

# The Four Horsemen of the New Antisemitism

By Victor Davis Hanson

Few predicted that blaming Israel and the Jews who support it would flare up in the early 21st century—and in America of all places, where there are nearly as many Jews as there are in Israel.



After all, Israel is the only consensual society in the Middle East. It holds regular elections and maintains tripartite judicial, executive, and legislative checks and balances.

Free speech is found in the Middle East only in Israel, where religious apostasy, criticism of one's own country, gender equity, and tolerance of gays are guaranteed in marked contrast to all its neighbors.

It was once common knowledge that Israel had survived the huge numbers of its enemies because its tiny population was better educated, freer, more adept at Western technology, more tolerant of dissent—and because it enjoyed the goodwill and bipartisan support of the United States.

True, the recent affluence of the Gulf States has presented a thin veneer of Westernism that has fooled many in the new

anti-Israel media. But just because Qatar did not censor a celebrity newsman's broadcast from Doha does not mean Qatar is a free society. After all, no Western journalist would dare schedule a broadcast from Qatar with a Qatari who had condemned the regime for its intolerance or announced his religious apostasy from Islam.

So why and how did millions of Americans begin to express hatred for Israel and, albeit more subtly, the Jews who support it?

There are four converging fronts in this perfect storm.

### **Demography**

First, in demographic terms, the US Muslim population is expanding exponentially, due almost entirely to recent immigration and higher birth rates than the American norm (e.g., 2.5–8 versus 1.6–1.7).

There are now nearly five million Muslim Americans. These numbers are anticipated by 2030 to surpass the Jewish American population.

Moreover, increasing numbers of Jews are not just secular or intermarried but no longer identify so strongly as Jewish, much less as supporters of Israel. More importantly, billions of dollars in the last few years from the Gulf states—primarily Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait—have flowed into American universities.

These enormous sums bankroll weaponized Middle East studies programs and enrich left-wing NGOs, nonprofits, and sympathetic politicians. The new antisemites talk nefariously of the money of “International Jewry,” and “It’s all about the Benjamins, baby,” but in truth, Gulf money dwarfs Israel’s lobbying budget.

An entire generation of young American elites has been groomed

in universities to despise Israel and, by extension, to express hostility toward Jews. After October 7, the scab was torn away, revealing what had festered underneath for years.

Any visitor to a contemporary American campus who talks at length to protesting students quickly arrives at two general conclusions:

First, many have been taught to despise Israel and simply parrot the indoctrinated talking points of their professors—"apartheid," "genocide," "war crimes," "settler colonialism," and so on.

The result is that it is now "cool" on campus to trash Israel, utter the platitude that "hating Israel is not hating Jews," and then either make life uncomfortable for Jewish students or remain silent when witnessing such harassment firsthand.

Second, today's students know little to nothing of the modern Middle East. Most have no idea what the eliminationist slogan "From the River to the Sea" actually portends. Few anti-Israeli demonstrators could identify either the Jordan River or the Mediterranean Sea, much less distinguish between them. Yet all understand that chanting the hip and approved slogans earns social acceptance in and outside the classroom.

## **DEI**

The DEI binary fuels both anti-Israel and anti-Jewish animus. In this Marxist moral schema, the world abroad—and within the United States—is divided into "white oppressors" and "nonwhite victims," despite the fact that people commonly classified as white comprise only a small minority of the global population. The dichotomy is reductive and often absurd, collapsing immense differences in class, wealth, power, culture, and historical circumstance into a crude racial narrative. Instead, in this paradigm, superficial appearance—including something as trivial as adding accents to names or adopting some sort of virtue-signaling head dress or garb—can brand one

as a nonwhite victim. Once so identified, the supposedly oppressed are granted collective grievances against their victimizers and, increasingly, exemptions from censure.

Thus, DEI offers a pass from charges of antisemitism on the theory that the oppressed cannot themselves become oppressors. Muslim students on American campuses were often graphic in their chants and placards wishing deaths upon Israelis, unapologetic in roughing up Jewish students, and confident—often correctly—that their purported victimhood exempted them from consequences.

The idea that minorities cannot be antisemites is, of course, not new. For example, graphic antagonism toward Jews—long at the forefront of the Civil Rights movement has long been expressed by prominent black leaders with little downside (e.g., Rev. Jeremiah Wright: “dem Jews”; Jesse Jackson: “Hymietown”; Al Sharpton: “diamond merchants right here in Crown Heights”; Malcolm X: “bloodsuckers”; Louis Farrakhan: “termites” and “gutter religion”).

Thus, Jews in America found themselves classified among the whitest and most privileged of the oppressor class, perhaps by virtue of their material success, while Israel abroad was deemed a white colonialist settler state because it repeatedly defeated neighboring enemies.

Key to the DEI demonization of the Jews has been the diminution of the horrors of the Holocaust to ensure Jews are excluded from the victim side of the ledger. The murder of six million had once been a principal reason of many to support the idea of an independent sanctuary in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people. Downplaying the Holocaust—or treating it as irrelevant or understandable—therefore calls postwar Zionism into question.

When Tucker Carlson declared that the unpublished podcaster Daryl Cooper was the preeminent historian of World War II, his

praise rested neither on Cooper's comprehensive scholarly work (there was none), nor bestselling popular accounts of the war (there were none), nor distinguished public lectures, seminar classes, or journal articles on the war (there were none).

