

The War on Gaza: Whither the “Jewish State”?

Part VII

By [Amir Nour](#)

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“We are a people, one people (...) When we sink, we become a revolutionary proletariat, the subordinate officers of a revolutionary party; when we rise, there rises also our terrible power of the purse.” —Theodore Herzl[1]

An Enduring Conundrum: From the “Jewish” to the “Zionist” Question

One of the unintended and crucial consequences of the genocidal Israeli War on Gaza is that it has put the “Jewish” and “Zionist” questions once again at the center of international geopolitics.

Today, more than ever before, this state of affairs begs an urgent update of the overheated debate around the future of Zionism, and by extension, that on the fate of the “Jewish State” it has succeeded in creating, by means of brutal force, in the midst of the infamous Western colonial enterprise in the Arab world during the 20th century.

Assuredly, the “Jewish Problem” is anything but new throughout history. Indeed, as Brian Klug[2] observed *“The first person who saw the Jews as a problem was Moses, who, time and again, complained to God about them; or maybe it was God who first saw the Jews as problematic”*.

A similar complaint is made in a treatise written in 1543 by the German Reformation leader and pioneer of Protestantism Martin Luther, titled *“The Jews and Their Lies”*. This work was among the last of his writings, shortly before he died in 1546 at the age of 63.

When they issued its first English translation in the United States in May 1948, the Christian-American publishers emphasised that they did not do so for sectarian purposes, arguing that they were also publishing the edicts of more than 20 popes who dealt with the Jewish problem. Their edicts, they noted, are as strong – if not stronger – as anything contained in Martin Luther’s book, since *“the ghettos were established by Papal edict, and the*

segregation of Christian communities from Jewish communities originated in edicts coming out of Rome”.

And because some of the language in the book was quite evidently expected to shock many readers, said publishers further stated to the attention of individuals doubting that these writings originated with the German priest that *“the original language may be found in Martin Luther’s works in the Congressional Library, Washington, D.C., and in one of several accredited Lutheran seminaries. Numerous clergymen of all denominations are aware of the existence of this work”.*

In its presentation of the treatise, the Virtual Jewish Library indicates that at the beginning of his career, Martin Luther was apparently sympathetic to Jewish resistance to the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, he expected the Jews to convert to his purified Christianity; when they did not, he turned violently against them.

The following excerpts from both the beginning and the end of the book say it all:

“I had decided not to write anymore, neither of the Jews, nor against the Jews. Because I have learned, however, that those miserable, wicked people do not cease trying to win over to themselves us, that is, the Christians also, I have permitted this booklet to go forth that I might be found among those who have resisted such poisonous undertaking of the Jews, and have warned the Christians to be on their guard against them. I would not have thought that a Christian would permit himself to be fooled by the Jews to share their exile and misery. But the Devil is the God of the world, and where God’s word is not, he has easy sailing, not only among the weak, but also among the strong. God help us. Amen.”

And

“In my opinion it will have to come to this: if we are to stay clean of the Jew’s blaspheming and not become partakers of it, we must separate, and they must leave our country. Thus they could no more cry and lie to God that we are holding them captive; and we could no more complain that they plague us with their blaspheming and usury. This is the nearest and best advice that makes it safe for both parties.”

In modern times, however, the “Jewish Question” – in the sense of being a problem that needs to be solved – has been set by Europe in the 19th century. It was *“a question Europe asked itself about the Jews”*, says Klug. European leaders thought the same about such questions as the “Oriental”, “Armenian”, and “Kurdish”, among others.

Likewise, in his 1896 pamphlet titled *“The Jewish State”*, the Budapest-born journalist and founder of political form of Zionism, Theodore Herzl confirmed that historical fact and further acknowledged that

“The Jewish Question still exists. It would be useless to deny it (...) The Jewish Question exists wherever Jews live in perceptible numbers. Where it does not exist, it is carried by Jews in the course of their migrations. We naturally move to those places where we are not persecuted, and there our presence produces persecution (...) The unfortunate Jews are now carrying anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America.”[3]

As it happens, the “Jewish Question” in the United States of America was thoroughly dealt with primarily in a series of articles appearing in *“The Dearborn Independent”* newspaper from May 22 to October 2, 1920. These were subsequently incorporated in Henry Ford’s book published in the same year under the title *“The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem”*[4]. It is no wonder that this book was, and still is to this day, considered by many as anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic.

