What's NEW with ANTI-SEMITISM?

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THE CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT STUDIES

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Published August 2012
by The Centre for Independent Studies Limited
PO Box 92, St Leonards, NSW, 1590
Email: cis@cis.org.au
Website: www.cis.org.au

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data:

Author: Kelly, Paul, 1947-
Title: What's new with anti-semitism?
Paul Kelly, Philip Mendes, Peter Kurti.

ISBN: 9781864322095 (pbk.)
Series: CIS policy forums, PF24.

Subjects: Antisemitism–Australia
Jews–Australia–Public opinion.
Propaganda, Anti-Israeli–Australia.

Other Authors/Contributors:
Mendes, Philip, 1964-
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Centre for Independent Studies (Australia)

Dewey Number: 305.8924094

Edited by Mangai Pitchai
Cover design by Ryan Acosta

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2012

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Introduction

In 2011, criticism of the Israeli government's domestic policy intensified in Australia with the emergence of the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. The local BDS campaign was directed against Israeli-owned businesses in Australia such as Max Brenner Chocolate, as well as non-Israeli owned companies perceived to have connections to Israeli activities in the Occupied Territories.

Critics of the BDS said the campaign went beyond criticism of Israeli government policy and amounted to a new form of anti-Semitism. At a CIS roundtable discussion on 1 December 2011, Paul Kelly, Philip Mendes, and Peter Kurti asked whether a new anti-Semitism is emerging in twenty-first century Australia.

What's New with Anti-Semitism?

Peter Kurti

'The target is not Jews or for that matter individual Israelis going about their ordinary lives,' somebody wrote to me, rather tetchily, a few months ago in response to an opinion piece I had written. 'The target is the political regime promulgating the illegal, coercive and dehumanising treatment of Palestinians.'

My correspondent was attempting to defend the distinction between anti-Jewish remarks and what he considered to be legitimate criticism of Israeli government policy. He insisted that he was not anti-Semitic, and that he was concerned principally with alleviating Palestinian suffering—although he did not specify whether he was concerned with Palestinian suffering within Green Line Israel or in the disputed territories.

Nor did he appear to have much concern for alleviating the suffering of Israeli citizens who endure missile and bomb attacks as they go about their 'ordinary lives' within Israel. In short, although he believed there was much to be said for Palestinians, it was clear my correspondent felt there was little, if anything, to be said for Israelis. He was clearly combining moral hyperbole with deliberate disinformation to justify his attack on what he called the 'political regime' of Israel.

In his 2010 report on anti-Semitism, Jeremy Jones said: 'Australia does not have a past to which anti-Semites can comfortably look with nostalgia, which distinguishes it from many other countries.'[1] Nonetheless, his report does note in Australia a culture of tolerating anti-Semitism, and which 'has been exacerbated with the growing phenomenon of anti-Semitism purporting to be representative of a left-wing or "anti-racist" opinion.' It is a phenomenon that, he says, is extremely difficult to measure.[2]

It is this new form of anti-Semitism, widely referred to by commentators as the 'New Anti-Semitism,' with which this

CIS roundtable is concerned. There are broadly two issues that stand behind the discussion: first, the cognitive dissonance that appears to exist between the *intentions* of the critics of Israel and the *actions* they perform; and second, the emergence in Australia of this new vein of anti-Israel criticism that is rather different from the kind of bigotry often associated with what the English writer Melanie Phillips, among others, calls 'Jew hatred' and which prevailed in Europe 70 years ago.[3]

Can one appeal to an elevated intention to justify an action? If I don't *intend* to be anti-Semitic, can I be absolved of the charge of *being* anti-Semitic?

In 2002, the journalist Thomas Friedman remarked in the *New York Times*: 'Criticizing Israel is not anti-Semitic, and saying so is vile. But singling out Israel for opprobrium and international sanction—out of all proportion to any other party in the Middle East—is anti-Semitic, and not saying so is dishonest.'[4]

This mutation of the centuries-old hatred is not so much directed at individual Jews or Jewish communities and groups fantasising about the malign effects of Jewish political and financial power. Rather, its object is the State of Israel itself. This new anti-Semitism tends to be expressed in terms of moral imperatives opposing what it perceives as the supremacist claims of Zionism and the questionable legitimacy of Jewish national consciousness—and it does so with the same energy with which South African apartheid and Nazism were opposed. Furthermore, it cloaks itself in the garb of human rights as it campaigns for the liberation of the 'long-oppressed' Palestinian people.

The discourse of delegitimising the State of Israel has always been a standard feature of Arab and Muslim radicals. For instance, while addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2011 to press the case for recognising Palestinian statehood, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas received a standing ovation when he blamed the origins of the conflict and the absence of peace entirely on Israel. Abbas, along with other Palestinian leaders, accepts and recognises a state called Israel with a Jewish majority, but he is reluctant to recognise Israel as a specifically *Jewish* state. Now,

however, this discourse questioning the legitimacy of Israel is being shared by a large number of people in the West who are on the Left.

As the English writer Ben Cohen has argued, this discourse is characterised by startling inconsistencies.

> What worries Jewish communities is that standards of extraordinary severity are applied to Israel alone, thus delegitimizing a major component of Jewish identity. Israel is not condemned for what it does, but for what it is. Syria and Sudan might be criticized for their woeful human rights records, but it is never suggested that either state is illegitimate in itself, even though the borders of both states were created by conflict and both have engaged in the ethnic cleansing and religious purging of minorities. Neither state is regarded, in contrast to Israel, as an inherent pariah. Neither state, therefore, is the subject of relentless campaigns questioning their right to exist; nor are they the targets of economic, academic and other boycotts.[5]

As a consequence, Cohen notes, 'The opposition not to Israel's security position alone but to its very legitimacy means that, as in Islamist and Arab nationalist discourse, the terms "Jew", "Israel" and "Zionist" are increasingly interchangeable in contemporary Left-wing discourse.'[6] Participants in this discourse in Australia include trade unions, academics, journalists, political activists, and Christian churches.

