

Israel's Supporters Better Wake Up!

By Melanie Phillips

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As we all know by now, Israel has lost the battle for public opinion in the West. Even the Israel government is now acknowledging this fact. Israel and its defenders have been outclassed and outmaneuvered in a war of the mind being waged on a battleground it never even acknowledged it was on.

Calls for more and better *hasbara*, however, are meaningless if the message or narrative promoted by Israel and its defenders misses the point of the attack being waged upon it. And it does miss that point, by a mile.

You cannot resist or overcome a threat unless you first understand its nature.

The first thing to say is that this phenomenon is characteristic not just of the media animosity or economic or academic boycotts. It goes across the intelligentsia and political class, spreading well beyond the normal suspects on the left into the mainstream middle-classes.

In Britain, the universities, the established church, the theatrical and publishing worlds, the voluntary sector, significant elements within the Foreign Office, members of Parliament across the political spectrum, as well as the media have overwhelmingly signed up to the demonization and delegitimization of Israel.

The scale of this phenomenon is nothing short of a multi-layered civilizational crisis.

The west is experiencing a total inversion of truth evidence and reason. A society's thinking class has overwhelmingly subscribed to an immoral, patently false and in many cases demonstrably absurd account of the Middle East, past and present, which it has uncritically absorbed and assumes to be true.

In routine, everyday discourse history is turned on its head; logic is suspended; and an entirely false narrative of the conflict is now widely accepted as unchallengeable fact, from which fundamental error has been spun a global web of potentially catastrophic false conclusions.

This has led to a kind of dialogue of the demented in which rational discussion is simply not possible because there is no shared understanding of the meaning of language. So victim and victimizer, truth and lies, justice and injustice turn into their precise opposite.

This madness is being promulgated through a global alliance between state and non-state actors — diplomats and journalists, politicians and NGOs and websites. Many of these are waging war not just against Israel but against the west.

There are two preconditions for an effective fight back. First is to form effective structures of resistance. Those structures, however, depend in turn on a correct understanding of the nature and scale of what we are up against.

So far, the structures are not in place, and more important still, what Israel is up against is grossly — and fatally — underestimated and misunderstood.

The problem is that we are dealing with a pathology — to which we nevertheless respond as if it were rational behavior.

What is happened is a pattern of thinking in the west which turns reality upside down. Remarkably, this in turn echoes a very similar inversion of reality within the Islamic world, where such inversion has a theological base.

Because Islam is considered perfect, its adherents can never do wrong. All their aggression is therefore represented as self-defense, while western/Israeli self-defense is said to be aggression.

So in this Orwellian universe the enslavement of Muslim women is said to represent their liberation; democracy is a means of enslavement from which the west must be freed; and the murder of Israelis is the purest form of justice.

Furthermore, this is overlaid by the phenomenon of 'psychological projection' in which the Islamic world not only denies its own misdeeds but ascribes them instead to its victims.

So while Muslims deny the Holocaust, they claim that Israel is carrying out a holocaust in Gaza. Anti-Semitism is central to Jewish experience in Europe; Muslims claim that 'Islamophobia' is rife throughout Europe.

Israel gives all Jews the 'right of return' to Israel on account of the unique reality of global Jewish persecution; the Muslims claim a 'right of return' — not to their own putative state of Palestine, but to Israel. They even claim that the Palestinians are the world's 'new Jews'.

These and many other examples are used within the Islamic world to negate Jewish experience and appropriate it for itself to obtain what Muslims want in terms of status, power and conquest.

What is remarkable is that instead of treating this as a pathological deformity of thinking, the western progressive intelligentsia has largely embraced it as rational and true. And to a large extent this is because that same western intelligentsia has itself supplanted rationality by ideology — or the dogma of a particular idea.

Objectivity, evidence and truth have been ditched for ideologies such as moral and cultural relativism, multiculturalism, feminism, environmentalism, anti-capitalism, anti-colonialism, transnationalism, anti-Americanism, and anti-Zionism.

Across a wide range of such issues, it's no longer possible to have a rational discussion with the progressive intelligentsia, as on each issue there's only one story for them which brooks no dissent.

