important as what the Jews actually do — words do have political consequences! The power of propaganda, of the media and images can often be as decisive as winning wars — a fact that was once very well understood by the Zionist leadership, but has tended to be forgotten in more recent years. The negative consequences of anti-Zionism have been most palpable and obvious for Israel in the international sphere — in its standing in the United Nations and its diplomatic isolation.

There is no less serious danger contained in the anti-Zionist drive of recent years when we come to consider Diaspora Jews. In my opinion, one of the objectives of the anti-Israel campaign has been to drive a wedge between the Jewish State and its exposed Diaspora hinterland. The more wicked and diabolical the State of Israel seems in the eyes of gentile public opinion, the less likely Diaspora Jews are to support such a State — this is surely the calculation of our enemies. How could World Jewry back a ‘Nazi’ State after what happened during the Holocaust? How can it support and subsidise racial discrimination in Israel? There has, in fact, been a growing chorus of gentile voices even in the West in recent years suggesting that Diaspora Jewry dissociate from this so-called ‘racist’ aggressive Israel or else it can expect to pay the price in terms of a justified (?) revival of antisemitism. For, as accomplices in Israeli ‘crimes’ through their financial and political support, Diaspora Jews are ultimately no less guilty. Clearly this type of

moral and political blackmail may have its impact on Jews outside Israel and the long-term consequences are unpredictable.²

Even for a commissioned address, presented at ‘the Home of the Israeli President’, Wistrich’s diatribe against anti-Zionism slides into somewhat hysterical language, and while pointing out the dangers of ‘The power of propaganda, of the media and images’, he is not himself disinclined to use the crudest form of propaganda in his address, assuming the safer grounds of a friendly and powerful audience, and a relative impunity from academic scrutiny, as the address was to be published only in Hebrew, in non-academic press version. This house-style has since become normalised, especially in France, Britain and the US, when used by public figures such as Bernard-Henri Lévy, Alain Finkielkraut, or Alan Dershowitz, supposedly liberal social critics, actually acting as normative advocates for Zionism and Israel. For all such speakers and authors, the concept of the *New anti-Semitism* was a crucial invention – it enabled them to mark left-wing and Muslim critics of Israel as anti-Semites, and hence to render them non-harmful, and even targets of social wrath and effective silencing.

The ‘New Anti-Semitism’

Over the last few decades, the term ‘New Anti-Semitism’ has been increasingly used, though it originated in the 1960s. It was (and is) used to denote a supposedly new form of anti-Semitism, originating in the twentieth century, and bringing together the far-left, radical Islam and the far-right, masquerading as a criticism of Israeli policies. The introduction of this new concept has done much to curtail and circumvent anti-Zionist critique, tarring it with the brush of racism.

The term ‘New Anti-Semitism’ was first expressed in a study by the then two leaders of the US Anti-Defamation League (ADL), who published (Forster and Epstein, 1974) *The New Anti-Semitism*, first titled *The Real Anti-Semitism in America* (Finkelstein, 2005: 24). This text, like many others since, attempts to prove, in the well-honed methods of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), that a massive wave of anti-Semitism is taking over American life. As the wave refused to materialise, more work was published, maybe as a way of ushering it in. The accusations in this foundational text of this new order of anti-Semitism hunters were ‘preposterous’ (Finkelstein 2005: 22), but even more ridiculous accusations were to come. Much of these were levelled at a number of Hollywood films and Broadway musicals, which – under

2 Wistrich, R (1984) ‘Anti-zionism as an Expression of Anti-Semitism in Recent Years’, from a translation of a lecture held on 10 December 1984 at Study Circle on World Jewry in the home of the President of Israel, accessed on: <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/Antizionism.htm>, on 9 March 2015.

the racial microscope of ADL and its watchful researchers—were found to hide or harbour Anti-Semitism, such as Norman Jewison's (not a Jew himself...) screen adaptation of *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Finkelstein, 2005: 22). From its inception, the 'new anti-Semitism' was intended as a political weapon, as defined by Antony Lerman: 'The 'New anti-Semitism' is seen by most, but by no means all, of those who give it credence and promote its use as synonymous with anti-Zionism; as such, they find it not only in the Arab world but also in the political left, anti-globalisation movements, Jihadist and Islamic movements, and the Muslim world more generally, the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, the left-liberal press, antiracist groups—the list is long' (Jewish Voice for Peace 2017: 9). Judith Butler further defines the function of such attacks on the right to criticise Israel, by charging such critics with antisemitism: 'The point of the charge is not to utter what is true, but to do damage to the criticism as well the person who speaks it. In other words, the charge of anti-Semitism has become an act of war' (Jewish Voice for Peace 2017: xii).

In 2004, with more and more volumes published in a number of languages, this wave of argumentation was examined by Brian Klug in a seminal essay (Klug 2004) in *The Nation*. He carefully monitors the language and form of the arguments by examining four volumes on the topic which have just been published:

As the words 'threat' and 'crisis' in the subtitles of the books by Foxman and Chesler indicate, the 'new anti-Semitism' is generally seen, by those who proclaim its existence, as a clear and present danger. Foxman believes that a 'frightening coalition of anti-Jewish sentiment is forming on a global scale'. Chesler goes even further: 'Let me be clear: the war against the Jews is being waged on many fronts—militarily, politically, economically, and through propaganda — and on all continents'. She even perceives a wider threat to Western civilization itself: 'Who or what can loosen the madness that has gripped the world and that threatens to annihilate the Jews and the West?' (Klug 2004)

Klug is archly critical of what he sees as 'confused' and damaging, as it may indeed give rise to real hostility towards Jews:

However, while the facts give cause for serious concern, the idea that they add up to a new kind of anti-Semitism is confused. Moreover, this confusion, combined with a McCarthyite tendency to see anti-Semites under every bed, arguably contributes to the climate of hostility toward Jews. The result is to make matters worse for the very people these authors mean to defend. (Klug 2004)

While denying the existence of a new form of anti-Semitism, Klug examines the claims for this 'newness', coming to the conclusion that it

is nothing but anti-Zionism—a severe critique of the Zionist project and the Israeli state based upon it:

Foxman's verdict on this position is uncompromising: 'The harsh but undeniable truth is this: what some like to call anti-Zionism is, in reality, anti-Semitism—always, everywhere, and for all time'. He adds for good measure: 'Therefore, anti-Zionism is not a politically legitimate point of view but rather an expression of bigotry and hatred'. (Klug 2004)

Klug is quite clear about the intended confusion which the four writers have hard-baked into their arguments and examples: 'Nonetheless, the inference is invalid. To argue that hostility to Israel and hostility to Jews are one and the same thing is to conflate the Jewish state with the Jewish people. In fact, Israel is one thing, Jewry another. Accordingly, anti-Zionism is one thing, anti-Semitism another. They are separate. To say they are separate is not to say that they are never connected. But they are independent variables that can be connected in different ways'. Klug clarifies his definition of the arguments used by examining the notion used by the four authors that 'Jews and Israel are judged by harsher criteria' than would otherwise be used, by posing a simple question—would Israel be judged more favourably, if it was not a Jewish state, but a Catholic one? Klug feels this is obviously not the case; critique of Israel by anti-Zionists is based on what Zionism does, rather than on the religious identity of its citizens.

