

Lamed-E

A Quarterly Journal of Politics and Culture
Selected and Edited by Ivan Ninic

Winter 2024

Number 65

On returning

By Predrag Finci

Barefoot, beaten, in rags, on his knees. The laying of the anguished father's reassuring hands on his son. This is Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. I pictured myself in the painting when I used to sneak into my room in my parents' house after days and days of roaming... It is no longer the case. My country was ravaged by the war, and my mother died in the war. In my parents' house there are new faces. The image of home is at times made feminine, as a symbol of shelter and refuge, then at times it is an image of patriarchal authority, to which one has to subjugate or from which one has to detach oneself. The stories about "domicile", "going home", "place of birth" and "hearth" were told by those who came from the rural areas to my city. Returning home became a pastoral theme for me, the idealised image of the village whose offspring do not go back. I am not one for returns: I parted with my friends once and for all, I did not go back to old flames, not even to once finished texts...

"Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death..." (*Job*, 10, 21). One leaves for a foreign land, adventure, exile... From the legend of Job through Hamlet until the present day it has been repeated over and over again that there is no return. Nevertheless, there is a famous epic about a return – Ulysses. (Luko Paljetak wrote that he hates Ulysses "only because he returned", to which my always high spirited friend commented: "And I hate Penelope because she was waiting for too long".) The return to the familiar is an end to an adventure, voyage, and sometimes it is a sign of a defeat. In my required reading I learned that returning is not the best outcome. Such was Krleža's *The Return of Philip Latinowicz*. I myself have experienced that it was

not the wisest decision, that "home is just further and further away".

Stay here, and if you go away do not return – thus one can sum up the poetics of nostalgia (homesickness) sprung from the country of my origin. One goes back to something that one has left. Just as there is no such thing as "return to philosophy" to the one who is obsessed with philosophical issues, who lives with philosophy, so there is no return to the home for those who physically left home, but never left it within themselves. "Back to basics" is a Hegelian concept of foundation. One cannot leave something that is the personal foundation of one's being. It is with you, overt or covert. The past is the shadow of your being. At times a phantom you are trying to run away from, at times a refuge. There are more than few of my fellow countrymen who still say things like "I haven't got a dinar to my name", "I am on my way to carsija", "I see my raja", they speak to the confused officials in their mother tongue, and all this is happening in London. I used to say to myself, filled with Benjaminian melancholy, that I go back home in my books, in my language, in my memories. I used to say that I have never left myself or my home, that I come back to myself and everything that is mine through introspection, I used to believe that there has something fatal in leaving, and something touching in returning.

My fellow Bosnian is driving me to the airport. "First, we said we would never go back. Then, when the going gets rough over here, we'll go back. Now some are going there to gather whatever is left of their possessions, others go to funerals. Almost everybody tells me that their friends were happy to see them, whereas their colleagues gave them a frosty reception. I would also like to go and visit the place, but I'd like to see no-one." Then he changes his mind: "No, I ain't going back, I left once..." A life changing decision is full of oaths, life is full of its negations.

"So. You've come to visit..." a fellow traveller asks me on board the plane. "After how long?"

”Ten years”.

A woman I know boasted how welcome they made her feel in Sarajevo. “It was fabulous. I know the people there are having tough time, though, and I myself could not go through it any more...” as if she is trying to convince others and herself that they still like her, that she has not been cast out by them (a fear of rejection is always two-way), while at once she justifies leaving her hometown, so she hastily adds that now “she is much better off than they are, I have not made a mistake by leaving. I’ll go there again, but only for a short visit...”. Again to gather the superficial impressions, akin to a carefree visitor. Truly back are those whose lives are completely back in the place of return, those who have restarted everything all over again. And whoever went back had their reasons. To continue with their career, to be respected, to find a better job (position), to be with their own, to avoid battling with the tricks of a foreign language’s grammar, to help his own people, to be on his own soil, and some were expelled too...

At the Sarajevo airport a customs officer greeted me in English and I automatically replied also in English, then corrected myself quickly. I was shown the counter for foreigners. I was filling out a form. “Place of birth”: “Sarajevo”. No-one is waiting for me. My flat was declared “vacant”, I am not carrying a key around my neck. I am used to being relieved from the burden of possession either by my relatives or by the state. I live in London, my sister is in Vienna, my son in The Hague (when I mentioned that in a bar, a fellow jumped, and I hastily added “oh, he works there”), my relatives either died or scattered. We are trying to preserve closeness via the internet. I am no longer surprised to hear that I am a guest in my own home town.

I sit next to a peasant woman on the bus. “It’s nice you sat next to me, it is good to have company”. Shelled empty houses with broken windows like black eye hollows, broken fences, beehives turned over, burnt down schools, new luxurious houses, glitzy restaurants...

I order a meal in a small inn, “bring me a large portion”, I say.

The waiter measures me, “It’s gonna be too much for ya”. Oh, yes, I am definitely back.

I am strolling down the streets (*ma jeunesse est finie...*) some of which have the names of people I used to know. One of my acquaintances is surprised to see me: “I thought you were dead?” I almost apologise.

Many smiling faces, heartfelt greetings. “When did you get here? How long will you be staying? How’s things over there? How’s your lady wife? Well, you see we are kinda bearing up...” I tell people that they have not changed, everyone tells me in return that I have not changed. We ‘d like to have everything as it used to be, that nothing has vanished. Then silence. The gap of different lives. Our present is divided by space, our lives are distant, we do not share common interests, worries, concerns, goals, but as soon as we sink into memories the void descends yet again. “Don’t tell me that you have come just for a few days, you’d better stay, so that you will be fucked up like the rest of us”, Nenad tells me.

Another acquaintance, a poet kisses me: “I haven’t seen you for a hundred years”, he yells, then lowers his voice: “Buy me a drink I am skint.” Some things never change.

I am asking about a friend’s daughter. “Oh, she married a Muslim.” Some years ago they would have commented on his profession, his birth place, his age, maybe even his family background.

I enter the University building where I spent many years working. I do not know one single student, and they do not know me. A slight unease. Then I tell my colleagues I have no intention of coming back, I will not ask for my position back, I will stay in England. “Wise”, agrees my colleague, and I nod, although I am not sure what he has in mind. I ask after absent colleagues. Dead, on pension, grew old... The ones “who went to the other side of the front” we hardly mention. I am more interested in my childhood friends (only childhood is indestructible) with whom I am linked by tender memories, closeness and a feeling of reliability, mates I talk to as if we were together only yesterday. One’s homeland is place where everything is of concern to you, the only place where you feel you have never left. And if I said that “everything is different” I would know exactly in what way.

