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A New Form of the Oldest Hatred: Mapping Antisemitism Today

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Abstract

An overview of contemporary left discourse, the chapter argues that while left antisemitism has a long history it is most likely to be expressed today as anti-Israel hostility centring on a collection of labels and discourses that construct Israel as an illegitimate state and Zionism as a racist ideology. These labels and discourses – Israel is a ‘Nazi-like’, ‘Apartheid’, ‘Settler-Colonial’, and ‘Pink-Washing’ State, while Jews are ‘White’, ‘Privileged’, and ‘non-indigenous’ – function as continuations or variations of the tropes of classical antisemitism, and are used today to demonise and delegitimise Israel and Zionism. To the degree that those tropes are becoming normalised in progressive American and European circles, the oldest hatred is finding a home there in the form of antizionist antisemitism.

Introduction

This chapter provides a map of one contemporary form of the oldest hatred – antisemitic forms of antizionism, or contemporary left antisemitism – which this collection of *Fathom* essays explores.

Antisemitic forms of antizionism target Israel and Zionism, going well beyond ‘criticism of Israel’ into the realm of demonisation and dehumanisation by reworking ideas, tropes and stereotypes found in ‘traditional’ or ‘classical’ antisemitism (Hirsh 2013). Bernard Harrison argues that antizionist antisemitism is a refurbished version of ‘political antisemitism’ (Harrison 2020). Political antisemitism takes the form of a system or collection of beliefs about Jews as a collective. It supposes that Jews act as one, in pursuit of goals inimical to the interests of non-Jews (Julius 2011). This is more commonly referred to as ‘conspiracy theory’. Examples include the belief that the Jews were behind 9/11, or that Jews start wars, control Hollywood, or the media, or finance, or references to the power of the ‘Israel Lobby’.

In relation to Israel, political antisemitism supposes that the 'hand of Israel' is behind everything that is bad in the world. Examples include the claim that the Israeli Secret Service trained the American police in the knee-on-the-neck tactic that killed George Floyd (Pollard 2020) and that former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn was 'forced' to resign due to 'a conspiracy within the party motivated from Israel' (Campaign Against Antisemitism 2020). Political antisemitism also supposes that 'Zionism' is colonialism, apartheid, racism, Nazism, the surveillance state, and everything that good people oppose (Hirsh 2023).

There is a significant increase in the numbers of people holding antisemitic sentiments in both the classical and the contemporary forms in America, the United Kingdom and Europe. The latest Anti-Defamation League (ADL) survey, published on 12 January 2023, finds that the percentage of people in the United States agreeing to six or more classical antisemitic statements has doubled since similar surveys in 2014, 2015 and 2019. The survey also finds a significant increase over time in anti-Israel sentiment among the American population. 40 per cent of Americans agree, at least to some extent, that 'Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews'. 24 per cent of Americans believe, at least to some extent, that Israel and its supporters are a bad influence on American democracy. 23 per cent of Americans agree, at least to some extent, that 'Israel can get away with anything because its supporters control the media' (Anti-Defamation League 2023).

A study of antisemitic prejudice across 16 European countries including the United Kingdom, the largest European antisemitism survey to date, was conducted by the Action and Protection League in 2021 (Action and Protection League 2021). It found that many of those who nurture antisemitic sentiment feel strong pressure not to express traditional anti-Jewish prejudice and therefore express their antisemitic sentiment through antisemitic hostility to Israel because they consider such opinions to be publicly acceptable. Thus, the survey found that in relation to traditional antisemitic sentiment, only 3 per cent strongly agreed, another 3 per cent moderately agreed, 1 per cent were unclassifiable, and 93 per cent were not antisemitic. But in relation to antizionist antisemitism, 4 per cent were strongly antisemitic, 27 per cent were moderately antisemitic, 24 per cent were unclassifiable, and only 45 per cent were not antisemitic. With respect to the United Kingdom, the report concluded that 4

per cent of the population aged 18-75 were strongly antisemitic and expressed their antisemitic sentiment as traditional antisemitism, while 27 per cent of the UK population were strongly antisemitic and expressed their antisemitism as antisemitic hostility to Israel. There is little doubt that antisemitic attitudes in Europe and the UK are more prevalent in relation to Israel than in any other respect. Interestingly, the UK was found to have the lowest level of antisemitic hostility to Israel among the 16 European countries surveyed (Action and Protection League 2021).

