



BLURRED RED LINES: ANTISEMITISM & ANTI-ZIONISM IN THE UK



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INTRODUCTION

Antisemitism is sometimes referred to as 'the oldest hatred.' Scholars of the subject map out and catalogue the differing forms of bigotry and discrimination that have sadly played a major role in the history of Jewish communities.

In the 21st Century open Antisemitism, like many other prejudices, is publicly unacceptable (in the West, at least). This is due in part to the general trend for the proscription of negative language and actions against minorities – what is commonly referred to as 'political correctness.' A significant factor in this has been the Holocaust, with the mass murder of 6 million Jews and others now understood to represent a warning about where rampant bigotry can lead.

And yet, Antisemitism evidently did not die in the death camps. Prejudice and discrimination still occurs. France, for example, is seeing the largest Jewish community in Europe shrink at an unprecedented rate, with thousands leaving every year. In the UK, a row about perceived Antisemitism in the Labour party has resulted in front page headlines, multiple suspensions of memberships, and several internal inquiries.

How are we to understand this apparent paradox, whereby Antisemitism is both socially toxic and yet apparently also flourishing? The complicating factor is, obviously, Israel. After many centuries as a vulnerable minority, Jews now have a state where they are the majority, with all the benefits and challenges that represents. After experiencing the horrors of being powerless, they now bear the responsibility of power. That there is now a Jewish state, a physical manifestation of Jewish self-determination, has undoubtedly had a significant impact on our understanding of Antisemitism.

The argument over what constitutes hostility towards Jews (Antisemitism) versus what counts as hostility towards the world's only Jewish-majority state (anti-Zionism) has been raging for many decades, indeed perhaps since the establishment of Israel in 1948. (If that argument seems particularly combustible now, consider the fact that in 1975 no less a body than the UN passed a resolution condemning Zionism itself as racism.)

Like any ideological debate, the argument is complicated by a multiplicity of viewpoints. In addition, there is the problem that those involved are likely to dismiss those holding differing views as acting in bad faith. On one hand, there are those who believe that hatred of Jews is being disguised as legitimate criticism of a country. On the other, there are those who claim that legitimate criticism of a country is being portrayed as hatred of Jews. That this debate is injected with a particularly significant degree of vitriol is therefore due to the fact that it clearly has real-life ramifications.

The 'blurred red lines' of our title refer to two distinct phenomena. One is that there are boundaries between what might be considered fair political comment and hate speech – red lines that shouldn't be crossed. But the second is that they are blurred and not always obvious. We recognise that people can unwittingly cross those lines, especially if they are unaware of them, and that the key to tackling this issue is open dialogue, education, and a willingness to accept political differences.

The report breaks down contemporary Antisemitism into discrete (although not necessarily distinct) categories. All relate in some fashion to the presence and actions of Israel. In its totality, this to us represents the most significant, acceptable, and dangerous form of Antisemitism – the elephant in the room when addressing the topic.

The three sections look at: how hostility to Israel can contain 'classic' Antisemitism; how hostility to Israel has created new forms of Antisemitism; and how hostility to Israel has encouraged Antisemitism to spread.

This report will not attempt to provide any definitive answer to the "Antisemitism/anti-Zionism" debate, since no empirical answer is possible when it comes to subjective perceptions of essentially contested ideas and concepts. As explicit supporters of Israel and Zionism, our contribution would most likely be dismissed out of hand by those opposed to the existence of both.

We would however argue that we have a right to have our voice heard; and that the dismissal of the voices of Jews has played a part in allowing Antisemitism to once again rear its ugly, unacceptable head in the UK and elsewhere.

SECTION ONE: NEW BOTTLE, OLD WINE

In this first section, we look at how criticism of Israel can, unwittingly or otherwise, reproduce classic Antisemitic ideas and concepts. These predate the creation of the state of Israel; nonetheless, they now re-appear wrapped in the guise of condemning a country, rather than a people. This is a distinction largely without a difference, and is likely to fuel further hatred against Jews.

Antisemitism, like any other prejudice, has a history. In the same way that Antisemitism didn't end with The Holocaust, so too the Holocaust was not the start of Antisemitism. To reach a stage whereby it was acceptable to mass murder millions of men, women and children required not only concrete physical conditions (means) but also a society conditioned to either support or not oppose it (motive).

While Antisemitism has manifested in different ways in different situations, core ideas and concepts have appeared and reappeared, invariably with a negative impact on the local Jewish community. While it is beyond the scope of this short report to provide a comprehensive catalogue, certain key ideas are understood to make up what might be termed 'classic' Antisemitism. Many of these crop up in contemporary anti-Israel discourse.

