

Israel Is Necessary: An affirmation to the question "Is Israel Necessary?"

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Thank you to the Staunton Library and to the United Nations Association Blue Ridge Chapter. As Prof. Metraux has just summarized, the modern story of Israel began in the Jews' desire to escape harassment and discrimination in Eastern Europe. That 19th century story in the early 20th century went beyond the traditional social distance between groups: anti-Semitism was reinforced by policies of the Czarist Russian government, by the agenda of nationalist movements in Poland and against the Romanian monarchy, by lawlessness in Ukraine after the Bolshevik seizure of power, and finally by the events of the 1930s and 1940s: world war, the Holocaust, and new pogroms against the surviving Jews.

With broad acceptance in Europe and beyond of the idea of the necessity of there being a Jewish state, President Truman the United Nations in 1948 recognized formally what the Zionists in fact had created on the ground: Israel, the Jewish state, was born by the sacrifices made by the Zionists and the survivors of the Holocaust. That state soon became the refuge of 800,000 Sephardic Jews expelled from Arab lands. From Morocco to Iraq, with little but the clothes on their backs, they escaped a new wave of anti-Jewish violence no less than the Ashkenazi Jews of Europe escaped the charnel house there.

Throughout the decades since, new waves of Jews have found refuge in Israel: the Falasha of Ethiopia; the Soviet Jews; and in the last decade, Jews from the collapsed republics of the former Soviet Union. Because of Israel, sanctuary has been available. In times of need for Jews worldwide, that sanctuary has been found under the protection of the newly strong arm of a Jewish people, and a Jewish state, unwilling to let their survival be contingent.

Have the sources ended that were needed for catastrophe? Apparently: the massacre of two in three European Jews, the expulsion of the Sephardim, the starving of the Ethiopians, etc. each were singular events. But has the hostility of neighbors that always foreshadowed catastrophe, has that phenomenon truly ended? The question under discussion tonight suggests that possibility. However, a clear reading of modern trends suggests that a sanctuary for the Jews, run by the Jews, remains vital both for the survival of this long abused and misunderstood

people, and for the survival of Western civilization. I now will develop evidence supporting each of these controversial conclusions.

What are these modern trends? I first will address the question of neighbors and hostility. The diet of anti-Jewish tirades served up in the Arab media is well known. Whether in the form of anti-Semitic television series as on Syrian television a year ago, or in “scholarly” exhibits that display anti-Semitic forgeries at the Alexandria Egypt library, one need not walk far in the Arab Middle East to find Jew hatred legitimized in the public square. But the phenomenon is far broader.

Last fall (2003), the retiring Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad, received a standing ovation at the 10th meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a world body representative of governments from throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. His chilling words brought cheers from the assembly: “today, the Jews rule this world by proxy.” But his prejudiced views hardly enlarged upon the paranoid lies penned a hundred years ago by the Czar’s minions in the notorious forgery, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Mahathir invoked dark, hidden conspiracies fully consistent with the *Protocols*: “They [the Jews] get others to fight and die for them.” Like anti-Semites throughout time, Mahathir distorted history: ““They [i.e., the Jews] survived 2,000 years of *pogroms* not by hitting back but by thinking... They invented socialism, communism, human rights and democracy so that persecuting them would appear to be wrong, so that they can enjoy equal rights with others.” Finally, Mahathir threatened: ““One-point-three billion Moslems simply cannot be defeated by a few million Jews.”

In deference to a shocked world, the Malaysian Government never released a full transcript of the speech. Much of the Western press, if they reported this story at all, highlighted from their reporters’ notes other clauses in Mahathir’s tirade, and discovered that he really had meant to encourage Muslims to work harder, be better students, think and innovate more, etc. ... Jews hear with different ears, for bitter experience has shown that before the violence of the deed comes the violence of twisting language, of falseness being accepted as truth.

The assault of falsehood against truth, it is this lingual fellow-traveler with anti-Semitism, that is widespread; and it is growing. Few Americans are aware that the version of fantasy that broadly is believed across the Arab and Islamic Middle East and South Asia – blames 911 not on the 19 Arab men who actually did the deed, but on ... you guessed it... the Jews. Two years

ago, CBS news traveled around Pakistan, asking not *ihadists* but medical doctors, mayors, journalists, businessmen and other social leaders who killed those 3000 Americans. Uniformly, CBS was told that “the Jews did it” in order to defame Islam, was the reply: “Israeli and Jews were behind that incident. Osama is totally innocent.”

