

CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE¹

PROFESSOR YEHEZKEL DROR²

M321D DRO
Dror, Yehezkel
Confronting antisemitism
13 p.

2004

1236858 -000 -001



123685801776

I. PERMANENCE OF ANTISEMITISM CORE

1. Antisemitism is a phenomenon persistently confronting the Jewish people since the first Exile to Babylon. Marked with periodic eruptions of varying intensity, it tends to take on the characteristics of epidemics.
2. While the eruptions take various forms in different venues, they share, in part, common root causes which render continuity to antisemitism as a historic phenomenon. Understanding these causes, and the changing factors coloring the specifics of antisemitism in different territories and times, is essential for the development of effective counter-strategies.

¹ Within its mission to analyze existential issues facing the Jewish people and develop long-term policy proposals, The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute is preparing a strategy paper on confronting antisemitism. A preliminary draft outline was distributed at the Global Coordination Forum against Antisemitism in Jerusalem in January 2004 and at the European Union meeting on confronting antisemitism that was held in Brussels in February that year. This second outline draft has been prepared for distribution to the Third General Assembly of European Jewry in Budapest in May 2004. The final text for publication is currently being prepared. Comments and suggestions are welcome, and should be sent by email to yehezkel@jpppi.org.il or by fax to 972-2-5635040.

² The views expressed in this outline are personal and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute.

³ It might be more exact to use another term, such as "Anti-Judaism" or "Anti-Jewishness". But the term "antisemitism" is too deeply rooted to be displaced or redefined.

For a pioneering use of the term "Anti-Jewishness" see Irving Cotler, *New Anti-Jewishness* (Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute), Alert Paper No. 1, November 2002.

3. Recurrent perceptions and beliefs about the Jewish people are strongly correlated with antisemitism as they transcend changing social constellations and historical periods. Listed in no particular order of importance, with the salience of specific themes varying with cultures, situations and historical period, these include:
- a. Jews are a people apart who regard themselves as "chosen" and are both very explicit and insistent in doing so.
 - b. Jews are an impediment to salvation. They are condemned by Christians because they rejected and caused the death of mankind's Savior; and by Moslems because they rejected and threatened God's ultimate true Prophet.
 - c. Judaism is an inhumane and barbaric religion Jewish monotheism is intolerant and the original source of all religious persecution and massacres throughout history. The extermination of all Amalekites ordered by the God of the Jews is a precursor to Auschwitz.
 - d. Jews are endowed with a super-natural ability to persist, strangely surviving and often thriving despite countless defeats, lack of political power, and incessant persecution. (At times this is also seen, paradoxically, as a sign of God's continuous benign providence of His people).
 - e. Jews are hostile to non-Jews, as demonstrated in the Talmud and by their insistence to mingle amongst themselves and refusal to socialize with non-Jews.
 - f. Jews have a different and "dirty" physical appearance and manner of dress and possess obnoxious personality traits.
 - g. Although politically powerless, Jews are often economically successful. They are envied and hated because of riches not honestly gained.
 - h. In strange but psychologically compelling combinations, Jews harbor both aspirations for global conspiracy and great vulnerability.
 - i. Viewed as perennial outsiders, Jews cannot help but possess split loyalties.
 - j. Jews are convenient enemies, constituting an "Other" who is accessible, easy to identify, and vulnerable. They are the "usual suspects" often sought during periods of trauma and disaster.
 - k. A number of very visible "clever" Jews holding iconoclastic views reinforce the stereo type of Jews as trouble-makers and "revolutionaries", an image that precipitates and perpetuates hostility.
 - l. Jews and Judaism permeate an aura of mystery.
 - m. Images of self-hatred and of anti-Jewish Jews, both facilitate and are fueled by antisemitism.

4. These and other underlying belief systems are certain to persist in the foreseeable future, albeit in altered forms. The official position of the Catholic Church towards Jews and Judaism has undergone radical changes for the better. All in all, however, core features of antisemitism persist, despite certain disruptive historical events which may have been expected to significantly mitigate manifestations of antisemitism.