There are two classic forms of Antisemitism. The first, stereotyping, is not dissimilar to other forms of prejudice– i.e. there are a core set of distinguishing characteristics that are assigned to an individual, based not on their actual behaviour or personality, but on predetermined beliefs about the group that individual belongs to. These are largely (although not exclusively) negative beliefs that impact on how that individual is perceived and treated. Examples of supporting evidence for these claims are trumpeted, contradictory evidence ignored, and wider social causes for why individuals might display these negative characteristics dismissed. [See Example Box 1]

Example Box 1: In America, there is widely noted problem with anti-black racism against those of African heritage. The most overt examples of explicit racism (slavery, segregated schools, absent voting rights) are gone. But many would argue that common stereotypes, especially subconscious ones, are still in effect. Black people are more likely to be perceived as violent and inclined towards crime. Overt racists will obsess about black individuals who are violent criminals, ignoring both white criminals and black non-criminals. Social factors that make it more likely that black individuals will become criminals (poverty and lack of opportunity) or be criminalised (racism within police forces) will not be tackled. But negative stereotypes can also be unconsciously propagated in the media (black people are more likely to be highlighted as 'looters' during natural disasters) by people who do not regard themselves as racist, thereby perpetuating these harmful stereotypes to society at large and shaping the views of others – even those opposed to racism.

In the case of Jews, a Jewish individual is likely to be regarded by an antisemite as inherently untrustworthy, greedy, and morally lax. Jews are different to the rest of society, even as they attempt to blend in. A Jew is more likely than others to be concerned about himself, and cares more about their fellow Jews than others. Jews have secretive, furtive practices that they shield from others. Racists invariably obsess over physical characteristics to 'prove' the differences between different groups of people; Jews are distinguished by their large, hooked noses in this case.

The second form of classic antisemitism is that of conspiracy theories, primarily that a group of Jews secretly controls the world. Again, this is not a way of thinking that is unique to the case of Jews. Conspiracy theories about a small group of rich, powerful elites are increasingly prevalent, especially on the internet. For example, the Illuminati, the Bilderberg Group, and even a race of humanoid lizards are all the subject of similar beliefs. The difference, of course, is that Jews are much more visible in public life than humanoid lizards, and therefore much easier to target.

The starting point for this discussion is the understanding that this set of beliefs, ideas and terms are by and large understood to be antisemitic, and only overt racists would be comfortable using them. But beliefs, ideas and terms are fluid and opaque; they can be employed even unconsciously, and frame discussions unthinkingly. Those uneducated in this specific topic can unwittingly tap into baser prejudices, thinking in ways that they otherwise wouldn't were another group under discussion. The onus is on those in the public domain not to employ anything that remotely resembles them unless absolutely necessary, in order to help drive them out of public circulation.

'THE ISRAEL LOBBY' - POWER AND CONTROL

Why do those at the top of society act in the way they do? Whole books are devoted to understanding the behaviour of those in charge of organisations, companies and even states. And yet, to the antisemite, the answer to this question is clear – these puppets do what they do because Jews control them.

This conspiratorial view of thinking feeds the narrative of Jews not only being 'the other,' but also that they are a secretive group that is working



to control society for their own benefit. Historically, communities would sometimes use Jews as a convenient scapegoat by allowing them to take the brunt of public anger. For example, those unhappy about their working conditions might be encouraged to take action against rich Jews who allegedly controlled the banks and kept them in poverty. Pogroms against Jews in East Europe were frequently triggered in this fashion.

The most widely cited example of this antisemitic notion are 'the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion,' a forgery that purports to document a meeting where several powerful Jews discussed how they would control the world. The tropes about how Jews supposedly control politicians, banking, the media etc are all present here, and, sadly, still believed in antisemitic circles today.

One does not have to look far to see this idea replicated in contemporary Britain, particularly when it comes to foreign policy discussions. Why do



politicians support Israel? Why doesn't the media report the full extent of Israel's crimes? Some variant on the idea of Jewish control is often not far away. Sometimes, it will be framed as overtly Jewish control. In one of the most infamous examples, the widely read (and well regarded) left-wing magazine The New Statesman published a front page story titled 'A kosher conspiracy?' – with an image of a Magen David/Star of David, the most universally recognised symbol of Judaism, pinning down a Union Jack, making the question mark somewhat redundant. (The New Statesman later apologised for the story.)

Other times, the control will be Israeli, rather than specifically Jewish. The Guardian published a cartoon of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a lectern, backed by missiles draped in Israeli colours and symbols and a large banner declaring 'Vote Likud' (his political party.) Problematically, Netanyahu also wore a pair of glove puppets, representing William Hague and Tony Blair, two then prominent British politicians. The inference was that this was a powerful Jew who controlled our politicians. (The Guardian reader's editor later apologised for it.)



Or take Martin Linton, former Labour MP and founder of Labour Friends of Palestine, in a speech to a pro-Palestinian pressure group: “There are long tentacles of Israel in this country who are funding election campaigns and putting money into the British political system for their own ends.” (He also apologised for his remarks.)

These examples show how easily discussion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can employ language that, overtly or covertly, references classic antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jewish political and financial control. What is perhaps most striking about these three prominent examples is that all of them come from the political left, which prides itself on opposing racism and fascism – and yet have slipped into thinking in ways that directly echo that of the racist, fascist far right.