Americans know better. We have known since 2001 which enemy killed those Americans, and we know that it was not as Jewish Americans or Christian Americans that they died. It was simply as Americans. Osama bin Laden, in 1998 declared war on *all* of us. But in that same proclamation, he also declared war on “the Jews,” not mind you, on the more socially acceptable pariah of the day, the Zionists, or the Israelis. No, Osama declared war on the Jews. For six years, all Jews and all Americans have been his targets. And for these six years the better part of the Arab and Islamic presses, and the social and political leaders within Arab and Islamic societies who are most familiar with Western culture, have been evading their responsibility to isolate such views, or even to condemn them.

The harvest of this hate is large, and as openly expressed hatred of the Jews has come to be routine, socially accepted discourse in the Muslim world, that hatred has distilled into being a code for other disturbing attitudes. Indeed, in the Islamic world, Jew-hatred has become a means for expressing rejection of things Western in general. It now highly correlates with attitudes of anti-Americanism. Over the last three years –note: this started before the U.S. took on Iraq—repeated scientific public opinion polls have found alarming levels of support for Osama’s goals and his tactics. Often, support for Osama is high where governments are closest to the U.S..

- A June 2003 Pew Center poll found-
 - o 71 percent of Palestinians,
 - o 58% of Indonesians,
 - o 55% of Jordanians,
 - o 49% of Moroccans, and
 - o 45% of Pakistanis to regard Osama bin Laden as a leader in whom they have confidence he will "do the right thing."

- A Fall 2003 poll of Saudi Arabians found 48% to agree with the content of Osama bin Laden's "sermons" and rhetoric.
- A March 2004 Pew Center poll found growing support for the suicidal tactics used by Osama bin Laden, his Iraqi subcontractor Abu Zarqawi, and the Islamist and secular enemies of Israel. When asked "are suicide bombings against Israel, or against the U.S. in Iraq justifiable?":
 - o In Jordan, 86% said yes (re: Israel) and 70% said yes (re: U.S. in Iraq).
 - o In Morocco, 74% said yes (re: Israel) and 66% said yes (re: U.S. in Iraq).
 - o In Pakistan, 47% said yes (re: Israel) and 46% said yes (re: U.S. in Iraq).
 - o Even in Turkey, 24% said yes (re: Israel) and 31% said yes (re: U.S. in Iraq).

As we well know, more than hot talk has been flowing from the Islamic world in recent years. Sustained by a media environment of incitement toward Israelis in largely government controlled presses, and reinforced by this broad societal embrace of religion-based killing, killers have felt few restraints on actual acts of violence. Thus should we understand the global pattern that links it all together:

- The April 11, 2002, bombing of an historic synagogue on Djerba, Tunisia, killing 20 including 16 German tourists.
- The bombing of the U.S. consulate and two nightclubs frequented by Western tourists on the Indonesian island of Bali, October 12, 2002.
- The shooting death of US AID worker Lawrence Foley in Amman, Jordan, October 28, 2002;
- The killing of 15 international tourists at Mombassa, Kenya, Nov. 28, 2002, an Al Qaeda attack that included the firing of two missiles at international civilian aircraft as well;
- The May 12, 2003 attacks by suicide squads on foreign housing complexes in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; attacks that killed 35, including 9 Americans.

- Four days later, on May 16, 2003, the bombings of a Spanish-owned restaurant, a Jewish community center, and Western-owned hotels in Casablanca, Morocco;
- The abduction and beheading of Daniel Pearl in Pakistan (February 2002), and the repeated attacks on Christian churches there, 2002-04;
- The March 11, 2004 attack on Spanish democracy, and the ugly harvest won by the terror attack on the Madrid train station that day that killed hundreds.