II. IMPACT OF RUPTURES IN HISTORY

5. For understanding and confronting present and anticipated foreseeable, the impact of five "ruptures in history" on the core variables must be taken into account:
 - a. *The Shoah*
 - b. Establishment and development of the State of Israel.
 - c. Success of the Jewish community in the USA.
 - d. The radicalization of Islam with some elements of a "clash of civilizations".
 - e. Globalization.
6. Expectations that the *Shoah* would result in social and cultural learning that radically reduces antisemitism have not been vindicated. The lessons of the *Shoah* somewhat increased governmental efforts in Western Europe to confront antisemitism, precipitated change in the official position of the Catholic Church and other parts of organized Christianity and stimulated some civil society actors to confront antisemitism. However, the *Shoah* has not eliminated antisemitism, and, on some deep psychological levels, it may have stimulated some forms of antisemitism as a way to overcome guilt feelings and as a reaction to Jewish demands for repentance and restitution.
7. Similarly, it was an illusion to expect that the establishment of a Jewish state would resolve "the Jewish question" and dispel antisemitism. True, about half of the Jewish people currently live in Israel and are not exposed to classical forms of anti-Semitic behavior. The power of the State of Israel provides novel ways for the Jewish people to protect itself from

antisemitism and confront it. At the same time, however, in some ways the very existence and achievements of the State of Israel, as a highly visible and powerful Jewish entity engaging in active statecraft stimulated new manifestations of antisemitism fused with anti-Israelism.⁴ These manifestations are related in part to the dynamics of the Israeli-Arab conflict. They also stem, however, from the very existence of a successful Jewish State, which contradicts widely-held beliefs in Islam and parts of Christianity.

8. The emergence of a thriving Jewish community in the USA has reduced the direct exposure to antisemitism of a large segment of the Jewish people as a result of dissipating antisemitism in the USA. However, strong anti-American currents in Europe and in Islamic countries, coupled with the visibility and apparent clout of American Jewry have produced a combination of anti-Americanism- and antisemitism that harbors a significant potential for malignant forms of violence.
9. Closely related are shifts in the Moslem world, parts of which take the form of aggressive fundamentalism that propagates a clash of cultures. In combination with growing Islamic populations in Western countries and some features of globalization, the results are radical versions of antisemitism fused with anti-Zionism, anti-Israelism and anti-Americanism. These culminate in the most dangerous manifestation of "neo" antisemitism superimposed on the traditional core of antisemitism.
10. Globalization has many benefits, including benefits for the Jewish people. This does not apply to antisemitism. Globalization could have been expected to reduce antisemitism by displacing atavistic habits with universal humanistic perspectives and concerns, but this has not happened. Instead, globalization can be seen as aggravating antisemitism in at least four ways:
 - a. Globalization stimulates "tribal" and fundamentalist reactions which have taken in part the form of antisemitism.
 - b. Globalization precipitates trauma, which in turn stimulates extreme movements and a search for "enemies", again in part fueling antisemitism.
 - c. Globalization engenders significant hardship, such as frictional unemployment. Jews are often seen as main drivers of globalization, accentuating antisemitism as a result.

⁴ For convenience, when I use, the term antisemitism in this outline, it includes anti-Israelism, which is consistent with their usual fusion in practice. In a more extensive analysis, a distinction may have to be drawn in some cases between the two terms to accommodate various constellations and forms.

- d. The "shrinking world" provides anti-Semitic actors with opportunities to network more effectively and become more efficient in anti-Jewish actions, including terrorism targeted at the Jewish community.
11. The overall result is the manifestation of new and, in some cases, aggravated and increasingly dangerous forms of antisemitism. While it is true that some forms of antisemitism have diminished, others more than offset these positive developments, rendering antisemitism a major challenge and danger confronting the Jewish people.

III. NEW FEATURES OF PRESENT AND FORESEEABLE ANTISEMITISM

12. A set of new features characterizing antisemitism justify to some extent the use of the term "New Antisemitism", as long as the continuity of the core causes is not lost in this terminology. Strictly speaking, it would be more accurate to use the term "New-Old Antisemitism", but for simplicity, I will incorporate this meaning in the term "antisemitism", as used in this paper.
13. To phrase it for a moment into more technical terms, manifestations of antisemitism are a dynamic, non-linear and, at times, paradoxical product of the interaction between and fusion of both invariant and radically changing variables. Also, antisemitism is in part deterministic, in part a product of chance, and in part, susceptible to deliberative shaping. All in all, the new and foreseeable antisemitism is more complex and multidimensional than previous forms.
14. Furthermore, it may become increasingly lethal, such as by the escalating ability of fewer and fewer easily to kill more and more. All this makes new antisemitism into a lethal danger, requiring crafting of comprehensive, multi-dimensional, innovative and long-term counter-strategies going, in part, far beyond present anti-antisemitism thinking and action.
15. Let me further emphasize the growing potential lethality of the more extreme forms of antisemitism, as engendered by modern technology. This goes back to the *Shoah*. While intentions to kill large numbers of Jews were not new, only the apparatus of a highly

organized mass state using advanced technologies made the mass killing of Jews in "death factories" possible. No repetition of the *Shoah* is envisaged, but the ability of fewer to kill more with less effort per person murdered may result in radically new forms of lethal attacks on Jewish targets.⁵ This capability is enhanced by the vulnerabilities and self-restraints characterizing modern liberal societies combined with globalization, as already mentioned.