In America, while antizionist antisemitism is most prevalent on the populist left, the recent Anti-Defamation League survey found that it is also seen on the populist right and in Islamist, Christian and Black Nationalist milieus (Anti-Defamation League 2023).

The Relationship between Classical Antisemitism and Antizionist Antisemitism

It is generally acknowledged by antisemitism scholars that antizionist antisemitism has significant continuities with classical antisemitism. Daniel Allington and David Hirsh point out that the correlation between negative attitudes towards Jews and negative attitudes towards Israel is one of the most solidly established facts of political psychology because it has been proven by so many experimental and survey-based studies (Allington and Hirsh 2019). Drawing on Staetsky's 2017 Jewish Policy Research (JPR) study of negative attitudes to Jews and to Israel, Allington and Hirsh reason that the correlation is not one of *causation* but one of *identity*. In other words, it's not that certain attitudes towards Jews drive certain attitudes towards Israel, or vice versa, but that there is a single social and psychological construct underlying both. For example, the statements 'Israel exploits Holocaust victimhood for its own purposes' and 'Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes' both express the same antisemitic idea, albeit one in relation to Jews and the other in relation to the Jewish state. The JPR study found that 'Jews exploit Holocaust victimhood for their own purposes' to be the most popular anti-Jewish statement among people with strong anti-Israel attitudes (Staetsky 2017).

David Seymour argues that antisemitism and antizionism should be understood as analogous ideologies. Antizionism, he claims, is an ideology that has matured in the twenty-first century because it fulfils twenty-first century functions that relate to twenty-

first century society. Just as twentieth century totalitarian antisemitism portrayed the 'enemy of the people' as having a Jewish face, so too antizionism portrays racism and oppression as having an Israeli face (Seymour 2019).

Thorsten Fuchshuber argues that antisemitism in the sense in which the word is most commonly understood – that is, the racialised Jew-hate associated with the Holocaust – and twenty-first century antizionism – that is, the seemingly democratic Jew-hate which today uses the language of human rights to delegitimise, demonise and dehumanise the most visible and important Jewish collectivity, the State of Israel – are simply two successive strategies for a) inflicting the maximum possible harm to Jews and b) rationalising such harm in a manner that is acceptable to wider society (Fuschshuber 2019).

Pointing to a 2003 European barometer poll which found that an extraordinarily high proportion of Europeans believe that Israel is a threat to peace in the region and to world peace, Bernard Harrison notes that this is a short step from the classical stereotype that Jews in general are evil or, at the very least, that they place the interests of Jews above the interests of non-Jews. This is no more than a revival of the fear of the 'Jewish conspiracy' (Harrison 2020).

Alan Johnson articulates the relationship between classical antisemitism and antizionist antisemitism when he writes, 'Antisemitic anti-Zionism bends the meaning of Israel and Zionism out of shape until both become fit receptacles for the tropes, images and ideas of classical antisemitism. In short, *that which the demonological Jew once was, demonological Israel now is*: uniquely malevolent, full of blood lust, all-controlling, the hidden-hand, tricky, always acting in bad faith, the obstacle to a better, purer, more spiritual world, uniquely deserving of punishment, and so on' (Johnson 2015, italics in original). In other words, the same negative attitudes that were applied to Jews qua Jews are now applied to Israel, the Jewish State.

The different ways in which antisemitic antizionism bends the meaning of Israel and Zionism out of shape is the subject of the following sections.