One needs to point out, though, that in a later text, Klug himself seems to join the growing number of those who identify criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism, maybe under the growing pressure of the Israel lobby and Israeli *hasbara* (public relations/cum propaganda) efforts in Britain. Having defined anti-Semitism as setting Jews apart from the rest of humanity as 'a sinister people apart from all other, not merely by its custom but by a collective character: arrogant yet obsequious; legalistic yet corrupt; flamboyant yet secretive. Always looking to turn a profit, Jews are as ruthless as they are tricky. Loyal only to their own, wherever they go they form a state within a state, preying upon the societies in whose midst they dwell. Their hidden hand controls the banks, the market and the media' (Klug 2012: 474). While the above definition seems to be an accurate description of the wherewithal of anti-Semitic discourse, Klug then turns round to apply this also to Israel: 'if [a] text projects the figure of 'the Jew' directly or indirectly (a) onto Israel for the reason that Israel is a Jewish state, or (b) onto Zionism for the reason that Zionism is a Jewish movement, or (c) onto Jews, individually or collectively, in association with either (a) or (b), then the text is anti-Semitic' (Klug 2012: 480). Thus, Klug himself abandons a universal definition of anti-Semitism

which referred to Jews in the real world, only to adopt a politically-recessive recasting of anti-Semitism as anti-Zionism, eight years after he pointed out the false intentions behind such a notion, joining the hue and cry about the supposed anti-Semitism of the left. It is easy to see how the new formulation Klug adopts can be, and is constantly abused and used against all criticism of Israeli behaviour, though most such criticism cannot be remotely described as anti-Semitic.

So, one can relate to the growing wave of publications and arguments about 'New anti-Semitism' as evidence of something—not so much of real anti-Semitism's growth or metamorphosis in the US in 1974, when Foster and Epstein published their work—but of the method used by the Israeli lobby to brand as anti-Semitic people and organisations it perceives as hostile to Israel or the Zionist project. On one occasion, the main group tainted by this myth happened to be Black American activists and organisations, ironically presented as racist. The sad truth is that racism by some American Jews was creating serious tension between Jews and Blacks in the large conurbations such as New York and Chicago; by combining this existing problem with the support given to Human Rights in Palestine by some Black organisations and some famous black individuals, the formula of New Anti-Semitism was a perfect foil to deflect Black critics, not just of Israel, but of racism towards US Blacks across the board. Norman Finkelstein in his substantial study of the nature of this 'inverted racism' in North America, examines how the Israel Lobby has developed new and unique ways of protecting Israel from criticism (Finkelstein, 2005).

In this area, as in the military arena, Israel's best defence seems to be an offensive. Using what Finkelstein calls the 'Holocaust Card', and playing victim in a situation in which they are the aggressor has become the hallmark of Israeli diplomacy and propaganda. By attacking opponents before they even manage to build a case, one gains a serious advantage—the accusation of anti-Semitism is one of the most difficult to shake off, even if the evidence provided is laughable—the long shadow of the Holocaust is still with us, and connecting any intellectual or politician to this moment in world history, however bizarre the accusation, is a sure-fire method of silencing or sidelining them. This mechanism also forces US politicians to avoid criticising Israel at all costs, including times when supporting Israel hurts US interests, a subject dealt with in great detail by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (Mearsheimer and Walt 2007).

But of course, anti-Semitism, while dormant below the surface of the US public sphere, has not shaped the life of the American polity in the way it did in Europe, hence one is best concentrating on the European

aspect of this phenomenon. A clear exposition of the so-called ‘new anti-Semitism’ in its European context is given by Pierre-André Taguieff, in his book on the topic, though he has projected it ironically, as the putative argument by anti-Semites he uncovers in every part of the globe: ‘Jews are all more or less crypto-Zionists. Zionism is a form of colonialism, imperialism, and racism. Therefore Jews are colonialists, imperialists, and racists, whether overt or covert’ (Taguieff 2004: 4). Taguieff then goes further: by presenting ‘Zionism’ as the incarnation of absolute evil, an anti-Jewish vision of the world has reconstituted itself in the second half of the twentieth century. Like the old ‘anti-Semitism’, in the strong sense of the term, it is characterised by an absolute hatred of Jews as representatives of a single, intrinsically negative entity or as exemplars of an evil force—that is, a total hatred in which Jews are ‘considered in themselves as endowed with a malign essence’ (Taguieff 2004: 4).

Like Taguieff, the other proponents of ‘new anti-Semitism’ are mainly French, which is hardly surprising; While Jews make up 1% of the population in France—around 650,000, Muslims are some 9 to 10 times more numerous, usually quoted as 5–6 million though the figures are approximate. With such a numerical disparity, as well as the marked differences in social status and degree of integration, tensions between both communities were in place well before the new millennium. With Jews playing a central role in French culture, political life, economy, the arts, literature and the media and mostly belonging to the more affluent parts of the social structure, with Muslims playing almost the opposite role—that of the social *other* once played by the Jews—the clash between both communities became all but inevitable. This is made starker by the fact that most French Jews originated in North Africa, in the same countries that French Muslims have come from—Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Even during the period of French rule in North Africa, Jews had full rights to French citizenship while Arab Moroccans did not, for example. This was part of the usual colonial tactic of ‘divide-and-rule’ employed by the French administration, calculated to make control of the country easier. However, such differences translated over time into class differences, and made it possible for Jews to immigrate *en masse* into France during the 1950s and 1960s as full citizens of the republic. Indeed, Jews who have immigrated to France have considered themselves part of the *pied noir*, and hence were quickly integrated into southern France, where most initially settled. The old anti-Semitism, always strong in France during the 19th and early 20th centuries, has understandably retreated after the Holocaust, lying dormant for decades, only to emerge in the 1970s and 1980 as a new racist phenomenon—Islamophobia—as Muslims emerged as the new *significant other*.