This is because, rather than arriving at a conclusion from the evidence, ideology inescapably wrenches the evidence to fit a prior idea. So ideology of any kind is fundamentally anti-reason and truth. And if there's no truth, there can be no lies either; truth and lies become merely 'alternative narratives'.

Moral and cultural relativism — the belief that subjective experience trumps moral authority and any notion of objectivity or truth — has turned right and wrong on their heads.

Because of the dominant belief in multiculturalism, victim culture and minority rights, self-designated victim groups — those without power — can never do wrong while majority groups can never do right. And Jews are not considered a minority because — in the hateful discourse of today — Jews are held to be all-powerful as they 'control' the media, Wall Street and America.

So the Muslim world cannot be held responsible for blowing people up as they are the third world victims of the west; so any atrocities they commit must be the fault of their victims; and so the US had it coming to it on 9/11. And in similar fashion, Israel can never be the victim of the Arab world; the murder of Israelis by the Arab world must be Israel's own fault.

So the way has been opened for mass credulity towards propaganda and fabrication. The custodians of reason have thus turned into destroyers of reason — centered in the crucible of reason, the university.

All these different ideologies are utopian; in their different ways, they all posit the creation of the perfect society. That is why they are considered 'progressive', and people on the progressive wing of politics sign up to them. That helps explain the distressing fact that so many Jews on the left also sign up to Israel-hatred, since they too sign up to such utopian ideologies.

But when utopias fail, as they always do, their adherents invariably select scapegoats on whom they turn to express their rage over the thwarting of the establishment of that perfect society. And since utopia is all about realizing the perfect society, these scapegoats become enemies of humanity.

For Greens, such enemies of humanity are capitalists; for anti-imperialists, America; for militant atheists, religious believers. Anti-Zionists turn on Israel for thwarting the end to the 'Jewish question': the redemption of western guilt for the persecution of the Jews — a guilt which can never be redeemed as long as the wretched Jews continue to make themselves the targets of attack.

In short, therefore, the west cannot defend itself against the Islamic jihad because it cannot itself even think straight any more.

But this lethal muddle in the minds of the intelligentsia must be viewed in turn in the context of a global diplomatic process which itself embodies upside-down thinking, which fans the flames of bigotry and defeatism — and in which Israel itself has been tragically, and suicidally, complicit.

It cannot be stressed enough that the reason why those promoting genocidal bigotry are winning is that the western world has not sought to defeat them but instead has appeased them from the very start.

In Palestine under the British Mandate, when the Arabs used terrorist violence to frustrate the will of the League of Nations in restoring the Jewish home, Britain rewarded them by offering them part of the Jews' legal and moral entitlement. When the Arabs started hijacking planes, the west's response was to invite them to the UN to plead their cause.

And despite the Arabs' repeated refusal to accept the two state solution, offered in the 1930s, in 2000 and under Ehud Olmert and their current refusal to negotiate at all, America punishes Israel for not making enough concessions to them — while giving a free pass to those who still refuse to accept Israel's right to exist.

It is astonishing that the west expects Israel to make any concessions to such attackers at all. After all, forcing a country which has endured more than six decades of existential siege to give any ground to its attackers amounts to forcing such a victim to surrender. This is expected by the civilized world of no other country.

Yet we are repeatedly told even by certain supporters of Israel that the Palestinians have a right to a state. Why? In any other conflict, such aggression forfeits any rights at all.

I am not saying that Israel should retain all the disputed territories; it may well be in its own interests to give some of them up. But the point is that Israel has made all the concessions over the years while the Arabs have made none — yet it is Israel, not the Arabs, that is under pressure from the west.

This is diplomacy as scripted by Franz Kafka.

The single greatest reason for the endless continuation of the Middle East impasse is that Britain, Europe and America have continuously rewarded the aggressor and either attacked the victim or left it twisting in the wind.

That's what needs to be said by Israel and its defenders. But Israel and its defenders themselves have been crippled or cowed by the false analysis of the enemy's narrative.

Even many of Israel's friends spout the demonstrably absurd proposition that a Palestine state would solve the problem, that the impediment to a Palestine state is the 'settlers', but that Israel is not taking action to remove the 'settlers' — and so therefore they too inescapably agree that Israel is the problem.

