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A changing cast: reflections on the history of antisemitism in South Africa

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It is an obvious, if frequently forgotten, rule that anti-Jewish feeling acquires political relevance only when it can combine with a major political issue, or when Jewish group interests come into open conflict with those of a major class in society.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

Over time the identity of the purveyors of Jew-hatred in South Africa has changed. Anti-alienism (or hostility towards the Eastern European Jewish immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) emanated essentially from the white English-speaking merchant class and rural Afrikaners. It was rooted in upheavals wrought by the “mineral revolution”, the demonstrable power of mining capital, and the economic recession in the wake of the South African War (1899–1902).¹ By the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 hostility had matured into an anti-Jewish stereotype, constructed initially on the diamond fields and in parts of the Eastern Cape where Jewish fortune-seekers and rural traders were depicted as exploitative and dishonest. In the urban centres, Eastern European Jews – pejoratively known as “Peruvians” – were depicted as hucksters, while mine magnates were associated with cosmopolitan international finance, personified in the vulgar cartoon caricature “Hoggenheimer”. Essentially, the Jewish image was cast in a racial mould, with outward appearance and moral assumptions inextricably intertwined.²

Wartime accusations of “shirking”, followed by the association of

1 We know little about attitudes of the majority “non-white” population during these decades. Their struggle was against white domination and oppression. This is not to say that views of the Jew are entirely absent; but besides a tantalizing hint or two, history has left scant evidence.

2 See Milton Shain, *The Roots of Antisemitism in South Africa* (Charlottesville and Johannesburg: University of Virginia Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 1994), ch. 3. For the origins of “Peruvian” and “Hoggenheimer” see Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2008), 45, 62.

Jews with Bolshevism, consolidated the anti-Jewish stereotype. In the context of the postwar economic depression and burgeoning black African radicalism, the Jew also emerged as the archetypal subversive.³ Significantly, the Rand Rebellion of 1922 – a clash between white mine workers and mine owners – was construed by some as a Bolshevik revolt. As eugenicist and nativist arguments (imported especially from the United States) increasingly penetrated South African discourse, Eastern European immigrants were perceived as a threat to the “Nordic” character of South African society.⁴ Calls to curtail the influx of “unassimilable” Eastern European Jews – made from the turn of the century – grew louder, culminating in cross-party support for the Immigration Quota Act of 1930 that limited to a numerical quota immigrants (of whatever race or creed) born in “quota” or “non-scheduled” countries (Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Palestine, the only mandated country specifically named). Importantly, in motivating the need to curtail the influx of Eastern Europeans, Dr. Daniel François (D. F.) Malan, Minister of the Interior, Public Health, and Education, explained that the Bill subsumed the basic elements of anti-alien opinion and discourse that related essentially to the eugenicist or racial paradigm of the late 1920s: Eastern European Jews were alien to the “Nordic” soul of the nation and unassimilable. Although Malan denied that the Bill was anti-Jewish, it was apparent who the targets were.⁵

The “Jewish Question” 1930–1948

The Quota Act ushered in a popular surge of antisemitism ensuring a prominent position for the “Jewish Question” on the public agenda. Its emergence can be tied directly to the brief interregnum between the moribund “Pact” Government – an alliance between the National and Labour Parties that governed after 1924 – and the birth in June 1934 of the

3 Four population groups were popularly defined from the late nineteenth century (and formally designated by the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950): Black, White, Coloured, and Indian. Coloureds were of mixed descent. The literature sometimes refers to Blacks as Africans, while Blacks, Coloureds, and Indians are sometimes collectively referred to as “Blacks” or (historically) “non-whites”. To avoid confusion, I shall when necessary use the term black African to distinguish black Africans from Coloureds and Indians.

4 See Shain, *Roots*, chs. 2–6.

5 See Milton Shain, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930–1948* (Cape Town and Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2014), ch. 1.

United South African Party, better known as the United Party.⁶ During these years of political uncertainty – complicated by a massive “poor white” problem, the effects of the Wall Street crash, and devastating drought – Louis Weichardt (a rabble-rouser who had spent his youth in Germany) launched the “South African Gentile National Socialist Movement”, commonly known as the Greyshirts. Inspired by European fascism and Nazism, Weichardt opposed “corrupt and rotted democracy” and confidently proclaimed that the Westminster parliamentary system “was outmoded and unsuited to South Africa’s needs.”⁷

In 1934 the Greyshirts disclosed “proof” of a world Jewish conspiracy, supposedly based on a document stolen from a synagogue in Port Elizabeth, and purportedly signed by the Reverend Abraham Levy, the spiritual leader of the congregation. This document was modelled on *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and, since the Reverend Levy was implicated by name, he was able to sue for libel. Levy won the case in the Eastern Cape high court, the first time the *Protocols* had been adjudicated a fabrication in a court of law.⁸ However, this failed to dampen hostility towards Jews.

Radical Right movements subsequently mushroomed across the country, flourishing especially in the Western and Eastern Cape Province, northern Natal, and on the Witwatersrand. Doing their best to appeal to the downtrodden, the dislocated, and the unskilled, these movements consistently blamed the Jew for the country’s woes. By mid-1936 six independently branded “Shirtist” groups were operating, some breakaways, others newly created. Led for the most part by disillusioned and angry young men, these fascist clones traversed the country, aping the politics of their European mentors. Filled with conspiratorial bluster, they crudely alerted South African whites to the exploitative, menacing, and evil Jew. Propagating fantasies, flirting with notions of “Aryanism” and international Jewish conspiracies, and peddling outrageous fabrications, they took advantage of enhanced rail and road communications and improved literacy to spread their message. To harness discontent, a plethora of pamphlets, broadsheets, and newspapers littered the landscape with antisemitic hate.

6 See Patrick J. Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika: The Impact of the Radical Right on the Afrikaner Nationalist Movement in the Fascist Era* (Hanover, London, and Johannesburg: Wesleyan University Press and Witwatersrand University Press, 1991), ch. 1.

7 Louis Weichardt quoted in *Cape Times*, 27 Oct. 1933.

8 See Shain, *Perfect Storm*, 62–75.

In the main, however, Shirtist leaders were mostly petty and marginal figures, invariably at odds with one another, often financially troubled, and thin on loyalty. Maligned and even ridiculed in the mainstream press, they performed poorly on the few occasions they contested elections. Yet they demanded attention. More importantly, they succeeded in shifting the “Jewish Question” from the political margins to the centre. By 1936, Malan, the leader of the breakaway opposition “Purified” National Party (NP), was imitating their rhetoric and sharing their obsessions. In particular, the influx of German-Jewish refugees seeking to escape Hitler aroused anger.⁹ Recognizing a burgeoning opposition to the influx, bureaucrats considered ways to contain what they feared would be a flood of “unassimilable” Jewish immigrants. The “Jewish Question” now entered the national debate.