We see in this ugly record, if we look at it with open eyes, a pattern. The meaning in the pattern best is revealed through the assaults on the Neve Shalom synagogue in Istanbul, Turkey: a place where Jews, -- not Zionists, not Israelis, but simply Jews,-- were attacked by Palestinian terrorists of the Abu Nidal group in 1986: 22 perished in a hail of machine-gun fire. In 1994, the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah attacked Neve Shalom again, though no one died in that bombing. Neve Shalom and Beth Israel synagogues were attacked again by Al Qaeda suicide bombers one year ago, on November 15, 2003: 27 were killed; 200 plus were injured.

Five days later, on Nov. 20, 2003, the same group of assailants who had set out to kill Jews, (again: *not* Israelis; Jews) in Istanbul then bombed the British consulate and the British HSBC Bank: 32 died, 450 were injured. In this pattern is revealed the nature of modern Jew hatred and Jew killing arising from the Arab and Islamic rage in the modern world:

Attacking Israel, then attacking any Jew, then attacking Americans, then attacking any Westerner. These are, in sequence, the more socially acceptable to less socially acceptable forms of hate violence coursing through the veins of Arab and Islamic societies. In a very real way, targeting the Jew represents a form of targeting modernity, and all the several things represented by the West that have fallen into convenient disfavor.

There are lessons to be drawn not merely from recognizing this pattern, but from seeking clarity in what at times may seem to be the confusion in Western responses. First, at the level of attitudes: Anti-Zionism becomes chic, then Anti-Israel expression goes mainstream, and a little later, we finally hear that these murmurs have become a chorus of anti-Americanism. In their turn, these attitudes each have become socially acceptable in recent years, and not just in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Without putting too fine a point on it, we would do well to appreciate the real European tradition, historically and in the present moment.

In 2004, this forces us to focus on France, the same nation in which one hundred years ago, the Dreyfus Affair divided that people into anti-Semitic (i.e., anti-Dreyfus) and less prejudiced camps. Just three months ago, on August 26, 2004, the director of the main public library in Paris was embarrassed to have to announce that more than ten books about the Dreyfus case had been defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti, and stamped with the web addresses of Holocaust denial and Islamist websites. In the first ten months of this year, at least eighteen similar incidents --some involving personal violence against Jews-- were reported by the Anti-Defamation League -- the most in any European state. Germany, by comparison, has had three incidents in the same time period, Russia has had four, according to the ADL.

Do the noxious odors spreading from public acts of anti-Semitism in Europe represent anything more than the odd misbehavior of social outcasts? The ADL's most recent survey regarding attitudes towards Jews informs on this point. When asked a battery of questions designed to elicit whether or not a respondent is prejudiced against Jews, the ADL found that a broad pattern of anti-Semitic attitudes are in 2004 found among:

- 25 percent in France (down from 35% in 2002)
- 36 percent in Germany (down from 37% in 2002)
- 24 percent in the U.K. (up from 18 % in 2002)
- 24 percent in Spain (down from 34 % in 2002)
- 15 percent in Italy (down from 23% in 2002)

Overall, between a fourth and a third of Europeans display anti-Semitic attitudes in 2004.

Prejudice toward local Jews reinforces support for government policies hostile to the Jewish state of Israel. Nearly half of Spaniards, 48 percent, believe "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their own country." In Germany, one in two affirm that bigoted attitude; in Italy, 57 percent do; in Britain, four in ten believe it. Europeans by a margin of almost two to one hold Israel more responsible for the violence in the Middle East than hold the Palestinians responsible. Thus, governments with confidence can feel that little risk in terms of alienating public opinion will attend a foreign policy favoring the Palestinians over Israel.

In the face of rising dangers to the Jews in Europe, and to the Jewish state of Israel, the European response has been one akin to the panic of a group of strangers, traveling together on a

snowy night, packed tightly into a slow, horse-drawn sleigh. The sleigh is encircled by a pack of howling, hungry wolves. The European response to the howls of the wolves is to lighten the sleigh, in hope of speeding their own escape at the expense of the hapless among them ... who are thrown to the wolves.

Certainly, Israel remains indispensable, necessary for the survival of the Jews. But Israel's survival is also emblematic. Besieged but unbowed, it represents the persistence of Western values in a snowy world still full of howling. When the first and easiest to throw from the sled are the Jews, don't doubt who goes next.