It did not help matters, of course, that French Jews were and remain the most vociferous supporters of Israeli policies and excesses, bar the US Jewish community. With France being the mainstay of Israel until 1967, and with its extensive military, political and financial support during the first decade after the arrival of North African Jewish immigrants, its support of Israel was a given; this was also fuelled by deep and mainly suppressed guilt felt towards Israel and Judaism after the appalling role played by the Vichy government during the war. Jews in France are well integrated and accepted, and saw the support of Israel not only as an integral part of being Jewish, but also of being French, echoing a similar sentiment in the US. The French left was itself enthusiastically supportive of Israel, even after the 1967 war and only later becoming open to anti-colonial argumentation about Palestine. This gradual and slow change was of course influenced by the existence of a new Muslim proletariat in Southern France and around Paris, demanding the sympathies and solidarity of the French left, exactly when Euro-Communism was being developed as an alternative to Soviet Communism. Thus, was established the deep fault-line between the two communities, only to intensify as the conflict in the Middle East and especially Palestine grew more lethal and one-sided.

The cleavage is clearly seen in 1956, with Israel, France and Britain involved in the so-called *Tripartite Aggression*, or the attack on Sinai and Egypt by the three armies, navies and air-forces—the two aging, sunken empires, with Israel as the new force in the Middle East were militarily far superior to the Egyptian armed forces; an invasion of a Third World country in order to impose colonial control was what President Nasser was rejecting when he nationalised the Suez Canal.

This attack in which the young Jewish state took part, on the side of the aggressors, and Israel's close cooperation with the French against the FLN in Algeria were the political markers for the North African, Muslim and mainly Arab immigrant population in France. That France and Britain behaved in this manner—infuriating in itself—was hardly new; but being joined by Israel, which has dealt a painful blow to the Arab armies in 1948, not to mention the humiliation and tragedy of the Palestinian people—together these new geo-political facts have had a lasting effect on the political consciousness of French Muslims. To be a French Muslim was doubly difficult with France allied with an anti-Arab force and struggling to control most of North Africa. For such recent migrants, French Jews—well integrated by then—ironically symbolised and embodied the Anti-Arab, Islamophobic and racist element of French society. This may have been a stark and approximate reading of events, with some Jews very active on the left, but because of the left's collusion with Israel on many fronts, it is an understandable one, at that.

The Use of Counter-intuitive Memes in the New Anti-Semitism Propaganda War

This brings us to a curious phenomenon—the counter-intuitive use of Zionist propaganda arguments that may be dismissed as self-defeating, but have actually gained a foothold due to the great influence they acquired within western media and academia. Here one is thinking of a range of arguments which, on the face of it, are ridiculous enough as not to require refutation. One, for example, is the Israeli claim that Iran is months, or even weeks away from completion of a nuclear weapon. Such arguments are made as a proof that anti-Semitism is alive and well, and supposedly preparing the annihilation of the entire population of Israel.

This specific claim was used by Netanyahu so many times that including here a full list of such claims is impractical. A simple Google search on this topic, for example, has yielded over 12 million results.³ In fact, Netanyahu has been using this tactic for two decades, since 1996. In an address to a Joint session of Congress in July 1996, he said: ‘If Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, this could presage catastrophic consequences, not only for my country, and not only for the Middle East, but for all mankind’, adding that, ‘the deadline for attaining this goal is getting extremely close’.⁴ One may assume this may be the earliest mention of this elusive bomb, but this is not the case. In his book, *Fighting Terrorism*, published in 1995, Netanyahu (about to become Prime Minister of Israel for the first time) saw fit not only to warn the world, but also to give a rather exact timetable of the forthcoming event, warning that it will take place ‘within three to five years’.⁵ Only 14 short years later, Netanyahu saw fit to update his prediction—in a leaked US State Department secret diplomatic cable Netanyahu, this time a Prime Ministerial candidate in Israel, claimed the Iranian bomb was ‘probably only one or two years away’. It is no surprise then, that after more than two decades of alerting us to a non-existent Iranian bomb, he had to compress the timetable even more—in his recent speech to another joint session of Congress, 96% of which members have been receiving some contribution from Israel Lobby funds, he said that the proposed deal with Iran suggested by President Obama would ‘pave its way

3 Search term was ‘Netanyahu on Iran Bomb’ and yielded 12,400,000 results on March 10, 2015.

4 See ‘Address by Prime Minister Netanyahu to a joint session of the US Congress—10 July 1996’ on Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: Volume 16: 1996–1997: Item 14 <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/foreignpolicy/mfadocuments/yearbook11/pages/14%20address%20by%20prime%20minister%20netanyahu%20to%20a%20joint.aspx>, accessed on 8 March 2015.

5 Netanyahu, B (1995) *Fighting Terrorism*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, quoted in <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/03/02/brief-history-netanyahu-crying-wolf-iranian-nuclear-bomb/>, accessed on 7 March 2015.

to the bomb'⁶, the same bomb he saw materialising at the latest in the year 2000; this after his speech at the UN in 2012 on the same topic, using the now infamous cardboard cartoon image of the stages of completion of the Iranian bomb, with 90% marked by a red line, denoting his claim; after this claim was recently countered by the Mossad, as reported by Al-Jazeera, based on leaked documents, revealing that the Mossad has clearly indicated Iran was *not* producing nuclear weapons⁷. No such facts have reduced the efficacy of Netanyahu's claim or its effect on the US Congress and Senate, which again gave Netanyahu a number of standing ovations during and after his speech. Facts have played a very limited part in this saga of anti-Iran effort by the US alt-Right and its Israeli partners, as during the period before the 2003 Iraq War.

So why does Netanyahu use this meme, one which has been exposed as a *crying wolf* lie so many times during the last couple of decades, not least by the Mossad itself? The simple and obvious explanation is that Netanyahu has used this ploy repeatedly during election campaigns in Israel, stupefying and frightening the gullible Israeli public into voting him into office; it worked in 1995, so why not in 2015? It seems clear that the public, especially in Israel, does not suffer from long-term memory. Netanyahu is also a disciple of the adage that repeating a lie enough times makes it a fact – this dog-whistle politics and public innuendo contributed to the murder of Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995, for example. Netanyahu has never faced the need to atone for any of his lies – indeed, he always benefitted from them.