The groundswell of anti-Jewish feeling and especially demands for actions and threats against the existing Jewish community prompted the ruling United Party to introduce stiffer educational and financial requirements for purposes of immigration. These were to take effect on 1 November 1936 and resulted in an interim increase in German-Jewish immigration. At the end of October, well-attended meetings led by a group of Stellenbosch University professors protested against the arrival of the *Stuttgart* carrying 537 German-Jewish immigrants.

In an obvious response to flourishing antisemitism, coupled with a private Bill introduced by Malan to restrict Jewish immigration and stiffen naturalization laws, the ruling United Party introduced the Aliens Act of 1937 that sought to curb large-scale German-Jewish immigration. Without mentioning Jews by name, immigrants were to be permitted entry by a Selection Board on the grounds of good character and the likelihood of assimilation into the European population. Whereas 3,615 German-Jewish refugees had entered South Africa between 1933 and 1936, fewer than 1,900 entered between 1937 and 1940.¹⁰ Yet hostility did not subside. Nationalists pushed for Jewish occupational and professional quotas, their propaganda underpinned by an insistence on the prospect of Jewish domination in business and the professions. The perceived threat of radical Jewish activism in alliance with a restive black proletariat was also a source of concern. These issues penetrated debates in the 1938

9 See *ibid.*, ch. 3.

10 See Sally Peberdy, *Selecting Immigrants: National Identity and South Africa's Immigration Policies 1910–2008* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2009), 65–70.

General Election when the National Party and the radical right utilized the “Jewish Question” as a stick with which to beat the United Party.¹¹

Antisemitism was given further impetus following the South African parliament’s narrow decision to support the Commonwealth war effort against Germany in 1939. A powerful anti-war movement was orchestrated by the Ossewabrandwag (Ox-wagon Sentinel) and the Nuwe Orde (New Order) in which the appeal of fascism was strong and, with it, the rhetoric of antisemitism. A range of major National Party publications issued in the early 1940s demonstrated the formative influence of Mussolini and Hitler on the exclusivist nature of an insurgent Afrikaner nationalism in which the Jew had no place.¹² However, the struggle against Hitler gradually eroded the warm reception initially accorded Nazi and fascist ideas, and by 1942 mainstream National Party leaders were unequivocally rejecting National Socialism as an alien import into South Africa. Nonetheless, as late as 1944 an investigation into antisemitism demonstrated a continuing hostility towards Jews.¹³

Although the Prime Minister Jan Smuts opposed large-scale Jewish immigration after the war, and a few National Party figures and other radical rightists wished to maintain limitations on Jews, antisemitism declined rapidly after 1945. Importantly, the Holocaust had ended the prospect of large-scale Jewish immigration, while knowledge of these events lessened anti-Jewish bigotry.¹⁴ There was to be sure little reason to persist with any form of programmatic antisemitism. Malan had many other “wedge” issues to focus on in the 1948 general election. Shortly before the poll he reached a *modus vivendi* with Jewish leaders, and six weeks after his election as Prime Minister he assured the South African Jewish Board of Deputies – representing about 100,000 Jews – that there “would be no further talk regarding the ‘Jewish Question’ in the life and politics of the country”.¹⁵

11 See Shain, *Perfect Storm*, 194–206.

12 See William Henry Vatcher, *White Laager: The Rise of Afrikaner Nationalism* (New York and London: Frederick Praeger, 1965), 65–9; Furlong, *Between Crown and Swastika*, ch. 6; Christoph Marx, *Oxwagons Sentinel: Radical Afrikaner Nationalism and the History of the Ossewabrandwag* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2008).

13 See Shain, *Perfect Storm*, 265.

14 Some commentators chose to deny these realities: see Shain, *Perfect Storm*, 269–70; Milton Shain, “South Africa”, in *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, ed. David Wyman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 676–7.

15 See Shain, *Perfect Storm*, 285.

The apartheid decades

Now in power, the National Party's primary focus was on formalizing a new racial order. English-speakers, including Jews, were indeed necessary for the apartheid project, the National Party's putative solution to South Africa's racial problems. Colour was the essential divide, and any lingering views of the Jew not being "white" – heard earlier in the century – soon disappeared.¹⁶ Antisemitism rapidly declined. This was aided by sustained economic growth driven by a prolonged boom in the international economy, and more particularly by the attendant rapid upward mobility of whites. Tellingly, the Greyshirts and New Order disbanded, and in 1951 the ban on Jewish membership of the Transvaal NP (the NP was structured along federal lines) was lifted.

For all that, the National Party occasionally reminded Jews in the 1950s and 1960s that their disproportionate involvement in anti-apartheid and communist activities was unwelcome.¹⁷ But these allegations were never translated into widespread anger. Pretoria's increasingly close ties with Jerusalem from the early 1970s (which followed tension in the early 1960s over Israel's support for the anti-apartheid African bloc at the United Nations) further lessened government antisemitism.¹⁸ Nevertheless, a few voices on the white radical right continued to hold conspiratorial ideas about Jews and Jewish power, allegedly evident in the ideologies of liberalism and communism. For example, Ray Rudman (a prominent Greyshirt leader in the 1930s, with a network of neo-Nazi contacts after the war), Johan Schoeman (an eccentric conspiracy-driven farmer), and the journalist Ivor Benson published and disseminated a range of anti-Jewish pamphlets and booklets – often supplied from abroad and adapted to local conditions.¹⁹ "Political" Zionism too was castigated by the radical right, with Israel characterized as a locus of international manipulation and Jerusalem as the heart of nefarious global machinations. These ideas were primarily propagated through the far-right *South African Observer*, a

16 In specifying "race", formal documents often included "Hebrew" as a racial designation: see e.g. Government Notice 665 of 1937, Form D (1) (10), Clause 5 (b).

17 For this involvement see Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Hanover and London: University of New England Press, 2003), chs. 2, 3.

18 For Israeli ties with apartheid South Africa see Sasha Polakow-Suransky, *The Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: Jacana Media, 2010).

