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EDITOR: Adam Garfinkle

• 1615 L Street, N.W. • Suite 1230 • Washington, D.C. 20036 •

• (202) 467-4884 • Fax (202) 467-0006 • editor@nationalinterest.org •

THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Number 72 • Summer 2003

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The Old-New Anti-Semitism

Robert S. Wistrich

THE 20th century may well be seen by future historians as the age *par excellence* of ideological politics. Millions were slaughtered on the altar of false messianisms and their salvationist logic, and in some places the killing still continues unabated. In the totalitarian nightmare of the last century the secular political religions of Nazism and Marxist-Leninism undoubtedly occupy a special place. So, too, does the oldest and darkest of ideological obsessions—that of anti-Semitism—for which over a decade ago I coined the term, "the longest hatred."[1]

For Adolf Hitler, in particular, anti-Semitism was the axis and *raison d'être* of the Nazi movement he created. His dream of global hegemony was overcome only through the combined military might of the United States, the British Empire and the Soviet Union. Nazism as a vital force in world politics was indeed destroyed in the flames engulfing Berlin at the end of April 1945, but the anti-Jewish poison it spread to far-flung corners of the globe has yet to be eradicated. The legacy has proven to be especially potent in the former Soviet Union and the Arab-Islamic world, where anti-Semitism is once again acquiring a potentially lethal charge.

There is currently a culture of hatred that permeates books, magazines, newspapers, sermons, video-cassettes, the Internet, television and radio in the Arab Middle East, which has not been seen since the heyday of Nazi Germany. Indeed, the dehumanizing images of Jews and Israel that are penetrating the body politic of Islam are sufficiently radical in tone and content to constitute a new "warrant for genocide."[2] They combine the blood libel of medieval Christian Europe with Nazi conspiracy theories about the Jewish drive for "world domination" and slanderous Islamic quotations about Jews as the "sons of apes" and donkeys.

The Quranic motifs began to grow in importance after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, along with virulent anti-Americanism. In the Islamic demonology, both America and Israel are now bonded together as "Satanic forces" that threaten

Robert S. Wistrich is Neuberger Professor of Modern History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the head of its International Centre for the Study of Anti-Semitism. His most recent book is *Hitler and the Holocaust* (Random House, 2002).

[1]Robert S. Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

[2]Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Antisemites* (New York: Norton, 1986). See also my *Muslim Anti-Semitism: A Clear and Present Danger* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2002) for examples of the scale that this dehumanization has assumed.

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the core-identity, values and existence of Islam. This has been especially the case since the beginning of the Palestinian Al-Aqsa *intifada* in the autumn of 2000 and the massacres of September 11, 2001. Not only did an astonishing number of Muslims seek to place the responsibility for this mass murder onto the Jews, but Israel, more than ever, was execrated as a dagger of the West poised to strike at the heart of the Muslim Arab world. In the anti-Semitic script, America itself is depicted as being run by Jews malevolently determined to subvert and destroy Islam.[3] This chorus of voices has grown even shriller with the American war on Iraq, a conflict that has led to an ever closer twinning of anti-American, anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic sentiment in western Europe, as well as the Islamic world.

Driven by this ideology, Islamists see the fingerprints of the all-powerful Zionist lobby everywhere, spreading its tentacles and deadly lies, draining the life-blood of Arabs and Muslims, gratuitously inciting war against Iraq, and carrying out its sinister plans for global control. The current popularity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—a forged Russian document from the beginning of the 20th century in which many Muslims appear to believe—is frightening testimony to the power of such myths.[4] The recent television series in Egypt dramatizing the "Protocols" and their fantasy of "Jewish world domination" is a mark of how deeply this anti-Semitic virus has already penetrated the thinking of political Islam.

Fundamentalist and oil-rich Saudi Arabia, the same soil from which Osama bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda movement have sprung, is a major hotbed of the type of Muslim jihad that specifically calls for the terrorist murder of Jews and Christians. Government dailies even print gory nonsense about the "well-established fact" that "Jews spill human blood for their holiday pastries."[5] But a no less anti-Semitic outlook holds sway in more secular Arab societies such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Jordan. This hysteria cannot be adequately understood in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Certainly, the cause of Palestine has periodically been hijacked by radical Islamists and pan-Arabists in order to broaden their political support in the Muslim world. But the "Jewish Question" in radical Islam (as with its Western totalitarian predecessors) is not centered on Palestine, and certainly does not see Palestine as a purely territorial issue amenable to rational bargaining. The ideological anti-Semitism that characterizes Islamist thinking is driven by something else: an irrational belief that history itself is determined by the evil machinations of the Jewish people. In this respect the Islamists seem to be directly following the Nazi model, with its fixation on a mythical Jewish power that strives for global hegemony.