The other obvious explanation is that by using this ploy, Netanyahu is again able to sway the US Congress and Senate behind Israel's crucial role as the sheriff of the Middle East, and away from a policy which might weaken this position leading to reduced level of financial, military and political support, as Iran becomes more important for US policy in the region – as it indeed was before the fall of the Shah in 1979. This explanation is both persuasive and carries a lot of weight, and has been expressed by many pundits in the US, Israel and elsewhere (Gendzier 2015). But there is also an even simpler explanation, which, being so obvious, does not surface in most commentators' arguments about the conflict.

By concentrating the debate about nuclear weapons in the Middle East on the one-time nemesis of the US, thus playing safely to the gallery of

6 BBC's report on Netanyahu's speech at Congress, on 3 March 2015: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-31716684>, accessed on 3 March 2015.

7 Al Jazeera English article: 'Mossad contradicted Netanyahu on Iran nuclear programme' by Will Jordan and Rahul Radhakrishnan, on 23 February 2015: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/02/leaks-netanyahu-misled-iran-nuclear-programme-guardian-iran-nuclear-speech-2012-150218165622065.html>, accessed on 1 March 2015.

racist prejudices in the American political arena, Netanyahu has shifted the debate from the real, extant hundreds of Israeli nuclear devices, which Israel neither confirms nor denies,⁸ to the elusive bomb of Iran, and the 'nefarious designs' by the Iranian regime, so reviled in the west. The proof of this counter-intuitive policy is its simple success. Repeating such claims in the right places with a powerful media megaphone—makes it into Gospel truth. There is no public debate either in the US or elsewhere about the Israeli bombs, but instead, western media is flooded by Iran Bomb narratives. However, as pointed out by Gendzier, this may only be a short-term reaction, as the US political elite realises the great cost of playing Israel's game rather than its own: '[T]he US has a long relationship with this special ally, and it may be time to probe its origins. If the Prime Minister's visit turns out to be what provoked such an opening, he is to be thanked' (Gendzier 2015). But the regional Goliath playing little David to the US Congress and world media is also an exercise in proving the dangers of the new anti-Semitism, and such language is constantly used and abused by the Israel Lobby. Since the arrival of President Trump, and the turning of this mode of argument into the new standard of Presidential discourse, Israel feels even safer in its fact-bending.

In so doing, Israel also feeds the growing neo-imperialist drive in Washington, now assisting the Saudi Arabian regime in its anti-Iran, anti-Shi'ite drive against Yemen, making Israel the battering ram of a new Western gambit for rewriting power relations in the Middle East and beyond.

The New Anti-Semitism: The Creation of a 'Judeo-Christian' Islamophobic Myth

One needs to think of the New anti-Semitism in the context of Middle East power-play, I would like to argue; the context of isolating Iran as a rising force, and providing a new narrative for western neo-imperialism in the post-Soviet world, where the clarity and simplicity of the Cold War gave way to a complex situation with no clear opponents. Israeli propaganda fills this need for a serious enough 'enemy' by replacing anti-Soviet propaganda with *political Islamophobia*. This was originally proposed by Ariel Sharon, and continued after his demise by his lesser follower, Binyamin Netanyahu. The part played by French Zionist intellectuals has been crucial to the success of the myth, which otherwise may have remained ineffective, crude propaganda.

⁸ But the CIA admits to it at last... See William Greider 'It's Official: The Pentagon Finally Admitted That Israel Has Nuclear Weapons, Too', *The Nation*, 20 March 2015, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/202129/its-official-pentagon-finally-admitted-israel-has-nuclear-weapons-too#>, accessed on 26 March 2015.

What was needed was a myth, or an interpretation of modern politics as an interconnected system with the west and Zionism on the one side, and with Islam, Iran and dangerous terrorism on the other – a simplified world picture reminding one of the Crusades, but for the fact that now it is a ‘Judeo-Christian’ coalition which faces the forces of Islamic evil. What was needed was a rewriting of the ‘evil empire’ notion of Reagan, infusing it with the moral furniture of a new age, and including the Jews – victims of the Holocaust – on the side of the Angels was the best insurance policy. That the two politicians (Trump and Netanyahu) now at the centre of this development are long-term believers as well as users of conspiracy theories is an integral part of what has emerged as the new ideological status quo in the west.

So how was the myth created? How can clear facts of the conflict be turned topsy-turvy, making a militarised settler colonial state into a mere victim? Surely the metamorphosis of the ‘old anti-Semitism’, a tendency alive in right-wing, fascist and neo-Nazi fringes of European politics, into the ‘new anti-Semitism’ must be one of the most innovative acts of political alchemy in modern times; from the base metal of old anti-Semitism emerge, phoenix-like, not only the ‘new anti-Semitism’, but also the new Islamophobia; additionally, the old foes of Judaism – fascist and neo-Nazi parties – have now turned into newfound friends. Such a counter-intuitive outcome surely requires close examination.

Now the structure of arguments about the ‘new anti-Semitism’ in Europe is not less important than the arguments themselves and arguably more significant. Badiou, Hazan and Segre carefully dissect this contextual and structural framework, using the work of the pioneers of such argument, Alain Finkielkraut, Bernard Henry-Lévy and Jean-Claude Milner, but, especially Pierre-André Taguieff (Taguieff 2004). The arguments presented by this group of French Zionist intellectuals are almost as convoluted as those voiced by traditional anti-Semites, and as dependent on conspiracy theories and far-reaching imaginative projections and generalisations.

The standard intellectual register used is that of the conspiracy theory; Henry-Lévy presents this odd thesis in 2004 thus: ‘French anti-Semitism’, that political passion whose appearance, it is worth constant reminder, dates from the French *fascist current* of the 1930, that ideological delirium which poorly conceals such dubious sentiments as the hatred of American democracy à la Tocqueville. . . the fantasy of a *cosmopolitan country living under the law of the Jewish lobby* – French anti-Americanism, then, attracts the worst, and its seductions will be all the more dangerous if a symbolic restraining blow from above does not very quickly oppose it’ (Henry-Lévy 2004: 873). By connecting the dates of two unrelated phenomena, the author lays the foundation for a most bizarre argument – that

anti-Americanism (of the fascist right, no less) is a cover for anti-Semitism, as it assumes, he tells us, that America is a society controlled by Jewish lobby groups. Thus, in a single stroke, Henry-Lévy tars any opposition to the American imperial project with anti-Semitism—an argument obviously directed at the progressive left in France and the rest of Europe.