19 See Milton Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists: Antisemitism in South Africa from 1948 to the Present* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2023), chs. 2, 4.

monthly founded in 1955 by S. E. D. Brown and edited by him for more than thirty years. Jewish conspiracies as well as any deviations on the part of the government from rigid apartheid were its primary focus, but Holocaust denial also entered its columns. Brown personally gave *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century* (1975) by Arthur Butz (a standard text in the lexicon of Holocaust denial literature) a favourable review and recommended the book highly.²⁰ Ultimately, the *South African Observer* supported the creation of the Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP), founded by Albert Hertzog in 1969 when he broke away from the National Party, which it accused of ideological deviation. The HNP envisaged limited rights for Jews who would effectively be second-class citizens in a Christian society,²¹ while its newspaper, *Die Afrikaner*, edited by Beaumont Schoeman, devoted substantial efforts to Holocaust denial.²²

Limitations on Jewish rights similarly infused the radical-right Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement, AWB), founded in 1973, and other white supremacist groups that arose in response to the National Party blunting some of the sharper edges of apartheid. These movements made substantial noise in the 1980s as South Africa moved from crisis to crisis. The leader of the AWB, Eugène Terre Blanche, a man with decidedly National-Socialist sympathies, suggested that South African Jews (whom he depicted as concerned only with money and power) should be marginalized in a Christian state. No compromise with them was possible.²³ At that time, a more serious political player, Andries Treurnicht, led another breakaway from the National Party to form the Conservative Party. He too looked askance at Jews, although the party never propagated a “Jewish Question” as such. This was not the case for a range of other white supremacist groups that responded to the erosion of apartheid.²⁴

Throughout the apartheid decades (and earlier) the black African majority, as well as the Asian and mixed-descent Coloured population, seldom commented on Jews. Their struggle was against white domin-

20 *South African Observer*, Sept. 1976.

21 See *Die Afrikaner*, 13 April 1970.

22 Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 92–3.

23 See Tzippi Hoffman and Alan Fischer, *The Jews in South Africa: What Future?* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1988), 185–9; Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 99–102.

24 See Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 108–15.

ation. Yet in 1970, a study by Melville Edelstein of matriculation students in Soweto revealed that young blacks experienced greater “social distance” in relation to Jews than towards English speakers in general, although less than towards Afrikaners.²⁵ He was told that Africans loathe to part with their money were described as “stingy as a Jew”. Edelstein thought that such prejudice arose from New Testament teaching in school and church.²⁶ It may well be that there was an added cause: the resentment of blacks (including Coloureds and Indians) against Jewish traders in town and country. The stereotypes were reaffirmed in fiction by black writers (including Coloureds and Indians) where the exploitative and powerful Jew was a common theme.²⁷

These canards also crept into anti-Zionist discourse that burgeoned from the 1970s, driven largely by the Muslim minority, which numbered less than two per cent of the total population. At that time a new generation of Muslims challenged its more conservative elders, as manifest in the founding of the Muslim Youth Movement in 1970 and the Muslim Students Association in 1974.²⁸ Inspired by the death of Imam Abdullah Haron at the hands of the apartheid police and by the Soweto student uprising in 1976, activist Muslims soon called for an “Islamic way of life”.²⁹ Study programmes and camps were initiated, and manuals printed. Much of the material was provided by Islamic groups abroad that targeted Zionism, secularism, capitalism, and communism as the major threats to Islam.³⁰

25 Melville Edelstein, “What do young Africans think?” (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Relations, 1972). For another study illustrating similar findings see Stuart Buxbaum, “The Social Distance Attitudes of a Sample of African and Coloured Matriculation Pupils: A Preliminary Analysis” (Honours diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1970).

26 Melville Edelstein, “The Urban African Image of the Jew”, *Jewish Affairs* 27, no. 2 (1972): 6–8.

27 See Marcia Leveson, *The People of the Book: Images of the Jew in South African English Fiction, 1890–1992* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996).

28 For an overview see Milton Shain and Margo Bastos, “Muslim Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism in South Africa since 1945”, *Antisemitism International* 3–4 (2006): 18–30.

29 See Farid Esack, “Three Islamic Strands in the South African Struggle for Justice,” *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1988): 33; Abdulkader Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1995), 122.

30 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, 140; Muhammed Haron, “The Muslim News (1960–1986): Expressions of Islamic Identity in South Africa”, in *Muslim Identity and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, ed. Louis Brenner (London: Hurst, 1993), 222–3. In searching for a “socially relevant Islam”, South African Muslims increasingly became acquainted with the anti-state writings of Abdul A’la Mawdudi (1903–1979) and Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966), whose

Added impetus was provided by the success of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. In its wake, the writings of Ali Shari'ati (1933–1977) and the Ayatollah Khomeini were included on Muslim Youth Movement reading lists.³¹

Although Iran was not perceived as a model for South African Muslims, Qibla, an Islamist movement founded in 1980, was patently inspired by the overthrow of the Shah. Three years later this movement objected to the creation of the United Democratic Front, an anti-apartheid umbrella movement that included progressive Jewish organizations. Accusing it of being Zionist-controlled and operating at the behest of the international Jewish financial conspiracy,³² Qibla was able to tap into a deep-rooted anger that identified Zionism as the “citadel of imperialism”. Indeed, apartheid was even perceived in certain circles as a product of Jewish and Zionist manipulation.³³

It is clear that by the late 1980s a significant element among the Muslim community shared the conspiratorial ideas of the radical white right. These ideas were manifested in letters to the press and articulated in radio talk shows. Certainly, much anti-Zionist rhetoric revealed classic anti-Jewish motifs with Jews or Zionists, at least for some critics, characterized as diabolically evil. This was invariably manifest in the rhetoric associated with Al-Quds Day marches during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Into the “new” South Africa

On 2 February 1990 President F. W. de Klerk set in motion the normalization of South African politics with the unbanning of the ANC (African National Congress) and other proscribed organizations. Over the next four years a new constitution was negotiated, and all race-based legislation undone. In 1994 South Africans voted for a new democratic government. The road towards a non-racial democracy was characterized by deep debate and negotiation, widespread violence, and pockets of white resistance. Occasionally, white supremacists blamed Jews for the end of apartheid.³⁴ Indeed, Eugene Terre Blanche disrupted political

writings were serialized in *Islamic Mission*, a newsletter started by the Claremont Muslim Youth Association.

31 See Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence*, ch. 3; Desmond Charles Rice, “Islamic Fundamentalism as a Major Religiopolitical Movement and its Impact on South Africa” (M.A. diss., University of Cape Town, 1987), 438–52.

32 Ebrahim Rasool, interview in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 118.

33 *Ibid.*, passim.

34 E. g. P. J. Pretorius, *Volksverraad: Die Geskiedenis agter die Geskiedenis* (Mossel Baai: Libanon

negotiations at the World Trade Centre in Kempton Park in July 1993, holding aloft a banner reading “Hitler was right – Communism is Jewish”. When Terre Blanche appeared in court for defying a summons to testify before the Goldstone Commission (appointed in 1993 under Justice Richard Goldstone to investigate public violence and intimidation), a banner read “Who is Goldstone? King of the Jews”. The placard also displayed both a Star of David and a hammer and sickle.³⁵

As South African society transformed there were indications that the black majority was not immune to antisemitism. Already in 1990, a survey conducted by the South African Zionist Federation among urban black African “elites” showed that they harboured substantial antipathy towards Jews. Almost one in five said that the Jewish community “irritated” them because, in descending order of frequency, they were parasites, snobs, racists, anti-Christ, and unpatriotic. Almost the same proportion approved of right-wing antisemitic actions, and nearly one in three considered the Jewish community to be “mostly a liability” to South Africa.³⁶ It is not without significance that specifically “Jewish capitalists” were identified in some industrial protests and antisemitic placards displayed at several strikes around the country.³⁷

These sorts of sentiments soon merged with an increasingly vocal anti-Zionism (driven largely by the Muslim community) that often cascaded into conspiratorial fantasies, arguably the hallmark of antisemitism. This is not to suggest that anti-Zionism can axiomatically be equated with antisemitism – on which more shortly. Relatively well-educated and well-placed in the corridors of power in post-apartheid South Africa, this tiny Muslim minority managed to keep the Palestinian question uppermost in popular and party-political discourse, while enjoying substantial support among the black and white intelligentsia.³⁸ To be

Uitgewers, 1996); Advocate Pretorius claimed that the fall of the Afrikaner was plotted by the Illuminati, a secret society organized by Jews and supposedly in control of the world.