One leaves for the unknown, for the new, and one returns to the familiar and predictable. Everyone returns to their home with some bitterness and a smile, with enormous grief and joyous anticipation. The dreamers would like to make a pompous melodrama out of their return, and so often they are met with reluctant scrutiny and fear of rejection. Many say that they expect nothing from their old home, and yet they hope for everything. Every one of us is what he has always been, and even more so what he has become in the meantime. One does not relinquish one’s

identity in departure, it is in fact reinforced, but upon return it is re-examined: Do I still retain my original roots? Where are they now, which are mine? Both in departure and in return the difference is expressed and multiplied in identity. The real issue of return is the issue of the possibility of a true encounter – the encounter with one's own self and with the Other. Can we achieve genuine communication and membership of our community once again? We would like to compensate for our loss and pay our debts on return, but we only confirm the losses.

The return is a twofold experience: the return to the perception of the familiar and to the inner measure of things. Everything has changed in relation to the cemented memory of all things past. The return is based on a desire for a repetition of things past, to locate the lost "sameness". But you cannot step twice into the same rivers (Heraclites, Fragment 91). In each return we return to the old which is novel, we come back to the same old, which is no longer. Not the place, not the person. Therefore, every return is much more a poetic metaphor or a symbolic gesture, than a real experience. In terms of a real event, the return home becomes an echo of times past, re-enacted only through memories, which reveals the reality of the personal identity, identity in which to be home means to be with oneself, the identity which is shaped in the dramatic "In-between": between home and the world, between memories and oblivion, between the restored and the lost. The returnee confronts himself and his world once more – confronts what still IS and what is no longer. That is why in all returnees there is sadness and joy, that is why in all returns there is so much sad joy.

(On the other side, on the bench, Svjetlana. She is adjusting her hair, smiling, she is in good spirits, but I dare not approach her, for I know that she died, it's been a year now).

November 4, 2022



Predrag Finci

Is anti-Zionism antisemitism? It doesn't matter

By Yossi Klein Halevi

It is time to shift gears and recognize that the delegitimization of Israel is the greatest threat facing the Jewish people today

While there is an obvious overlap between antisemitism and other forms of hatred against the "other," Jew-hatred is unique. No other antipathy to any group has such deep historical roots, beginning in pagan Egypt and the Hellenistic world, where the Jewish refusal to acknowledge the divinity of kings was regarded as intolerable arrogance and monotheism as an affront to the "religious pluralism" of the gods. No other hatred is so adaptable to seemingly any ideology and circumstance.

In its way, the persistence of antisemitism through most of recorded history is as astonishing as Jewish survival. Antisemitism has even managed to outwit its most formidable challenge, the Holocaust.

Conflating antisemitism with racism does an injustice to both. Each is distinct; each creates its own misery. Depending on the era, antisemitism has been nurtured by religion, secularism, utopian longings, racism, and anti-racism.

The term "anti-Semitism" is an invention of nineteenth-century European racists.

Acknowledging that there is no such thing as "Semitism," many now prefer the term "antisemitism," removing the capital "S" and the hyphen. Even in its amended form, though, the term is problematic and implicitly reinforces the identification of Jew-hatred with racism. (Given the pervasive use of the term, this article reluctantly uses "antisemitism" as synonymous with Jew-hatred.)

Defining antisemitism

Antisemitism is the transformation of the Jews into "The Jew," a symbol of whatever a given civilization regards as its most loathsome qualities. For Christians until the post-Holocaust era, The Jew was a Christ-killer, guilty of the ultimate crime of trying to murder the source of hope. For Muslims, The Jew was the "killer of prophets," the ultimate crime for a faith founded in veneration of the Prophet. For Marxists, The Jew was the ultimate capitalist; Marx, the son of a

Jew who converted to Christianity, wrote that money was the “jealous god of Israel.” And for Nazis, The Jew was the ultimate race polluter and, no less dangerous, the inculcator of conscience, undermining the Aryans’ ability to survive in a brutal world.

Along with “symbolization,” anti-Jewishness works through “denialism” – the distortion or outright denial of the legitimacy of Jewish identity and history or the co-option of the Jewish story by others. According to the old Christian doctrine of “supersessionism,” the sinful Jews were no longer worthy of their identity as “Israel,” and their place as God’s chosen people was supplanted by the Church, the “new Israel.” To a lesser extent, Islam adopted biblical stories and claimed biblical figures as its own, accusing the Jews of falsifying their own scriptures. Arguably, no other people or faith (and the Jews are both) has had to contend through most of its history with a spiritual assault of this magnitude on its right to its own story. In the modern era, that assault assumed a secular form. In much of the Muslim world, led by the Iranian regime, and for neo-Nazis in the West, Holocaust denial is an attempt to undermine the moral argument for Israel as a necessary refuge for the Jewish people. But there are also more subtle forms of Holocaust denial. The Soviet Union, for example, did not deny the historicity of the Holocaust but rather its Jewish nature. The Soviet regime forbade Jews from publicly mourning their dead. Memorials at the sites of Nazi mass murder commemorated the unnamed as “victims of Fascism” – twice murdered, as Soviet Jews noted bitterly: killed as Jews by the Nazis and erased as Jews by the Soviets.

Defining anti-Zionism

Subsequently, the Soviet regime went a step further, from the erasure of the Holocaust to its inversion, equating Zionism with racism and even Nazism. The notion of Zionism as a form of racism was born in the Soviet Union. The regime understood that the only way to justify Jew-hatred from the left was through anti-racism. That ingenious ideological twist is the Soviet Union’s posthumous gift to Western anti-Zionists. Is anti-Zionism, then, the latest iteration of antisemitism? Much of contemporary anti-Zionism uncomfortably fits the historic pattern of both symbolization and denialism. In the era of anti-racism and human rights, the Jewish state is turned into the criminal of nations, a symbol of racism and colonialism, and now even genocide. Reaching this conclusion requires a heavy dose of denialism: the erasure of the Zionist narrative, from the millennial-old Jewish roots in the land

of Israel to the relentless war against Israel’s existence, which has forced Israel to act in sometimes brutal ways.