Israel and its defenders have been fighting on the wrong battleground: the one that has been chosen by its enemies. The Arabs brilliantly reconfigured the Arab war of extermination against Israel as the oppression by Israel of the Palestinians.

That has transformed Israel from victim to aggressor — the reversal of reality which lies at the very heart of the western obsession with the 'settlements' and the territories.

Yet since Oslo, Israel has meekly gone along with this mad pressure. It has never said it is totally unconscionable. It has never put the all-important argument from justice on its own account. So it has allowed its enemies to appropriate this argument mendaciously as their own. But if Israel doesn't make the case properly on its own behalf, how can anyone else do so?

To which Israel says realpolitik dictates it has to go along with the diplomatic game being played. But diplomatic realpolitik is what brought us all to this position — the brink of a terrible war with Iran which is treated by America with kid gloves while Israel is put under the cosh.

For the west to suck up to its enemies while bashing its friends like this is the diplomatic version of auto-immune disease. And eventually this disease will kill it.

What Israel has failed to recognize is that the battleground on which it is being forced to fight is not just military. It is also a battleground of the mind, and the strategy being used against it — and to which it needs to respond in kind — is psychological warfare.

The Arab and Muslim world long ago realized if it set the narrative in its own image, it would recruit millions of fanatics to its cause and also confuse and demoralize its victims. In this it has wildly succeeded.

There is therefore an overwhelming need for Israel to alter its strategy. Indeed, it needs to have a strategy.

And this brings us to perhaps the most difficult challenge in all of this — the fact that the role played by the Israel government is of critical importance. Unless it adopts the correct strategy, its defenders will remain crippled.

Yet any promising initiatives seem to fall victim to Israel's chaotic political structure, which appears to prevent the Prime Minister from being master in his own house. Good ideas are habitually destroyed by rampaging egos and turf wars between Israeli Cabinet ministers.

This is no way to run a chip shop, let alone a country under existential siege.

The fact remains that both Israel and diaspora Jews have to rethink. They have to realize they must start fighting on the battleground where the attack is actually being mounted against them. And the goal has to be to seize and retake the moral high ground.

This strategy requires two different tactics: one for those who are capable of rational thought, and another for those who are not. The first group comprises those who are not irrational but merely desperately ignorant. Much of the obsession with Israel's behavior is due to the widespread belief that its very existence is an aberration which, although understandable at the time it came into being, was a historic mistake.

People believe that Israel was created as a way of redeeming Holocaust guilt. Accordingly, they believe that European Jews with no previous connection to Palestine — which they believe was the historic homeland of Palestinian Muslims who had lived there since time immemorial — were transplanted there as foreign invaders, from where they drove out the indigenous Arabs into the West Bank and Gaza. These are territories which Israel is now occupying illegally oppressing the Palestinians and frustrating the creation of a state of Palestine which would end the conflict.

Of course every one of those assumptions is false. But from those false assumptions proceeds the understandable belief not just that Israel's behavior is unjust, illegal and oppressive but that it is unjust and oppressive by virtue of its very existence. For these people there is an urgent need for a proactive educational approach. No-one has ever told them that these beliefs are false — and when they are told, the effect is often transformative.

There is a desperate and urgent need to educate such people in Jewish and Middle East history; to enlighten them about the shameful role played by Britain in Palestine in tearing up its treaty obligations; to tell them that under international law Israel is entitled to the disputed territories — land within which Britain undertook to settle the Jews 'from the river to the sea' because of their historic and unique rights to that land.

That's all necessary for those who are still rational. For bigots, however, there is no point arguing with them. They are, by definition, beyond all reason. Their influence simply has to be destroyed. They have to be held to account for their lies and bigotry which should be forensically exposed.

So Israel and its defenders should be demanding of the world why it expects Israel alone to make compromises with people who have tried for nine decades to wipe out the Jewish presence in the land and are still firing rockets at it.