35 *The Citizen*, 18 Nov. 1993.

36 “The Attitude of White and Black Elites Towards Anti-Semitism”, Opinion Surveys Research for a New South Africa, Pretoria, 8–14 Aug. 1990. This was a methodologically questionable survey, and surveys should not be equated with actions.

37 See Jocelyn Hellig, *Antisemitism in South Africa Today* (Tel Aviv: Project for the Study of Antisemitism, Tel Aviv University, 2001), 18.

38 The black majority sympathized with the Palestinian struggle and recalled the close ties between Pretoria and Jerusalem. Fundamentally, the ANC has always abhorred ethnicity, and its intellectuals struggle to accept the notion of an ethnic state; see Milton Shain, “South Africa, Apartheid and the Road to BDS”, in *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and*

sure, in the “new South Africa”, anti-Zionist protests – often displaying blatantly anti-Jewish motifs – have enjoyed great prominence. Muslim writings reflected an increasingly paranoid cast of mind, with Jews being portrayed as “pulling all the strings”.³⁹ Global events and identification with Muslims in the Middle East sharpened boundaries between the South African Muslim community and “others”, which of course included Jews. Relations with Jews were further strained by People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) flaunting its links with Hamas and Hezbollah. A Qibla-inspired vigilante movement, PAGAD emerged amid the breakdown of law and order in the aftermath of apartheid’s demise and the loosening of the police state, and was touted as an answer to social evils.⁴⁰ It was no surprise that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* went on sale at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance (WCAR) in Durban, where South African Muslims joined their coreligionists from abroad and others hostile to Israel in what turned out to be an anti-Zionist and antisemitic hate-fest.⁴¹ One of the flyers distributed at the meeting had a picture of Hitler accompanied by the following question: “What would have happened if I had won. The Good things. There would have been no Israel and no Palestinian’s [sic] bloodshed. The rest is your guess”.⁴² Hostile anti-Jewish caricatures were also on display, with one depicting a rabbi wearing an Israeli army cap on his head and holding *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Another poster described how Passover bread was made with the blood of Muslims.⁴³

Visiting dignitaries were appalled at the outpouring of Jew-hate. “When I see something like this, I am a Jew”, noted the UN Human Rights Commissioner Mary Robinson, while the prominent ANC leader Pallo

Delegitimizing Israel, ed. Robert Wistrich (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 66–78.

39 See e.g. *Muslim Views*, March 1997; April 1997.

40 See Abdulkader I. Tayob, “Islamism and Pagad: Finding the Connection”, in *Drugs, Gangs, People’s Power: Exploring the Pagad Phenomenon*, ed. Raashied Galant and Fahmi Gamielien (Claremont, Cape Town: Claremont Main Road Masjid, 1996), 29–36.

41 See Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 145–6. For firsthand accounts see Benjamin Pogrud, *Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusation of Apartheid in Israel* (Lanham, MD, and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 157–60; Tova Herzl, *Madame Ambassador: Behind the Scenes with a Candid Israeli Diplomat* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 187–96.

42 See Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Antisemitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 486.

43 See Joëlle Fiss, *The Durban Diaries: What really happened at the UN Conference against Racism in Durban (2001)* (New York: American Jewish Committee and European Union of Jewish Students, 2008), 7.

Jordan found the disruptions “disgraceful”.⁴⁴ South Africa’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Aziz Pahad, lamented some months later that the conference “was hijacked and used by some with an anti-Israel agenda to turn it into an anti-Semitic event”.⁴⁵

Only a few days after the Durban gathering – and perhaps even inspired by the event – Sheikh Mogamat Faaik Gamieldien of Cape Town wrote a letter to the *Cape Argus* headed “The Golden Calf of Judaism”, in which he quoted with approbation *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Readers were reminded that this publication had been banned under the apartheid regime (a form of endorsement, presumably) and that it clearly provided an explanation for Zionist and Israeli actions. Gamieldien did his best to deprecate the idea of Jewish self-determination, and claimed that the Durban conference had “succeeded in exposing Zionism, the golden calf of Judaism, as actively pursuing the genocide of the Palestinian people”.⁴⁶

Holocaust denial had also crept into Islamic discourse. In 1997, Radio 786, a Muslim radio station, had to apologize for airing an interview with a Swiss German Holocaust denier, Ahmed Huber, who spoke of the “Holocaust swindle”, and in 1998, the same radio station interviewed Dr. Yaqub Zaki who, besides claiming that the “million plus” Jews who died in the Second World War had died of infectious diseases, spent much of his time engaged with elaborate Jewish conspiracies, including a bizarre connection between Jewish financiers, the South African War, Alfred Milner, and Zionism.⁴⁷

Although Muslim–Jewish relations have deteriorated in the past three decades, one should not treat the Muslim community as a monolith. Various intellectual discourses operate and compete. Some are innovative and progressive, with an emphasis on Islamic humanism and universalism; others are conservative or Islamist, at odds with religious pluralism and ecumenism.⁴⁸ Qibla and the Islamic Unity Convention, for example, were heavily influenced by Khomeinism and some of the more radical schools of Islamic thought.⁴⁹ Common to both strands, though, was a hostile critique of Zionism. In some cases, this hostility is

44 *The Guardian*, 31 Aug. 2001.

45 *Haaretz*, 27 March 2002; Pahad was speaking to the Jewish audience some months after the WCAR. See also Poggrund, *Drawing Fire*, 159–60.

46 *Cape Argus*, 6 Sept. 2001.

47 Interview with Yaqub Zaki, Radio 786, “Prime Talk”, 8 May 1998.

48 See Ebrahim Moosa, “Islam in South Africa”, in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, ed. Martin Prozesky and John de Gruchy (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), 148–51.

49 See Tayob, “Islamism and Pagad”, 30–31.

separated from anti-Jewish tropes; in others, Zionism and Judaism are conflated in a combination that incorporates fantasies, as well as notions of international Jewish finance and imperialism.