Of course, the two models and the two situations are not identical, and the context has changed as well. The "Jewish question" radically changed its contours with the establishment of a Jewish state and Israeli military power in the Middle East. Nonetheless, the creation of Israel could not, on its own, blunt the potential of anti-Semitism as a global phenomenon.

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[3]See, for example, the comments of the Imam of Shihab-a-Din Mosque in Nazareth, as reported in *Ha'aretz*, September 28, 2001.

[4]For one of countless examples, see "Israel—the Plague of Our Time and a Terrorist State", *Al-Ahram*, June 23, 2001, which elaborates at length on the Judeo-Masonic-Communist conspiracy, the Talmudic Jew and a "Protocols"-style narrative of Zionism as the key to understanding Israeli policy.

[5]*Al-Riyadh*, March 10, 2002. This Saudi paper purported to link the Jewish holiday of Purim with the blood libel, a monstrous fabrication that has now become an article of faith among many Muslims.

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It seems rather to have attenuated its force for about two decades, even while a new version of the problem metathesized. Zionism in effect has shifted the focus of postwar anti-Jewishness to an assault on the dominant collective representation of contemporary Jewish existence—the State of Israel itself. Since 1948, the major ideological and political threat to the survival of the Jewish nation gradually switched from Europe to the Arab Islamic world, fueled by a politicidal "anti-Zionist" ideology whose main thrust has always been the destruction of Israel as an independent state.

The European Legacy

TO GRASP THE origins of the demonology behind contemporary Islamist versions of anti-Semitism, one needs to be aware of its characteristics as they first crystallized at the end of the 19th century. *Fin de siècle* European anti-Semitism was deeply pessimistic. It was obsessed with the "decadence" of Christian and "Aryan" civilization, supposedly in thrall to a newly emancipated and "victorious" Jewry. From the radical journalist Wilhelm Marr's prophecy of *Finis Germaniae* (1879) to Edouard Drumont's *La Dernière Bataille* (1889) and the Teutonomaniac Houston S. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the 19th Century* (1899), we find the same specter of Jewish power and gentile demise invoked by a new class of best-selling publicists and populist intellectuals. The anti-Semites inhabited a murky fantasy-world imbued with quasi-apocalyptic visions of European decline, colored by occult sectarianism and permeated with notions of retributive punishment on a cosmic scale. They elaborated negative millenarianism in secular garb—a "reactionary modernism" that reluctantly adapted to democratic mass politics and class conflict while preaching a backward-looking utopia based on premodern feudal or even tribal models.

In this *fin de siècle* world of economic disorientation, rapid social change and eroding traditional values, populist anti-Semitic movements arose that became the seedplot of Nazism. They were especially powerful in the decaying Austro-Hungarian Empire, where the young Hitler acquired the "granite-like foundations", as he called them in *Mein Kampf*, of his *Weltanschauung*. The main elements of 20th-century ideological anti-Semitism were already in place by 1914, when Hitler was 25 years old. These elements included: the beliefs that nationalism was an irresistible force and that race was a secular equivalent of Destiny or Providence; the fear of pollution by alien, inferior races; the *angst* provoked by Marxist class struggle and the leveling tendencies of mass society; and the hatred, nourished by movements of the radical Right and Left, of capitalism, modern urban civilization and liberal democracy.

European anti-Semites usually shared a belief in occult, sinister forces working to undermine social hierarchy, order, authority and tradition. They were alarmed by the spiritual vacuum induced by the declining hold of Christianity, and especially by the working classes' attraction to apocalyptic, revolutionary Marxism. Above all, they shared an obsession with the mythological figure of the satanic, ubiquitous, immoral and all-powerful Jew. Here was, as Richard Wagner put it, the "plastic demon of modern civilization", whose unquenchable will to destroy gentile society lay behind all negative processes of change, providing a coherent explanation for the resulting anomie. "All comes from the Jew, all returns to the Jew." This classic formula of Edouard Drumont in 1886 exemplified the delirious causality embraced by modern anti-Semites. The principle of evil is not in ourselves; it comes from outside. It is the product of conspiracy and devilish forces

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whose incarnation is the mythical Jew.