And as anyone would do nowadays, Ford reported that the chief difficulty in writing about the Jewish Question during his time was the supersensitiveness of Jews and non-Jews concerning the whole matter. There is a vague feeling, he said, that even to openly use the word “Jew” or to expose it nakedly to print, is somehow improper. Hence, *“polite evasions like ‘Hebrew’ and ‘Semite’ both of which are subject to the criticism of inaccuracy, are timidly essayed, and people pick their way gingerly as if the whole subject were forbidden, until some courageous Jewish thinker comes straight out with the good old word ‘Jew’ and then the constraint is relieved and the air cleared”*. The word “Jew”, he rightly observed, is not an epithet, *“it is a name, ancient and honorable, with significance for every period of human history, past, present and to come”*.

According to the American industrialist, owing to this extreme sensitiveness about the public discussion of the Jewish Question on the part of Gentiles, *“nothing is changed thereby. The Jew is not changed. The Gentile is not changed. The Jew still remains the enigma of the world (...) Poor in his masses, he yet controls the world’s finances. Scattered abroad without country or government, he yet presents a unity of race continuity which no other people has achieved. Living under legal disabilities in almost every land, he has become the power behind many a throne.”*

The business magnate remarked that the emergence of the Jew in the financial, political and social spheres has been so complete and spectacular since the war [World War I], that his place, power and purpose in the world are being given a critical attention and a new scrutiny, much of it unfriendly. Such a scrutiny of his nature and super-nationality, he added, is essential to better define and understand the reasons for his power, his separateness, and his suffering.

To that effect, he was of the view that the “Jewish Question” in America cannot be concealed or silenced by threats against publications, nor by the propagandist publication of matter extremely and invariably favorable to everything Jewish. The Jews of the United States, he said, *“can best serve themselves and their fellow-Jews all over the world by letting drop their far too ready cry of ‘anti-Semitism’, by adopting a franker tone than that which befits a helpless victim, and by seeing what the Jewish Question is and how it behooves every Jew who loves his people to help solve it”*.

The reality on the ground, nonetheless, proved to be altogether different. And the series of articles in the *“The Dearborn Independent”* newspaper have been met by an organized barrage by mail, wire and voice, every single item of which carrying the wail of persecution. In reaction, Ford commented by saying:

“One would think that a heartless and horrible attack were being made on a most pitiable and helpless people – until one looks at the letterheads of the magnates who write, and at the financial ratings of those who protest, and at the membership of the organisations whose responsible heads hysterically demand retraction. And always in the background there is the threat of boycott, a threat which has practically sealed up

the columns of every publication in America against even the mildest discussion of the Jewish Question”.

Malek Bennabi, the Algerian thinker who also wrote about the “*Global Jew*” in his 1951 book[5], had this to say about Henry Ford’s imbroglio due to his outstanding albeit most unwelcome publication:

“(…) In fact, the Jewish ‘boss’ has behind him all the banks that his ancestors created, and everywhere he has cousins established, some in Paris, some in London, some in Berlin and others in New York. Anyone who is unaware of the crucial importance of this international cousinship, of these economic kingdoms, is learning this the hard way. When, about 1920, Ford thought himself strong enough to denounce the occult power that was spreading over all of America, he proved both his ignorance of the real force he wanted to fight and his boastfulness. But the great Kahal, who had been disturbed by the insubordination of the Gentile, had made his arrangements. And six months later, the great, the powerful, the extremely wealthy Ford had to publicly apologise to the Jewish community. He had understood”.

With regard to the question of political Zionism, as wished for by Henry Ford, there are today not one “courageous Jewish thinker [who] comes straight out with the good old word Jew” but many, who do not shy away neither from addressing challenging issues regarding their fellow-Jews nor from calling a spade a spade.

One of those thinkers is Maj. Gen. (ret.) Gershon Hacohen whose very incisive critic we have previously referred to. In part three of his above-mentioned contribution[6], he asked: “*What has Zionism achieved?* And answered: “*The imposition of doubt*”. The sudden strike by Hamas, he explained, thrust the Zionist idea back to the dilemma of its earliest days. It prompted an echoing of the doubt cast during Herzl’s visit: “*You might solve the Jews’ problem, but you won’t solve the problem of Judaism*”. On October 7, he added, “*we were forcefully confronted with the fundamental Zionist question: What do the Jews want in the Land of Israel?*”

He was actually paraphrasing another “courageous Jew thinker” in the person of Dan Miron, a professor of 20th century Hebrew literature who, in a book[7] published in 2005, touched upon the Zionist dilemma and disputed its ultimate goal. To that effect, he said:

“...[T]he expectation of Zionism that the distancing of Jews from European societies and their concentration in their own country would lead to the disappearance of antisemitism did not materialise. Even the security of Zionism, which was supposed to be able to extricate the Jewish people from existential threats, leading to a new Jewish existential activism, did not come to fruition and may not reach the goal it set for itself”.