BLOOD LIBELS - INEXCUSABLE CRIMES

One of the differences between Antisemitism and other forms of racism is that the negative stereotypes around Jews are so bizarre and implausible that they have very little connection to the world at large. This in turn makes it harder to challenge; something that is being claimed which seems plausible can at least be refuted rationally and empirically. Most contemporary stereotypes, on the other hand, take some recognisable element of the world around us and then use it to tarnish a whole group.

We have already seen one powerful example of a classic, irrational form of Antisemitism in the conspiracy theory that Jews control the world. This is an idea that is fundamentally impossible to refute – if you are irrational enough to believe it, then no evidence is required. Indeed, lack of evidence becomes evidence – what better proof is there of an all powerful group than the fact that it has managed to cover itself up perfectly?

Another example is the Blood Libel, a belief that sprouted in Medieval Europe during times when superstition was far more widespread than scientific understanding. The Blood Libel is the charge that Jews kidnap non-Jewish children, and then (after torturing and murdering them) use their blood in their religious ceremonies.

It should go without saying that this is a preposterous accusation, akin to the belief that women cursed their neighbours, cavorted with devils, and flew around on broomsticks. While they might strike us as ridiculous now, both ideas were taken very seriously at the time – with deadly consequences, triggering pogroms and witch trials, respectively.

But prejudice does not simply disappear, and no one is born fully inoculated against it. Anti-racism campaigners are aware of what contemporary forms of hatred look like; the concern is that the Blood Libel is simply ‘not on the radar’ because no one explicitly uses it in the West anymore. This means that the appropriate alarm bells do not sound when it appears in connection with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One does not have to look far to see reworkings of the Blood Libel in contemporary anti-Israel rhetoric. Sadly, the constituent parts – dead children, defiled bodies, and of course blood itself – lend themselves well to a violent military conflict in which innocent civilians on both sides have been killed. This necessarily complicates the issue.

In propaganda terms, for example, there is a long history of partisans in war attempting to make their opponents appear as inhuman as possible. And what could be more immoral than the murder of children? It’s perhaps understandable from this perspective that anti-Israel campaigners deride the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) as ‘baby killers.’ But in doing so, they touch on ancient stereotypes that look and feel like the pogrom-inducing hysterias of yesteryear. To justify the potential harm this particularly charged accusation could cause, therefore, these campaigners would have to show that Israel has an exceptionally poor record in this area.



A superficial examination of Israel’s military record refutes this. Campaigns by the Israeli army (for example in Gaza) are not noted for their exceptionally high civilian casualties when compared with comparable scenarios (e.g. attempting to combat an enemy that integrates itself deliberately within a civilian population.) In one recent report, military experts from other Western states assessed Israel’s actions and noted that the procedures for safeguarding civilians were, if anything, *too high* – because if enforced across the board they would hamper the ability of other democratic states to effectively wage war.

This obsession with Israel as a baby-killing state also ignores the lengths to which it goes to save and help children in need. Palestinian children are frequently treated in Israeli hospitals – even during times of war, and even when the Palestinian children in question have committed acts of violence.

(Neither of these two points, it must be added, can be readily claimed by the Palestinian side, which adds the charge of hypocrisy to their supporters in the West who levy the charge of ‘child-killer’ against Israel. Palestinian terrorists - including Hamas, the representative government of Gaza - make no distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and neither do suicide bombs or indiscriminate rockets. Terrorists like Samir Kuntar who killed children were even lauded as heroes.)

As mentioned above, there is a certain logic to Israel being accused of killing children during a conflict in which, tragically, children are killed - albeit unintentionally. But one can see echoes of the Blood Libel even when Israel is acting in a humanitarian, rather than military, sphere.

The most high-profile example of this in the UK came from Baroness Jenny Tonge, a member of the Liberal Democrat party who is a well-known supporter of the Palestinian cause. Tonge was a patron for the Palestine Telegraph, an online publication which published an accusation that an emergency Israeli team assisting in relief work in Haiti after an earthquake there were in fact secretly harvesting organs. Rather than dismissing the charge, she validated it by stating: “To prevent allegations such as these – which have already been posted on YouTube – going any further, the IDF and the Israeli Medical Association should establish an independent inquiry immediately to clear the names of the team in Haiti.”

Finally, there is Jewish sensitivity to images that show Israel gratuitously revelling in blood – complicated again by the fact that Israel frequently finds itself at war. But sometimes Israel or Israelis will find themselves (metaphorically) covered in the liquid even when not engaged in military conflict.

This was the case with a Gerald Scarfe’s cartoon from 2013 on Israel’s settlement policy. The settlements, like all aspects of Israeli policies, are fair game for criticism and even ridicule. But his depiction of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu building a wall using blood as cement – with innocent Palestinians writhing in agony between the bricks – struck many as having very unpleasant historical overtones. In this instance, where the blood was not fundamentally necessary to the criticism, it was therefore widely deemed to stray into the realm of antisemitic tropes.



SECTION TWO: THE VIRUS MUTATES

One of the metaphors for Antisemitism is that of a virus – one that constantly mutates and adapts for new environments. In the previous section, we looked at how Antisemitism that predated Israel’s existence has found a new home in current discussions about the Jewish state.