According to the anti-Zionist variation of supersessionism, sinful Israel has ceded its story to the Palestinians, who are, in effect, the new Jews, both as victims and as rightful heirs to the Holy Land. We are not only colonialists in our land but, in our story, imposters who must be expelled from both. In their fallen state, Jews have even forfeited the Holocaust; in this retelling, Gaza becomes the “Gaza Ghetto.” When a swastika is painted on the façade of a synagogue, it is no longer clear whether the perpetrators are far-rightists celebrating Nazism or far-leftists branding Jews as the new Nazis. Astonishingly, the current rise in attacks on Jews coincides with the greatest mass slaughter of Israelis in a century of conflict between Arabs and Jews. The global assault emerged with the first reports of the Hamas massacre – before Israel’s counter-offensive even began.

Antisemitism is a response not only to Jewish power, real or exaggerated but also to Jewish vulnerability; a successful attack on Jews rouses the antisemitic appetite.

The pretext offered for the widespread support among anti-Zionists for the Hamas massacre is based on two “denialist” arguments. The first is that the massacre was the inevitable result of the Israeli occupation. This argument ignores the fact that Hamas’ goal is not the end of the occupation of the territories Israel won in the 1967 Six-Day War but the destruction of the Jewish state. And it ignores the complicated history of how we have come to this point, including Palestinian rejection of every offer Israel has made over the years to end the occupation.

The second argument in support of the Hamas massacre is that it was not a massacre at all. There were no mass rapes; children weren’t burned alive. This latest expression of anti-Jewish denialism has taken the macabre form of tearing down posters of Israeli hostages, even blacking out their faces – a literal defacement. Embracing Hamas requires adopting its denial of the humanity of Israelis.

The British Jewish writer David Hirsh argues that the term “anti-Zionism” should be treated like “anti-Semitism,” removing the hyphen and lowercasing the “z.” Similar to the absence of meaning in “Semitism,” he notes “Zionism” for radical progressives is a fantasy construct, a demonic ideology with no resemblance to its actual nature. Historical Zionism incorporates almost the entirety of Jewish political and religious life – from social democrats to Marxists, from theocrats to Reform Jews to secular liberals. To reduce “Zionism” to a form of colonialism not only does violence to the Jews’ attachment to

their ancient land but to the complexity of Zionism itself.

The real threat of anti-Zionism

And yet, the total conflation of anti-Zionism with classical antisemitism is problematic. To begin with, some anti-Zionists are proudly identifying Jews who argue that Zionism has betrayed Judaism by replacing an ethical tradition with nationalism and power. Many, perhaps most, of the young people demonstrating against Israel on campuses today – even those chanting the Hamas slogan, “From the river to the sea,” which promotes the erasure of the Jewish state – are not inherently antisemitic.

More deeply, the contemporary reality of Jewish power complicates an easy identification of anti-Zionism with antisemitism. In the past, hatred against Jews was based on contrived accusations. “The Jews” did not kill Christ, and no Jew used the blood of Christian children for matzos. But thousands of Gazan children have been killed by a Jewish army.

Like most Jewish Israelis, I believe we have no choice but to attempt to destroy the Hamas regime, which has turned mosques, schools, and hospitals into terrorist centers. Still, in reclaiming power after the Holocaust – “hard power” in Israel, “soft power” in the Diaspora – the Jewish people forfeited the identity of the victim. While acting in self-defense against genocidal enemies does not turn us into victimizers, power does deny us the right to dismiss all accusations against us as absurd.

Still, does it really matter whether anti-Zionism is a form of classical antisemitism? Anti-Zionism is the greatest threat facing the Jewish people today; surely, that should be sufficient to treat it as a menace on its own terms.

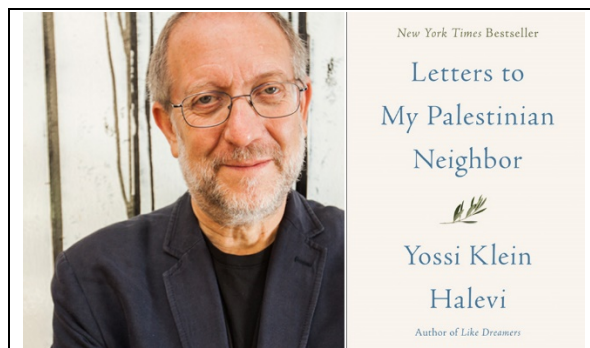
Anti-Zionism threatens the Jewish people in three ways. First, its vision of the dismantling of a Jewish state would existentially threaten Israel’s 7 million Jews. To conclude, after October 7, 2023 – when we experienced a pre-enactment of the consequences of the anti-Zionist plan – that Israelis can survive in the Middle East without the protection of national sovereignty and an army defies reason.

Second, anti-Zionism is an assault on the legitimacy of the mid-twentieth-century Jewish story of overcoming annihilation. The fulfillment of the Jewish people’s longing to return home was the foundation of the post-Holocaust recovery. To turn that story of faith, courage, and persistence into a crime is to subvert the pillar of contemporary Jewish identity, shared by the strong majority of world Jewry.

Third, anti-Zionism threatens the historic achievement of American Jewry, which is unconditional acceptance by the non-Jewish mainstream. In the past, Jews were accepted as Americans – provided they “toned down” their Jewishness. Anti-Zionists have reintroduced conditionality; now, Jews must renounce their attachment to Israel as the condition for their acceptance.

Jews and their friends should not be required to prove that a mortal threat is literally antisemitic to be justified in resisting it. We need to shift the conversation over anti-Zionism and focus on its dire implications for the Jewish future.

This essay appeared in the most recent edition, devoted to antisemitism, of the American Bar Association’s magazine, “Human Rights.”



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THE TIMES OF ISRAEL



Contested remembrance of the Holocaust in post- communist Europe

By Jelena Subotić¹

This paper explores the ways in which the memory of the Holocaust in post-communist Europe has become appropriated to represent other types of historical crimes. I demonstrate how the familiar narratives and images of the Holocaust have been appropriated for three major purposes: to promote narratives of competitive victimization, to criminalize communism, and to advance myths of European unity. I illustrate these arguments with brief examples of contested commemorative practices of the Holocaust in Poland, Lithuania, and the House of European History in Brussels. The analysis shows that the continuing contestation about the Holocaust has produced many opportunities for Holocaust instrumentalization, which has serious political consequences in the present.

Keywords: Holocaust, memory, post-communist Europe, communism, narratives

In the aftermath of the communist collapse, evident first with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and then with the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, newly independent post-communist states were confronted with the need to carry out a thorough rewriting of their state identities, ideologies, and national myths. This rewriting was necessary to establish different forms of political legitimacy in the newly emerged, confusing, unstable, and unsettled post-communist order.