Constructing Israel as a Human Rights Abuser: a preliminary note on ‘labelling theory’ and the malleability of the concept of ‘human rights’

The meaning of Israel and Zionism have been bent out of shape to construct Israel as a human rights abuser which is central to, or symbolic of, all that is bad in the world. In this way, the construct of the demonic Jew who is a danger to gentiles has been transferred to Israel which is perceived as a danger to peace in the region, if not the world. Zionism, which to Jews represents a movement for self-determination and a political defence against antisemitism, has been constructed as a racist ideology in its very essence, and with supposedly worldwide reach, sometimes called ‘Global Zionism’, a term saturated with conspiracism and antisemitism (Gardner 2007). These demonising constructs have been facilitated by a process known as ‘labelling theory’ and by the extraordinary malleability of the concept of human rights.

The point has been made that language is used for more than the transfer of communication; it has a formative role in constituting people’s sense of reality. Donald Ellis uses the term ‘labelling theory’ to describe the psychological and sociological processes by which linguistic terms serve as the basis for perception and the definition of reality. Citing Lakoff, Ellis explains that communication acquires its meaning by being related to some form of foundational experience. Thus, the repeated labelling of Israel by antizionists as, to give just one example, an ‘apartheid state’, is enough to produce a body of opinion that sees Israel as an ‘apartheid state’. This is because the word ‘apartheid’ is already associated in people’s minds with the characteristics of the South African apartheid regime. When the use of a linguistic term to apply to Israel is part of a persistent, persuasive, and repetitive campaign, then the label is easily absorbed by the public (Ellis 2019).

Alex Joffe argues that the concept of ‘human rights’ is infinitely malleable. Although human rights are assumed to be a timeless and agreed upon unitary body of beliefs, laws, and mechanisms, they in fact encompass a vast and diverse range of concepts and instruments, including treaties, national law, international law, international customary law, international humanitarian law, international human rights law, declarations, and specific human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. The diversity and unevenness of human rights laws and instruments have facilitated the creation of a ‘human rights industry’ in which the

concept of human rights as applied to Israel deliberately blurs many legal and political categories, justifying the practice of linguistic abuse in the application of the demonising labels that are applied to Israel. Joffe claims that the 'human rights industry' is controlled by activists in charge of NGOs and transnational organisations who regard Israel, a small ethno-national state with a clear and explicit Jewish identity, as an affront to their idea of transnational progressivism. They therefore take full advantage of their positions to lead the charge in demonising and delegitimising Israel (Joffe 2019). Recent NGO reports demonising Israel includes the Human Rights Watch report, 'A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution' (2021), and Amnesty International report, 'Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: A Cruel System of Domination and a Crime against Humanity' (2022) both of which accused Israel of being an apartheid state.

The following sections consider the main labels used by antizionists to demonise and delegitimise Israel and Zionism. These labels are the tropes of the 'new' or 'contemporary' or 'antizionist' antisemitism.

Israel as a 'Nazi-like' state

The claim is frequently made by antizionists that Israel treats the Palestinians just as the Nazis treated the Jews. Labelling Israel as a Nazi-like state is known as 'Holocaust inversion' (Gerstenfeld 2007, 2009). Johnson notes that Holocaust inversion has become a principal signifier or reference point of contemporary antizionist discourse (Johnson 2018, 2019). This is because Holocaust inversion is a powerful political tool in the fight to deny Israel's legitimacy and to justify her replacement with an Arab majority state. It does this effectively for two reasons: first, in the post-war world, 'Nazism' has become the defining metaphor of absolute evil and Israel is therefore constructed as uniquely evil (Wistrich 2004: 29); and second, the claim that Israel is inflicting a kind of Holocaust on the Palestinians involves the implicit accusation that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians. Thus, a term that is so commonly associated with the mass murder of European Jews in the Shoah, and a reason for the broad international support for the founding of the State of Israel in 1948 (Herf 2022), is now commonly associated with Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and is a justification for its elimination as a Jewish state.