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At its seventh triennial forum in July 2010, the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) announced it would 'continue to add its voice to the call for an end to Israel's occupation of Palestine.'[7] Declaring its solidarity with Palestinian Christians, the NCCA went on to invite member churches 'to consider a boycott of goods produced by Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.' In a media release, the Reverend Tara Curlewis, General

Secretary of the NCCA, said, 'It is hoped that such actions will liberate the people from an experience of injustice to one where a just and definitive peace may be reached.'[8]

The call to which the NCCA committed to support was the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, which was launched in July 2005 by 171 Palestinian non-governmental organisations in a bid to force Israel to comply with 'its obligations under international law.' The objectives of the BDS campaign are threefold:

1) to end what it calls Israel's 'occupation and colonization of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and dismantling of the Wall'
2) to obtain Israeli recognition of the 'fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality,' and
3) to secure Israeli respect, protection and promotion of 'the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in the UN Resolution 194.'[9]

In Australia, the BDS is coordinated by a group called 'Australians for Palestine,' one of whose leaders, Sonja Karkar, wrote a manual about the campaign (published in October 2010 and revised in May 2011). The manual sets out at some length a particular view of the situation in Israel that does not mention either Arab aggression against Israel in 1948 or 1967; the Palestinian rejection in 2000–01 of the Clinton-Barak offer of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, including the removal of Jewish settlements (often cited as a barrier to peace); or Hamas' commitment to destroy the state of Israel. In short, the manual tends to perpetuate the myth of Palestinian victimhood described with some perspicacity by the Israeli historian Benny Morris (who is variously described as a 'new' or 'revisionist' historian, has been critical both of Israel and of Zionism, and today adopts a more hawkish position):

> One of the characteristics of the Palestinian national movement has been the Palestinians' view of themselves as perpetual victims of others—Ottoman Turks, British officials, Zionists, Americans—and never to appreciate that they are, at least in large part, victims of their own

> mistakes and iniquities. In the Palestinian *Weltanschauung*, they never set a foot wrong; their misfortunes are always the fault of others.[10]

This experience of victimhood is captured in each of the three objectives of the BDS campaign. Furthermore, and notwithstanding the claim that 'the focus of BDS is on Israel's abuse of power and Israeli institutions that acquiesce in that power, not on Jewish people or Judaism,'[11] a closer examination of each of the campaign objectives shows that the BDS is not, in fact, presenting a nuanced critique of Israeli government policy. Rather, it has launched a sustained attack on the very legitimacy of the State of Israel itself.

1. Ending Israel's occupation and colonisation of Arab lands and dismantling the Separation Wall

Immediately after the Six Day War in June 1967, Israel offered to return much of the land it had captured in exchange for peace. In September 1967, the Arab world responded by emphatically rejecting this offer with the three famous No's of Khartoum: 'no peace with,' 'no negotiation with,' and 'no recognition of' Israel. When Israel accepted that it should withdraw its forces 'from territories occupied in the recent conflict' (UN Resolution 242) *as well* as the principle expressed in 242(1)(ii) of 'termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty … of every state in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force,' the Arab response was to adopt the Palestinian National Charter, which pledged to continue 'armed struggle' as the only way to liberate all of Palestine. The wall was erected in response to fears for the security of the Israeli population in the face of this continued struggle. In recent years, this struggle has taken the form of a campaign of suicide-bombing, which 'as every poll among Palestinians has shown [was and remains] immensely popular.'[12]

The first BDS objective appears to date Israel's occupation of Arab lands from 1967, meaning that the lands have been colonised for 44 years. However, when Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath was interviewed on ABC TV's *Lateline* on 26 September 2011,

he declared Israel 'has been in full occupation of our country for years, 62 years.' Shaath obviously regards Israel's very existence, not just its occupation of the West Bank, as illegitimate.[13]

2. Equal rights for Arab-Palestinian citizens inside Israel

It is widely, yet quite incorrectly, claimed that Israel is practising a form of apartheid. Both Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu have given weight to this charge. 'I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory,' Tutu wrote in a letter to student protestors at UC Berkeley in California in March 2010, 'and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of Apartheid.'[14] The accusation that Israel is practising a form of apartheid is wholly unfounded. Indeed, as Cohen has noted, 'the only Arabs in the Middle East who enjoy human and civil rights which conform to democratic standards are [the] citizens of Israel.'[15] Whereas Palestinian leaders argue that accepting Israel as a Jewish state would mean jeopardising the status of the country's Arab minority, commentators such as Yossi Klein Halevi say, 'there is no conceptual contradiction between Israel as a Jewish state and as a democracy—the two essential elements of its identity as defined by its Declaration of Independence.'[16] It is true that Palestinians living in the territories do not have the same civil and legal rights as Israeli citizens. The reason is that they are not Israeli citizens. Within Israel, Arab citizens enjoy the same civil, legal and political rights as Jewish citizens. There are Israeli-Arab members of the Knesset, the army, and the police force. Israeli-Arabs attend Israeli universities and receive medical treatment in hospitals alongside Israeli Jews. Even so, commentators such as Melanie Phillips say: 'It can be reasonably argued that there is social and economic discrimination against Israeli Arabs.'[17]

The American feminist Phyllis Chesler, who has passionately attacked the demonisation of Israel, has also been very critical of the Israeli government's failure to address the social and economic disparities between sectors of the population: 'Although Israeli Palestinian Arabs may privately admit that their lives as second-class

citizens in Israel are far better than the lives of their counterparts all over the Arab world, they remain second-class citizens in Israel proper … Israeli Arabs were not granted equal citizenship [when choosing to remain in Israel after the 1948 war]. This is unforgivable, an understandable but huge mistake.'[18] Israel is capable of addressing this mistake, and perhaps must do far more to provide Israeli-Arabs the reassurance that they can participate as equal members in Israeli society. Even so, legitimate criticism such as this can surely not warrant the charge that Israel is an apartheid state, for under South African *apartheid* there was a systematic separation of races and the areas they were permitted to occupy. 'Israel stands virtually alone in the world, among nations facing an immediate military threat to their existence,' notes Bernard Harrison, 'in its willingness to countenance within its borders, neither interning nor expelling its members, a large population of people sharing the culture and religion of her declared enemies.'[19]