A large part of the new post-communist international agenda was the project of “rejoining Europe” after five decades of cultural, political, and social isolation. To “come back to Europe,” East Central European states needed to systematically erase the legacy of the fifty years of communism that had removed them from Europe’s center. Instead, they were to replace that legacy by embracing a set of perceived core European values, identities, and political cultures. Some of this “return to Europe” was ideational, normative, and rhetorical, but much of it was very practical and quite institutionalized. Most directly, it involved applications for membership

in various European bodies — most importantly the European Union.

Being part of a united European project, after fifty years of ideological fracture, would also mean pursuing a shared history, a common understanding of Europe’s past, and shared ways of remembering (Judt 2005, Müller 2002, Littoz-Monnet 2012). European unity necessitated a patched-up history. Thus, casting off communism’s undesirable legacy also meant rearranging state biographies, which were built on historical memories of recent and distant national pasts, and especially memories of various and overlapping occupations.

Hence, the attempt to introduce a cosmopolitan, pan-national memory of the Holocaust into post-communist states in East Central Europe has created an especially acute case of insecurity in these states. Holocaust memory, especially Holocaust memory that was introduced from the West, threatened to displace the already-solidified memory of other occupations, such as occupations by the Soviet Union and was therefore perceived as a hostile intrusion into the collective national memory that had already taken shape.

The Holocaust in Europe’s Contested Historical Memory

The project of European biographical unity encountered serious and, as it turned out, insurmountable obstacles when it came to the history of World War II, a series of occupations, and especially the Holocaust. Few events in 20th-century Europe were as broadly meaningful and consequential as the Holocaust. Its various (if often conflicting) narratives of genocide, survival, heroism, rescue, and the promise of “never again” served as a foundational story for the European Union, one that gave the political project of the European Union great significance and broad appeal (Assmann 2014). Not only did the Holocaust serve as an example of the endpoint of the politics of racism, exclusion, and violence, but the commemorative practices that developed around it (museums, memorials, monuments, days of remembrance) became widely dispersed and diffused as examples of how the past — including *other* pasts, *other* histories, and *other* historical crimes, such as occupations — should be remembered and memorialized (Young 1993). In fact, over time, as Levy and Sznajder detailed in their influential 2002 essay “Memory Unbound,” the Holocaust became detached from the historical moment of the Nazi Holocaust of Europe’s Jews and further victim groups in the 1940s and developed into a broader narrative, no longer limited to that precise historical time and place, about crimes against humanity and about the

defense of human rights everywhere. This is what the “cosmopolitan memory” of the Holocaust came to represent: no longer a memory of the Holocaust alone, but instead a broadly shared, *exemplary* narrative of human rights atrocities and their remembrance — particularly, a narrative that is accepted across borders and across national imaginations (Levy and Sznajder 2002, Baer and Sznajder 2017, Dubiel 2003). This feature of cosmopolitan Holocaust memory has been evident, for instance, in the massive proliferation of Holocaust museums and monuments around the world, especially since the 1990s, including in many countries that had very little, if any, actual historical relationship to the Holocaust (Duffy 2001). The implication of this diffusion of cosmopolitan Holocaust memory and memorialization practices was that these models of Holocaust remembrance became, over time, another way in which states for whom European identity remained liminal (such as in post-communist East and Central Europe) could perform European identity. Holocaust remembrance, in the words of Tony Judt, became a “European entry ticket” (Judt 2005, 803) for many post-communist states that otherwise had little interest in revisiting the difficult and often-implicatory history of the Holocaust. In fact, Holocaust remembrance soon became *obligatory* in the post-communist East’s “Europeanization” process; as the European Union made its Eastern European enlargement conditional on many domestic reforms, education about and memorialization of the Holocaust became one of the explicit expectations that candidate states were required to meet.

In the first decade after the collapse of communism, the European Union passed a series of resolutions that dealt specifically with the memory and legacies of the Holocaust. For example, the 1995 Resolution on the Return of Plundered Property to Jewish Communities contained explicit demands from East European states to return property looted in the Holocaust (European Parliament 1995). Then in 2000, also within the decade, Sweden convened the 2000 Stockholm Forum on the Holocaust, which served as a major European institutional push to regulate Holocaust remembrance across the continent and define a common framework for European Holocaust remembrance, research, and education (Allwork 2015). The Stockholm Forum also established the International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which was to implement Stockholm recommendations into practice.

In 2005, then, the European Parliament adopted its most complete resolution on the Holocaust, the Resolution on Remembrance of the Holocaust, Antisemitism and Racism. This resolution established January 27 — the

anniversary of the day in 1945 when the Soviet Red Army liberated the prisoners at Auschwitz — as Holocaust Remembrance Day across the whole of the European Union (European Parliament 2005). In 2012, the Stockholm Task Force was renamed the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an international organization that has since become the main source of international regulation and modeling of Holocaust remembrance practices around the world. It is through the IHRA that exemplary models of Holocaust remembrance, along with issues much broader than the Holocaust alone, such as the definition of antisemitism, become globally diffused (Plessow 2015, Kucia 2016).

Yet while many governments in East Central European states — careful not to jeopardize the delicate process of European Union accession — accepted these new resolutions, signed related documents, and adopted major models of the memory framework, they also rejected much of the established canon of European memory politics (Mälksoo 2009, Littoz-Monnet 2013). As a result, East Central European states’ accession to the European Union sparked a divergence in memory; their entrance into the European family occasioned a much more direct and critical assault — without concern for international political consequences — on the pre-existing Western European mnemonic canon. This moment allowed for a new cycle of memory politics, wherein post-communist states began to model Holocaust remembrance away from the Western cosmopolitan memory model and, instead, increasingly *after each other’s representations* and their own post-communist experiences.

This new field of mnemonic replication in the post-communist Eastern states — a “field of anticommunism” (Dujisin 2020) — was built on the realization that cosmopolitan Holocaust memory, as developed in the West, did not align very well with their own, often quite different, set of historical memories of 20th-century occupations. This lack of fit was evident in the fact that the Shoah was not viewed as the defining memory of the 20th-century experience across the post-communist space. Instead, Eastern European states after communism constructed their national identities on the memory of Stalinism and Soviet occupation, as well as on the search for continuity with pre-communist nation-states. The Western cosmopolitan centrality of the Holocaust, in this regard, was set to replace the centrality of anti-communist and ethnic-nationalist frames as the dominant organizing narrative of post-communist states. Such a prospect was threatening and destabilizing to these states because it drowned out nationalist appeals to their own victimization and diluted them with appeals to

memorialize past Jewish suffering (Vermeersch 2019).