The 'Nazi-like state' label also condemns Israel and Zionism as racist without the need for evidentiary support. It is thought that the need for evidentiary support is dispensed with because the Holocaust inversion trope has morphed from two classic antisemitic tropes. First, Israel's racism is considered to be inseparable from the nature of Jewish culture and consciousness because of the classical antisemitic trope that Jews consider themselves to be the Chosen People destined to be 'set above others' and thus entitled to write 'discriminatory institutions and practices' into 'the basic legal structure of [their] state' (Chomsky and Avishai 1975). Second, the claim that the Israelis have become the 'persecutors' of the Palestinian Arabs because of the terrible atrocities they suffered at the hands of the Nazis is a variant of the 'persecuted Jews become the persecutors' trope, which was first popularised by the Bishop of Norwich as long ago as twelfth-century England, and even today retains some popularity with antizionists like Jacqueline Rose (Julius 2011: 506).

Thus, despite the lack of supporting evidence, a 2011 study of seven European countries found high levels of agreement with the statement, 'Israel is carrying out a war of extermination against the Palestinians' (Gerstenfeld 2013). A 2019 pilot study, conducted on 340 volunteers from King's College London, found that 34 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that 'Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews' (Allington and Hirsh 2019: 48); and more recently, as noted above, the 2023 ADL survey found that 40 per cent of Americans agree to some extent with the statement that 'Israel treats the Palestinians like the Nazis treated the Jews'.

Holocaust inversion not only accuses Israelis of being no better than the Nazis who murdered their families, it also whitewashes the heinous Nazi crimes. This amounts to 'soft-core Holocaust denial' (Lipstadt 1994). Far-right antisemitism, on the other hand, denies the Holocaust outright, accusing the Jews of conspiring to fabricate or exaggerate the Holocaust for their own benefit, such as to increase their power. Unlike Holocaust inversion, Holocaust denial is a marginal phenomenon.

Israel as an 'Apartheid' State

Israel is condemned by another false analogy: the label of 'Apartheid State'. As with the Nazi analogy, the apartheid analogy is used to delegitimise Israel by comparing it to Apartheid South Africa with its social and political policy of racial segregation and

discrimination against the indigenous Black majority. This makes what Alan Johnson refers to as the 'Apartheid smear' (Johnson 2014, 2022) an effective rhetorical strategy in the campaign to delegitimise Israel. As with the other demonising labels, the strategy of repetition is used with references to 'Apartheid Israel', 'the apartheid system' and 'the apartheid wall' (to refer to the security wall). Harrison claims that the charge of apartheid against Israel is believed without question because Israel is a Jewish state, and the homeland of the long-persecuted Jewish people, and so for good historical reasons gives Jews anywhere in the world a legal 'right of return' but does not give the same right to Arabs, thus convincing people that Israel is apartheid-like (Harrison 2020). The apartheid label has also been strongly reinforced by the UN's 1975 and 2001 resolutions equating Zionism with racism, as well as reports of NGOs, like B'tselem, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International which, as noted above, play a prominent role in the political campaigns to delegitimise Israel, most recently by mounting a full-frontal attack against Israel as an apartheid state.

By labelling Israel an 'apartheid-state', anti-Israel activists can justify support for the campaign to boycott Israel by comparing Israel to apartheid-era South Africa. As David Hirsh has noted, this presents the boycott of Israel as a moral obligation (2017: 95-99), and is a continuation of the long history of the exclusion and repudiation of Jews which has been adopted by many in the Arab world and on the Western left (Hirsh and Miller 2022: 21-36). The labelling of Israel as an apartheid state, like the labelling of Israel as a Nazi-state, is a convenient and effective way of designating Israel as a racist, and therefore, an illegitimate state.

A closely related political narrative is one that labels Israel a 'settler-colonial state' and therefore, once again, illegitimate.