3. The right of return of Palestinian refugees as set out in UN Resolution 194

Instead of accepting the two-state solution proposed by the United Nations in 1947, the Arab-Palestinian side opted for violence. The eruption of war led directly to the refugee crisis as hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled the fighting. According to UN figures, 650,000 Arab inhabitants of mandatory Palestine fled the fighting.[20] The historical account of what happened has been highly politicised. Most Palestinians fleeing the fighting were probably sympathetic to the aggressors, and many joined the fighting. Some appear to have been driven out by Israeli forces. Palestinian propaganda also had a part to play. Yet most who fled simply did so to get out of harm's way. The difficulty is that they found themselves on the losing side of the war. Once hostilities came to an end, the Palestinian refugees were not allowed back. Whereas the majority of the 750,000 Jewish refugees who were forced to flee Arab countries were resettled in Israel, the Arab countries refused to resettle or grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees; promised them they would be able to

return to their former homes; and pending the re-conquest of Israel, preferred to keep them in refugee camps, which exist to this day.

According to the UN General Assembly's Resolution 194 of December 1948, refugees 'wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.'[21] Resolutions of the UN General Assembly are not binding, unlike those of the UN Security Council, so the status of the claimed *right* of return is open to question. Yet even if there is a *right* of return, Resolution 194 explicitly states it is conditional upon a willingness to live peacefully.

> Since Israel had every reason to believe that the refugees did not want to 'live at peace with their neighbours,' it is at least arguable that they forfeited their right to return. Which other state in the world could reasonably be asked to welcome back hundreds of thousands of people who had been taught by their leaders to strive for that state's destruction?[22]

In addition to finding themselves on the wrong side of history, however, the Arab-Palestinian leadership presses for the right of return for another reason. Arab leaders have always been candid that any return of Palestinian refugees would not be as a minority group but as a majority group to eliminate the Jewish state and create a Muslim state. Alan Dershowitz cites the secretary of the Arab Higher Command, Emile Ghoury, who, in August 1948, told the *Beirut Telegraph*: 'It is inconceivable that the refugees should be sent back to their homes while they are occupied by the Jews … it would serve as a first step toward their recognition of Israel.'[23] A two-state solution would no longer be possible if Resolution 194 was implemented. By calling for the implementation of Resolution 194 as its third objective, the BDS campaign effectively declares itself in favour of a one-state solution.

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There are many thoughtful and well-meaning supporters of the BDS in Australia, some of them Christians, who insist that their only purpose is to campaign for justice for Palestinians. In many instances, I think some of these people would be genuinely distressed by an accusation of anti-Semitism. They would insist, I imagine, that they do not hate Jews; they simply hate injustice. Furthermore, they may well insist they are not attacking Israel but merely criticising policies of its government. Although there is a tendency among critics of Israel to assert that Judaism is merely confessional and that claims for the territorial boundaries of a state are both recent and illegitimate, 'modern Jewish identity increasingly embraces cultural, religious and national elements.'[24]

My somewhat lengthy examination of the three objectives of BDS does indicate that the campaign has a darker purpose: to damage and de-legitimise the Jewish state by questioning the basis of its creation and continued existence as a liberal democracy.

Of course, critics respond to this by noting that questions about the legitimacy of the State of Israel are being raised not only by non-Jewish critics but also by Jews—both Israeli and non-Israeli—themselves.

While that is undoubtedly true, those who argue along these lines fail to recognise the fallacy of what Dershowitz calls 'argument by ethnic admission,' the fallacious reasoning being to conclude that 'one side of a dispute must be right if some people who are ethnically identified with *that* side support the *other* side' [emphasis in original].[25]

In conclusion, I would argue that this discourse of de-legitimisation is anti-Semitic. I would also argue that if I participate in this discourse and share the objectives of those who propound the discourse, I cannot then claim to be untainted by their ideological position. By allying myself with a position or an argument that is anti-Semitic, I myself become a participant in anti-Semitic discourse. To argue otherwise is disingenuous.

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My co-panellists, Philip Mendes and Paul Kelly, will look more closely at some of the reasons for the emergence of this New Anti-Semitism and its relationship to the political Left, especially in Australia. Philip, in particular, will examine the nexus between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Before passing the baton to them, I want to make some brief remarks about the concept of 'the Jewish state'—for it is important to note that the idea of the Jewish state itself remains controversial within certain circles of contemporary Jewish thought that advocate a loosening of the ties between faith and nation.

The most eloquent opponents of Theodore Herzl's nineteenth-century movement promoting modern Jewish nationalism (Zionism) included emancipated and assimilated Jews in Europe and the United States. Among their wide-ranging concerns was a fear that the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine would serve to stamp Jews as strangers in their native countries and undermine their status as citizens of those lands. Zionism had (and on the extreme margins of the ultra-orthodox community, still has) its religious opponents, too. Rabbinical opposition takes different forms but includes the orthodox view that Jewishness is to be defined in terms of religious faith and practice rather than in terms of physical place.

Today there are concerns that certain Jewish intellectuals and opinion-formers within Israel are turning away from the basic Zionist political demand for recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of a Jewish state in at least part of Palestine. The Israeli scholar Yoram Hazony uses the term 'post-Zionism' to describe the period dating from the election of Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1992 during which, according to Hazony, the idea of the Jewish state began to die. Post-Zionism, he argues, is a movement within Israeli culture that no longer sees Israel as a Jewish state but rather as a 'state of citizens—a regime that not only seeks a separation between Jewish religion and state but which also seeks a separation between Jewish *nationality* and state' [emphasis in original].[26]

Hazony is greatly concerned by the rise of post-Zionism and by its implications for the future of the Jewish state. To what extent

the opinions of post-Zionist Jews may be considered anti-Semitic requires careful consideration. My own view is that they are not anti-Semitic (in either the new or the old sense) but are more likely to be attributable to a national existential weariness identified by Israeli political commentator Yoel Marcus in 1995:

> Our people has long since tired of bearing Zionism on its shoulders generation after generation … While the Arabs have remained faithful to their ideology of the holiness of the land, preferring to forgo peace rather than concede anything of their demands … Israel is ready lightly to withdraw from the lands that were the cradle of Judaism … in exchange for personal safety and a 'normal' life.[27]

It is, of course, a testimony to the vibrancy of the state of Israel's liberal democracy that its citizens can discuss with freedom and vigour such widely divergent views about the very existence of the country.