The mass slaughter of World War I, with its destruction of traditional elites, collapse of established monarchies and sudden flurry of revolutionary coups in central Europe (above all the Bolshevik triumph in Russia, whose autocracy had been the fountainhead of the *ancien régime* in Europe), immeasurably envenomed and radicalized anti-Semitism. The massacres of Jews by the White Armies during the Russian Civil War (1918–20), the fierce anti-Semitic backlash against Jewish participation in the German and Hungarian revolutions, and the juxtaposition of the "Jewish" and "Red" perils in east-central Europe were all alarming signals of growing extremism.

These events greatly encouraged the mass dissemination of 19th-century anti-Semitic stereotypes and ideologies. The climate was ripe for a far more effective translation of conspiracy theories into political praxis than had been the case before World War I. German defeat in that war, crushing economic reparations imposed by the Allies, the resultant loathing for the democratic West, the devastating inflation of 1923, chronic political instability in the Weimar Republic, growing fear of communism, and the ravages of the Great Depression were so many milestones on the road to Nazism. From each one, the sense of helplessness grew, and the longing to blame someone or something for it grew with it. Nazi anti-Semitism thus sprang from popular fears, and at the same time stoked and organized them.

The Nazi-Arab Nexus

NAZI DOCTRINES exerted considerable fascination on the Arab world during these years. Both pan-Arabism and pan-Islamic ideologies in the Middle East looked to Hitler's Germany as a model for national unification, a counterweight to Western imperialism and a source of revolutionary dynamism. Anti-Semitic and anti-British feelings (which anticipated some of the anti-Americanism rampant today) created a powerful sense of affinity between German Nazis and Arab nationalists in Egypt, Syria and Iraq. A former Syrian Ba'athi leader, recalling the atmosphere of the late 1930s, wrote:

> We were fascinated by Nazism, reading its books and the sources of its thinking, particularly Nietzsche, Fichte and Chamberlain. And we were the first who thought about translating *Mein Kampf*. We, who lived in Damascus, could appreciate the tendency of the Arab people to Nazism which was the power which appealed to it. By nature, the vanquished admires the victorious.[6]

Arab nationalists, radicals and Islamic militants were clearly influenced by the anti-liberal and anti-Western spirit of fascism, its emphasis on youth, its pattern of organization and, above all, its cult of power. In Iraq, the Director-General of Education, Dr. Sami Shawkat, told students in Baghdad in the autumn of 1933:

> There is something more important than money and learning for preserving the honor of a nation and for keeping humiliation at bay. That is strength. . . . Strength, as I use the word here, means to excel in the Profession of Death.[7]

[6]Quoted in Itamar Rabinovich, "Germany and the Syrian Political Scene in the Late 1930s", Jehuda L. Wallach, ed., *Germany and the Middle East 1835–1939* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Institut für Deutsche Geschichte, April 1975), p. 197.

[7]Quoted in Sylvia G. Haim, ed., *Arab Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 98–9. Shawkat regarded both Prussia and the Third Reich as models for Iraq not only to achieve its own independence but also to unite all Arab countries.

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Seventy years later, Saddam's Iraq provided a sinister confirmation of this outlook in its determination to develop weapons of mass destruction and its readiness to use them against internal as well as external enemies.

The idolization of power, together with the totalitarian mystique of the nation, was already developed by many Arab radicals in the 1930s and 1940s. Their visions of grandeur were exacerbated by a feeling of deep malaise, and even trauma, which the encounter with Western civilization had inflicted upon Arab society. The Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna in Egypt, represented the pristine anti-Western and fundamentalist version of this backlash. From the outset, the jihadists around al-Banna developed the cult of the leader and preached fascist doctrines of "unity and discipline" and "martial strength and military preparedness." Like Ahmad Hussein's Young Egypt movement of the late 1930s, they were militantly anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic, supporting the boycott and harassment of the Jewish community in Egypt.[8]

The Muslim Brothers, with their vision of a *judenfrei* Palestine as a rallying-point for removing all Western influences from the Middle East, belonged to the first wave of Islamic fascism. The second wave, which swelled after the Six Day War, had as its leading ideologue one Sayyid Qutb, a revolutionary Egyptian intellectual executed by Nasser only a year before the Arab defeat. For Qutb and his followers, the invasion of Western culture had thrown Muslims back into a state of pre-Islamic barbarism (*jahiliyya*) dominated by social chaos, sexual permissiveness, polytheism, apostasy and idolatry. His notorious text of the early 1950s, *Our Struggle with the Jews*, portrayed the Jews as the "eternal enemies" of Muhammad and the Islamic community who used Christianity, capitalism and communism as weapons in their war to subvert the Muslim religion.[9] The Islamists of today have faithfully followed Qutb in attributing Marxism, psychoanalysis, sociology, materialism, sexual depravity, and the destruction of morals and the family to "Jewish" influence. In this cultural war, they see Zionism and Americanism as kindred expressions of an existential threat to Muslim identity.