Miron argues that in the two main dimensions of the Zionist vision outlined in Theodore Herzl’s magnum opus – that is to say finding a solution to the problems of antisemitism and of the need to physically protect Jews from persecution around the world – expectations have yet to pan out notwithstanding over a hundred years since the beginning of the Jewish emigration to Palestine and over fifty years of the state of Israel’s existence.

Thus, in the first dimension, Miron believes that the Zionist vision has become caught in a deadlock given that antisemitism has emerged in a new form that is more sophisticated: it is

ostensibly not hatred of Jews as Jews, but merely criticism of the state of Israel, and fierce antipathy is directed against Jews worldwide whenever they voice complaints about actions that threaten the state of Israel, actions they feel endanger them as well.

As for the second dimension, Miron is of the opinion that there exists a fear that despite Israel's independence and military strength, the historical development of Zionism and its success in achieving Jewish statehood have only led to the replacement of one type of existential threat with another. The most recent tragic events occurring in the tormented Middle East region are convincing evidence of the pertinence of Miron's views and projections.

Hacohen shares this perspective. In essence, he says, Zionism has merely swapped ailment A, like past pogroms – a Russian word meaning devastation – in Kishinev for ailment B, like the Iranian nuclear threat or the Simchat Torah massacre of the northwestern Negev. In other words, the movement that was supposed to solve antisemitism has instead generated, over the past two decades, a new and equally dangerous form of it, in the guise of anti-Zionism.

Reflecting on the October 7th Operation “*Al-Aqsa Flood*” conducted by several Palestinian Resistance groups and the entrance on the scene of the Iranian-led “*Axis of Resistance*” – which wiped out layers upon layers of Israelis' conventional wisdom in terms of how they think about themselves and their path forward – the retired military officer considers that the state of Israel is now “*in one of the most difficult crises it has ever known. It suffered an unprecedented blow and it is required to receive an unprecedented punishment*”.

Such a punishment took a turn for the worse when – in retaliation for an April 1 Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate building in Damascus, Syria, that killed several Iranian military commanders and other local personnel – Iranian Revolutionary Guards launched “*Operation True Promise*” through a massive air attack, which is indeed unprecedented, on designated targets inside Israel, including two air bases in the Negev desert from which Israeli aircraft were used to strike said consulate. Over 300 drones and missiles navigated more than 1,700 kilometres above Iran's neighbours, including Iraq and Jordan – both of which being home to US military bases – before penetrating Israel's airspace. Even though Israel employed all of its extensive integrated anti-missile defense system comprised of the “*Iron Dome*”, the “*Arrow*” and “*David's Sling*” missile interceptors, the US-made “*Patriot*” missile batteries, in addition to US, British, and Israeli aircraft, and US and French shipborne anti-missile defenses, several Iranian missiles succeeded in striking heavily-protected Israeli airfields and air defense installations.

In the aftermath of this Iranian attack, the leader of Israel's opposition, Yair Lapid, as well as many analysts and former Israeli officers believe that key defensive policy of deterrence – which has long been an obsession of the country's political and military circles and regarded as a vital pillar of its security – has been severely damaged once again since October 7, 2023. From now on, writes commentator Ben Caspit in *Ma'ariv* newspaper,

“The Iranians have lost their sense of fear. No more proxies, undercover agents and covert terror attacks. From now on, it is Iran against Israel, out in the open. Israeli deterrence, which got Iran to swallow its pride every time anew and not to attack Israel directly, has now been shattered.”[8]

For his part, Scott Ritter[9] recounted in a recent article[10] that back in 2007, during an

address to the American Jewish Committee, he told the crowd that the last thing he wanted to see was a scenario where Iranian missiles were raining down on the soil of Israel. He therefore warned that *"unless Israel changes course, this is the inevitable outcome of a policy driven more by arrogance than common sense."* On the night of 13-14 April, his concerns were effectively played out live before an anxious international audience. Commenting on that event, Ritter said:

"The 'Missiles of April' represent a sea-change moment in Middle Eastern geopolitics – the establishment of Iranian deterrence that impacts both Israel and the United States (...) Moreover, Iran has been able to accomplish this without either disrupting its strategic pivot to the east or undermining the cause of Palestinian statehood".