Endnotes

1 Jeremy Jones, *Anti-Semitism in Australia 2010* (Sydney: ECAJ, 2010), 6. The report is prepared annually on behalf of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to assist in the understanding of anti-Jewish prejudice in contemporary Australia.

2 As above, 9.

3 In 1879, the German journalist Wilhelm Marr coined the term 'Antisemitismus' to denote opposition to the Jewish people and Jewish values. This was at a time when nascent German-Jewish emancipation was coming to be regarded as a threat to German culture. An internationally accepted working definition of anti-Semitism was devised only in 2004. The European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) proposed that *anti-Semitism* is the expression of hostility both to Jews as individuals and to Jewish collectives such as community institutions, religious facilities, and the State of Israel.

4 Thomas Friedman, 'Campus hypocrisy,' *The New York Times* (16 October 2002), cited in Bernard Harrison, *The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel and Liberal Opinion* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 79.

5 Ben Cohen, 'A Discourse of Delegitimisation: The British Left and the Jews,' originally written for the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (London: 2003), 3, www.axt.org.uk/HateMusic/essay_cohen_delegitimisation.htm.
6 As above, 3.
7 NCCA (National Council of Churches in Australia), founded in 1994, is an ecumenical organisation bringing together some 19 member churches for the purposes of dialogue, practical cooperation, and political lobbying. In its time, the executive body of the NCCA has issued social justice policy statements on issues such as gambling, poverty, housing and racism.
8 NCCA (National Council of Churches in Australia), 'A Call for Justice, Security and Peace for Palestine and Israel' (20 July 2010).
9 BDS Movement, 'Introducing the BDS Movement,' www.bdsmovement.net/.
10 Benny Morris, 'Rejection,' *New Republic* (21–28 April 2003), 37.
11 Sonja Karkar, *Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions: A Global Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid* (Melbourne: Australians for Palestine, 2011), 39.
12 Benny Morris, *One State, Two States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 180.
13 'Saying Too Much,' *Australia/Israel Review* 36:11 (November 2011), 37.
14 Desmond Tutu, quoted in Sonja Karkar, *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions*, as above, 5.
15 Ben Cohen, 'A Discourse of Delegitimisation,' as above, 4.
16 Yossi Klein Halevi, 'The real obstacle to Palestinian statehood,' *The Globe and Mail* (7 October 2011).
17 Melanie Phillips, *The World Turned Upside Down: The Global Battle Over God, Truth and Power* (New York: Encounter, 2010), 66.
18 Phyllis Chesler, *The New Anti-Semitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do About It* (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 165.
19 Bernard Harrison, *The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism: Jews, Israel and Liberal Opinion* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 133.
20 Comparable estimates put the number of Jewish refugees expelled from neighbouring Arab countries during the post-1948 years at 850,000.
21 UN General Assembly Resolution 194, paragraph 11.
22 Robin Shepherd, *A State Beyond the Pale: Europe's Problem with Israel* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2009), Kindle edition, 28.
23 Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 85.
24 Ben Cohen, 'A Discourse of Delegitimisation,' as above, 3.
25 Alan Dershowitz, *The Case for Israel*, as above, 221.
26 Yoram Hazony, *The Jewish State: The Struggle for Israel's Soul* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), xxv.
27 Cited in Yoram Hazony, as above, 71.

When Does Criticism of Zionism and Israel Become Anti-Jewish Racial Hatred?

Philip Mendes

Historically, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism were divergent ideas. Anti-Semitism was primarily a phenomenon of the far Right. It is a racist prejudice that exists independently of any objective reality. It is not about what Jews actually say or do, but rather about what anti-Semites falsely and malevolently attribute to them. As reflected in anti-Semitic conspiracy theories such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, it is a subjective stereotyping based on notions of collective Jewish guilt.[1]

In contrast, anti-Zionism (particularly before the creation of the State of Israel) was based on a relatively objective assessment of the prospects of success for some Jews in Israel/Palestine. Opposition came from both Jews and the international Left.[2] However, in recent decades, it is arguable that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism—defined as a rejection of the legitimacy of the State of Israel and a desire to negate the reality of its existence—have increasingly converged.

Australia

Australia has been a golden land for the Jews in which anti-Semitism has generally been limited to the political margins. The only semi-serious outbreak of anti-Semitism occurred in the mid-late 1940s as a campaign against the immigration of small numbers of European Jewish refugees. This campaign was driven by the far Right League of Rights, and assisted by populist magazines such as the *Smith's Weekly* and the *Bulletin*. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was widely distributed to promote the argument that international

Zionism and international communism shared a common objective to destroy the British Empire, and attacks were levelled at Australian Jews for allegedly raising funds to support anti-British terrorism in Palestine.[3]

Some mainstream conservatives shared this view of Jews as aliens and potential subversives. For example, a statement by Liberal Party leader Robert Menzies in February 1947 implied that preference was being given to Jewish refugees ahead of British migrants, and that 'too great a proportion of Jewish refugees was included in our annual migration.'[4] The Liberal and Country parties also opposed the establishment of the State of Israel, believing that it undermined the strength of the British Empire. The deputy leader of the Country Party, John McEwen, alleged that the United Nations' partition motion was the result of 'political pressure by the American Jews who exercise tremendous political power in the United States,' and argued that the Arab States were being driven into the arms of the Soviet Union.[5]

In contrast, the political Left appeared at that time to be strongly opposed to anti-Semitism, and also supportive of Zionism. The Labor government assisted Jewish immigration to Australia, and strongly supported the establishment of the State of Israel.[6]

The international Left, the Jews and Israel

Left attitudes to Jews have always incorporated what Jacobs calls 'a rainbow of perspectives.'[7] There was never any universally endorsed socialist dogma on the Jewish question. Socialists were just as divided in their attitude to anti-Semitism as they were on other political questions. Their approach varied from friendship to enmity.