Anti-Semitism Today

TODAY, the identity crisis affecting millions of Muslims is spawning its own brand of Islamic neo-fascism. That crisis is accentuated by accelerating urbanization, overpopulation and endemic poverty, as well as the prevalence of suffocating dictatorships throughout the Arab world. Without the bogeymen of America and Israel, however, Arab despots would be hard put to explain to their own peoples why the modern world is passing them by. Why is Cairo infinitely poorer than Tel Aviv? Why is heart surgery so much better in London than in Damascus? Why do Arab immigrants prefer Los Angeles or Detroit to Baghdad or Beirut?

The crushing of dissent, the repression of women, the scale of mass illiteracy and underdevelopment and the oil riches of corrupt ruling elites provide part of the answer. For decades, authoritarian Arab regimes turned the bitter feelings of humiliation and rage among the masses against the "colonialist" West. The Islamists have continued in this vein, adding their own paranoid suspicions of modern secular civilization. Fear of apostasy fuses with hatred of America, Jews

[8]See Matthias Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass: Über den neuen antijüdischen Krieg* (Freiburg: Ça Ira Verlag, 2002), pp. 31–3.

[9]See Adnan Musallam, *Sayyid Qutb: The Emergence of the Islamist 1939–1950* (Jerusalem: publisher not known, 1997), pp. 34, 52–60.

and non-Muslims in general. Rank homophobia and a fiercely puritanical, repressive vision of veiled and enslaved womanhood are added to the mix. Indeed, European fascism, for all its male-oriented warrior barbarism, was almost liberating in its attitudes toward women compared with the Taliban or Saudi Wahhabism.

Militarism, the glorification of force and a nihilistic cult of death are, however, traits that Nazis, fascists and Islamists share completely in common. The morbid addiction to destruction and revenge drives them to paint the world red with blood in their mad rush to introduce utopia in the here-and-now. Added to this is the totalitarian belief, very much shared by Stalinists, in the all-encompassing power of propaganda, party organization and terror—a mystique reinforced by the seemingly limitless manipulative possibilities of modern technology joined to ideological dogma. The individual is considered totally malleable and subordinate to the revolutionary cause, whether it be "living space", "racial purity", the "Arab Renaissance", the "classless society" or the jihad. Promethean doctrines, to which human life is so eagerly sacrificed, can only be vindicated by the success of a global revolution that grants political hegemony to true believers in the cause. Whether millions die in the attempt is irrelevant in the light of either the eternal laws of nature and history or the will of God.

Totalitarian anti-Semitism reached its genocidal extreme with Hitler's ideology and a political praxis that, though it grew up on Christian soil, was ultimately determined to replace and supplant Christianity. National Socialism was racial politics carried out under the sign of the Apocalypse, in which the global struggle between the "Aryan" world and Jewry stood at the center of a closed system of thought. Anti-Semitism was transformed into a crucial lever in the restructuring not only of Nazi Germany but of the entire international order—initially as a weapon for undermining Hitler's domestic adversaries and then for subverting or neutralizing opposition to his policies abroad. Hitler emphasized that the destruction of world Jewry was a precondition for restoring the natural hierarchy within the nation and between the races. The Darwinian racism that he espoused was *not* the root of his anti-Semitism; it was simply the "scientific" language he employed to give more credibility to his eschatological political agenda. Its deeper sources lay in a pseudo-religious, Manichean vision of a world in which "the Jew" was the negative wellspring and dark side of history driving mankind relentlessly toward the abyss.

Nazi ideology led to acts of murderous race-cleansing of varying kinds during World War II, but only the Jews were singled out for total extermination. The war against them was conceived as an apocalyptic *Vernichtungskrieg* for global hegemony. What Hitler did was to transform the demonological fantasies of both Christian and anti-Christian anti-Semitism into a practical political program on a universal scale. The choice of the target grew out of centuries of Christian teaching that had singled out the Jews as a deicidal people. But the *Shoah* was a modernized high-tech version of "Holy War" carried out by totalitarian atheists. These atheists consciously sought to eradicate both the Enlightenment legacy of reason and the entire Judeo-Christian tradition of ethics.