They should expose the pretense of Britain or European countries which claim to have Israel's security needs at heart but forbid it from using military means to defend itself; and which — as did the British Government recently — turn Israeli self-defense against the jihadi lynch-mob on board the Turkish terror ship Mavi Marmara into an attack to be condemned, or demand the opening of the border with Gaza which would allow in arms to kill more Israelis.

Israel and its defenders should be asking why so-called friends in the west want a Palestine state, since once the IDF depart the disputed territories they will become in short order yet another Iranian-backed Islamic terrorist entity which will pose a further threat not just to Israel but to the west.

They should be asking why the EU is continuing to fund the genocidal incitement against Jews promoted by the Palestine Authority. They should be asking so-called 'progressives' — including Jewish 'progressives' — why they support the racist ethnic cleansing of every Jew from a future state of Palestine.

They should be asking them why they are not marching against Hamas on account of its tyrannical oppression of Palestinians in Gaza. Why they are ignoring Arab and Muslim persecution of women and homosexuals.

Why they are not mounting a boycott, divestment and sanctions movement against Mahmoud Abbas's PA and Hamas, on account of Abbas's Holocaust denial and the clear evidence of continuation of Nazi Jew-hatred in a direct line of descent from predecessors who were Hitler's supporters in Palestine.

As for western Israel-bashers, Israel and its defenders should accuse them not of Jew-hating motives that cannot be proved but of absurdities and contradictions and untruths they cannot deny. They should ridicule them, humiliate them, destroy their reputations; boycott them, not invite them to social gatherings, show them disapproval and contempt. Treat them as pariahs. Turn their own weapons against them.

They should be telling the Jews 'own story of refugees and ethnic cleansing — the 800,000 Jews driven out of Arab lands after 1948, and who now make up more than half of Israel's population. It's good to see that at last Israel is beginning to bring this to the world's attention. In Britain virtually no-one knows about it. At a stroke it takes the ground from under the feet of those demanding the 'right of return' for Arabs.

They should be holding Arab and Islamic democracy weeks on campus, to expose the oppression and persecution within that world against women, homosexuals and others.

They should be singling out the Anglican Church and the revival of ancient theological Jew-hatred being spread within the Anglican world by the Palestinian Christians of the Sabeel Center.

At the same time, they should be focusing on their true friends within the Christian world, not just in America but also in Africa and Asia where there is an enormous reservoir of goodwill towards Israel which could be mobilized into a global fighting force.

They should be campaigning against the UN and the hijacking of international law and human rights by anti-western, anti-Jewish and anti-Christian ideologues.

They should be confronting head-on the false claim that bigotry is confined to the right. They should be pointing the finger at the 'progressive' left to show how it is actually supporting the mortal enemies not just of Israel but the west.

And they should be making this case to Israelis themselves, to counter the delegitimization and ignorance in Israeli universities and to educate the Israeli young in their own national history.

In other words, both Israel and diaspora Jews have to stop playing defense and go onto the offence. Israel has nothing to be defensive about or for which it needs to apologize. It is the enemies of Israel who are promoting injustice and the denial of international law and human rights. Playing defense intrinsically cedes ground to the enemy.

It is time for Israel and its defenders to stop conniving with that smokescreen for the war of annihilation being waged against Israel — the claim that the Middle East impasse would be solved by establishing a state of Palestine to which the settlements, and thus by extension Israel, are the obstacle. It is time for them to stop agreeing that the Jews are to blame for their own predicament.

Israel and its defenders need to make the argument from justice and reclaim that moral high ground from the enemies of Israel and the west, both at home — including within Israel — and abroad. It is those enemies who deny truth, justice and human rights. It is those enemies who should be in the dock. It is time to take the gloves off and put them there.

In short, Israel and its defenders must understand that the tsunami of bigotry against Israel sweeping the west is intimately related to Israel's seriously flawed diplomatic strategy.

For years, Israel has been playing a defensive diplomatic game, which suggests inescapably that it has a case to answer. Such diplomatic cringing has badly undermined it and hugely strengthened its enemies, who are taking advantage of such weakness over and over again.

It is time for Israel to realize that military campaigns against its enemies are not enough. It has to call time on its false friends too, and start fighting both these and its more obvious enemies on the battleground of the mind.