In a similar vein, any criticism of the media, especially media conglomerates, argues Henry-Lévy, is also anti-Semitic, as ‘it is well known that many Jews work in the media...’ (Badiou, Hazan and Segre 2013: 18–19). The same twisted logic sees all arguments which are either anti-Capitalist or even anti-imperialist as basically anti-Semitic under cover of progressive political arguments: ‘Another variant of this amalgam is no less interesting. It is clear that anti-Imperialism today is anti-Americanism. Anti-Americanism is evidently anti-capitalism. And anti-capitalism, via the classic fantasy figure of the ‘Jewish financier’, is anti-Semitic’ (Badiou, Hazan and Segre: 2013: 18–19). Thus, Taguieff builds a cartoon-like straw-man, a caricature of the anti-Zionist argument: ‘This recent wave of Judeophobia is part of a discourse of ideas—designed to attack Jews and mobilise action against them—that has been spreading throughout the world. We find in this discourse a number of words and themes handed down from various anti-Jewish traditions, but also new indictments in which ‘Israel’ and ‘Zionism’ serve as repulsive myths. To get to the heart of the matter, we might say that its general form of argument is as follows: ‘Jews are all more or less crypto-Zionists. Zionism is a form of colonialism, imperialism, and racism. Therefore Jews are colonialists, imperialists, and racists, whether overt or covert’. By presenting ‘Zionism’ as the incarnation of absolute evil, an anti-Jewish vision of the world reconstituted itself in the second half of the twentieth century’ (Taguieff 2004: 4). By employing such imaginary constructions of his foe, Taguieff constructs a phantasmagorical version of anti-Zionism as deluded and racist, even though such a creature exists nowhere.

This imaginary coalition described by Taguieff seems to include much of Western society, a bastion of pro-Israel sentiments, justifying a rather lengthy, but typical quote, about the *loci* of anti-Semitic narratives and sentiments: ‘Not surprisingly, the accusations may be found in neofascist, traditionalist, or fundamentalist Christian circles of the far right. But today they are mainly purveyed by the propagandists of political or radical Islam (the various currents of Islamism or ‘Islamic Radicalism’) by the humanitarian neo-Christian movement which, in its twin demonisation of America and Israel, is succeeding revolutionary anti-imperialist Third Worldism; by a section of the elites, both left and right, liberal and social democratic, which advocates moving beyond the nation-state and preaches the messianic utopia of the post-national world (for which the Israeli

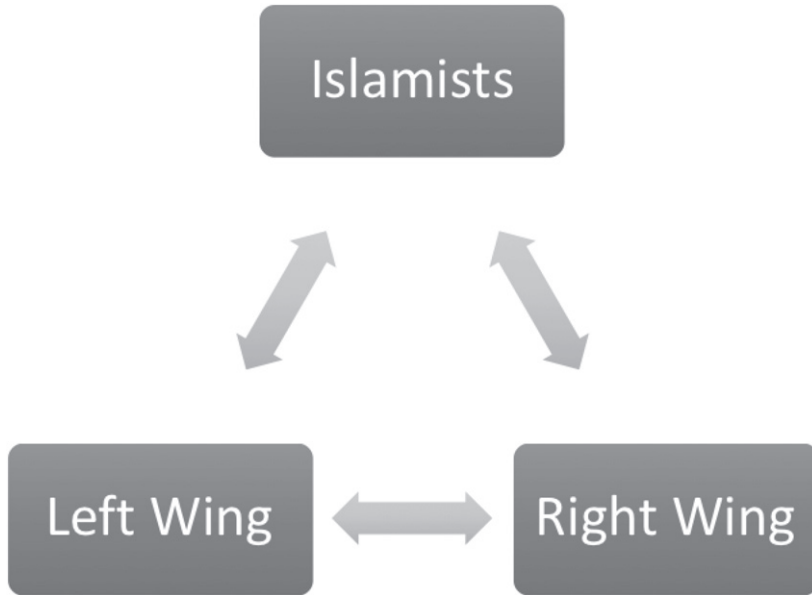


Figure 1. The Imaginary ‘New Anti-Semitic’ World Coalition.

nation-state represents intolerable resistance to the globalist injunctions); by the new anti-imperialist coming from a Communist or leftist (anarcho-Trotskyist) tradition, who tend to reduce their struggle against ‘neo-liberal’ globalisation to a simplistic anti-Americanism; and, of course, by the whole of the Arab world, whose constituent dictatorships and reactionary plutocratic regimes are looking for ways of deflecting mass anger onto external enemies and have cynically made the Palestinian cause the absolute cause, a major symbolic issue. ‘Israelis-Zionists-Jews’ operates as a representation of the absolute enemy, worthy of absolute hatred’ (Taguieff 2004: 5). In this imaginary construct of the opposition, which seems to exclude little, there are some features we may wish to concentrate on.

Badiou’s argument, that the ‘inquisitors’ fighting against ‘new anti-Semitism’ are seeking ‘to link together things that, as we have just seen, actually have no connection at all’ (Badiou Hazan and Segre 2013: 17) is clearly evident in Taguieff’s claims. But, Taguieff seems to be of the opinion this has not gone far enough; he adds that the “demonisation” employed by such diverse groups is part of a ‘wide-ranging demonisation of America, for radical anti-Americanism has indeed been the transnational political orthodoxy of the post-1989 world. Combined with the mythical figure of the American hyper-power, itself the latest recycling

of “imperialism” or “American imperialism”, the repulsive category of “Israelis-Zionists-Jews” makes it possible to pass off accusatory expressions as a kind of causal explanation’ (Taguieff 2004: 6).

This is indeed a fascinating claim, and a return to the earlier discussion of counter-intuitive arguments used by Zionist proponents, as well as by the Israeli state machinery. First, it seems that Taguieff believes that ‘imperialism’ is a figment of left-wing imagination, as is ‘American imperialism’; but even more emphatically, he claims that the formula ‘Israelis-Zionists-Jews’ is also a fiction and a meme invented by the new anti-Semitism.