However, the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has thrown up new forms of Antisemitism that did not exist hundreds of years ago. These are new actions and ideas that nonetheless discriminate against Jews and harm their ability to live in safety and dignity.

ZIOS, ZIONISTS, AND ZIONISM – DISCRIMINATORY DISCOURSE

Antisemitism is not simply the use of archaic ideas and stereotypes. Contemporary prejudice also includes actions and words that can make Jewish individuals feel unsafe and singled out. There are several derogatory terms for Jew, for example, that should not pass muster in polite society. Even the word ‘Jew’ itself can be used in a pejorative and racist fashion.

But sometimes the issue is not that simple.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has complicated the situation by making the word ‘Zionist’ a catch-all term of abuse in parts of the extreme left and right, and created a discriminatory atmosphere for those who self-identify as supporters of Jewish self-determination.

Most Jews identify as Zionists, even if they wouldn’t necessarily use that term. While they might not automatically support every action and policy of the Israeli government, they still have an emotional attachment to the existence of a Jewish national home. For many, this will be religious. For others, it will be more practical – many having friends and family living there. Therefore, to see the terms ‘Zionist’ and ‘Zionism’ bandied about as insults, with little apparent understanding of their meaning, is exclusionary and worrying. [See Example Box 2]

Example box 2: Zionism is the ideology of Jewish self-determination, and the belief that Jews as a nation have the right to a state. Since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, Zionism in practical terms means supporting the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish-majority state. As with any ideology, there is considerable discussion and debate as to what constitutes Zionism, with different branches disagreeing over different aspects of contemporary Jewish life. But today, most Jews are supporters of Zionism.

As Britain's Chief Rabbi recently wrote: "Those people who have nevertheless sought to redefine Zionism, who vilify and delegitimize it, I say: Be under no illusions – you are deeply insulting not only the Jewish community but countless others who instinctively reject the politics of distortion and demonisation."

There are several ways in which this can work. The first, and most obviously antisemitic, is when 'Zionist' covers or reproduces classic Jewish conspiracy theory slurs.

Take this quote from Malia Bouattia, newly elected President of the National Union of Students in the UK. She claimed that the "Zionist-led media" was responsible for coverage she didn't agree with – propagating the charge that Jews underhandedly manipulate the media behind the scenes.

Or this, from a recent article on the 'Middle East Eye' news website by Nada Elia about apparent attempts by Israel supporters to shut down free speech when it comes to discussions of the Middle East:

"[P]eople are becoming acutely aware of the fact that Zionism functions as a global apparatus that seeks to shut down the will of the people everywhere, and erode our freedoms, in order to increase the power of politicians, multinational corporations, and the global arms and security trade."

Again, note that Zionism has now morphed into a global, powerful network, in hoc with politicians and capital to silence the ordinary person. Is it really a coincidence that the term for Jewish self-determination is used as a catch-all expression for Jewish control?

But these words don't have to be used in an Antisemitic context to be Antisemitic in effect. The use of 'Zionist' as a pejorative term has a chilling effect on Jewish people, excluding them from polite society unless they are willing to publicly denounce any attachment to Israel. [See Example Box 3]

Example Box 3: *There are numerous examples throughout history of terms that have both been terms of endearment and abuse. The term 'gay' originally meant 'happy,' but became associated with the LGBT community. Words such as 'queer' and 'gay' are frequently used in these circles as a purely descriptive term for someone with same-sex attraction. But they can also be used in a pejorative sense, if used as an insult. Schools, for example, have worked to tackle children using 'gay' as synonymous for stupid and/or uncool. Context, as usual, is the key factor here. Under hate speech legislation, someone could be charged with a hate crime for using words like 'queer' and 'gay' in an insulting fashion, especially if their intention was to intimidate or provoke.*

Returning to Malia Bouattia, she derided Birmingham University as "something of a Zionist outpost," due to a larger-than-average Jewish society. The idea that Jews are different to the rest of society, a malignant presence within the otherwise healthy body, is one that plays on old stereotypes. The highlighting of a Jewish student body would invariably make Jewish students feel as if they were being singled out.

A variant on this is 'Zio' – shorthand for 'Zionist.' Originally favoured by the American far-right, this term was apparently popular in Oxford University's Labour society. Again, the effect is the same – to 'other' Jewish students and dismiss their concerns.

As an explicitly Zionist organisation, the Zionist Federation obviously doesn't believe that there is anything inherently negative with Zionism or being a Zionist. But when they are used as pejorative terms, especially to silence Jewish individuals, it is clear they are being used in an Antisemitic fashion.

PAINFUL ANALOGIES - HITLER AND THE HOLOCAUST

In 1990 Mike Godwin coined 'Godwin's Law' – "As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches." This law is closely associated with the satirical term *Reductio ad Hitlerum*, whereby someone attempts to win an argument by comparing their opponent's position to one favoured by Hitler and/or the Nazi party. This stance is widely mocked since it is recognised that few, if any, issues are comparable to the Nazis, who are regarded by most as the gold standard of political evil. More pragmatically, as a rhetorical device it tends to derail discussions and debates, stoking outrage that is hardly conducive to persuasion.