Israel as a 'Settler-Colonial' State

The application to Israel of the 'settler-colonial state' label portrays Israel as an historical wrong and suggests the possibility of righting that wrong by the dismantling of Israel as a Jewish state. The settler-colonialism discourse has therefore become a major part of the antizionist narrative to delegitimise Israel, and is a favoured theme of BDS activists who state:

The origin of Israel's contemporary regime over Palestinians is found in the

racist ideology of late 19th century European colonialism. This ideology was shared by the dominant stream of the Zionist movement, which was founded in Europe and would later establish the state of Israel (BDS, nd).

As with the 'Nazi-like state' and the 'apartheid state' labels, the 'settler-colonial state' label is without any factual support. First, no nationals were sent to Palestine by a mother country to create a polity and dominate the local population. Moreover, as Johnson points out, the 'Zionist settler-colonialism' paradigm erases 'everything one needs to know in order to properly understand the conflict (and so make a useful contribution to its resolution)', ignoring 'everything that distinguishes the Jewish return to Palestine from White European Settler Colonialism', including the long and intimate Jewish relationship to the land; the exceptional history of Jewish persecution; the fact of Jewish indigeneity – Johnson points out that 'Hundreds of thousands of Jews moved to Israel from Arab lands from the late 1940s, moving within a region they had lived in for millennia, and most were *driven out* of their homelands by Arab and Muslim antisemitism (a huge subject that is routinely ignored or covered over by the advocates of 'settler colonialism')' – and the stark fact that it was the international community assembled in the United Nations that accepted Jewish claims in Palestine and birthed the Jewish state, proposing a division of the land between Jews and Arabs, a two-state solution, a proposal the Jews accepted and the Arabs, local and regional, rejected, launching a war of annihilation against the Jews only a few years after the Holocaust (Johnson 2021a, Strawson 2019).

The 'Indigeneity' Discourse

The settler-colonialism discourse is strongly supported by the 'indigeneity' discourse. 'Indigenous' is a legal concept used to refer to a culturally distinct ethnic group whose members are directly descended from the earliest known inhabitants of a particular region and who, to some extent, have maintained the same language and culture, such as the Aborigines in Australia. The 'indigeneity' discourse has been co-opted by antizionist activists. They label the Palestinian Arabs as the 'indigenous people of Palestine' descended from the Canaanites and other tribes. As such, the Palestinian Arabs are portrayed as the true inhabitants of the land of Israel with sole rights to it. The rights of indigenous peoples, which include the right to protect their culture, identity, language, ceremonies, access to education, employment, health, and natural resources, are recognised by international law. The indigeneity discourse thus

constructs the Jews as recent foreign invaders and conquerors, thus supporting the colonialism discourse. It also denies the Jews any historical claim to the land of Israel and thus delegitimises Zionism which is set up as a colonialist project and is therefore racist (Troen and Troen 2019). An example of the indigeneity discourse is the claim sometimes made by anti-Israel activists that 'Jesus was a Palestinian'.

'Jews As White' Discourse

A discourse associated with the perception of Zionists as European colonisers and oppressors of the indigenous people of Palestine, and with a perception of Israelis as practising apartheid, is the labelling of Jews as 'white' and as enjoying 'white privilege'. This practice has become more commonplace in academia and in public debates with the arrival over the past twenty years or so of 'Critical Whiteness Studies' as a field of academic scholarship.

Writers of colour, including Ralph Ellison, Franz Fanon, and James Baldwin advanced the idea that 'whiteness' lies at the centre of the problem of racism, and that by problematising whiteness, racism can be disrupted. Critical Whiteness Studies sets out to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege. Thus, it sees the world in binary terms with 'white' representing domination, oppression, and racism, and 'black' representing the downtrodden and oppressed. Within this discourse, 'whiteness' is also used to denote those who enjoy 'white privilege'. In this sense, 'whiteness' is not just used in a descriptive sense but is also used in a critical sense. Balazs Berkovits argues that attributing 'whiteness' to Jews is more than merely controversial; it assimilates the most persecuted minority in European history to the dominant majority, while downgrading the significance of antisemitism. Because Jews are framed as white, 'there cannot by definition be any discrimination against them, or if there is, it cannot be "systemic", that is, meaningful' (Berkovits 2018: 93).