On the one hand, socialism and socialist movements have always contained a degree of anti-Semitism and anti-Semites. Some socialist leaders and many rank and file socialists—particularly before the twentieth century—were influenced by the popular anti-Jewish prejudices of the wider society. They stereotyped all Jews as wealthy exploiters, and ignored the presence of large numbers of poor and working-class Jews. This led them to deny sympathy to Jews who

were experiencing persecution, including those arriving in new countries as stateless refugees and immigrants.

On the other hand, socialist movements have a long history of universalistic philo-Semitism or sympathy for Jews, a phenomenon that accounts for the historical over-representation of Jews in the political Left. By the early twentieth century, most socialist movements recognised that Jews were an oppressed group per se who deserved solidarity from the workers movement, and welcomed Jews into their ranks. But they still remained reluctant to recognise Jewish national aspirations; failed to fully understand the national and religious prejudices (as opposed to social or economic factors) that fuelled anti-Semitism; and mostly assumed erroneously that both anti-Semitism and the Jews as a distinct group would disappear with the triumph of socialism.

Nevertheless, the historical scales weigh in favour of the philo-Semites. Movements of the political Left were generally more likely to support Jewish aspirations for equality than movements of the political Right. With some exceptions, Left groups did not incite or participate in violence against Jews, did not call for Jews to be excluded from particular trades or professions or broader national life and culture, and did not argue that Jews should be collectively expelled or sent to Palestine. The anti-Semitism that influenced the policies of the former Soviet Union and its satellites from at least 1948 onwards, however, is an important deviation from this rule.[8]

Left attitudes to Zionism and Israel have also incorporated a wide spectrum of views. Historically, most socialists advocated Jewish assimilation, and adopted a negative approach to manifestations of Jewish national or group identity. However, in practice, socialists regularly distinguished between the maximalist Zionist aspiration to settle all Jews in Palestine/Israel, and the more minimalist Zionist goal to create and preserve a Jewish national homeland or refuge in Palestine/Israel. Most socialists were reluctant to endorse the former goal, but many supported the latter.

During the 1947–48 Arab-Israeli war, virtually the entire Left, whether communist or social democratic, adopted a pro-Zionist position and supported the creation of the State of Israel. However,

since 1967, many on the Left have adopted a position of hostility to the State of Israel. Some manifestations of this hostility appear to verge on open anti-Semitism.[9]

The turning point of the 1967 Six Day War

Following the Six Day War in 1967, a sea change took place in the attitude of Left to Zionism and Israel. Before 1967, virtually no Western left-wing organisations had supported Arab calls for the destruction of Israel. Soviet and orthodox communist criticism of Israel (while vigorous and uncompromising) had only intermittently enjoyed a high profile or been of political significance. Moreover, social democrats tended to be uniformly sympathetic to Israel.

Israel's victory in the Six Day War provoked a sudden reversal in these attitudes. Particularly within far Left groups, Israel was depicted as a modern-day Sparta, allegedly using racist and Nazi-like strategies to suppress Palestinian-Arab aspirations in the service of Western imperialism. The Palestinians were constructed as a uniquely oppressed people whose suffering and symbolic significance was even greater than that of the international proletariat.

The change in Left attitudes can arguably be attributed to five major factors. The first was that the Jewish military victory in the Six Day War destroyed the post-Holocaust taboo (at least outside the Soviet Union) concerning public criticism of Jews. Jews were suddenly transformed from their historical role as the international symbols of victimhood into an alleged victimiser, while the Palestinians became the new symbols of victimhood.

A second factor was the generational change in the Left itself. The older Left (whether orthodox communist, Trotskyist or social democratic) tended to view the rise of fascism, Nazism and the Holocaust as defining epochs of their political development. Sympathy for the Jews was central to this point of view. In contrast, the younger leftists involved in the New Left were most strongly influenced by the evils of America's intervention in Vietnam. Their prime sympathy was for coloured Third World peoples struggling to free themselves from Western economic and political domination. It was hardly surprising that this anti-American animus would

be extended to Israel—America's principal ally in the Middle East—which appeared to be the most prominent representative of white Western interests in the Third World.

A third factor influencing the Left's revised position was the significant change in the identity and perception of Israel's enemies. Before 1967, it was difficult for any self-respecting group on the Left to back the reactionary monarchs and militarists who opposed Israel's existence. But the Six Day War led many on the Left to recognise the plight of the Palestinian refugees, and the extent of Israeli responsibility for that suffering. The war also provoked the emergence of an independent Palestinian national movement in the form of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The PLO began to form active links with the Western Left, and astutely constructed itself as part of a broad international, anti-colonialist struggle. Some Palestinians and their supporters explicitly equated their struggle in politics and strategy to that of the Viet Cong.

A fourth factor was the intensive anti-Zionist campaign conducted by the former Soviet Union and associated communist parties around the world. This campaign introduced many of the key themes that would become dominant within broad sections of the far Left, including the equation of Israel and Zionism with apartheid, Nazism and other forms of racism, and arguments that Israel was a uniquely evil state. A further factor was that Israel's ongoing occupation of Arab territories, and suppression of Palestinian national aspirations, did provoke legitimate criticism from all groups on the Left. This criticism was not identical to criticism of Israel per se, and was shared by many Jews and Israelis.[10]

Contemporary Left views on Israel and Zionism

Today, there are arguably three principal Left positions on Zionism and Israel.

One perspective, which can broadly be called pro-Israel, is balanced in terms of favouring a two-state solution to facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation. Advocates support moderates and condemn extremists and violence on both sides of the conflict. This is a minority position, but is held by a number of

centre-left leaders such as the Australian Labor Party Prime Minister Julia Gillard and most of her key ministers, the former British New Labour leader Tony Blair and other prominent New Labour figures, and the former German Greens leader and foreign minister, Joshka Fischer. It is also supported by a number of social democratic members of parliament in Western countries, who have formed Friends of Israel groups, and some social democratic intellectuals and trade union leaders.