Drawing comparisons with the Nazi Party, however ill advised, is not antisemitic per se; indeed it could be argued that it is a positive sign that (in the West at least) German fascism is still seen as utterly reprehensible. (There are parts of the world, on the other hand, where Hitler is still lauded, which is a genuine concern.)

How about comparisons between Israel and the Nazis, therefore? Are these justifiable?

To begin with, as noted above, the comparison between Israeli policies and that of the Third Reich are - like most such analogies - simply inaccurate. By any empirical, factual analysis, any comparison between policies are either irrelevant (both states build roads and collect taxes) or incredibly wide of the

mark (only one of these states was committed to genocide).

But in this specific instance, the comparisons go beyond simply being unjustifiable. They are designed to cause deliberate offence to Jews as Jews – and therefore inescapably Antisemitic.

These can include direct analogies i.e. calls for Israel to 'stop the Holocaust of Gaza.' Or it could be the suggestion that Israelis have failed to 'learn the lessons' of the Holocaust – implying that they are now perpetrating their own genocide. An example of both would be Lord Prescott's comments during Operation Protective Edge:

"Israel brands them terrorists, but it is acting as judge, jury and executioner in the concentration camp that is Gaza. What happened to the Jewish people at the hands of the Nazis is appalling. But you would think those atrocities would give Israelis a unique sense of perspective and empathy with the victims of a ghetto."



The accusation that Israel behaves in a fashion similar to Nazi Germany – that it treats Palestinians in the same way that Nazi Germany treated Jews – is a deliberate slur, maliciously turning the victims of genocide into supposed perpetrators. It takes the suffering of the Jewish people, and utilizes it as a rhetorical weapon against them. Accusing a woman of acting like a rapist – unless she was actually sexually assaulting someone - would be classed as sexist and offensive. Describing a black person as behaving like a slave master – unless he was literally selling people as property – would be rightly denounced as racist and unacceptable. On this principle, any linkage between Israel and Nazi Germany should be avoided and condemned.

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER - RESISTANCE AND TERRORISM

In 2014, an angry mob took the streets of Germany, chanting 'Hamas, Hamas/Jews to the Gas.' Most people would agree that, less than a century after Kristallnacht, demonstrators openly calling for Jews to be sent to gas chambers (in a country which did exactly that, no less) is flagrant and undisguised Antisemitism. What, after all, could be more prejudicial then

calling for violence against a group, based purely on their identity?

However, what might not be as obviously objectionable is the first half of the chant. Open declarations of support for Hamas – a Palestinian political party – might not seem as immediately offensive as calling for a repetition of the Holocaust. But the reality is that while the threat of far-right fascists is decreasing, the threat from Islamist terrorists is on the rise. Support for the Palestinian cause can often include support these groups, who endorse violence against Jews, in Israel or elsewhere.



The most obvious example of this – as referenced above - is support for terrorist groups such as Hamas (based in Gaza) [See Example Box 4] or Hezbollah (in Lebanon) [See Example Box 5]. Both groups are openly Antisemitic and commit acts of indiscriminate violence against civilians. Flags of these groups are often waved at anti-Israel demonstrations; while this might be legally permissible, depending on the circumstances, it is no less concerning for Jewish individuals.

(Additionally, at a time when European governments are tackling the threat posed by terrorism and radicalisation, it is hypocritical to proscribe some Islamist groups like Isis, but not others like Hamas.)

Example Box 4: Hamas are often presented as a resistance group that is simply fighting for the rights of Palestinians. But their guiding ideology is a combination of Western and Islamic Antisemitism. Their Charter states that the 'Day of Judgement' will not come until Muslims fight Jews. They also claim that Jews amassed great wealth in order to control world media and stir revolutions around the world – including the French and Communist revolutions.

But it is not just the open championing of these groups that is a threat. Whitewashing them is also problematic. People should be free to argue that, for example, groups like these should be brought into dialogue and negotiations – however, this should include an honest acknowledgement of their ideology and actions.

The classic example of how not to do this was the infamous meeting where

then MP (and now leader of the Labour party) Jeremy Corbyn invited members of both Hamas and Hezbollah to British Parliament. Most of the subsequent coverage focused on the fact that he had referred to them as his 'friends.' Arguably more worrying was his description of their overarching ethos: dedicated to the good of the Palestinian people and bringing about long-term peace, social and political justice.

Example Box 5: One of the arguments against regarding Hezbollah as an antisemitic organisation is because they only target Israel. Even if this were true, it wouldn't make their indiscriminate violence against civilians acceptable. But it isn't. Hezbollah are linked to a string of terrorist attacks across the world, most prominently the bomb attack on the Jewish cultural centre in Argentina that killed 85 and injured hundreds of others. As recently as 2012 they exploded a bus in Belgium, killing six.