Similarly, Israel is seen as a white colony in the Middle East. Indeed, Berkovits asserts that the 'Jewish whiteness' label is used to characterise a variety of phenomena including 'Jewish hegemony and supremacism' and 'Zionist racism and colonialism', allowing Jews to be perceived as 'not only part of the dominant majority, but also the

ruling white elite or “caste” exercising their domination on racist grounds, thereby forming one of the most oppressive majorities in the world’ (Berkovits 2018:101).

Berkovits argues that the labelling of Jews as ‘white’ is essential to understanding why so much contemporary criticism is directed at Israel and Zionism. Because Israel has become a symbol of oppression and privilege, denouncing Israel and Zionism signals one’s holding of a ‘progressive’ ideological world view and one’s membership in the camp of the good: ‘If anti-Zionism has become probably the most popular critical idiom, it is due to the perception of Jews as white colonizers. Criticism of Israel feeds on criticism of Jews as inchoately “white”’ (Berkovits 2021).

Antisemitism has always been able to accommodate mutually incompatible anathemas against Jews. Today, while antizionist antisemitism regards Jews as white colonial oppressors, far right antisemitism regards Jews as destroying white nations (CST 2019). This conspiracy theory is known as ‘white genocide’. It holds that Jews control migration flows and are responsible for the immigration of people regarded as ethnically and culturally inferior, resulting in the destruction of native identity.

‘Intersectionality’: Discourse and Practice

‘Intersectionality’ is a discourse that is closely associated with the ‘Jews-as-white’ discourse. The theory of intersectionality recognises that people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of prejudice, and it burst onto the academic scene in 1989 when American law professor, Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote a seminal essay explaining that black women are oppressed by dual sources of bias and discrimination.

However, ‘intersectionality’ has morphed from its original meaning and focus into a fashionable but often crude theory which links together simplistically the identities of all those who claim to be the victims of a common power structure. Palestinians are thus regarded by intersectional theory as suffering from the same kind of structural racism as people of colour, and the same structural oppression as the LGBTQ community and feminist movement. Members of these groups thus identify with the Palestinians as the ‘victimised other’.

Because the intersectionality discourse reinforces the narrative of Israel as a colonial power that practices apartheid and implements Nazi-like policies against the Palestinians, proponents of the academic boycott and those who support anti-racist campaigns and other minority causes constantly call for the banning of 'Zionists' from participation in progressive movements and activities. Moreover, during the Israel-Hamas conflict in May 2021 academics and student activists on both sides of the Atlantic signed statements affirming the idea that Israel is an apartheid state that must be boycotted and dismantled, as being foundational to their scholarship and morality. These statements functioned as loyalty tests for Jewish academics and students whose membership in the academic community was made conditional on their endorsement (Hirsh 2023).

'Pinkwashing:' Discourse and Practice

Closely associated with 'intersectionality' as a discourse and practice, is 'Pinkwashing'. American academic Corinne Blackmer claims that 'the academic notion of queerness and hostility to the Jewish state are now virtually synonymous' (Blackmer 2023), driven by a group of prominent 'progressive' academic scholars, the most prominent of whom is Judith Butler. The term 'pinkwashing' is used to allege that Israel dishonestly uses its excellent record on LGBTQ rights to cover up human rights abuses against the Palestinians, and to paint its Arab neighbours as homophobic.

'Pinkwashing' is not limited to academic discourse. It was used at the Chicago Dyke March in 2016 and the Washington DC Dyke March in 2019 to justify the banning of the rainbow flag with a blue Star of David in the middle from their parades on the grounds that they were 'anti-Zionist' events. The march organisers thought that displaying the blue Star of David might 'make people feel unsafe' because it resembled the Israeli flag (Kirchick 2017; Blackmer 2023).