Instead, the reason for such hagiography was that Cooper in his podcast had downplayed the Holocaust in narratives of the war, whitewashed Germany, and cited a nefarious shadowy group of you-know-who for pushing supposedly naïve or sinister leaders like Churchill and Roosevelt into an aggressive and unwarranted war against a supposedly victimized Hitler and Nazi Germany.

### **From Underdog to Overdog**

Third, Israel is no longer the Israel of 1947, 1956, 1967, or 1973, nor the Israel mired in the various Lebanon and Intifada quagmires that followed.

In the early 21st century, Benjamin Netanyahu helped open the Israeli economy and foster a meritocratic, free-market boom. Only oil-rich Qatar and the UAE surpass Israel in regional per capita income.

Its military, honed over generations of warfare, has become more capable than those of France, Germany, or the UK in key areas, especially combat aviation, the number of combat aircraft, and pilot quality. In short, tiny underdog Israel—surrounded by hundreds of millions of aggressive Muslims—has somehow been recast as the settler “overdog” bully. With a mere 18 percent of collective Arab GDP and outnumbered 50,000 to one, Israel is depicted as poised to carve out a “Greater Israel” from the impotent but simultaneously more virtuous and richer Arab Middle East.

October 7 and its aftermath, counterintuitively, accelerated the anti-Israel, anti-Jewish hatred. If Israel had not responded to the massacre, the new anti-Israel cohort would have claimed their inaction was a passive admission of prior

guilt for which the attack was merely partial payment.

Yet once Israel moved to destroy Hamas, it was branded genocidal. Early Israeli calls for Gazans to turn over the planners and perpetrators of the massacre were dismissed by the Palestinians as absurd or unserious—mere jest. Few in the West called on the Palestinians to surrender their mass murderers.

Yet few of Israel's critics could ever explain exactly what the Jewish state was supposed to do after suffering mass murder in peacetime from an enemy that had abducted more than 240 hostages—to the cheers of most Gazans.

How was the IDF—or any army—supposed to descend into a billion-dollar, booby-trapped labyrinth of tunnels, its exits and entries hidden beneath schools, private homes, mosques, and hospitals, to free hostages and kill terrorists while the media effectively shilled for Hamas?

### **The New Jacobin Agenda**

Hating Israel—and, by association, Jews—was voiced not merely by DEI or the radical new wing of the Democratic Party. Anti-Israelism instead merged into a broader leftist potpourri of open borders, illegal immigration, anti-ICE violence, Green New Deal-style wokism, and Trump Derangement Syndrome.

These causes came to be viewed as an inseparable package whose elements were interconnected and tolerated no apostasy from any of them.

Thus, Jacobinism became an all-or-nothing litmus test. As a result, even though Totenkopf tattoos might have been the last thing seen by Jews as they were herded by the tens of thousands into the gas chambers, such Satanic iconography scrawled into the flesh was apparently no longer disqualifying for a Democratic Senate nominee in Maine.

For figures like Nancy Pelosi, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden, or Chuck Schumer to forcefully challenge hatred of Israel—and, by extension, of the Jews—would now be treated as political heresy, a career-ending death wish. Defending Israel and calling out antisemitism became as unfashionable in progressive circles as praising secure borders, deportations, or fossil fuels and pipelines. And so the old party largely kept mum and sanctioned the new loathing.

As for conservative podcasters and internet influencers who now seem unrecognizable from what they had professed only months or years earlier, many had grown tired of being ostracized from popular culture and the establishment hallmarks of media and entertainment.

How else to explain their sudden hatred of Trump for the current Iran war, or his support for Israel, when the remaining 90 percent of his agenda has matched their own life-long conservative views, and were antithetical to the Left they now sometimes court?

But once figures like Candace Owens or a newly radicalized Tucker Carlson became fixated on the Jews, the Left found them useful as both shields and validators. Their rhetoric suggested that virulent anti-Israelism was not merely a left-wing fixation but something shared across the political spectrum.

The more such figures received establishment tolerance—or even praise and social acceptance—like addicts, the madder and louder they became until they were very nearly indistinguishable from the leftists they had so long warned about. Thus Carlson, a once eloquent conservative, came full circle and effectively rationalized the idea of allowing Iran to have a nuclear bomb. That notion after all, was the subtext of Obama's Iran Deal and his morally neutral idea of a powerful Tehran-Damascus-Beirut-Gaza axis to balance moderate Arab regimes and Israel.

The Left praised these new right-wing opponents of Israel, as if they were Liz Cheney—who were not so bad after all. Such praise from the corridors of cultural influence and power apparently was seen as welcome shelter from the prior left-wing hailstorms that had pelted them for years.

The final irony?

The only meaningful resistance to the anti-Israel crowd is not the DEI coalition, not the new Democratic Party, not the coastal and credentialed and supposedly enlightened left-wing white elite, not the supposedly “character is destiny” Never Trumpers, and certainly not the allegedly brave mavericks who have bolted from the MAGA base.

Instead, what is left in the pathway of demonizing Israel and blaming Jews, here and abroad, is the supposed bigot Donald Trump and his “irredeemable,” “deplorable” MAGA movement—for now, the last dam holding back the rising flood.

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