A second perspective endorses a two-state solution in principle, but in practice, holds Israel principally or even solely responsible for the continuing violence and terror in the Middle East. This position, which probably represents the majority of the Western Left, is held by many social democrats, Greens and trade unions, and also by some Jews in groups such as the Tikkun community in the United States and the Australian Jewish Democratic Society.

This perspective holds that an end to the Israeli occupation and/or blockade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is the key prerequisite for Israeli-Palestinian peace and reconciliation. In general, adherents of this view recognise that not all Israelis are the same, and understand the difference between particular Israeli government policies and the Israeli people per se. Many favour alliances with Israeli Left and peace groups who hold similar points of view.

Some components of this second perspective may reasonably be characterised as unbalanced and naïve at best, and as failing to offer a corresponding critical analysis of contemporary and historical Palestinian actions and strategies, which have acted as serious barriers to peace.

Nevertheless, the rights and wrongs of Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories are legitimately subject to a robust international debate. This debate also takes place within the democratic structures of Israel itself. There is nothing prejudicial about questioning the legal and moral legitimacy of Jewish settlements in the Occupied West Bank; highlighting the impact of the Jewish security fence on the daily lives of the Palestinian population in the Territories; attacking the continuing discrimination against Palestinian Arabs living within Green Line Israel; or noting the extent to which the

creation of the State of Israel contributed, among other factors including Palestinian and Arab military aggression, to the historical injustice that has befallen the indigenous Palestinians.

The third Left perspective is what I call anti-Zionist fundamentalism because it is akin to religious fundamentalism. This view, which is held mainly but no longer exclusively by far Left groups, regards Israel as a racist and colonialist state that has no right to exist. Adherents hold to a point of view opposing Israel's existence specifically and Jewish national rights more broadly, which is beyond rational debate and unconnected to contemporary or historical reality.

This form of anti-Zionism is substantively different to the earlier pre-1948 Left tradition of anti-Zionism. That tradition opposed Zionism as a political movement on theoretical grounds. In contrast, anti-Zionist fundamentalists today wish to eliminate the actual existing nation-state of Israel. Israelis and their Jewish supporters are depicted as inherently evil oppressors by the simple process of denying the historical link between the Jewish experience of oppression in both Europe and the Middle East and the creation of Israel. Conversely, Palestinians are depicted as intrinsically innocent victims. In place of the fundamental and objective centrality of the State of Israel to contemporary Jewish identity, anti-Zionist fundamentalists portray Israel as a mere political construct, and use ethnic stereotyping of all Israelis and all Jewish supporters of Israel whatever their political views to justify their claims.

The purpose of negating the reality of Israel's existence is to overcome the ideological barrier posed by the Left's historical opposition to racism. Any objective analysis of the Middle East would have to accept that Israel could only be destroyed by a war of partial or total genocide, which would inevitably produce millions of Israeli Jewish refugees and produce a catastrophically traumatic effect on almost all Jews outside Israel. But advocacy of genocide means endorsing the most virulent form of racism imaginable. So instead, anti-Zionist fundamentalists construct a subjective fantasy world in which Israel is detached from its specifically Jewish roots, and then miraculously destroyed by remote control free of

any violence or bloodshed under the banner of anti-racism.[11]

How anti-Zionist fundamentalism becomes political anti-Semitism

Anti-Zionist fundamentalism is not the same as Nazi-style racist anti-Semitism. But it is a form of political anti-Semitism linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Political anti-Semitism occurs when actions are taken to demonise Israelis (and their Jewish supporters elsewhere) in a way that potentially exposes them to the threat of national destruction by violence or other means.[12]

This anti-Jewish discourse is reflected in a number of manifestations of contemporary anti-Zionist rhetoric. First, there is a pathological and obsessive hatred and demonisation of Israel and Israeli Jews unrelated to the actual actions and reality of that state. These include claims that Israel is the world's worst human rights abuser, that its crimes equal or exceed those of the Nazis, and that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians. The call for erasing an existing state is unique in international discourse.[13]

One increasingly common slur is that Israel is an apartheid state similar to the former South African racist regime and arguably deserves the same fate as that regime. In fact, Israel is a comprehensive nation-state formed on a democratic basis consisting of a range of social groups and classes. There is no judicial or political separation between the rights of Jewish and Arab citizens. In contrast, a small white population in South Africa exploited a much larger black majority. The analogy is deliberately offensive given that Israel was created specifically as an affirmative action project to compensate Jews for their horrendous experiences of racism culminating in the Holocaust.[14]

Second, there are proposals for academic and other boycotts of Israel (reflected in the worldwide Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement) based on the ethnic stereotyping of all Israelis. The aim of such caricatures is to politically isolate and impose pariah status on the whole Israeli nation. These proposals single out Israelis in that no such boycotts are proposed against other countries or nations involved in territorial expansion or human rights abuses.[15] This movement includes a small number of

Jewish Uncle Toms whose Jewish background is opportunistically highlighted in an attempt to counter justified charges of anti-Semitism. This expedient strategy of using Jews to vilify their own people mirrors the old Communist movement's parading of Jewish communists to defend murderous Stalinist anti-Semitism in the 1950s.[16]

Third, there is the extension of the denunciation of all Jewish Israelis to all Jews—Zionist or otherwise—who support Israel's existence. These Jews are collectively denounced via group libel as accomplices of racism and genocide, whatever their actual ideological and political position on solutions to the conflict may be.[17]

Fourth, there are stereotypical descriptions of Jewish behaviour, and attacks on alleged excessive Jewish global power, wealth and influence reminiscent of the Protocols of Elders of Zion. The American academics Walt and Mearsheimer famously provided a respectable academic veneer for the conspiratorial argument that a powerful Zionist lobby directs US foreign policy towards Israel and the Middle East independent of any broader economic and military interests.[18] Associated arguments accuse Jews of controlling Western governments, finance and the media; planning the 9/11 attacks; and being responsible for the US-led war in Iraq.