The topography and lexicography of post-Holocaust anti-Semitism changed dramatically after 1945, yet the essential elements of ideological continuity have been remarkably tenacious. Today, the geographical center of gravity is neither Germany nor the European continent (despite the alarming revival of old prejudices) but the Arab-Muslim world and its diasporic offshoots. Anti-Jewish rhetoric

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in the new millennium tends to be Islamic, anti-globalist and neo-Marxist far more than it is Christian, conservative or neo-fascist. Whether the assault comes from the far Left or Right, from liberals or fundamentalists, its focus now is above all the collective Jew embodied in the State of Israel. Despite the incessant hair-splitting over the need to separate anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, this has in recent decades become a distinction without a meaningful difference. Whatever theoretical contortions one may indulge in, the State of Israel is a Jewish state. Whoever wants to defame or destroy it, openly or through policies that entail nothing else but such destruction, is in effect practicing the Jew-hatred of yesteryear, whatever their self-proclaimed intentions.

The Soviet Legacy

THE CASE of Soviet communism is particularly interesting in this regard. In 1931, Josef Stalin officially denounced anti-Semitism as "zoological", a form of cannibalism. This was formally consistent with the original internationalist policy of Marxist-Leninism and the older communist view of anti-Semitism as a reactionary tool of the ruling classes to divert attention away from the class struggle. By 1949, however, Stalin was beginning to sound like Adolf Hitler when it came to "the Jewish question." He adopted the classic Nazi mythology of "rootless cosmopolitanism" and applied it to Soviet Jews. Stalinist accusations which developed out of this slogan followed the pattern of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This had an obvious propaganda value in Soviet Russia, as it did in all of the East European satellite countries that fell under communist control in the late 1940s, where anti-Semitism already enjoyed great popularity. The fictitious "world conspiracy" invented by the Stalinists offered a suitable backdrop for totalitarian claims to world rule alongside the crusade against Wall Street, capitalism and imperialism.

Stalin's shift toward the Nazi paradigm became transparent in the Slansky show trial in Czechoslovakia (1952–53), which proceeded as if all Jews were potentially Zionists and all Zionist groups were "agents" of American imperialism. This was followed by the extinction of Soviet Jewish culture and a planned "final solution" of the "Jewish question" by mass expulsion to Siberia.[10] This disaster was only averted by Stalin's sudden death (on Purim, incidentally) fifty years ago.

Under Nikita Khrushchev's somewhat erratic but bold de-Stalinization policy, there was a temporary respite, though Soviet adventurism in the Third World and domestic campaigns against religion ensured that prejudices against Israel, the Jews and Judaism continued to fester. After the Israeli victory in the Six Day War, a new Soviet-style version of the *Protocols* emerged behind a thin veneer of Marxist-Leninist verbiage. Relentless Communist Party propaganda unleashed a massive campaign portraying Zionism as "Fascist", "Nazi", "racist", driven by "hatred toward all peoples" and a "chosen people" superiority complex. It was no accident that Moscow played such a major role in masterminding the infamous UN resolution equating Zionism with racism.[11]

These ideological fictions had little to do with the actual policies of the Jewish state. They assumed the existence of a dark Jewish conspiracy, linked to America and

[10]Arkady Vaksberg, *Stalin Against the Jews* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), pp. 183–257.

[11]William Korey, *Russian Anti-Semitism, Pamyat, and the Demonology of Zionism* (Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), pp. 30–59.

freemasonry, that sought planetary domination. The Zionist goals were allegedly to overthrow the communist systems in the USSR and Eastern Europe, to dominate the economy of the largest capitalist states, and to liquidate national-liberation movements throughout the Third World. The so-called Zionist "bourgeoisie" aimed to reduce the Arabs and the Third World to servitude. The "socialist" camp, led by the USSR, saw itself as the main obstacle to this perfidious design.

By the 1970s, Zionism was considered one of the darkest forces of world reaction, an ideology and an organization no less dangerous than Hitlerism and "Aryan" racism. History was rewrittenby Soviet propagandists to make Zionism the source of inspiration for the Nazis! It was even branded as an active agent of "collaboration" in the German implementation of the Holocaust. In the Brezhnev era of Soviet expansion, "anti-Zionist" anti-Semitism became a cardinal feature of the official chauvinist ideology. This was the first major political campaign to totally defame Zionism as the incarnation of evil and to discredit the Torah as a book of hatred, preaching genocide. The Jewish religion was systematically slandered as a teaching of racial exclusion and its messianic ideals smeared as a justification for *Lebensraum*. As in contemporary Islamic and Arab literature, the grand sweep of Jewish and Zionist history was twisted into a narrative of pure criminality, sadism and immorality.