All of this feeds into a worrying trend whereby those who commit indiscriminate violence against Israeli citizens (and Jews elsewhere) are legitimised, and their actions ignored, excused or even celebrated.

Take, again, Malia Bouattia, new president of the British National Union of Students. She stated: "To consider that Palestine will be free only by means of fundraising, **non-violent protest** and the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement is problematic... Boycott can be misunderstood as the alternative to **resistance** by the Palestinian people[bold added]."

Many Jewish students would be concerned to be represented by someone who would welcome violence against their friends and family in Israel.

Another recent example comes from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), which held a public memorial for a large number of Palestinians who had recently been killed in Israel and the West Bank. What the candlelit vigil failed to mention was the large majority of these Palestinians had been killed during attacks on Israelis. Many Israelis (predominantly civilian) had been injured or murdered during daily terrorist incidents, dubbed 'the Stabbing Intifada' due to the propensity for knife attacks. Again, consider the impact on Jewish students who witnessed those perpetrating violence mourned as the *victims* of violence.

Or from Oxford University's Labour society, where students were alleged to sing a song titled 'Rockets Over Tel Aviv' – making light of the numerous missiles fired into Israel from Gaza.

While support for the Palestinian cause is not antisemitic, active support for those elements that endorse indiscriminate violence against Jews is.

SECTION THREE: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

In the previous two sections, we have examined ways and forms of Antisemitism, both old and new. The purpose is to provide those who are concerned about the rise of Antisemitism with an understanding of what constitutes this form of prejudice. But while many of these examples are extremely current, these problems have been present for many years, if not decades. How then is it that this form of prejudice has been allowed to fester unchallenged for so long?

In this section, therefore, we examine three distinct categories of Antisemitism that explain this phenomena. Firstly, the failure to distinguish between Israel and Jewish communities has meant the latter has taken the blame for the actions of the former. Secondly, the inability to take Jewish fears about Antisemitism in good faith. And finally, the obliviousness to how the anti-Israel movement as a whole could be seen as a manifestation of Antisemitism.

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION - BLAMING THE DIASPORA

During times of direct conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, demonstrations and protests often take place around the world. Anger at (perceived) actions by Israel will frequently spill over into targeting of visible Jewish symbols such as schools or synagogues, or more obviously Jewish individuals (those wearing religious items or traditional clothing.)

For example, during the 2014 conflict – Operation Protective Edge – a Jewish synagogue in Brighton had 'Free Gaza' spraypainted on it. In London, a Jewish school had their website hacked, with a message that included "Op[eration]SaveGaza... Jerusalem is ours... F*** Israel" added.



All the statistical evidence shows that during these times, Jews are more likely to be singled out and blamed for the actions of Israel.

This type of thinking can also promote more traditional forms of Antisemitism, as detailed in earlier parts of the report. For example, Jews might be (consciously or otherwise) held responsible because all Jews form part of a global network that works covertly together for their own goals (conspiracy theory Antisemitism.)

Sometimes, this link between Israel and the diaspora will be used to 'excuse' Antisemitism – as if it were just a protest against Israel – or even to blame Israel's actions for Antisemitism. This reaction is apparently so deep that some people will even use it to explain away jihadi terrorist attacks on Jewish communities.

In January 2015, following the terrorist attacks in Paris, BBC interviewer Tom Willcox was interviewing a member of the Jewish community in France (Jews had been specifically targeted by the terrorists). After she had recounted the increased threat of Antisemitism in France, Willcox appeared to dismiss her concerns by saying: "Many, many, many, many critics though, of Israel's policy would suggest that the Palestinians suffer hugely at Jewish hands as well."

Of course, French Jews have no responsibility for Israeli policies – and even if they did, that would not justify them being murdered. The traditional (and valid) point here is that it's prejudiced to treat Jews as a homogenous mass that share the same views. Jews are, after all, individuals with an array of differing opinions on any number of issues – including the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Therefore, it's wrong to single out and target Jews for discriminatory treatment.

This is obviously correct, but there is an important caveat here. Part of the underlying logic of this is that you shouldn't accuse someone of supporting Israel just because they are Jewish because, for all you know, they might be as anti-Israel as you are. This moves perilously close to designating between 'good' Jews (who are suitably anti-Israel) and 'bad' Jews (who presumably aren't), forcing a minority to pass some arbitrary test before they can be allowed to live in dignity.

Rather, no individual should be victim of harassment or violence, irrespective of their views. The Muslim community in the UK, for example, have an understandable emotional attachment to their co-religionists in the Palestinian territories. But the actions of Palestinians should no more justify unacceptable behaviour towards a Muslim here than the actions of Israelis should justify actions against Jews.

THE LIVINGSTONE FORMULATION - FEARS OR SMEARS?

Much of the material listed in this report might seem fairly uncontroversial. Examples of conspiracy theories that so obviously echo paranoid delusions from the darkest chapters of recent history must surely be unacceptable.

Evidence that the Jewish community finds itself concerned and even threatened should be taken seriously by anyone who considers themselves committed to equality and tolerance.