Leaving aside for the moment the argument about the strange imputed coalition of anti-Semitic forces, most of which, in fact, actually support Israel and Zionism, some parts of which are mortal enemies of each other, one may examine the accusation that the formulation ‘Israelis-Zionists-Jews’ is an invention of this anti-Semitic global coalition. Anyone acquainted with left wing and pro-Palestinian arguments will be aware of the great length to which such texts go to refute this formula, correctly identified as a Zionist tenet. The frequent dispatches from Israel over the last few decades include thousands of instances of Israeli politicians, parties and institutions repeatedly claiming that Israel is not just a Jewish state, but the ‘state of all Jews’; recent legislation, in order to remove doubt, has not only removed the Arabic language from the list of official language in Israel, but has also removed the word ‘democratic’ from the description of Israel as a ‘Jewish and democratic’ state; The legislation further calls Israel ‘the state of all Jews’, and thus equates the terms Jew/Israeli/Zionist. This is further assisted by Zionist and Jewish federations in different countries, as well as Jewish media outlets, in the US, Canada, Australia, UK and France – to mention just the main examples – promoting and advancing this exact political equation and also raising the question: ‘is there a place for the Jews in Europe?’ a question Netanyahu answered with a resounding ‘no’ in early 2015, after the *Charlie Ebro* events. Had it been a non-Jewish politician uttering such sentiments, he or she would be chased out of European politics for extreme (old) anti-Semitism. Does the fact that an Israeli-Jewish politician is making such a statement make it less racist and anti-Semitic?

This manoeuvre of first inventing and promoting a political formulation, then claiming that it was created and used by a fantastic grand anti-Semitic coalition of opposites, is surprisingly successful, causing one grave doubts about any intelligence still embedded in Western public discourse; it seems that society has not greatly benefitted from the terrifying experiences of the twentieth century in Europe and elsewhere, and that shallow, disconnected and false arguments can easily grab hold of the public imagination and its agenda. That it is the Jews of Europe and the US

through their elected or appointed representatives in a variety of organisations, who are mainly stating such positions, or agreeing without demurral when these are made in their name, is doubly distressing, of course. This total negation of the Islamic and Arab world, through a claimed 'Judeo-Christian' set of values (what might such values be, apart from common Islamophobia? We are never clearly told, but they seem to include democracy, capitalism, Zionism, 'Americano-philia' and Globalism, at least according to the school of French warriors against their brainchild of the 'new anti-Semitism') is of course a depressing development after a century which brought mass genocide to the modern experience. This 'battle to the bitter end' cannot but terrify anyone with a scant knowledge of history, promising new and terrifying atrocities to come.

Lest we may think that Taguieff's arguments are new or original, it may be beneficial to compare his narrative to that of Amos Oz, the grand icon of the Israeli left and beyond. In the early 1980s, well before some of those Taguieff identifies as the enemies of Judaism even existed in any identifiable form, Amos Oz had already managed to expose his own position in some unthinking references, in two books (Oz, 1983 *In the Land of Israel*, and 1977, *Be'Or Hathchelt Heaza (In this intense Blue Light)* published at the time. When Oz describes his first visit to the offices of the Jerusalem Palestinian daily *Al-Fajr*, he does not fail to use the classic anti-Semitic narrative of the innocent façade behind which hide the destructive forces of the entire Arab World: 'Behind the Dawn (Al-Fajr) stands the fortune of the mysterious Paul Ajlouni. Behind Ajlouni stands, so they say, the PLO, the mighty resources of Libya and Saudi Arabia, the power of the Islamic bloc, the resources of the Soviet alliance, the masses of the Third World. Behind them stand the phalanxes, the mouthpieces of the simplistic New Left and the reactionaries of the old right, as well as humanitarian do-good liberalism aching for symmetry and light' (Oz 1983: 157, quoted in Bresheeth 1989: 134). It seems not much was left for innovation after such lines, echoed in the rest of the Oz text. What is terrifying is the fact that this is the genuine voice of the 'progressive edge' of left Zionism, *a light unto the nations*.

Conspiracy theories were always strongly supported by Zionist intellectuals, ironically; but even the crudest propaganda coming out of Israel at the time was never that transparent. This latter-day racism seems to jump out of Oz despite his well-mannered caution elsewhere, in the only chapter of the book dealing with Palestinians directly, not something he was ever adept at, or inclined towards. On entering the offices of *Al-Fajr*, Oz does not fail to note: 'The atmosphere. . . is similar, perhaps, to that in the office of a Hebrew-language Journal or a Yiddish newspaper in Eastern Europe before the fall: poverty, and enthusiasm, lofty rhetoric and irritating prosaic hardships, poetry and politics. I count

five medium-sized rooms, slightly shabby, furnished with simple wooden desks, peeling-painted chairs. . . ' (Oz 1983: 164). Despite the obvious miserable appearance which Oz notes, he cannot fail to see through this, and recognise the powers of the grand coalition of anti-Semitic evil hidden behind the rickety furniture.

Furthermore, Oz has not changed his views since then; in some sense, racism is currently much closer to the surface of his writing. On the occasion of the Israeli elections in March 2015, he published an article in *Haaretz*⁹ designed, one assumes, to assist the so-called centre-left Zionist Camp Party against Netanyahu. In the article, published on 13 March 2015, a few days before the election, Oz used the same tactic to be used by Netanyahu few days later, on election day itself. Both use the prevalent fear of the Arab *other*, so carefully nurtured and developed not just by Israeli politicians, from Ben-Gurion to Netanyahu, but also (and mainly) by Israeli intellectuals of Oz's ilk. If Netanyahu used the 'Arab' meme on live Facebook posting, telling his followers to get out and vote for him, as 'the Arabs are coming out in droves to the polls' for left-wing parties,¹⁰ then Oz was not more sophisticated or delicate in his approach: 'We'll begin with the most important thing, with a matter of life-and-death for the State of Israel: If there will not be two states here, and fast, there will be one state here. If there will be one state here, it will be an Arab state, from the sea to the Jordan River. If there will be an Arab state here, I don't envy my children and my grandchildren'. Ironically, Oz criticises Israeli politicians for fear-mongering later in the same piece: 'The same fearmongers who frightened us with the Soviet army at the gates of Kfar Sava are now scaring us again, saying that if we withdraw from the territories, missiles will strike Tel Aviv, Ben-Gurion International Airport and Kfar Sava'.¹¹ His own fear-mongering, however, seems invisible to him.

Like a racist meeting a Jew and seeing not a human being but a representative of the plots and machinations of 'World Jewry', so Oz rejects all evidence of senses and logic, even such evidence as he himself has provided, in favour of the 'Elders of Palestine' plot. Obviously, the *Al-Fajr* offices with their shabby desks are a mere camouflage, a front

9 Oz, A 'Oz Has a Recipe for Saving Israel', *Haaretz*, 13 March 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/.premium-1.646562>, accessed on 12 May 2015.

10 See *Haaretz* webpage on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERc6hi_F9LA, accessed 12 May 2015. Please also note that most of the US media channels have removed this video clip from their website, leaving the link broken. . . It is indeed damning evidence, and the US media plays its role in hiding it. To see an example of this type of censorship, please examine the live report on MSNBC, for example: <http://www.msnbc.com/andrea-mitchell-reports/watch/netanyahu-no-palestinian-state-on-my-watch-414352452000>, accessed on 10 May 2015.