Alan Dershowitz argues that the 'pinkwashing' accusation amounts to nothing more than the antisemitic canard that Jews can do no right: 'Nothing the Jew or the Jew among nations does can be praised, because its purpose is always to "manipulate," to "conceal", "to divert attention away from", or to "distort" the evil that inheres in all Jewish actions and inactions. Everything the Jewish nation does is part of a grand conspiratorial plan' (Dershowitz 2017).

Thus, the 'pinkwashing' allegation is yet another rhetorical strategy used by BDS activists and others to demonise and delegitimise Israel and to exclude Jews from progressive spaces.

Antisemitism Denial and the Livingstone Formulation: Discourse and Practice

As noted above, one consequence of the 'Jews as white' discourse is that Jews are not believed to be a marginalised or oppressed group that suffers from structural racism. As a result, when antisemitism is alleged, it is frequently denied by those relied on to adjudicate the issue. Not only is the antisemitism denied, but Berkovits argues that the excessive power and dominance associated with 'white Jews' invites criticism in a way that over-emphasises the antisemitic content of the response (Berkovits 2021). Berkovits's claim can be illustrated with two examples: antisemitism was denied by the Employment Tribunal in the case of *Fraser v University and College Union* in 2013 (Courts and Tribunals Judiciary 2013) and by the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, and in both cases the denial was accompanied by a counter allegation that those alleging antisemitism, who were mostly Jews, were doing so dishonestly to prevent Israel from being criticised.

The *Livingstone Formulation* is a term coined by David Hirsh in 2006 to describe the practice of responding to a complaint of antisemitism with a counter-allegation that the complainants are just trying to silence criticism of Israel. In other words, it accuses Jews of bad faith and of 'weaponising antisemitism'. Hirsh notes that the Livingstone Formulation is the key mode of bullying experienced by Jews in left and liberal spaces (2023).

Noting that the use of the Livingstone Formulation had become standard practice in response to claims of antisemitism in the Labour Party, the Report of the Equality and Human Rights Commission into Antisemitism in the Labour Party found that social media comments by Labour Party 'agents' (i.e. aides, staff members, members of the National Executive Committee) alleging that the complaints of antisemitism had been manufactured by the 'Israel lobby' were evidence of 'antisemitic conduct' and concluded that the denial of antisemitism constituted the unlawful harassment of Jewish members under the Equality Act 2010 (EHRC 2020).

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism

Nowhere has the campaign to reject the IHRA working definition of antisemitism been waged more forcefully than in British universities. The campaign has been led by the academic antizionist left, most of whom are members of the UK's academic union, the University and College Union (UCU), which has a history of promoting an academic boycott of Israel. The UCU voiced official opposition to the Department of Education's 2020 request that the IHRA definition be adopted by the university sector to combat rising campus antisemitism. The UCU's opposition was stated to be on the grounds of 'free speech' and 'academic freedom' (Grady 2020).

Despite these purported objections, it appears likely that many antizionist academics who oppose IHRA do so because the Working Definition stigmatises as possibly antisemitic, 'taking into account the overall context', the very expressions of hostility to Israel which they themselves rely on to demonise and delegitimise the Jewish state. The IHRA lists the following.

- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel (IHRA 2016).

Antizionist academics also oppose the IHRA definition because, as Hirsh points out, its adoption by their universities affirms that antizionist antisemitism exists and that it is significant. To this end, it refutes their self-serving claim that antizionism and

antisemitism are two entirely distinct phenomena, or that antizionist antisemitism is insignificant, or that it is being 'weaponised' by Zionists, all claims advanced by parts of the left (Hirsh 2023; See the articles collected in Johnson ed. 2021b).

Conclusion

Although left antisemitism has a long history it is most likely to be expressed today as anti-Israel hostility centring on a collection of labels that construct Israel as an illegitimate state and Zionism as a racist ideology. These labels are continuations or variations of the tropes of classical antisemitism which are used today to demonise and delegitimise Israel and Zionism. To the degree that those tropes become normalised in progressive American and European circles, the oldest hatred finds a home there in the form of antizionist antisemitism.

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