16. To return to the establishment of the State of Israel. This fundamental "disruption" has, *inter alia*, far-reaching implications for antisemitism, beyond the points mentioned above, such as:
 - a. It jeopardizes religious dogmas concerning the "punishment" of the Jews as "murderers of God" or rejecters of the true faith.
 - This may well pose theological dilemmas for Christian fundamentalists, once the permanence of Israel as a Jewish state becomes well established.
 - b. The new reality of a powerful Jewish state contradicts the stereotype of Jewish disenfranchisement and powerlessness.
 - c. A Jewish state navigating the murky waters of statecraft creates cognitive difficulties in accepting Israeli policies, which necessarily entails elements of "dirty hands" – as all states, but "unacceptable" from Jews.
 - d. The situation facilitates the perception of a Jewish-Israel-USA "axis of evil" (called JIA – "Jews, Israel, America") that is out to rule the world, repress Islam, reduce Europe to a secondary power, etc.
 - e. The creation of a Jewish state creates a realm of ambiguity that eases the transition from a legitimate critique of Israeli policies to antisemitism.
 - f. A new and virulent breed of Israeli and Jewish Anti-Zionism and antisemitism has arisen within the context of the Israeli foreign and domestic policies and practices.
17. Additional factors generating some unique features of new and anticipated antisemitism include, *inter alia*:
 - a. A civilizational and realpolitical conflict between Israel supported by the Jewish people and Arabs and the Moslem world, in which "the Jews" are victoriously, causing shame and resentment, mixed with envy (and at times, admiration). The dangers inherent in this are exasperated by factors such as the growing power of Islam, demographic shifts, Arab control of essential oil resources, proliferation of weapons of mass killing and more.

⁵ See my article "Confronting Atrocious Evil". Midstream, January 2003, pp. 18-20 (Distributed separately).

- b. The close alignment of Israel with the USA, resulting in projection of anti-American feeling on Jews and Israel.
 - c. The search for new causes and "enemies" by political and ideological groups (such as factions of the Left in Europe), whose traditional values have been discredited by historic events.
18. One cannot summarily exclude the possibility that some forms of Jewish counter-tactics, while helping to reduce antisemitism, may also, in some circumstances, aggravate it – in a kind of escalating "hostility race".

IV. TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE COUNTER-ANTISEMITISM STRATEGY

19. The need and scope for a partly new theory of antisemitism, which both differentiates between and integrates deep historic core causes and new formative factors, is evident. This new theory should enable holistic and long-term estimation and understanding of antisemitism while anticipating possibly very malignant forms. This call for a deeper and more comprehensive theory of antisemitism and for strategies based on it stands in contrast to preoccupation with the outer layers and current manifestations of "New Antisemitism" and with "tactical" countermeasures, which characterize large parts – though not all – present anti-antisemitism efforts.
20. Inter alia, essential are improved efforts to anticipate possible future forms of antisemitism enabling action to prevent them from emerging.
21. Also requires in analysis of the short-term and long-term consequences of various forms of antisemitism for the Jewish people and the formulation of appropriate counter-actions in proportion to anticipated damage. Thus, distinctions need to be drawn between types of consequences such as:
- a. Inducing a feeling of not being "loved" or accepted and generating hatred.
 - b. Invoking fear that can compromise the quality of individual and collective life.