Finally, deliberate attempts are made to diminish and trivialise the extent of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust by comparing Jews with Nazis. For example, numerous critics have equated the Star of David with the swastika and former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon with Hitler; claimed that the Israeli army is the equivalent of the Nazi SS; argued that the 2009 Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip was reminiscent of the Nazi assault on the Warsaw Ghetto; and featured Anne Frank wearing a Palestinian *keffiyeh*. These analogies do not appear to be used for any other international conflicts, and seem to be motivated solely by a desire to offend and hurt Jews.[19]

Conclusion: Is Anti-Semitism on the rise in Australia?

The answer to this question is yes and no. On the one hand, there is an increasing tirade of abuse directed at Israel and Jewish supporters of Israel in various forums. Online journals such as *New Matilda* provide an opportunity for populist racists to mount attacks on

Jews not dissimilar to those that traditionally emanated from the far Right.[20]

Some on the ideological Left have returned to the essentialism of the early Socialist movement where all Jews are stereotyped as oppressors, but now mostly as Zionists rather than capitalists. Some of this racism—mostly but not always coded as anti-Zionism—has seeped into sections of mainstream political organisations, academia, trade unions and intellectual journals, most notably the NSW Branch of the Greens and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney.[21]

Additionally, beyond the Left per se, it appears that some groups within the numerically significant Arab and Muslim populations are contributing to this anti-Jewish discourse. To be sure, not all Australian Arabs are Muslim; equally, most Australian Muslims are not Arab. The harsh anti-Jewish rhetoric seems to principally emanate from immigrant groups who come from Middle-Eastern countries where anti-Semitism is an accepted part of public debate.

On the other hand, the counter-argument suggests that very little anti-Semitism enters the political mainstream. The Australian Labor Party and the Coalition are strong supporters of Israel, and almost completely free of anti-Semitism. There is a totally new phenomenon of conservative philo-Semitism. Most conservatives today have abandoned old right-wing stereotypes of Jews as non-assimilated aliens, and view Jews positively as patriotic Australians who can be relied upon to defend the liberal democratic values of our society. Conservatives now seem more likely than those on the Left to challenge and condemn minor manifestations of anti-Semitism.[22]

This philo-Semitism includes a pro-Zionist perspective. As we noted earlier, conservatives were not always supporters of Israel. However, conservative views of Israel changed over time, particularly following the 1967 Six Day War, which established Israel as a reliable and effective opponent of the Soviet Bloc. Since the 9/11 terror attack, political conservatives in the United States, Australia, Canada and elsewhere have identified Islamic fundamentalism as the enemy, and the State of Israel as a key ally in the global struggle against

terror. Many have forged an unconditional alliance with Israel, as reflected in their supportive positions on the 2008 Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead in Gaza, and the recent Gaza flotilla episode.[23]

Conservative sympathy for Jews and Israel is largely shared by Julia Gillard and her centrist social democratic colleagues in the Labor Party. The anti-American and anti-Israel position that dominated the party's socialist left faction in the 1970s and 1980s is largely dead. Most Left anti-Zionists today join the Greens or the Socialist Alliance, not the Labor Party.

There may still be establishment anti-Semites who act subtly to exclude Jews from positions of power and status. But it seems to me that contemporary political anti-Semitism is more a phenomenon of those who themselves feel excluded from the political and socio-economic mainstream. In the past, they used to be mainly individuals and groups on the far Right. Today, they are increasingly those on the far Left and/or those from recent Middle-Eastern immigrant groups.

It is hard to predict the future, but we can hope that as these newer immigrant/ethnic groups enter the mainstream they will leave their anti-Semitic baggage behind. This is what happened with earlier post-War immigrant groups from Eastern Europe who often brought anti-Jewish prejudices to Australia but which the younger generation in their communities rejected. The alternative, and the more pessimistic conclusion, is that these groups may infect younger Australians, and eventually drag their anti-Semitism into the mainstream.

Endnotes

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22 A good recent example is the conservative attack on the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies' call for a boycott of an Israel Research Forum at the University of Sydney. See Royston Mitchell, Global Animosity Club,' *Quadrant Online* (27 October 2011), www.quadrant.org.au/blogs. Writers such as Imre Salusinszky in *The Australian* newspaper have also been quick to expose manifestations of anti-Semitism.

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Is Anti-Semitism on the Rise in Australia?

Paul Kelly

Within mainstream Australian politics there is little evidence of anti-Semitism. This comment applies, in particular, to the two major sides, Labor and Coalition. Anti-Semitism in Australia carries heavily negative connotations and can be contrasted with the related but different concept of anti-Israeli sentiment. My remarks today will focus more on attitudes towards Israel as a state rather than attitudes towards Jews as a people.

While in historical terms the Right was long the focus of anti-Semitism, in more recent decades it is the Left that has tended to be the focus of anti-Israel attitudes. Again, the historical story is important—within the ALP, the Left's hostility towards Israel has substantially weakened compared to a generation ago when Bob Hawke, before he entered Parliament, was engaged in bitter fights within the party over Israel. There remains an awareness within Labor, Left and Right, of the party's important role in supporting the creation of the state of Israel in the late 1940s. This is apparent at the leadership level where Labor's historical role still exerts an influence on the current generation. It is noteworthy that both Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard as prime ministers have been distinctly pro-Israel, more so than many of Labor's support base.

The Centre-Left of politics is more fragmented than usual, with formal loyalty divided between Labor and the Greens and the impact of technology creating a wide media spectrum, including social media, that offers a diversity of opinion towards Israel. It should be noted, of course, that actual events in the Middle East, in terms of political and military developments, will be the most influential forces in determining attitudes within Australia towards Israel. It is a fact that the Six Day War in 1967 and its legacy is the single most important event in shaping contemporary thinking about Israel in this country.

In these brief comments, I want to look at broad trends in politics and how they might affect thinking towards Israel.

At present, the Centre-Left is the site of contradictory and intense forces—the crisis of identity and ideas with Labor; the rise of the Greens as the emerging third force; and the cultural success of what may be termed the Progressive Left and its values in a range of institutions such as NGOs, social media, the academy, sections of the ABC, and many people interested in group identity politics spanning feminists, gays, environmentalists, and ethnic lobbies. There is a mobility within progressive politics driven by the compulsion to find causes to promote its interests.