To resolve these different memory pulls, many states in post-communist Europe chose instead to embark on radical projects of criminalizing communism (Mälksoo 2014), taking much of the language of memory that had been developed to commemorate the Holocaust and using that language to commemorate crimes of communist occupations instead.² A number of post-communist states (among the most active being the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Lithuania) pushed for a series of resolutions and legislation about anti-communist memory through the European Parliament (Neumayer 2018, 2015). These efforts were also explicitly transnational; in addition to working with other right and far-right political parties in the European Parliament (many of them members of the European People's Party bloc), these groups also organized networks of transnational memory entrepreneurship as in, for example, the international Platform on European Memory and Conscience (Hogea 2012, Büttner and Delius 2015).

The centrality of the Holocaust as a foundational European narrative, however, was also soundly rejected across much of post-communist Europe because of its perceived elevation of Jewish victimhood above the victimhood of other regional-majority ethnic groups — an elevation openly resented by many citizens of those countries (Baer and Sznajder 2017). Further, the centrality of Jewish suffering in European Holocaust memory was also rejected in much of post-communist Europe because it raised discussion about the local populations' extensive and deep complicity in the Holocaust; historical evidence of complicity and collaboration with the Nazi occupation and widespread betrayal of the Jews by their non-Jewish friends and neighbors went directly against the far more dominant local narratives of rescue and help. This new Western-imposed narrative was unflattering and unsettling for the public to confront. It also highlighted the direct economic advantage that non-Jewish majorities in these states derived from the almost complete absence of Jews across these states, an advantage that had manifested itself in the form of widespread local takeovers of formerly-Jewish-owned property and businesses (Himka 2008, Charnysh and Finkel 2017).

It is against this background that the destabilizing effects of Holocaust memory in post-communist Europe can be best understood. Holocaust memory, as institutionalized in the Western mnemonic canon, created not only significant stress and anxiety but also deep domestic conflict and contestation in much of the post-communist East. It brought up undesirable memories that were contrary to these states'

identities of victimization at the hands of German and Soviet occupiers. To resolve this dilemma — how to accept the Holocaust memory template *nominally* while rejecting its focus on Jewish suffering and local Eastern European complicity? — post-communist states embarked on a new kind of historical remembrance whereby the memory, symbols, and imagery of the Holocaust became appropriated to represent other historical crimes instead. Holocaust remembrance practices, iconography, and visual templates that were constructed on the established Western cosmopolitan memory model were used as examples — but not examples of how to memorialize the Holocaust (which remained largely unmemorialized in the East). Instead, these models and tropes, which were originally developed in Western memory and which presented Holocaust crimes as prime exemplars of crimes against humanity, were now used in the East to memorialize very different types of crimes, such as the crimes of communist regimes.

This type of Holocaust remembrance, I suggest, is best viewed as a form of *memory appropriation*, whereby the memory of the Holocaust is instrumentalized to memorialize a *different* kind of suffering, such as suffering under communist occupations or suffering from ethnic violence perpetrated by other groups. This practice of Holocaust appropriation was not unique or particular to individual countries, however. Models of Holocaust appropriation travelled broadly across the post-communist space and even found their way westward into the core of the European Union: the new House of European History in Brussels.

It is certainly the case that cultural models, including models of memorialization, commemoration, and remembrance, are themselves cultural hybrids. They develop through cultural diffusion and imitation over time. They borrow some elements from earlier models, and a new cultural context provides new meaning to old or borrowed commemorative forms. On its own, this process of cultural diffusion is not necessarily problematic, and it is not what I refer to in my typology of appropriation. What I am interested in, instead, are instances of purposeful appropriation of existing Holocaust commemorative practices that *erase* Jewish victims of the Holocaust in order to elevate ethnic-majority victimization instead. It is a process of appropriation that replaces the memory of the Holocaust with the memory of ethnic-majority suffering, through the explicit use of Holocaust imagery and commemorative repertoire. This process should, then, be understood as political appropriation, with a much more direct political agenda than commonplace forms of cultural hybridization.³

Holocaust appropriation can be grouped into three main forms: first, remembrance practices that normatively elevate the suffering of non-Jewish national majorities and equate it with the Holocaust; second, remembrance practices that reposition the crimes of communism as the dominant criminal legacy of the 20th century, on par with, and sometimes surpassing, the legacy of the Holocaust; and, third, remembrance practices that appropriate Holocaust remembrance to strengthen myths of European unity. Below are brief examples of each form.

Holocaust appropriation as competitive victimization

In 2017 in Warsaw, a commemorative plaque was unveiled “In Memory of the 200,000 Poles Murdered in Warsaw in the German Death Camp KL Warschau”.⁴ This interpretation of events, however, significantly deviated from the established historical record. There indeed did exist a camp in Warsaw, where a few thousand Polish citizens died during the German occupation. But after the burning of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943, this camp was turned into a concentration and extermination camp for Jews brought in from *other* parts of Europe, who were used as slave labor to clear the charred remains of the ghetto. A total of some 20,000 people died in this camp, most of them enslaved Jews transported to Poland from elsewhere on the continent. The very clear purpose of this commemoration was to compete directly with the memory of the Holocaust, especially in Poland, the geographic heart of the genocide. One likely reason for the invented number of 200,000 ethnic Poles killed in *KL Warschau* is that, when added to the roughly 200,000 ethnic Poles killed in the Warsaw Uprising, the total number killed reaches the number of 400,000, which is often cited as the estimated number of *Jews* imprisoned (and most consequently killed) in the Warsaw Ghetto. Further, the myth of the *KL Warschau* also includes a truly fantastical story about a tunnel under the rail lines where, the conspiracy alleges, Germans created a massive gas chamber to murder ethnic Poles (Benjakov 2019). This myth, therefore, places ethnic Polish victimization by the Nazis *above* the victimization of the Jews, not only by equating the numbers of the dead but also repurposing the known symbolic and visual imagery of the Holocaust (here: gassing) to elevate the suffering of non-Jewish others and chip away at the dominance of Holocaust memory where it is seemingly unwelcome. The point of this type of appropriation is to elevate the suffering of Poles and present their suffering — rather than the Holocaust of the largest group of

European Jews — as the dominant experience of World War II in Poland.⁵

Holocaust appropriation as the criminalization of communism

The Museum of Genocide Victims,⁶ to this day the top tourist destination in Vilnius, Lithuania sits in a former NKVD/KGB building (which also served as Gestapo headquarters during the Nazi occupation), and it continues to be the most visible institution of memory in Lithuania. The museum, in describing its objectives, claims that it preserves the memory of the “genocide performed by the Soviet occupiers against the Lithuanian inhabitants, demonstrates the methods and extent of resistance to the occupying regime, and commemorates genocide victims and freedom fighters.” The Museum is narrating the history of Soviet control of Lithuania as a history of genocide — implying quite directly that the purpose of the Soviet occupation was the total annihilation of the Lithuanian people, and equating the political purpose of the Soviet occupation with the Nazi Holocaust. This link is made visually clear by the use of extremely graphic images of executions, camps, death, and torture — images that many visitors would associate with the Holocaust, such that a casual visitor who strolled into the museum would leave with the clear impression that the Soviet occupation of Lithuania was comparable to the

Nazi genocide (Wight and Lennon 2007).