11 See note 9 above. Both sentences come from the same article in *Haaretz*.

hiding the powers of darkness of the conglomerate Palestinians/Soviets/Third World/New Left/Old Right/Humanists; impressive indeed. That this meme of the omnipotent, multi-faced, ever-present anti-Semite, Kali-like with its many tentacles, was already invented by a celebrated Israeli 'liberal' in the early 1980s is quite incredible. That the same type of anti-Semitic literary device is used by a French left-winger to describe what he terms the 'haters of Zion', in the first decade of the twenty-first century is even more depressing. But then, the same Oz holds the same views today, as we have seen, and views concocted by Taguieff have become popularised all over the western world since their publication. This fantastic construction of the enemies of Jews, Zionists and Israelis is written by a left-winger who supports: 'a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. More precisely, I would support a political solution based upon the principle of two independent states, one Israeli, one Palestinian, existing alongside each other and open to federation at some time in the future; the return of the State of Israel to its 1967 frontiers, with a clause providing for the division of Jerusalem; and an end to occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; an end to the dismantling of Jewish settlements' in the West Bank (Taguieff 2004: 9). That Taguieff, the liberal Jew who supports all the above, is a strong opponent of the international, non-violent, civic campaign of BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) promoting a peaceful resolution of the conflict—a campaign whose aims¹² Taguieff claims above he shares, as his guidelines for the resolution of the conflict are almost identical to that of the BDS campaign, is the clearest evidence that his poise is pure posturing—one can safely claim such lofty aims, secure in the knowledge that Israel will never allow such a solution to come about.

After all, all Israeli prime ministers, of 'left' and right, have refused the establishment of the Palestinian state outlined both by Taguieff and the BDS campaign. Even Yitzhak Rabin, who went further than anyone before (or after) him, was not prepared to accept a just peace on these terms, and of course, was murdered for his 'daring' approach which was too much for the Israeli right. To advance such claims as Taguieff does in the quote above, and continue to support racist and expansionist Israeli governments, opposing the only efficient, non-violent civic strategy for international action is of course a false and futile position, shared by some of his Jewish colleagues in France, though most are much too nationalistic to agree with the guidelines for peace outlined by Taguieff, however unlikely they may be at this juncture. It is also interesting to note that at the time of writing his book Taguieff claims (Taguieff 2004: 9–10) to have believed that the impasse of the 'peace process' is merely temporary

12 Homepage of the international BDS movement: <http://www.bdsmovement.net>, accessed on 1 March 2015.

and thought that it could continue and succeed, and the main task he thought was to establish trust between the two sides. In what way might such work as his, one wonders, help in establishing such trust?

Arguably, Taguieff is one of the architects of the permanent breach between Jews (many of them Arab-Jews) and Arabs in France and beyond, through advancing a set of toxic, Islamophobic arguments, under the guise of liberal positioning. In so doing, Taguieff uses Islam in the most 'liberal' and a-historical manner (Taguieff 2044: 14–16) mixing up Sunni and Shi'ite trends, or rather being unaware of such distinctions and the animosity between such groups, using as examples texts by, say, the founders of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1923, and of other, more recent groups which became what we know today as ISIL or ISIS; Such sweeping generalisations, while never proving the anti-Semitic intent of such groups, are certainly showing Taguieff's unmethodical, rampant Islamophobia and lack of understanding of the complexity of the Islamic world. This he combines with an automatic identification of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism: "We may define anti-Zionism' in the strong sense of the term as 'the strategy seeking the elimination of the state of Israel'. Such 'anti-Zionism' may be interpreted as the most recent form of what historians call 'eliminationist' anti-Semitism—which, in reality, is inseparable from any variant of 'redemptive' anti-Semitism" (Taguieff 2004: 17). Gradually, the French left seems to be able to shake off such bizarre, totally inaccurate accusations and to reevaluate its relationship to an ever more extreme Israeli apartheid state, but this idea of equating anti-Zionism—a critique presenting Israel as a settler-colonial project of dispossessing the Palestinians, for example, as anti-Semitic, has become commonplace now in political circles in the UK and US, and inspires the recent campaign for outlawing criticism and boycotting of Israel in the US.¹³ This criminalising of civic non-violent action against Israeli atrocities is the new *modus operandi* of the Israel lobby and its willing advocates and partners in the west.

Instead of dwelling in the fantastic realm of the New anti-Semitism warriors, it may be wiser to reflect on the realities of the third millennium. The old anti-Semites—the right wing, fascist and neo-Nazi organisation are now best friends of Israel, both in Europe and North America. Instead of the anti-Semitic old right, the new Alt-Right is 'Zionophile' and Islamophobic, not surprisingly. The new *Other*, both in Europe and in North America is now the Arab and Muslim immigrant, and

13 Shugerman, E. "45 senators support bill that makes boycotting Israel a crime: the American civil Liberties Union calls the bill a 'direct violation of the First Amendment', *Independent*, 20 July, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/israel-boycott-crime-bill-settlements-senators-support-law-a7852101.html>, accessed on 20 November 2017.

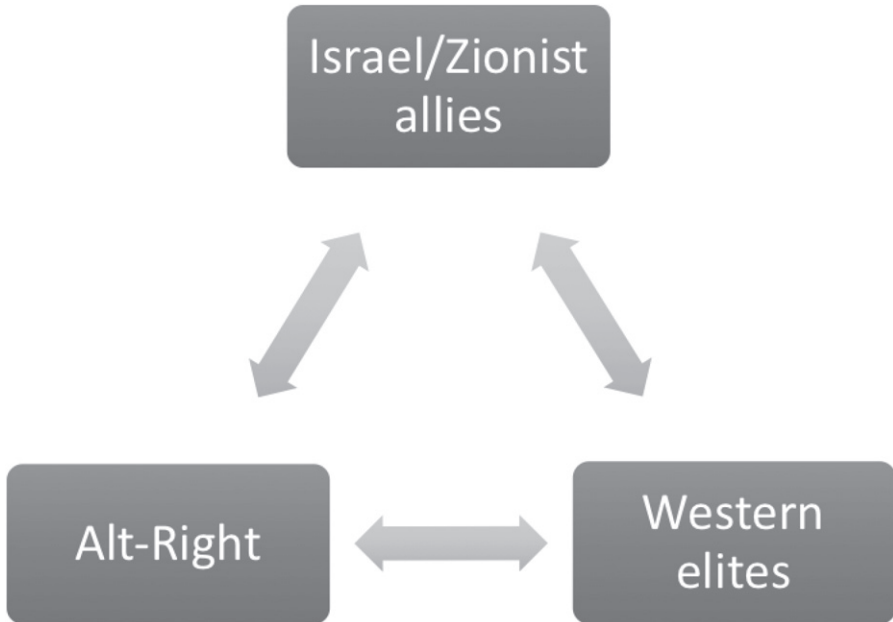


Figure 2. The real-world new Islamophobic alliance.