One of the most important but least understood changes within Labor has been the weakening of the ALP Right as an ideological force. This reflects epic global transformation. It is pivotal because the Labor Right, notably in NSW, has been the foundation of the party's moderate pragmatism and the power base for former prime ministers Whitlam, Hawke and Keating, and Beazley as opposition leader. What have been the forces at work?

First, the Cold War imposed a tremendous discipline on Labor and changed the paradigm to one of democratic freedom versus communist tyranny. That paradigm is gone.

Second, there has been a dramatic decline in the influence of the church in the Labor Party, notably in its right wing, where the church was once conspicuous.

Third is the crisis of party identity. Most of the young people in the party, the core activists, are from the Left and to the Left. The Right has lost much of its previous ideological momentum.

With the ALP primary vote at about 30%, the party is slated to return to opposition and then begin a serious structural reform. This will be tied to a search for new policies and new positions. For the first time in its history, Labor is fighting on two fronts: the Greens on the Left and the Coalition on the Right. One of the arguments offered by a number of Labor activists from the Left is that the party needs to move to the Left to counter the rise of the Greens, a position that runs into strong resistance among a number of senior ministers.

The Greens now sit on 12–14% of the primary vote. They are best understood as an ideological party. Under Gillard, they enjoy a formal alliance with Labor at the national level and they will hold the balance of power in the Senate in the foreseeable future. This has been a remarkable period of accomplishment for the Greens. Unlike the Australian Democrats, the Greens represent a global ideology and will not be fading away. Their former leader, Bob Brown, is on public record saying they aspire to replace the Labor Party as the main force on the centre Left, an objective I think will not be realised.

How should we understand the Greens?

First, it is a party of the environment with a deeply held environmental philosophy that is global in essence and permeates its worldview. It embraces climate change as faith, which means the party is to a certain extent anti-economic growth, hostile to immigration, and committed to a radical policy of 100% renewable energy. These are far-reaching policies in terms of what they mean for the Australian economy and our energy policy.

Second, in foreign policy and defence, the party is essentially neutralist. It is sceptical of, or in opposition to, our alliance with the United States, and sceptical about the commitment of Australian forces outside Australia. The party wants to change the governance arrangements so that only the Parliament can authorise the commitment of troops abroad, not the executive branch of government. Third, the Greens have not accepted the economic settlement of the Hawke-Keating period. It is a party of economic regulators, usually but not universally, hostile to market forces.

Finally, the Greens Party stands for a cultural and values transformation of Australia and Western civilisation in different areas such nature, religion, authority, human rights, marriage and euthanasia. It seeks to strengthen the secular state beyond the norms of the past century.

In short, the Greens have been a vehicle to get radical and sometimes extreme ideas into the mainstream. Their progress over the last 20 years shows how the party has operated as a not so insignificant force for change in Australian policies and values.

The Greens invariably mount their political arguments in terms of justice and human rights, almost regardless of the cause. They testify to the multi-application of human rights arguments. Remember that the report by Father Frank Brennan into a Charter of Rights found that people were supporting the charter to achieve three political objectives: eliminate John Howard's asylum seeker laws; soften the national security laws; and water down Howard's Northern Territory Intervention. The debate about human rights is never what it seems—it is always about the quest for political results and usually for outcomes opposed by a majority of the population.

Greens tactics are shaped in terms of the imperatives of tolerance, anti-racism and justice. This is how they frame their support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. The party is divided on this issue, but the policy of the Greens NSW is particularly strong:

> That the Greens NSW call upon all Australians and the Australian government to boycott Israeli goods, trading and military arrangements, and sporting, cultural and academic events as a contribution to the struggle to end Israel's occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territory, the siege of Gaza and imprisonment of 1.5 million people, and Israel's institution of a system of apartheid.

When this issue erupted in early 2011, the Greens as a party were caught by surprise. Under Brown's leadership, the party had been tactically acute and successful at choosing the right time to elevate issues and run on them. But this tactic backfired on the BDS campaign and the Greens were severely embarrassed and exposed.

The point, however, is that the Greens remain the most likely location within mainstream politics where attitudes towards Israel will harden. I am not saying the Greens are anti-Semitic. It is, however, apparent that the Greens and significant sections of progressive opinion in Australia are either critical of or hostile towards Israel. This position is invariably framed as support for the

human rights of the Palestinian people or the need for Israel to cease being a colonial and/or racist power. I think there is little public support in Australia for the BDS campaign. The Labor Party and the Coalition are against it. Those who support the idea tend to be ideologically pledged. The tactic is to depict Israel as a pariah state and as an occupation state that violates human rights. The effort to depict Israel as another South Africa is intellectually and morally fraudulent, but yet its political traction should not be overlooked.

We can expect to see extreme views in Australia, not just on the issue of Israel but generally, become far more prominent. That will be a function of the social media. It lives off assertion, abuse, controversy and polarisation. Sooner or later, Israel as an issue will reach 'lift off' status—it could be ignited by another military conflict or a political trigger.

The direction in which the Greens move, as a formal party, will be important in influencing the wider debate. So will the mood and thinking of the ALP Left. The role of Islam within Australian politics and the extent to which ethnic groups from the Middle East exert an anti-Israeli line will also be vital. The latter is a test of Australia's ability to ensure that migrants, over time, cast off the intensity of the politics of their homeland. Where religion is involved the test is greater.

As always, the biggest question is what happens in the politics of the Middle East. Short of a peace settlement—and that looks unlikely—politics will continue to attribute blame to one side or the other.

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WHAT'S NEW WITH ANTI-SEMITISM?

Criticism of the Israeli government's domestic policy has intensified in Australia with the emergence of the inter-national Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign here. At a CIS roundtable discussion on 1 December 2011, Paul Kelly, Philip Mendes, and Peter Kurti asked whether a new anti-Semitism is emerging in twenty-first century Australia.

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CIS Policy Forum 24
ISBN 978-1-86432-209-5
ISSN 0726 3635

www.cis.org.au

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