Indications that hostility towards Israel is in some quarters informed by blatant hostility towards Jews is evident in hate mail, social media abuse, verbal abuse, mass email postings, and the use of demonstrations and pamphlets, graffiti, violence and vandalism, and, of course, Holocaust denial.⁵⁰ Invariably, outpourings track the ebb and flow of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. But antisemitism is also evident at the highest levels. Thus at the time of Operation Cast Lead in 2008–9, South Africa’s Deputy Foreign Minister, Fatima Hajaig, told a mainly Muslim audience that the United States and the West were controlled by “Jewish money power”.⁵¹

The pressure persisted well after the Gaza incursion, with the Nobel Laureate Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and other prominent figures regularly castigating Israel’s actions.⁵² In 2011 the University of Johannesburg severed ties with Ben Gurion University of the Negev,⁵³ and in 2012 the Deputy Foreign Minister Ebrahim Ebrahim called on South Africans not to visit Israel.⁵⁴ During “Israel Apartheid Week” in 2013, protesters, led by the South African chapter of the international Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, disrupted a concert at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, featuring a visiting Israeli pianist.⁵⁵ Later in the year, demonstrators chanted “Dubula iJuda” (“Shoot the Jews” in Zulu) outside a concert intended to compensate for the earlier disruption. The BDS South Africa director, Muhammed Desai, defended the song, which he equated with “Kill the Boer” sung at funerals at the height of the struggle against apartheid. Although the BDS movement denies antisemitic motivation, and frames its case against “Apartheid Israel” in a human rights discourse, the line between anti-Zionism and Jew-hatred is often crossed. Notably, Africa4Palestine (an offshoot from BDS South Africa) recently expressed support for the hugely controversial

50 See e.g. “Antisemitism Report: South Africa 2014”, SA Rochlin Archives, South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Johannesburg.

51 See Mendelsohn and Shain, *Jews in South Africa*, 216.

52 See Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 150–51.

53 Ilham Rawoot and David Macfarlane, “UJ severs Ties with Israel’s Ben Gurion”, *Mail & Guardian*, 23 March 2011.

54 Raphael Ahren, “South Africa’s Deputy Minister: Don’t visit Israel”, *The Times of Israel*, 12 Aug. 2012.

55 “Antisemitism Report: South Africa 2013”, SA Rochlin Archives.

Boston “Mapping Project”, in which Jewish institutions in the U.S. city were identified and potentially targeted.⁵⁶

All the old *canards* were once again heard during Israel’s Operation Protective Edge in August 2014. In a particularly ugly communication at the time, Tony Ehrenreich, a one-time trade unionist and senior ANC-aligned politician in the Western Cape, called on those Jews supporting Zionism to leave the country,⁵⁷ while the Deputy Minister of International Relations, Marius Fransman, accused Jews of dominating business in Cape Town at the expense of others.⁵⁸ Fransman’s colleague, Sharon Davids, also made an outrageous and invented assertion when she told the Western Cape Provincial parliament that the Democratic Alliance (DA) had fabricated the drought-induced 2018 water crisis in Cape Town in order to obtain desalination contract kickbacks from the “Jewish mafia”. In addition, she attributed opposition to Mayor Patricia de Lille within the DA to the fact that de Lille was against the award of a Sea Point property in Cape Town for the purposes of building a Jewish day school.⁵⁹ “Premier Helen Zille is too much in love with the Jewish mafia”, claimed Davids. Social media has displayed even worse outrages: examples such as “Kill the Jew”, “May you burn in Hell”, “You must get out of South Africa and don’t come back, you Jewish bastards” reflect the tone.⁶⁰ Posters held

56 See Rebecca Hodes, “‘Dubul’ ijuda/Shoot the Jew’ and the Local Architecture of Anti-Semitism”, <http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2013-09-12-dibul-ijudashoot-the-jew-and-the-local-architecture-of-anti-semitism>, 12 Sept. 2013 (accessed 22 Sept. 2023); “Antisemitism Report: South Africa 2013”, SA Rochlin Archives; see Tali Feinberg, “Local Extremists endorse Antisemitic ‘Mapping Project’”, *South African Jewish Report*, 30 June 2022.

57 “If the SAJBD Wants to Advance a Zionist Agenda It Should Leave SA – COSATU WCape”, *Politicsweb*, 30 July 2014, <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/if-the-sajbd-wants-to-advance-a-zionist-agenda-it-> (accessed 9 Oct. 2023).

58 Marius Fransman, 26 Feb. 2013, reported in “Antisemitism Report: South Africa 2013”, SA Rochlin Archives; see also “Africa Check: No Evidence to support ANC Leader’s Claim that 98% of Property Owners in Cape Town are ‘White’ and ‘Jewish’”, *Daily Maverick*, 16 Oct. 2013, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-10-16-africa-check-no-evidence-to-support-anc-leaders-claim-that-98-of-property-owners-in-cape-town-are-white-and-jewish/> (accessed 22 Sept. 2023).

59 Jenni Evans, “SA Jewish Board of Deputies condemns ANC MPL’s ‘Jewish Mafia’ Statement”, *News24*, 27 Feb. 2018, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/sa-jewish-board-of-deputies-condemns-anc-mpls-jewish-mafia-statement-20180227> (accessed 22 Sept. 2023).

60 For examples of antisemitism in the social media see Annual Report, Kantor Center, Tel Aviv University, 2017, 83–5, <http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/>

aloft during marches show no distinction between opposition to Israel's policies and crude Jew-hatred.

Contemporary South Africa has, to be sure, become a comfortable space for anti-Zionists, be they Jew-haters or not. Both the electronic and print media are widely supportive of the Palestinian cause. Zionism is characterized – especially but not exclusively in the Muslim media – as immoral in conception and horrific in execution. In today's atmosphere it would be tantamount to political suicide for an ANC politician or public figure to say anything positive about the Jewish state.⁶¹

It is the tropes employed in anti-Zionist discourse which raise the spectre of antisemitism. The language often goes beyond the bounds of normal political rhetoric and frequently betrays vulgar Jew-hatred. Israel alone is signalled out for obloquy, while the controversial human rights abuses of many other states are ignored. For some, at least, anti-Zionism has become a hygienic form of antisemitism and a fig leaf for what the historian Robert Wistrich has termed “the longest hatred”.⁶²

Accounting for the ebb and flow of antisemitism

Accounting for the ebb and flow of antisemitism is complicated, and anti-Jewish hostility cannot be reduced to a single cause. The structural position of Jews and the timing of their entry into society are, in the South African case, important factors. One certainly sees a significant increase of antisemitism during times of economic and social stress. This was apparent on the Witwatersrand in the mid-1890s and in Cape Town during the economic depression that followed the South African War. It was particularly the case in the 1930s, when, in the wake of the Wall Street crash,

Doch_full_2018_220418.pdf (accessed 22 Sept. 2023).