He therefore concluded that

"Operation True Promise" will go down in history as "one of the most important military victories in the history of modern Iran, keeping in mind that war is but an extension of politics by other means."

In the final analysis, more than ever before in its short history, the "Jewish state" is now in deep and multifaceted trouble. In the past, writes Jacques Baud in his brilliant recent book[11], *"the term antisemitism meant a sickly hatred of the Jew. Today, it means protesting against the bombing of women and children! (...) Israel has always sought to impose itself by force, and this strategy is not a winning one. Today, the Palestinian David is defeating the Israeli Goliath"*.

And neither Herzl's vision of a soft solution to the "Jewish Question" through a successful creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, nor Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky's security approach based on his hard *"Iron Wall"*[12] policy, which was equally advocated by David Ben-Gurion, have so far helped the Jews fulfil their dream of living in peace, away from an age-old, entrenched and pervasive antisemitism, in *"their own normal state, where they could be accepted as a nation among nations, a state among nation-states"*.

Furthermore, 76 years after its founding, Israel has yet to overcome the basic contradiction that has defined it from the very beginning: Can it be Jewish *and* democratic?[13]

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Notes

[1] Theodore Herzl, *"The Jewish State"*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1946. The first English-language edition, translated by Sylvie d'Avigdor, was published by Nutt, London, England, 1896. As for the Herzl text, it was originally published under the German title *"Der Judenstaat"* in Vienna, 1896.

[2] Brian Klug, *"Reflections on the Jewish Question, Postcolonial Critique, and Zionism"*, University of Notre Dame, 29 August 2023.

[3] Theodore Herzl, *"The Jewish State"*.

[4] Henry Ford, *"The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem"*, The Dearborn Publishing Co., 1920 (downloadable from: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/25282/25282-h/25282-h.htm>).

[5] Malek Bennabi, *"Vocation de l'Islam, Deuxième partie"* (French version), 5 December 1951.

[6] Maj. Gen. (ret.) Gershon Hacohen, *"A New Existential War – Part III: Forming a Clear Post-War National Vision Means Returning to the Roots of Zionism"*, BESA Center Perspectives Paper No. 2,251, 8 January 8, 2023.

[7] Dan Meron, *"Healing for Touching"* (translated from Hebrew), 2005. See my related contribution, *"The War on Gaza: Towards Palestine's Independence Despite the Doom and Gloom"*: <https://www.globalresearch.ca/war-gaza-towards-palestine-independence-despite-doom-gloom/5848373>

[8] Peter Beaumont, *"Iran attack shows Israeli deterrence policy 'shattered', Netanyahu critics say"*, The Guardian, 15 April 2024.

[9] Scott Ritter had spent the better part of a decade trying to protect Israel from Iraqi missiles, both during his service in Desert Storm, where he played a role in the counter-SCUD missile campaign, and as a United Nations weapons inspector, where he worked with Israeli intelligence to make sure Iraq's SCUD missiles were eliminated. He has been writing about Iran for more than two decades and published two books on related subjects : *"Target Iran, The Truth about the White House's Plans for Regime Change"* and *"Dealbreaker, Donald Trump and the Unmaking of the Iran Nuclear Deal"*. Since October 7th attacks, he has been a staunch supporter of the Palestinian cause. He wrote a long article titled *"Why I no longer stand with Israel, and never will again"*, in which he explained why he does so. To read it, click on the following link:

<https://www.scottritterextra.com/p/why-i-no-longer-stand-with-israel>

[10] Scott Ritter, *"The Missiles of April"*, Scott Ritter Extra, 14 April 2024.

[11] Jacques Baud, *"Operation Al-Aqsa Flood: The Defeat of the Vanquisher"*, Max Milo editions, March 2024.

[12] Jabotinsky stated that *"Zionist colonisation must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population – behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach."* To read the full document, click on the following link:

<https://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf>

[13] Eran Kaplan, *"On its 75th birthday, Israel still can't agree on what it means to be a Jewish state and a democracy"*, The Conversation, 10 May 2023.

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