Unfortunately, the matter is more complicated. Cases of obvious, undisguised prejudice and hatred towards Jews in the UK are thankfully rare and treated appropriately. Holocaust Denial (or Revisionism), for example, whilst not illegal, is widely viewed as repugnant. In 2014, a serial abuser was jailed for harassing the Jewish MP Luciana Berger online.

But as this document shows, Antisemitism in the 21st Century invariably comes cloaked as or intertwined with condemnation of Israel. This can make it difficult to parse the boundaries between the two, especially for those unversed in the grammar and logic of anti-Jewish prejudice.

This, in of itself, should not be viewed as some overwhelming moral failure. After all, no one is born with a comprehensive, working knowledge of prejudices. This is especially true of those who are fortunate enough not to have experienced prejudice directly, and to belong to social groups largely unworried by discrimination.

Contemporary social justice movements thrive on this; a fundamental focus of the liberal left is the opening of space to hitherto marginalised groups whose voices have traditionally been either silenced or ignored. Individuals are invited to 'check their privilege,' lest they assume their comfortable perspective is true for all. In modern feminist culture, 'mansplaining' – the act of men chauvinistically explaining subject matters to women, often despite their lack of expertise – is a noted bugbear.

The understanding that those most likely to bear the brunt of discrimination (intentional or otherwise), are better placed to be aware of said discrimination than those most likely to perpetrate it is not, however, confined to the cutting edge of radical politics.

Following the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence by racists in 1993, there was an inquiry into how the police had failed to make progress on the case. Two important concepts came out of this tragic episode.

Firstly, that organisations (in this case, the police force) could be 'institutionally racist.' Even if these bodies did not actively employ racists, they could nonetheless be so unwilling or unable to consider the views of minority groups as to in effect be discriminatory towards them.

Secondly, that in order to counter this, organisations should automatically consider any incident an individual considered to be racist as potentially being racist. In other words, if someone believed themselves to be the victim of racism, then those involved had a duty to take that charge seriously.

This outlook is sadly almost completely in remiss when it comes to Jewish communities and their concerns. Instead, the default position for many is that accusations of Antisemitism are a smear or a deliberate smokescreen to distract from Israel's apparent crimes.

This rhetorical device is so common it even has a name: the Livingstone Formulation, named after British politician Ken Livingstone who has a long history of being accused of making antisemitic comments. [See Example Box 6]

Example Box 6: Ken Livingstone is a longstanding member of the Labour party who served as mayor of London. In 2006 he refused to apologise for comparing a Jewish journalist to a concentration camp guard. In 2012 he argued that Jews wouldn't vote for Labour because they were too rich. In the wake of Labour's Antisemitism scandal, he claimed that Hitler was a Zionist before he 'went a bit mad' and committed the Holocaust. He argued that it was over-the-top to compare Antisemitism and racism, and that it was only Antisemitism if you hated Jews in the diaspora as well as hating them in Israel. Despite this, he repeatedly states that he has never heard any Antisemitism in the Labour party, and that it's a smear against supporters of Palestinians.

Jews concerned with Antisemitism therefore find themselves in a Catch 22. They either ignore any Antisemitism which is related to Israel. Or they find themselves accused of manipulating Antisemitism for their own cynical purposes. Either position is likely to foster Jew-hatred.

The unpleasant stereotype that Jews deride any and all criticism of Israel as antisemitic is patently false; the majority of British Jews disagree with any number of Israeli policies (as do many Israelis themselves.) This stereotype is however often promoted by those who, ironically, hold the opposite stance – that no criticism of Israel can ever be antisemitic.

Even now, during the current crisis of Antisemitism within the contemporary British Labour party, there are those who deny that it is a legitimate concern. This, after several councillors, an MP, and former London mayor have all been suspended; two official internal inquiries into the issue; and numerous headlines and opinion pieces across the media.

Like any minority group, Jews have the right to have their concerns taken

seriously. Contemporary Antisemitism has become more widely acceptable precisely because it has excused in the past as a political position.

ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM - DISTINCTION WITHOUT A DIFFERENCE

The final discussion that needs to be had is perhaps the most pressing, and yet the least easy to resolve. So far, the topics covered have addressed how heated rhetoric in the Israeli-Palestinian debate can easily mutate into words and actions that replicate traditional experiences of Antisemitism that predate the creation of Israel by centuries. The underlying assumption is that we have legitimate criticism of Israel on one hand, and illegitimate criticism on the other, and that there is only an issue when the former shades into the latter.