The Soviet anti-Semitic demonology of Zionism did not immediately collapse with the fall of communism. In the early 1990s, the so-called "Red-Brown" alliance of neo-Stalinists and Russian ultra-nationalists, animated by their belief in the international Zionist conspiracy, continued to preach anti-Jewish doctrines of hate. The alliance claimed that Jews controlled the channels of mass communication throughout the world, insisted that they had deliberately ruined Russia through the Communist Revolution, and proclaimed that Jewish oligarchs were now delivering the nation into the hands of a rapacious cosmopolitan clique working on behalf of American imperialist designs.[12] This was the credo of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who, ten years ago, won a quarter of all ballots cast in the Russian elections. Depicted in the media as the Russian Hitler, he specialized in ethnic slurs against Balts, Armenians, Caucasians and blacks as well as Jews; he established close ties with the German and Austrian radical Right (including neo-Nazis) and talked openly of restoring a Greater Russian dominion. Just as he execrated Jews and Zionists, so he identified strongly with Arab nationalist dictators like Saddam Hussein.

Pan-Arabist and Islamist Versions

THE RUSSIAN communist model, like that of German Nazism, was an important formative influence in Saddam's version of Ba'athism.[13] The Iraqi leader grew up in the framework of this dogmatic ideology, which not only glorified the Arabs as a "master race" but also emphasized the need for relentless struggle and perpetual revolution in the name of the pan-Arab cause. Saddam imbibed his radical nationalism from Michel Aflaq, a Greek Orthodox Christian born in Damascus who had turned his back on all Western ideas to create the Arab Renaissance in the 1940s. In the Aflaqian concept, the Arab nation was the culmination of spiritual perfection, far superior in its traditions and culture to the superficiality of

[12] Korey, pp. 223–30.

[13] See Kanan Makiya, *Republic of Fear* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), and Saïd K. Aburish, *Saddam Hussein: The Politics of Revenge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001).

Western civilization. But Arab unity would remain a dream without sacrifice, conflict, martyrdom and bloodshed.

Saddam adopted Aflaq's highly charged ideological style while accentuating the Leninist party structures of Ba'athism in order to consolidate his grip on power. He embraced a quasi-mystical view of the Arabs which assumed that an exalted eschatological mission had been assigned to them by God himself. Saddam added to this belief a tremendous emphasis on the will to power, the need to crush a world of enemies, to prepare for endless war and perpetuate the revolution as a sacred task of the Ba'ath Party.[14] For the Iraqi leader there was never any question about his right to murder "inferior" groups such as the Kurds or anyone defined as an internal "enemy" of the regime. It was also an axiom that America and its civilization must be humiliated. It was no less self-evident to him that the "Zionist entity" must be eradicated.

For the Ba'athis, Israel was always an artificial "implant" in the Middle East, a multi-tentacled "octopus", a "deadly cancer" or an "AIDS virus" to be burned up, as Saddam Hussein publicly threatened to do shortly before the first Gulf War. Only two years ago he declared on Iraqi television: "Palestine is Arab and must be liberated from the river to the sea and all the Zionists who emigrated to the land of Palestine must leave."[15] The fact that Saddam filled his speeches with references to Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian ruler who destroyed the first Jewish Temple) and Saladin, demonstrated not only megalomania but also his determination to destroy the Jewish State and teach the Western "Christian" Crusaders a lesson they would never forget. In Saddam's totalitarian version of pan-Arabism, Jews were by definition "outsiders", "aliens" and enemies of the Arab nation. Hence it is no surprise to find that Israelis are completely dehumanized as murderers, criminals and the scum of the earth in Iraqi (as well as in Syrian) Ba'athi literature. Wiping out Israel meant expelling or killing a collection of "rootless nomads" who stole a land that was not their own.

For Islamic fundamentalists, the "liberation of Palestine" is no less of an ideological and political imperative than it is for the Ba'athis, but it is also a "war of civilizations" in a more far-reaching and even apocalyptic sense. In their confrontation with Israel and Zionism, the Islamists appeal to a 1,400 year-old history and repeatedly invoke Quranic precedents. Muhammad's war with the Jews in 7th-century Arabia is for them a vitally important guideline for the present. But this return to the distant past has not prevented Islamists from borrowing extensively from the much execrated Western culture's most extreme anti-Semitic motifs. Thus, fundamentalist Muslims have enthusiastically revived the blood libel of medieval Christianity and adopted the scenario of a "final struggle" with the Jews as part of their Islamic *Heilsgeschichte*.