61 One saw evidence of this in the instantaneous condemnation of South Africa's Chief Justice, Mogoeng Mogoeng, when in 2020 he lamented his government's “lopsided” attitude to the Israel–Palestine problem in a webinar hosted by the *Jerusalem Post*; see blog, 30 June 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/the-chief-justice-mogoeng-and-his-support-of-israel-633340>; *Daily Friend*, 4 July 2020; <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/naledi-pandor-views-chief-justices-comments-on-israel-with-great-dismay-20200701>. See also the comments of Mandla Mandela, the grandson of Nelson Mandela, reported 26 June 2020, <https://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/chief-justice-mogoeng-must-resign-if-he-stands-by-his-remarks-supporting-apartheid-israel-says-mandla-mandela-49966588> (all accessed 22 Sept. 2023).

62 See Robert Wistrich, *Anti-Semitism: The Longest Hatred* (London: Thames Mandarin, 1992). For the novelist Howard Jacobson, *Mother's Boy: A Writer's Beginnings* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2022), 268, anti-Zionism is “antisemitism's get-out-of-jail-free card”.

South Africa grappled with social, political, and economic instability. Some would argue that it was the alien nature of the Yiddish-speaking immigrants that underpinned much of the hostility. Jews were seen to be ineradicably different and set apart by specific cultural and religious predilections and, according to their detractors, by a racial otherness. But to account for antisemitism in terms of the conspicuousness of the victims – or, for that matter, their structural position within the economy and society – is too simplistic. Prevailing discourses, as Bryan Cheyette has argued in the British context, are inclined to construct the Jew within a pre-set frame, and no account of antisemitism can ignore the historic evolution of an anti-Jewish discourse.⁶³ Here one must consider the Christian *adversus Judaeos* legacy and Islamic anti-Jewish religious texts and narratives,⁶⁴ as well as the mutations of Jew-hate during the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, including social Darwinism and the racialization of the Jew.⁶⁵

Christian religious antisemitism in South Africa certainly cannot be entirely discounted. In the decades prior to apartheid, religious framing undoubtedly played a role, and continued to do so in the post-1948 period when neo-Calvinism powerfully informed the cultural agenda under the National Party and its offshoots. Christian National Education was instated as official schooling policy, and objections to Jews entering public life were from time to time raised.⁶⁶ The AWB, for example, undoubtedly wished to marginalize Jews on religious grounds.

For the most part, however, Jews in South Africa have not been perceived through a theological prism. General perceptions have been rooted largely in the context of South Africa's own historical reality and intellectual traditions. In this regard, nativism and ethnonationalism in

63 Bryan Cheyette, "Hilaire Belloc and the 'Marconi Scandal' 1900–1914: A Reassessment of the Interactionist Model of Racist Hatred", *Immigrants and Minorities* 8, nos. 1 and 2 (March 1989): 130–42. For the deep roots of anti-Judaism in global culture, see David Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2013).

64 For the *adversus Judaeos* tradition see Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire AD 135–425* (Liverpool: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization with Liverpool University Press, 1996). There is also a substantial literature that has focused on textual hostility to Jews and Judaism in the Qur'an and Hadith (oral tradition), which for believers is the word of God.

65 Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

66 See Shain, *Fascists, Fabricators and Fantasists*, 11–14, 88–92.

the 1920s and 1930s heightened and sharpened differences.⁶⁷ The Jew helped consolidate an all-embracing Afrikaner identity, understood in terms of cultural unity, national roots, and opposition to the foreigner, with antisemitism serving to blur class divisions and antagonisms within Afrikaner society. By employing the discourse of “race” to exclude and denigrate Jews, Afrikaners’ inferior status in society and their poverty could be explained in “racial” or national terms. Consequently, despite the upturn in the economy from the mid-1930s, it is no coincidence that antisemitism continued to suffuse specifically right-wing Afrikaner political discourse and programmes. And it is also no coincidence that the “Jewish Question” continued to be tied to internecine Afrikaner struggles, and utilized according to prevailing political needs, cultural ambitions, and power games.⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the importance of contingencies and context, the transformation of “private” into “public” antisemitism in the 1930s and early 1940s would not have been possible without the emergence and consolidation of an anti-Jewish stereotype that had long penetrated the national consciousness. Private antisemitism in this view refers “to expressions of contempt or discrimination outside the realm of public life”, while public antisemitism refers to the “eruption of anti-Semitism in political life – the injection of anti-Semitism into matters of policy and the manipulation of anti-Semitism for partisan political ends.”⁶⁹ Without this, white radical-right propaganda in the 1930s would not have been embraced at the popular level. There is, in other words, a connection and a continuity between anti-Jewish sentiment as manifest in images of and ideas about the Jew before 1930, and the anti-Jewish political programmes of the 1930s and early 1940s, but it was the specific circumstances of the 1930s that enabled the earlier sentiments to translate into party-political policy.

This analysis is confirmed by the rapid decline in anti-Jewish hostility after 1948, despite sporadic incidents of Jew-hatred and antisemitic propaganda disseminated by fringe actors and groups. Fantasies

67 There are instructive parallels to be drawn with Quebec in the interwar years, where fascist groups, such as Adrien Arcand’s Parti National Social Chrétien, similarly highlighted the allegedly negative role of Jews – a useful means of bolstering a Francophone identity founded in confession and notions of race.

68 See Shain, *Perfect Storm*, ch. 6.

69 Todd M. Endelman, “Comparative Perspectives on Modern Anti-Semitism in the West”, in *History and Hate: The Dimensions of Anti-Semitism*, ed. David Berger (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1986), 104.

persisted, but the crude and popular animosity of earlier decades largely withered away. Vulgar Hoggenheimer cartoons, for example, were used only occasionally and then with diminishing returns. Upwardly mobile Afrikaners no longer perceived the Jew as a threat, and there was little need to utilize the Jew to further *völkisch* ends. Within a few years, an emergent Afrikaner bourgeoisie, well-educated and more self-assured than its forebears, enjoyed the economic fruits of racist exploitation and political power. Afrikaners developed a newfound respect for enterprise and material success, and, as they began to experience power and mobility themselves, their sense of inferiority and fear of the Jew (by then unequivocally part of the dominant and privileged white population) began to evaporate. Simply put, prosperity blunted resentment.

Nevertheless, Jews were still associated with money and sharp business practices by some, and the scent of grand Jewish conspiracies lingered, albeit with little traction. Even the disproportionate involvement of Jews in the Treason and Rivonia trials of the 1950s and early 1960s failed to ignite party political action. However, notions of the liberal and communist Jew persisted, and, as political deviants, they were seen to threaten the apartheid project. Perceptions of subversion were reinforced and intensified by Israel's hostile stance towards South Africa in the early 1960s when the Jewish state supported the African bloc against the apartheid regime in international forums.