The problem with this model of historical remembrance was not its focus on Lithuanian victims of the Soviet occupation; the brutality of the Soviet regime across the Baltics and elsewhere in Eastern Europe is well documented and deserving of research and remembrance. The problem, rather, is in the characterization of the Soviet occupation as a genocide, equal in its motivation and criminality to the Nazi Holocaust. For most Lithuanians (and other occupied Baltic nations, such as the Estonians or the Latvians), the predominant memory of World War II is the trauma of mass deportations of their citizens to the labor camps in the Soviet East, from which some never returned (Budrytė 2004). But the fundamental difference between Soviet deportations and Nazi terror was that, for the Jews, the Roma, and other ‘enemies’ of the German Reich, there was no return from Nazi camps. The reason that most people in Lithuania who were deported to the Soviet camps after 1945 were Lithuanians and not Jews was that, by that point, there were practically no Jews left alive in Lithuania for the Soviets to deport. The purpose of Soviet violence was not the annihilation of all Lithuanians on account of their ethnicity; it was total government

control and the eradication of all political opposition, *regardless of ethnicity*. By substantial contrast, the purpose of the Nazi occupation and the guiding ideology of the Nazi political project were genocide and racial ‘purity,’ which were envisioned to entail the complete erasure of millions of European Jews, their culture, and their history. Equating the two occupation regimes without realizing the fundamental difference in their motivations for mass violence is, at best, imprecise, and at worst, disingenuous.

Holocaust appropriation as a myth of European unity

This reordering of European memory received perhaps its clearest physical manifestation in the new House of European History, which, after decades of delays — some political, some administrative — finally opened in Brussels in May 2017. This museum was one of the key European Union projects aimed at shoring up the cultural foundation for European Union integration, strengthening European identity, and building the European Union’s legitimacy across the continent (Kaiser 2017, 518).

The House of European History narrates the history of European unity by weaving together stories of the Holocaust with those of communist occupations, again subsuming the huge diversity of communist experience under the Stalinist narrative while marginalizing the centrality of the Holocaust. The House of European History specifically avoids singling out the experience of European Jews and has no separate remembrance of their annihilation — a curating decision agreed upon early in the development of the museum (Kaiser 2017). Instead, the Holocaust is woven through other narratives of World War II and post-World War II remembrance, in a way that demonstrates the extent to which the memorial models from East Central Europe have been imported into the European Union memory core (Kaiser 2017). Using the models of remembrance practices already developed and institutionalized in post-communist Europe, the House of European History positions both the Nazi and communist occupations as integral to the history of Europe and as having led, teleologically, toward European integration (Hilmar 2016).

Conclusion

This article aimed to put practices of Holocaust memory appropriation into a contemporary political context by demonstrating that they are not isolated instances of competing memory, but instead critical elements in national strategies of

political legitimacy. They serve to reposition national narratives in opposition both to those of communism and to those historically embraced by Western Europe, instead reclaiming a national identity that rejects cosmopolitanism and is rebuilt along ethnic-majoritarian lines.

More broadly, the examples demonstrate that we cannot understand practices of historical remembrance — of the Holocaust, but also of any other significant historical event — in national isolation. These practices diffuse, spread, and reconstitute in different ways across transnational spaces. Political actors — state actors but also many social actors, such as cultural entrepreneurs, historians, or various other memory gatekeepers — look for and are influenced by examples from across their borders. Once these models of remembrance have developed and become salient, they are easily transported and applied to different political and cultural contexts, where they might begin to serve different local political needs. These remembrance practices imitate one another, at the same time growing and spreading through a form of grafting or hybridization, whereby some elements are adopted and merged with the local model, and some are rejected. It is the ease with which these practices can be molded and adapted that makes them so readily transportable. Paying attention to these processes helps us understand how practices travel, but also how they are localized, nationalized, and particularized, for contemporary political purposes.

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² For a full elaboration of this argument, see Subotić 2019

³ This argument is expressed in more detail in Subotić 2020.

⁴ For a detailed investigation of the KL Warschau claims in contemporary Poland on which this summary is based, see Davies 2019.

⁵ Prior to World War II, Poland had the largest Jewish population in all of Europe — some 3 million people, or 9.5% of Poland's population in 1933.

⁶ After intense pressure, much of it international, the museum changed its official name to the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights in 2018.

⁷ Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights: <http://genocid.lt/muziejus/en/708/c>.



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FILUM, Journal of Language, Literature, Arts and Culture Nasleđe, 58, 2024, Kragujevac

Left Wing Calls Republican Judea-Samaria Bill “Censorship” and “Rewriting History”

*Again you shall plant vineyards on the hills
of Shomron, Men shall plant and live to
enjoy them* 31: 5, Jeremiah



By Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) introduced legislation on Thursday that would ban the federal government from using the term “West Bank” and instead use the historically accurate term “Judea and Samaria.” As expected, some left-wing media objected to refraining from using the term that Jordan coined as an anti-factual attack on Israel.

The Case for Using “Judea and Samaria” in U.S. Government Discourse

Senator Cotton’s recent introduction of the “RECOGNIZING Judea and Samaria Act” presents a critical opportunity to return historical accuracy and clarity to discussions regarding the disputed territories of Israel. The bill, which seeks to retire the term “West Bank” in favor of the historically and biblically grounded term “Judea and Samaria,” strikes at the heart of historical revisionism and political bias in how we talk about the region.

Historical Context: A Return to the Truth

The territories in question—Judea and Samaria—have been part of the Jewish people’s ancestral homeland for thousands of years. As recorded in the Bible and reinforced by archaeological evidence, these lands were known as Judea and Samaria from the earliest days of Hebrew settlement. These regions were central to the ancient kingdoms of Israel and Judea, and their connection to the Jewish people is religious and deeply historical.