The September 11, 2001 attack on America escalated such trends to new heights of defamation. The Al-Qaeda assault on the World Trade Center in New York was not only a declaration of war against the greatest metropolis of international capitalism. It was also seen by its perpetrators as a blow against the nerve-center of "world Jewry." There is a line of continuity running from Hitler to Ramzi Yousef, who planned the World Trade Center bombings of 1993, and Mohamed Atta, who masterminded the 9/11 atrocity. The Islamo-fascists, like the

[14]David Brooks, "Saddam's Brain", *The Weekly Standard* (November 11, 2002).

[15]Hussein, speaking to an Algerian delegation, May 30, 2001, quoted in Reuven Ehrlich, ed., *Incitement and Propaganda Against Israel, the Jewish People and the West* (Herzliya: Hamercaz LeMoreshet Hamodi'in, 2002), p. 32.

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Nazis before them, are genuinely convinced that a corrupt America is in Jewish hands. Hence, the jihad to liberate Muslims across the world from oppression and injustice is simultaneously anti-American and anti-Jewish. It is also viscerally opposed to liberalism, individualism and modernity as such. It goes without saying that the Islamists reject *laissez-faire* principles in economics, politics and culture. It is axiomatic that they deeply despise the political liberties of the West, such as freedom of speech, freedom of thought and freedom of association and assembly. In these respects they often find common ground with anti-globalist leftists and right-wing radicals in the West today, who concentrate all their spleen on the "sins" of America and Israel while dismissing the threat posed by international terrorism.

In its attitude toward the Jews, Islamic fundamentalism displays many parallels with Nazism and Stalinist communism as well. The identification of Judaism with threatening forces of modernity such as secularism, capitalism, liberalism and moral lassitude is a pattern that applies to each of these ideologies. There is the same obsession with Jews as a revolutionary, subversive and corrosive force; with their hidden, occult, manipulative activities; with their boundless "materialism" and abstract rationalism and its imagined undermining of "sacred values" like family, nation and state. Global conspiracy theories reappear in fundamentalist Islam in apocalyptic colors reminiscent of those favored by its Christian and post-Christian totalitarian predecessors. In the Manichean struggle of the Forces of Light, Goodness and Truth against those of darkness, evil and falsehood, it is clear that the Jews are a spearhead of the Devil's legions.

Sixty years ago, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the leader of the Palestinian Arab national movement (who spent much of World War II in Berlin), insisted that there were strong ideological parallels between Islam and National Socialism. By way of example, he pointed to a common authoritarianism, anti-communism, Anglophobia and hatred of the Jews. His speeches would often begin with anti-Jewish quotations from the Quran. In March 1944, speaking on Radio Berlin, he called on the Arabs to rise up: "Kill the Jews, wherever you find them. This pleases God, history and religion." A few months earlier, celebrating the friendship and ideological links between the German Nazis and Arabs, Haj Amin expressed his admiration for the way "they [the Germans] have definitively solved the Jewish problem."

In the light of what has been happening in the past two years, one has to ask if anything fundamental has changed. Neither Yasir Arafat, the Fatah *Al-Aqsa* Brigades, Hamas, Islamic Jihad or Hizballah differ from Haj Amin in their desire to see the eradication of Israel and its replacement by a "liberated" Palestine. Like the global jihadists of Al-Qaeda, Palestinian Islamists are driven by a violently anti-Western and anti-Jewish religious fanaticism. Israel and the Jews are perceived as an existential threat to Muslim culture and collective identity. The Jewish state is theologically and ontologically intolerable because no "protected people" (*dhimmis*) can exercise state sovereignty on what is defined as "sacred Muslim territory." This is understood as an affront to the "God-given right" of Muslims to enjoy exclusive political hegemony in *dar al-Islam* (The House of Islam).

This outlook is shared by millions of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, conservative Wahhabi Saudis, Iranian Ayatollahs, Al-Qaeda, Hizballah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, Islamic Jihad and many secular Arab nationalists, despite the many differences among these groups. But the

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Islamist ideology remains the most intransigent of all the totalitarian options since it insists that permanent war—the jihad—must be waged against "infidels" until the Day of Judgment. No strategic compromise is possible with the American or Israeli "devils", let alone with Muslim "heretics" (i.e., normal, pious Muslims). There can certainly be no "normalization" with a Jewish state, since its very existence is the symptom of the malaise, decadence and corruption in Islam as it is practiced today.