Yet attempts to propagate and mobilize around anti-Jewish conspiracies had little success. Even pristine neo-Calvinist exclusivism – resurrected under the HNP after 1970 and the Conservative Party and AWB in the 1980s – failed to galvanize action. By then, wrote Jonathan Hyslop, Afrikaner identification with “the modernist statist project of apartheid” had given way to rampant individualism and consumerism.⁷⁰ All the same, Jews continued to be associated with liberalism and communism. Of course, a kernel of truth underpinned these notions: Jews were indeed over-represented on the white radical left and prominent among liberal opponents of the National Party, and Israel was vocal in its opposition to apartheid in the early 1960s.⁷¹ Yet, chimerical or irrational cosmic

70 Jonathan Hyslop, “Why did Apartheid’s Supporters capitulate? ‘Whiteness’, Class and Consumption in Urban South Africa 1985–1995”, *Society in Transition* 31, no. 1 (2000): 36–7.

71 This “kernel of truth” notion with regards to antisemitism has been succinctly raised by Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Antisemitism in Germany and Austria* (London: Peter Halban, rev. ed. 1988), 14–15, reflecting on the German and Austrian experience. This

fantasies about Jews – arguably the hallmark of antisemitism – seemingly served psychological and social needs, and were demonstrably connected to centuries of antisemitic pathology.⁷² The continuing circulation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* illustrates this. For “the losers” its message is especially appealing, writes Stephen Bonner, as blame for political failure could be shifted onto the “alien” outsider.⁷³ More generally, however, fantasies, including Holocaust denial and the belief that Israel serves as the locus of international Jewish power (a sort of Jewish Vatican), suggest “paranoia”.⁷⁴ In the final analysis, it seems that fabrications and conspiratorial fantasies offer simple explanations for what the historian David Nirenberg calls “fearful complexity”.⁷⁵ So-called facts can be shoehorned into a supposedly logical consistency, and hatred or anger – whatever its aetiology – projected onto a chosen target.⁷⁶

This is certainly the case for remnants of the white radical right and for those Muslims who disseminated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and denied the Holocaust at the WCAR in 2001. In the search for simple answers to complex issues, both the anti-Zionist left and the radical right share an image of an omnipotent Jew – one undermining and the other embracing apartheid (as manifest in the Pretoria–Jerusalem axis of the 1970s and 1980s). Convergence in the sense of a shared image of the all-powerful Jew is also apparent in the use of antisemitic tropes: Israel – the Jew writ large – is seen as the centre of a vast conspiracy, nefariously manipulating global and South African politics and finance. In the

basis of reality also informs Fritz Stern’s understanding of late nineteenth century German antisemitism. See also Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1979), xix.

72 Fantasies or “chimerical stereotypes” have no “kernel of truth”: Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1990), 306.

73 See Stephen Eric Bonner, “Conspiracy Then and Now: History, Politics, and the Anti-Semitic Imagination”, in *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ed. Richard Landes and Steven T. Katz (New York and London: New York University Press, 2012), 220–21.

74 As noted by Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 3–4, 37, this was not paranoia in a clinical sense, but rather paranoia reflected in “the curious leap in imagination that is always made at some critical point in the recital of events”.

75 See Nirenberg, *Anti-Judaism*, 466.

76 Umberto Eco puts it well: “it is not the Protocols that produce antisemitism, it is people’s profound need to single out an Enemy that leads them to believe in the Protocols”; in Will Eisner, *The Plot: The Secret Story of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), “Introduction”, vii.

words of Martin Jansen, a prominent member of the Palestine Solidarity Committee, “the powerful tentacles of Zionist power and influences reaches [sic] into the commanding heights of our economy and the ANC government through business arrangements and patronage, including President Zuma and family members.”⁷⁷ This kind of statement connects seamlessly to a long history of Jew-hatred, facilitated in today’s world by ubiquitous social media (particularly the internet’s hate-filled sites) which include South African locations.⁷⁸ Speed and connectivity are everything, explains Robert Wistrich: “The ‘new’ Judeophobes can take the age-old anti-Semitic narrative, link it to highly inflammatory images of real conflict (Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon), and spread a toxic message of fanaticism and Jew-hatred that can reach millions of people at the click of a mouse”.⁷⁹

Israel has now become a locus of hate. In South Africa this is driven primarily, but not exclusively, by Muslims.⁸⁰ Many human rights-oriented elites – both black and white, Christian and Muslim – consider Zionism (essentially a nineteenth-century ethnonational movement) to be illegitimate. There is little empathy for ethnic politics in South African thought today, which, as Hermann Giliomee put it, is informed by “a dogmatic or intransigent universalism.” “Its point of departure”, he writes, “is that race or ethnicity as a principle of social organization is essentially irrational and ephemeral and that there is no need to make any concessions to it. What this boils down to is the unshakeable conviction that there is not much more to racial or ethnic identification than the legacy of apartheid classification.”⁸¹ Such views are widely shared in progressive circles. Certainly, the ANC, dating back to its foundation document, the Freedom Charter of 1955, has little time for ethnic politics or what it sees

77 Martin Jansen, “Why we must support the BDS Campaign”, *Muslim Views*, Aug. 2014.

78 For a hostile domestic site, see “HistoryReviewed”, <http://historyreviewed.best/index.php/2020/12/>. Established by the Zimbabwean-born Jan Lamprecht, this white supremacist/nationalist site specializes in attacks on the South African government, white nationalist struggles, Holocaust denial, and global and South African Jewry.

79 Wistrich, *Lethal Obsession*, 600.

80 E.g. the Palestinian Solidarity Committee established ties with important groups beyond the Muslim community such as the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the SACP; see Goolam Vahed, “Islam in the Public Sphere in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Prospects and Challenges”, *Journal for Islamic Studies* 27 (2007): 136–7.

81 Hermann Giliomee, “Manipulating the Past”, in *Political Correctness in South Africa*, ed. Rainer Erkens and John Kane-Berman (Johannesburg: South African Institute for Race Relations, 2000), 93–4.

as “tribalism”. It has always viewed such politics as a means to divide and rule, manifest in the apartheid project with its proposed puppet ethnic “homelands”.⁸² Archbishop Desmond Tutu went so far as to declare “native” cultural identities as little more than an excrescence of colonial racism – something a democratic nation should not countenance.⁸³

For the critics of Zionism, historic ties between Jews and the “Land of Israel” are of no consequence. An important dimension of Jewish identity is thereby fundamentally challenged. In power since 1994, the ANC has effectively separated “good” from “bad” (Zionist) Jews. Their Chief Representative at the United Nations, Dr. Neo Mnumzama, put it as follows in 1988:

Jews in South Africa come in many different political colours. There are those who belong to the Zionist movement and represent the same reality which is concretised in the state of Israel, and we disapprove of those members of the Jewish community who have these Zionist affiliations. There are also Jews who belong to the broad struggle against apartheid. We see such members of the Jewish community in a positive light. There are also Jews who belong to the African National Congress, which is the national liberation movement of the South African people. We see them in an even more positive light.⁸⁴

For all that, it is significant that the character of nationalism in South Africa today is (at least formally) inclusive in orientation and non-racial in content. Pluralism, multiculturalism, and “rainbowism” – the very antithesis of ethnonationalism – take the sharpness out of ethnic conflict and militate against antisemitism. South Africa’s “rainbow” nation celebrates diversity and difference. Cultural rights and religious freedom are enshrined in the new South African Constitution, while Church and State are separated.⁸⁵ This is far removed from the apartheid state and

82 For the intellectual origins of this anti-Zionist worldview see Milton Shain, “The Roots of Anti-Zionism in South Africa and the Delegitimization of Israel”, in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 397–413.