The problem is that much of the criticism of Israel is so one-sided, obsessive, and unique that the concern is that Antisemitism is not an unfortunate fringe byproduct, but an inherent part of the movement. If this seems controversial, imagine how such reductionist obsessions would look like in any other context. [See Example Box: 7]

Example box 7: Hillary Clinton is running to be President of the United States. Like any political candidate, she has a set of strengths and weaknesses, and differing individuals will assess these according to their own criteria. Where does sexism fit into this debate? Firstly, we recognise that there will be sexist individuals. Secondly, sexism is a social issue that exists within American society, even if it is not as great as it used to be. Thirdly, not all sexism is obvious or explicit. With that in mind, the debate around Clinton might go something like this. Criticism of Clinton is not inherently sexist. Some criticism of Clinton will be overtly sexist (I think women belong in the kitchen, not the White House). Some will be subtly sexist, drawing on traditional misogynistic tropes (I don't think she's strong enough -she's too emotional to be President). Some of the coverage will treat her differently because she's a woman (what do Clinton's fashion choices say about her?). And some would argue that obsessively criticising her, overlooking similar or worse faults in (male) candidates is evidence of sexism, if not an example of sexism itself.

Two examples lay out the logic behind this position.

When Alex Chalmers triggered an official party inquiry into Antisemitism at the Labour party student body in Oxford, he did so not only citing cases of abuse directed towards Jewish students, but also their endorsement of the upcoming Israeli Apartheid Week programme to be held in the town.

A defence of IAW – which focuses on the charge that Israel is an inherently

racist and unacceptable state – inadvertently set out the case for the prosecution, when a letter writer asked: “Is it so wrong to focus on Israeli oppression for just one week?”

But anti-Israel campaigners do not restrict themselves to just one week. And campaigns like Israeli Apartheid Week are unique in that only Israel’s human rights record is focused on in this way. This is even more telling when you consider that Israel, far from having the worst human rights records in the Middle East, actually has the best.

There is also the linked Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which seeks to target Israel with social, political and economic punishment. And while it might be understandable why Palestinians themselves are sometimes supportive of the BDS campaign – they are locked in a national struggle with Israelis after all - it is far more perplexing as to why the rest of the world is. There are at any time any number of human rights issues occurring across the world, including wars in which hundreds and even thousands of people are killed. And yet only the actions of the world’s only Jewish state invites such a degree of scrutiny and animosity.

The second example is that of Naz Shah, the suspended MP for Bradford West. Shah was suspended from the Labour party for a variety of social media posts; the one that received the most traction was a joke suggesting that Israel should be relocated to the United States. While it might have been taken as a satirical jab at Israel’s close relationship with America, Shah was excoriated for suggesting that Jews should be forcibly transferred – especially in light of the frequency of mass deportations in Jewish history.

This set an important precedent, since it was widely acknowledged that her post about removing Israel was a form of Antisemitism. (Shah apologised for the posts).

This thinking, however, is inherent in the anti-Israel movement. As mentioned in a previous section, many who campaign against Israel refuse to acknowledge any of their criticism can amount to Antisemitism. One of the most common refrains is that it’s anti-Zionism, not Antisemitism, and that supporters of Israel are conflating the two.

But what is anti-Zionism, if not a believe that Israel should cease to exist? One of the founding members of the BDS movement, Omar Barghouti, openly stated: “Definitely, most definitely we oppose a Jewish state in any part of Palestine.” You would struggle to find members of the BDS movement who

hold the opposite view to this – that any Jewish state could be accepted.

This then is the other distinguishing factor. If the quantity of the criticism of Israel is one potential form of Antisemitism, what about the quality? There is no shortage of people who will defend Shah’s post, arguing that it is just (and therefore legitimate) criticism. But criticism of what? Israel’s continued policy of existing?

This is not simply a rhetorical question. While the majority of Israel supporters (including Jewish communal bodies in the UK) believe in the validity of an independent Palestinian state next to Israel, this is largely not reciprocated amongst Palestinian supporters. The idea that Israel is fundamentally illegitimate, that Jews are colonialist settlers, and that Zionism is racism, are axiomatic in pro-Palestinian circles. The best they are willing to concede is a one state solution, whereby Israeli Jews are subsumed into an Arab-majority Palestinian state.

This is not a ‘solution’ that is posited to any other conflict. No one believes, for example, that the territorial dispute between Russia and the Ukraine would be resolved by two states becoming one i.e. the former absorbing the latter.

It is also not a solution that would be acceptable to the majority of Israelis, who do not believe that Palestinian self-determination should trump Jewish self-determination. Given this, the only way that pro-Palestinians will apparently cease their campaigning is if these Israeli Jews leave – echoing Naz Shah’s post.

This then, is the final part of why Antisemitism has been allowed to spread. It is because there is a growing anti-Israel movement that at its core has ideas that are unacceptable to Jews, are prejudiced against Jews, and will inevitably ostracise Jews.

There is no doubt that there are very real human rights concerns when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, concerns that will only be resolved when the conflict is ended too. But the reality is that much of the condemnation of Israel is driven by the belief that it shouldn’t exist. The majority of Jews will find that antisemitic; however, raising this has caused sections of society who are convinced Israel is indefensible to simply dismiss Jewish concerns out of hand, fostering an environment in which older forms of Antisemitism have become prevalent.

If the example of Naz Shah proves anything, though, it’s that many non-Jewish people also see the calls to remove Israel as antisemitic too.



The ZF is the leading Advocacy organisation for Israel in the UK
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