As was the case with Nazism, only the comprehensive and decisive defeat of these dark and irrational forces in the Islamic world can clear the road for peace in the Middle East and a genuine "dialogue of civilizations." Saddam's defeat will undoubtedly be a powerful blow in that cause, not only by eliminating the specter of deadly weapons in the hands of a ruthless dictator and stopping bonuses for the suicide-killers in the Palestinian territories and Israel, but by destroying one of the historic patrons of global terrorism. But this is also a war of ideas as much as it is a military and political confrontation. Its long-term success will depend on a dramatic awakening of the moderate and rational forces within the Arab-Muslim world, forces that have hitherto been strangled by the terrible legacies of totalitarianism, jihad and anti-Semitism. Hopefully, that long-term reformation of Islam will begin in the aftermath of the Iraq War, even if its fruits may take time to mature.

WE SEE that Nazism, communism, radical pan-Arab nationalism and Islamism share a remarkably similar demonology of the Jew. Each of these modern ideologies declared war in different ways on Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment values and sought, or are seeking, the downfall of Western liberal democracy. They all share the same penchant for conspiracy theories of history, society and civilization, as well as the same closed system of beliefs, addiction to mystical or salvationist politics and will to power.

In the case of the jihadist, the return of anti-Semitism also needs to be seen as a powerful backlash against Western and Israeli visions of a "new Middle East", as well as the rejection of a new world order, a global economy, "normalization" with the Jewish state and the idea of a negotiated peace. Indeed, "world Zionism" is today perceived as the driving-force behind globalization ("Americanization") much as a century ago "international Jewry" was depicted by European anti-Semites as the satanic engine of finance capitalism and supranational cosmopolitanism. The new anti-Semitism eagerly scavenges this arsenal of older images which, since the onset of modernity, have stereotyped the Jews as a dangerously mobile, rootless, abstract and transnational mafia uniquely tuned to exploit capitalist economy and culture. The protean caricature of the Jew has been given a new lease on life by the contemporary Islamist apostles of jihad. Israel and Jewry have become their great surrogate in the holy war against America and the corrupt modern world of *jahiliyya*. Uncle Sam, so to speak, has coalesced with Shylock into a terrifying specter of globalization that threatens to swamp the world of Islam.

One can see this syndrome clearly at work in the ongoing radicalization of Pakistan, where obscurantist, intolerant and misogynist Islamist parties were the biggest winners in the October 2002 elections. This Sunni Muslim nuclear-armed state has become increasingly Islamicized in the past two decades. Its Wahhabi influenced and funded private Islamic educational system has been thoroughly penetrated by a fundamentalist creed in which hatred of Western civilization, Jews and Hindus is matched only by loathing

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for Shi'a Muslims.[16] Such fanaticism produced the murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in January 2002 (both a Jew and an American). It stokes the fantastic conspiracy theories, so widely believed in Pakistan, that the Mossad engineered the 9/11 massacre, and it carries with it the danger of a nuclear confrontation with India. Pakistani "anti-Semitism" has no connection to the empirical world or Israelis and Jews as real people.[17] It is a pure ideological product of totalitarian Islam—paid for and nurtured by the House of Saud.

A century ago, partisans of the radical Right and Left first began to converge in a common hatred of "materialist" values represented by international capitalism. They discovered in political anti-Semitism a powerful new weapon against the liberal, democratic order. The German Social Democrat August Bebel once called this kind of bigotry the "socialism of fools." However, like so many others on the Left and in the liberal center, he hugely underestimated the genocidal potential of this ideology once it was harnessed by ruthless totalitarian parties or movements. The simplistic belief that, thanks to technological and scientific progress, the 21st century would usher in universal peace across the globe has proven to be no less naive. Today, in the context of a far more media-saturated and globalized village, anti-Semitism (often masquerading as anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism) has recharged its batteries with a vengeance.

In the Islamic world (and increasingly in western Europe), it has become a dangerous form of auto-intoxication and self-destruction—the intellectual equivalent of the suicide bomb. In the first half of the 20th century, many good-hearted rational people refused to accept that such highly irrational beliefs could be taken seriously by many people. They were wrong. This is an error well worth avoiding in the first half of the 21st century. □

[16]Alex Alexiev, "The Pakistani Time Bomb", *Commentary* (March 2003), pp. 46–52.

[17]Bernard-Henri Levy, *Qui a tué Daniel Pearl?* (Paris: Grasset, 2003).

> And [Balaam] took up his parable, and said: "From Aram Balak bringeth me, the King of Moab from the mountains of the East: 'Come, curse me Jacob, and come, execrate Israel.' How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I execrate whom the Lord hath not execrated? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hill I behold him: Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who hath counted the dust of Jacob, or numbered the stock of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let mine end be like his!"
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> —Numbers 23:7–10