- c. Motivating reluctance among Jews to identify with Judaism, participate in community activities, and stimulating various forms of "exit".
 - d. Influencing government actions in directions detrimental to the Jewish people and Israel, including de-legitimizing Israel as the Jewish homeland and equating Zionism with "racism".
 - e. Causing damage to Jewish property, including cultural and historic monuments.
 - f. Killing Jews.
22. There are additional potential consequences of emerging forms of antisemitism, including very sensitive ones, which require further discussion. However, the need for developing a multi-faceted, discriminating strategy to counter antisemitism has hopefully been adequately illustrated. Within this strategy special attention should be given to the more dangerous manifestations and potentials of antisemitism.
23. The resources of the Jewish people, while being constantly augmented, should be allocated to counter-antisemitism action within a qualitative cost-risk-benefit frame of thinking, taking into account other not less pressing needs. The required strategy should also consider preferable mixes of using the significant, albeit limited, soft and hard power resources held by the Jewish people. Not less important, it should balance prudence with determination and avoid the perils of both megalomania and "dwarfomania".
24. To further illustrate main issues which require reconsideration within a well-crafted and dynamic anti-antisemitism strategy are the limits of information and public relations. Their utility may well be overestimated with resulting unrealistic expectations, misallocation of resources and neglect of other, often more effective, measures. Thus, needed are:
- a. Clear differentiation between different types of anti-Semites, only some of which are open to "rational" argument.
 - b. A much broader approach to "changing the mind" of anti-Semites based on all available knowledge.⁶
 - c. A holistic approach to the whole range of anti-antisemitism instruments, of which

⁶ To provide just one illustration of relevant ideas, see Howard Gardner, *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds* (Boston, MS: Harvard Business School Press), 2004. Without in any way disparaging the outstanding thinking on ways to fight antisemitism by many of the persons and organizations involved in doing so, still my impression is that the knowledge-base of anti-antisemitism action needs much deepening and broadening.

information and public relations are only one and not necessarily the most important one, with better balance and synergism between them.

25. Within the context of a well-crafted and constantly learning strategy the division of labor between international Jewish organizations, country-specific Jewish community bodies and the government of Israel should be reconsidered and restructured. Multiple approaches should be combined with coordinated shared strategies.
26. To further illustrate some features of an anti-antisemitism strategy, it may include the following dimensions:
 - a. Clear positioning of contemporary anti-Israelism as both a new form of deep antisemitism and an anti-Western "clash of civilizations".
 - b. Distinguishing between discourse and debate directed at reassuring Jews and convincing open-minded people and verbal confrontation with committed anti-Semites. The latter cannot be expected to have any positive impact on their views or actions (though in a few situations it may have positive side-effects, such as mobilizing support of others).
 - c. Recognizing the rigid limitations of advocacy. One should not expect from it what it cannot deliver and should refrain from over-investment. In part it may be better to adopt an indirect approach – such as rebuilding images of "Israel the beautiful".
 - d. Developing a graduated response, without indiscriminately lashing out at all expressions of antisemitism with full force.
 - A graduated response requires strong nerves, outstanding analytic abilities, multiple response options and careful assessment of different forms of antisemitism and their potential damage.
 - A desire "to be loved" is not a good motif for counter-antisemitism actions.
 - Existential threats require radical counter-measures, while less severe expressions of antisemitism, in which hostility is mixed with admiration, require less radical responses.
 - Also to be taken into account in determining the proper response are the numerous cases in which antisemitism feeds on counter-arguments and media coverage.
 - Careful attention must be paid to the possible negative consequences of demonstrating too much "fear" as this may encourage further anti-Semitic action rather than mobilize support.
 - In some instances, although difficult to adopt from a psychological standpoint, masterful inaction may be the optimal response.

- e. In all counter-measures, long-term outcomes of interaction-chains should be weighed.
- f. As clear a line as possible must be drawn between legitimate critiques of Israeli policies, whether regarded as valid or not, and anti-Israelism which clearly is tainted by and fused with antisemitism.
- g. Special efforts should be made to preempt and prevent the rise of antisemitism in civilizations and countries in Asia that are free from biases found in countries with Christian or Islamic traditions. These should aim at facilitating understanding and appreciation of Judaism as a civilization and of the Jewish people as a potentially helpful actor.⁷
- h. Radical measures should be advocated and sometimes initiated against violent antisemitism, particularly those fused with terrorism threats against the West
- i. "*Tikun Olam*" policies and social action programs should be initiated, adopting a proactive stance on global and humanitarian problems.
 - This goes hand-in-hand with conducting a higher-level discourse on the past, present and potential contributions of the Jewish people and Judaism, including Israel, to pressing universal problems confronting humanity. In particular urgent is demonstrating the fundamental synergism between what can be called *raison de judaisme*,⁸ *raison d'état* of Israel and urgent requirements of *raison d'humanité*.
 - The co-initiation with partners of work on required changes in international public law to address new and increasingly dangerous forms of mega-terrorism.
 - Jewish organizations and Israel should play a more active role in UN and NGO global issue forums.
- j. The Israeli government should consider more extensively the potential implications of Israeli decisions for the Jewish people worldwide.
- k. Harsh preemptive counter-measures against lethal or potentially lethal antisemitism should be adopted and costs imposed on the manifestations of radical antisemitism.
 - Let me demonstrate what I have in mind with a counter-factual virtual history speculation: If somehow the Jewish people had a nuclear device while the facts of the ongoing *Shoah* became evident, and if the major powers had not stopped the mass