The term “West Bank” is a relatively modern invention introduced by Jordan after illegally

occupying the region in 1948. Before that, these territories were part of the British Mandate for Palestine, and their legal status was clear under international law, particularly in the context of the 1922 League of Nations Mandate. That mandate cedes Judea and Samaria to a future Jewish state by explicitly recognizing the Jewish people’s historical connection to that land. Furthermore, Jordan’s use of “West Bank” was a deliberate move to reframe the region’s identity, distance it from its Jewish roots, and downplay Israel’s historical claims. This is a crucial point because while “West Bank” might seem neutral or descriptive, it is, in reality, a politically charged term that originated from a geopolitical agenda that sought to deny Jewish historical rights.

Israel reconquered the land in the defensive 1967 Six-Day War. Many legal scholars reason that since defensive war is not illegal according to international law, it follows that the defender’s territorial gains from such a war would not be unlawful.

Reaffirming Israel’s Sovereignty

The bill introduced by Senator Cotton and co-sponsored by numerous Republicans aims to remove the political baggage accompanying the term “West Bank.” By mandating that U.S. government documents use “Judea and Samaria” instead, the legislation affirms Israel’s sovereignty over these areas and acknowledges its undeniable historical and legal claims. This approach is not about erasing Palestinian identity or denying their claims to parts of the land. Instead, it is about acknowledging the historical truth of the region. Just as other countries are not asked to erase their historical narratives when discussing territories, Israel should be afforded the same respect for its history and its right to call these areas by their rightful names.

The term “Judea and Samaria” also reflects the reality of the situation on the ground. The Jewish people have maintained a continuous presence in these territories for millennia, and they are deeply integrated into the modern State of Israel. By using the term “West Bank,” one perpetuates a false dichotomy—one that implies the territory is separate from Israel rather than a part of the nation’s ongoing historical and cultural heritage.

Cultural and Political Implications

Opponents of the bill, particularly from left-wing factions, have decried it as “censorship” and an attempt to “rewrite history.” This reaction, however, misses the broader point. Language is not merely descriptive; it is powerful. Words shape perceptions and influence policies. The

term “West Bank” has been weaponized as a tool to promote Palestinian national aspirations and delegitimize Israel’s rightful claim to its land. By embracing “Judea and Samaria,” the U.S. government would be taking a stand against this form of historical revisionism. It would also be supporting Israel in its fight against a pervasive narrative that seeks to delegitimize its sovereignty. This is not about denying the Palestinians a future or a voice; it is about standing for truth and honoring the historical connection of the Jewish people to their land. Furthermore, the bill’s supporters point out the need for clarity in international diplomacy. Terms like “West Bank” can be ambiguous, clouded with political motivations that make the path to peace even more complex. Replacing this term with “Judea and Samaria” helps clarify Israel’s territorial claims and ensures that U.S. foreign policy accurately reflects the reality on the ground.

A Global Perspective on Truth and Accuracy

Historically, the term “West Bank” has been employed in a way that distorts the territorial dynamics of the region. For instance, the term is often used as shorthand for a Palestinian claim to the land, even though international law, particularly after the Six-Day War in 1967, does not recognize such claims without negotiation. By framing the debate through the lens of historical truth—using the term “Judea and Samaria”—we set the stage for a more honest dialogue about the region’s future.

The RECOGNIZING Judea and Samaria Act represents a critical step in reframing the conversation around Israel’s territorial rights. By honoring Israel’s biblical and historical connection to the land, the United States can play a role in bringing more truth and clarity to a conflict that has long been marred by distortion and political gamesmanship.

In the end, adopting “Judea and Samaria” is not about denying anyone’s history or rights; it is about restoring a truthful narrative and acknowledging the legitimacy of Israel’s claim to the land. The RECOGNIZING Judea and Samaria Act is a call for a more honest, more respectful, and more accurate discussion about one of the most sensitive and important regions in the world today.

December 6, 2024

Israel’s “Earthquake War”

Mountains shall be overthrown, cliffs shall topple, and every wall shall crumble to the ground. 38:20, Ezekiel

By Adam Eliyahu Berkowitz

Media reports claim the IDF is launching intensive airstrikes in Syria’s Tartus region, targeting military sites, including air defense units and surface-to-surface missile warehouses. The explosions, fueled by the stored Syrian missiles, were so intense that they measured as a 3.0 Magnitude Earthquake on nearby Seismic Sensors.

Despite the intensity of the attack and the secondary explosions, no casualties were reported.

The IDF is destroying military sites in Syria after the collapse of President Bashar Assad’s regime, wiping out air defenses and most of the arsenal of the former Syrian army. The Israeli military declined to comment on the strikes.

The attack in Syria was similar was not the first time this war went seismic. Earlier this month, it was reported that seismic stations in southern Israel detected the movement of Hamas vehicles prior to the October 7 attack. Three seismic stations—located in Amazia, Ketziot, and Yatir, between 30 and 50 kilometers from Gaza—recorded unprecedented seismic noise levels that morning. No known natural or human source on the Israeli side could have generated seismic signals with a distribution and intensity similar to those attributed to Hamas movements. The research team was able to track the movement of heavy vehicles along Salah al-Din Road, a major thoroughfare in Gaza. Observations from stations dozens of kilometers from Gaza’s border indicate convoys of heavy vehicles such as bulldozers and trucks carrying operatives. The seismic data revealed a coordinated deployment across the entire Gaza border

The seismic aspect of the war may bear a prophetic meaning. Massive earthquakes in Israel are prophesied to accompany the multinational Gog and Magog conflict, which will signal the end of times. The prophets explicitly mention earthquakes and volcanoes as playing a role in the end of days, preparing the world by burning away impurities, as a crucible is used in metallurgy to purify metal.

“And I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined and will

try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My name and I will answer them; I will say: 'It is My people' and they shall say: 'Hashem is my God.'" Zechariah 13:9

The Prophet Ezekiel specifically described earthquakes as preceding the War of Gog and Magog:

Mountains shall be overthrown, cliffs shall topple, and every wall shall crumble to the ground. Ezekiel 38:20

Some rabbis have attributed this pre-Magog shake-up to God entering the fray and using the forces of nature as his weapons of choice. Rabbi Haim Shvili, a 20th-century Jewish mystic, predicted that the period preceding the Messiah would necessarily be fraught with catastrophic earthquakes in Israel. In his book of predictions concerning the Messiah in 1935, "Cheshbonot HaGeula" (Accountings Of the Redemption), Rabbi Shvili predicted that these earthquakes would serve several purposes, such as pagan temples and monuments to foreign gods throughout Israel would be destroyed. Rabbi Shvili noted that the seismic activity will specifically target Muslim and Christian sites. These earthquakes will be so severe as to cause geographic changes in the Temple Mount, requiring the construction of an entirely new city. The quakes will cause springs of water to burst forth around Jerusalem, bringing about the prophecy in Zechariah.