83 See Jean and John Camaroff, “Reflections on Liberalism, Postculturalism and ID-ology: Citizenship and Difference in South Africa”, *Social Identities* 9, no. 4 (2003): 445.

84 Dr. Neo Mnumzama, interview in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 71. It would be fair to state that similar sentiments are shared by the ANC’s alliance partners, COSATU and the SACP.

85 The Bill of Rights states that the government may not discriminate directly or indirectly against any individual based on religion; in addition, no one may deny members of a religious group either the right to practise their religion or to form, join, or maintain

the exclusivist and triumphalist character of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s. Equally important is the condemnation of classic antisemitism by political leaders in recent years. Unlike the Nationalists of the 1930s, the ANC has not manipulated whatever anti-Jewish sentiment exists for political gain.⁸⁶ Recently, however, condemnations of antisemitism have become more tepid. There are, indeed, disturbing signs that many South Africans have turned away from non-racism and multiculturalism.⁸⁷

More concerning is a burgeoning Muslim anti-Zionist discourse that in some cases appears to be simple Jew-hatred. Much of this is driven by a radicalized minority that is well connected to a global network. Some of this hatred is tied to historically contingent factors. For example, in the Western Cape where most Muslims reside, some of the anger is underpinned by historic landlord–tenant relations in the inner city, encounters between employers and employees in the textile industry (where Jews were prominent as employers and Muslims as employees), and, of course, a general anger at white privilege with which Jews are associated. Ebrahim Rasool captured some of these perceptions: “the Jewish community is also by and large the business community, the owners of the big shops, the factories. More often than not, our relationship with the Jewish community is one where we are around negotiating tables with them. Our workers are striking at their factories and so forth”.⁸⁸ Farid Esack put it even more bluntly when discussing Muslim attitudes to Jews that were embedded in a particular relationship:

All the normal prejudices, that Jews are misers, the longnosed ones, the sellouts, that you can't trust the Jews and this, that and the other. All those prejudices are in the Muslim community. There is a very intense hostility towards Jews amongst Muslims. The one is the ordinary contact that our mothers and fathers had with Jews. The contact with Jews was that the Jew was the debt collector or the money lender. There is this ongoing antagonism between the money collector and the person who

religious associations with other members of that group.

86 The one exception has been in the Western Cape where in the 2000 local government elections, Tony Leon, a Jew and leader of the DA, was identified as a Zionist and his wife a Mossad agent; personal communication. With regard to censuring see Dawood Khan to South African Jewish Board of Deputies, “An Open Letter of Apology”, 7 April 1993, South African Jewish Board of Deputies, National Executive Council, Minutes of the Meeting, 23 May 1993, SA Rochlin Archives.

87 At the same time there are interesting indications of emerging identity politics.

88 Ebrahim Rasool, interview in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 115.

has to pay the money, which I guess would be this way in any kind of society. Muslims, however, would know that this guy was a Jew. The black Christian neighbour in the community would consider this man as just another white man.⁸⁹

A dialectical relationship thus operates between negative stereotyping embedded in historic encounters, religious differences, radical teachings, and specific realities. In other words, even without the close ties between the apartheid state and Israel from the late 1960s to 1990, tensions would have been unavoidable. Importantly, however, a decidedly anti-Jewish tone has crept into anti-Zionist rhetoric. Taj Hargey, a Muslim academic, explains this in terms of an “incompetent clergy” which was unable to deal with Zionism on an “intellectual and rational basis”, and was thus obliged to resort to “sheer emotive” antisemitism: “So they go onto *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, they mention other scurrilous material, usually long noses, being stingy – the Shylock type imagery of Jews”.⁹⁰

Hargey’s observations are important: patently anti-Jewish motifs are often embedded in Muslim anti-Zionist discourse and propaganda. This informs the rhetoric associated with Al-Quds Day during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and propaganda that emphasized Jewish power, cunning, and duplicity – indicative of the easy shift from criticism of Israeli behaviour to something more sinister.⁹¹ This sort of conflation was noted decades ago by the Muslim intellectual Farid Esack: “Nothing that the Jews do will be enough for Muslims”, he explained in response to a question asking if Jews would be accepted by the Muslim community if they renounced all recognition and support for Israel.⁹²

With hindsight, it is apparent that hostility to Jews in South Africa has gone through various phases, each phase rooted within a different cultural and political context.⁹³ Notably, in each case “the Jew” has

89 Farid Esack, interview in *ibid.*, 126.

90 Taj Hargey, interview in *ibid.*, 155.

91 See Farid Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: One World, 1997), 218.

92 Esack, interview in Hoffman and Fischer, *Jews in South Africa*, 128.

93 It is hoped that scholars will in time productively locate and entangle (to use a notion suggested by Jonathan Judaken) parallel and overlapping hatreds of others in South Africa; Jonathan Judaken, “Introduction”, in “Rethinking Anti-Semitism”, AHR Roundtable, *American Historical Review* (Oct. 2018): 1122–38. It is certainly the case that hatred of Jews is often shared with hatred of blacks in South Africa.

been identified as a source of evil: at the turn of the century, it was for fomenting war, corroding business ethics, and corrupting society; in the 1930s and early 1940s for pulling the political and economic strings of society; and in recent decades (in some of the discourse of anti-Zionism) for malevolently orchestrating global politics and financial affairs in a quest for world domination. In this sense the radical right and the contemporary anti-Zionist left share much with the left-liberal J. A. Hobson whose work on imperialism deeply influenced Lenin.⁹⁴ Writing at the end of the nineteenth century and informed by the so-called logic of capitalism and its ties to imperialism, Hobson saw Jews as orchestrating the South African War for financial gain. Like the Hobsonians on the left and the radicals on the right, some anti-Zionists today have constructed a fantasy world with the malevolent and manipulative Jew at its centre.

94 See Irina Filatova and Apollon Davidson, ““We the South African Bolsheviks”: The Russian Revolution and South Africa”, *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 4 (2017): 951, n. 72.