the ‘war of terror’ has done much to turn the same group into terror suspects; The Alt-Right, hostile to Muslims and other immigrants, shares its understanding with that other Islamophobic force in the Middle East, Israel; this is also true abroad, as Jewish Zionist activists in the UK march with the neo-Nazi EDL (English Defence League) and US Jewish intellectuals make common cause with the anti-Semitic white supremacists in the White House. As opposed to the odd picture of a political alliance one is unable to find signs of described at the start of this article, we could instead look at a more realistic representation of the new alliances, below. These are not shady groups of unknown individuals, but the real power-brokers of political influence.

The European anti-Semitic right-wing has been replaced by the Alt-Right—right wing parties which, in the European context, are quick to display their pro-Israel and Judeo-phillic credentials, claiming to be part of the ‘Judeo-Christian tradition’, a mythical entity invented by public relations executives. Instead of the imaginary creature of Taguieff’s imagination, we can indeed see a new alliance, not anti-Semitic this time, but instead ‘Zionophile’ and Islamophobic. This has been clearly demonstrated by Geert Wilders in Holland and Marine Le Pen in France, not to mention other right-wing leaders in eastern Europe, all who vie

for the crown of ‘best friend of Israel’, as was the case during the US presidential campaign in 2016, and since.

This is the context of claims that BDS as the strategy of supporting Palestine is endangering Israel’s existence, not just as a Jewish apartheid state, but the very entity of the Zionist project. Of course, if Palestinians were to be granted rights and equality in their own country, it would mean the end of Jewish Zionist supremacy in Palestine – the end of Israel as we know it; it would have to be replaced by a secular democracy of all its citizens, a prospect Zionists are truly terrified of. The mere mention of equality for Palestinians is disturbing to most Israeli Jews, as is black equality to white supremacists in the US; Hence the number and severity of Israeli official exhortations, declaring BDS to be ‘an existential threat to Israel’, and the recent setting up of a new Israeli ministry to fight BDS with a huge budget. The resulting laws, regulations and overt and covert activities outside of Israel have indeed been phenomenal. In the fight against BDS, the fake accusations of all political foes with weaponised anti-Semitism has become the main armament of the Zionist camp.

With Britain as the birthplace of BDS and being perceived as the main culprit, a new raft of measures had to be developed to stop Palestinian rights being discussed openly and publicly. What followed was a major effort on behalf of Israel by not only Zionist and Jewish organisations, but also the setting up of new political groups and the revival of moribund ones, organised by the Israel Lobby. The task was to engage all rungs of government, local and central, as well as the main social institutions – academia, the judiciary, the political class, the media – by rewriting the political agenda; any criticism of Israel was dubbed anti-Semitic, not just through social conventions, but through legislative and regulatory machinery.

To date, this effort has been quite successful; universities and schools are carefully controlled by a combination of the Prevent regulations, the Extremism Unit at the Department of Education (DfE, UK government), and the recent UK government ‘acceptance’ of the definition of anti-Semitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), equating a critique of Israel with anti-Semitism; a deluge of public pronouncements in support of Israel, as well as against nefarious Islamist bodies, completes the picture. The orchestrated campaign against the imaginary anti-Semitism in the Labour Party has been the cream on this cake – muzzling any support of Palestine in the Labour Party, and tarring such supporters, starting with Jeremy Corbyn himself, with the toxic brush of anti-Semitism. It is interesting to note that the IHRA definition is closely based on the 2005 EUMC (EU Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia) ‘working definition’ of Anti-Semitism which was widely condemned and discredited, due to the fact that it equated like with not-like – Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

While we should not for a moment assume that this is the final defeat of solidarity for Palestine in the UK, it is clear that a severe blow has been dealt to the liberal camp on this issue, and that new tactics and methods of non-violent civic action will need to be developed in order to move the campaign to non-traditional grounds, as the old ones are being closed off by reactionary government action on behalf of Israel.

Recent action by the UK Labour Party, where Jewish activists and others supporting the right to criticise Israel's crimes have been put under investigation for supposedly voicing anti-Semitic views, based on the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, have proven the toxic nature of Zionist propaganda and its efficacy. Labour has been under attack for over two years, since Jeremy Corbyn's election as leader, and has seemingly collapsed in the face of such fake accusations, using the IHRA definition as a tool of expelling long-standing socialist and anti-racist activists from the party; action was taken against Tony Greenstein, Jackie Walker, and especially against former mayor of London Ken Livingstone and Professor Moshe Machover, both of whom were expelled from the party in September 2017¹⁴. This took place despite the legal opinion by the senior Jurist Hugh Tomlinson, obtained by a number of organisations supporting free speech on Israel/Palestine, that the IHRA definition is flawed and biased, and has no legal standing whatsoever. In his conclusions, Hugh Tomlinson points out that the definition is: 'unclear and confusing', that 'The Government's 'adoption' of the IHRA Definition has no legal status or effect and, in particular, does not require public authorities to adopt this definition as part of their anti-racism policies' and further says that 'Any public authority which does adopt the IHRA Definition must interpret it in a way which is consistent with its own statutory obligations, particularly its obligation not to act in a matter inconsistent with the Article 10 right to freedom of expression (of the European Convention on Human Rights. Article 10 does not permit the prohibition or sanctioning of speech unless it can be seen as a direct or indirect call for or justification of violence, hatred or intolerance). The fact that speech is offensive to a particular group is not, of itself, a proper ground for prohibition or sanction'.¹⁵ This legal opinion was presented at the House of Lords, but seems to have had little effect on the actions of political parties in Britain, all of which accepted this flawed definition, as did the British government under Theresa May. This clearly is a major failure of a constitutional nature that will have to be faced and reversed, if freedom of speech is to be retained in Britain not to mention freedom of speech on Palestine.

¹⁴ Prof. Machover was latter re-instated and the accusations repeated.

¹⁵ <http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/ihra-opinion/#sthash.vdfnP2gl.dpbs>, accessed on 4 September 2017.

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