⁷ As illustrated in a project of The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute on upgrading relations between the Jewish people and China, to be concluded in the Summer of 2004.

⁸ Even though grammatically incorrect according to French language rules, I think this term should be put into use as it expresses uniquely well the idea of "Reason of the Jewish people and Judaism", in parallel with "Reason of State", similar to the introduction of the term *raison d'humanité* in my book *The Capacity to Govern: A Report to the Club of Rome* (London and Portland, OR: Cass), paperback edition, 2002, ch. 9.

killing immediately, the Jewish people would have been morally duty-bound to use the nuclear device against Nazi Germany. A nation subject to the systematic annihilation of one third of its population is entitled, and indeed duty-bound to act with determination and resolve to protect itself, even if this entails significant "collateral damage".

- l. Jewish antisemitism cum anti-Israelism must be treated in a highly focused manner, taking care to respect legitimate critique.
 - m. Strategies must be adjusted rapidly to dynamic governance structures, such as the development of the European Union.
27. The failure to present a Jewish people position in the debate on the inclusion of a reference to "Christian roots" in the proposed European constitution might have been an omission. Jewish European bodies should have proposed reference to "Biblical roots", or at least "Judea-Christian" roots.
28. Anti-antisemitism strategies need integrating with other Jewish people strategies. Thus, critically important is crafting of an overall Jewish people strategy towards Islam and Islamic organizations, as adjusted to local circumstances. This strategy is crucial for the future of Israel and the situation of Jewish communities in countries with growing Islamic populations. For example, cooperation in acting together against antisemitism and anti-Islamism should be considered, as should Jewish policies towards governmental "assimilation" policies such as in France.
29. Let me mention a few additional dimensions of the required strategic thinking and planning:
- a. Facilitating and supporting creativity in inventing and developing new options for coping with antisemitism, *inter alia*, by setting up appropriate structures and teams.
 - b. Strengthening the capacity of the Jewish people to face and absorb hostility, by reinforcing courage, increasing tolerance to bear pain, and counteracting fear, despair and withdrawal.
 - Careful consideration must be given, for example, to the options of reducing the visibility of Jewish identity as against providing a more active defense.
 - c. Addressing the dilemma inherent in considering measures advantageous for some parts of the Jewish people but opposed by others (including those directly involved).
 - d. Confronting tragic choices between reducing immediate costs versus reducing long-term costs, such as faced in hostage situations.

V. IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

30. Move in the proposed direction of developing a more "strategic" approach requires satisfying some organizational requirements, with priority to setting up a "strategic working group".
31. Initiate careful evaluation of the effectiveness of various anti-antisemitism efforts and learning from them.
 - a. An illustration is evaluating the effectiveness of various laws, court appeals, and modes of law enforcement.
32. Identify additional specific needs, including:
 - a. Further improvement of coordination of anti-antisemitism activities.
 - b. An upgrade of existing mechanisms for threat analysis, crisis management and post-crisis damage reduction systems for the Jewish people.
 - c. In combination with the crisis management system, development of a quick response system to "non-crisis" events, threats and opportunities, such as to the French school dress issue and the speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Malaysia on 16 October 2003.
 - d. Development of professionals and holding of workshops for Jewish leadership on ways to cope with antisemitism.
 - e. Establishment of professional staffs and advisors for dealing with antisemitism, at the level of the major international Jewish organizations (if they lack such a staff) and in large Jewish communities.
33. Consider ways to increase the resources allocated to addressing antisemitism, such as expanding the channeling of *Shoah* compensation payments and memorial foundation projects to anti-antisemitism activities.
34. Positioning anti-antisemitism strategies within overall Jewish people policies and "Jewish people-craft".⁹ Thus:
 - a. The respective roles of the State of Israel and major Jewish communities and organizations have to be reconsidered, in ways that increase synergism.

⁹ In line with the term "statecraft", applied to the Jewish people.