"And it shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall go out from Yerushalayim: half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in summer and in winter shall it be." Zechariah 14:8

The earthquake will also split the Mount of Olives in two.

On that day, He will set His feet on the Mount of Olives, near Yerushalayim on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall split across from east to west, and one part of the Mount shall shift to the north and the other to the south, a huge gorge. Zechariah 14:4

The primary function of the earthquakes, according to Rabbi Shvili, will be to instill great fear in the nations who rise up against Israel in the end-of-days.

The timing of the Oct. 7 attack was particularly significant, as it occurred on the morning of the Jewish festival of Simchat Torah, the last day of the holiday of Sukkoth. According to Rabbi Shvili, the earthquakes will come during the holiday of Sukkot, coinciding with the War of Gog and Magog. The pre-Messiah war will be so traumatic to all of mankind that Sukkot will become an internationally recognized holiday.

December 17, 2024

Jawlani the Jew

Conspiracies on HTS leader run rampant on social media

By Ohad Merlin

Conspiracy theories regarding the origins of Ahmad al-Sharaa, leader of triumphant [Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham](#), have been going rampant on social and traditional media across the Middle East and beyond, propagated mainly by Islamic Republic sympathizers and Assad regime loyalists.

Another leader claimed by conspiracists to be Julani's doppelganger was no other than Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky. Hossam al-Ghamry, an anchor at the Cairo-based Tahrir Egyptian Network (TeN), pointed at the similarity between the two, adding, "The terrorist Julani kept dressing, talking and taking pictures like the Jew Zelensky... And the media applauds him... Netanyahu is so happy with you." In a different post, he added, ironically, "This tells us that Mossad and CIA have a shortage of stylist jobs."

In this same context, an Egyptian account opined that Julani, in fact, looks like famous Israeli spy Eli Cohen. Another claimed that he resembles Zionism's visionary Theodore Hertzl.

A Houthi newspaper from Yemen published a caricature showing Julani being controlled as a puppet by Erdogan, which in turn was controlled by Israel and the US.

Salwa al-Soubi, an Egyptian law scholar and lawyer, posted on X, "Israeli Mossad: This is a spy we prepared well..." also pointing at what she deemed the USA's "double game" of both regarding Julani as a wanted terrorist and leading interviews with him on CNN.

Mossad-Julani conspiracies abroad

The Mossad theories went beyond the Middle Eastern sphere.

Danish politician and former economic analyst Mads Palsvig uploaded an exceptionally viral post that accused al-Sharaa of being a Mossad mole. Palsvig insinuated that Julani was a Jew named Yonatan Zvi David, who graduated from a non-existing institute named the "School of Islamic Jurisprudence in Tel Aviv."

The post was viewed over two million views, received 14,000 likes, and was reposted 6,600 times on X.

Another strikingly eccentric conspiracy theory had to do with al-Sharaa's tactical attire, which was depicted as being made by Israeli footwear firm Source ('Shoresh'). www.jpost.com

Iran Just Lost Its Last Colonial Settlement in Southern Lebanon

Lenny Ben-David



In 2016, Iranian leaders visited the “Iranian Park” in the Lebanese town of Maroun al-Ras, located on the border with Israel. Iran constructed a replica of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem at the site. A member of the Assembly of Experts in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Sheikh Mohammad Mohammadi Rishhari, accompanied by the Cultural Counselor at the Iranian Embassy in Lebanon, Mohammad Mahdi Shariatmadar, visited Iran Park, where they were received by a member of the Loyalty to the Resistance bloc [Hizbullah], MP Hassan Fadlallah. (El Nashra) Institute for Contemporary Affairs Founded jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation

The Shiite town of Maroun al-Ras in southern Lebanon, near the Israeli communities of Avivim and Yiron, includes “Iran Park” – dedicated to Hizbullah martyrs and to Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani. A statue of Soleimani pointing at Israel one km. away stood atop an observation tower.

The park also included a replica of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, a museum, an obstacle course, a playground, picnic grounds, and a paintball course. The Dome of the Rock replica is unusual since the original sanctuary in Jerusalem is a *Sunni* shrine.

The 5,000 Lebanese residents of Maroun al-Ras proudly accepted their role as Iran’s colonial subjects. Iranian and Hizbullah flags prominently flew over Maroun al-Ras and the Iran Park. In October 2010, Iranian President Ahmadinejad visited Maroun al-Ras to dedicate the “Iranian Park.” Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-

Abdollahian visited Maroun al-Ras on April 26, 2023.

On May 15, 2011, tens of thousands of Palestinians arrived in 1,000 buses at Maroun al-Ras’s Iran Park to “March to Palestine.” IDF snipers were forced to repel the mobs.

During Israel’s recent operation in southern Lebanon, the Iran Park in Maroun al-Ras was razed.

During the 2006 war between Israel and Hizbullah in southern Lebanon, the Israel Defense Forces discovered camouflaged and fortified Hizbullah bunkers in Lebanese “nature preserves.” The Hizbullah facilities in the town of Maroun al-Ras were extensive, and the combat was brutal.

But there was reason to believe that there was more than bunkers. In 2007, this author published *tower. (Wikipedia, 2012)* an analysis warning that Hizbullah was probably building tunnels under the border into Israel. [*Mining for trouble in Lebanon: Syrian thuggery, North Korean mining, Iranian colonization, and Nasrallah’s surprise.*¹]

Over the next 15 years, Hizbullah pursued a war of attrition with rockets and missiles fired above ground aimed at Israeli towns, farm communities, and military posts across northern Israel. While projectiles were flying overhead, Hizbullah dug an extensive underground network of bunkers, command centers, tunnels, and weapons armories. Observations towers were erected to spy deep into Israeli communities in the north. In December 2024, the town of Maroun al-Ras was wiped off the map by the Israeli Defense Forces.

The Town of Maroun al-Ras Filled Hizbullah’s Needs

The Shiite town of Maroun al-Ras was located a stone’s throw and a sniper’s shot from Israel’s Avivim and Yiron civilian communities. Built on the site was the “Iran Park” -dedicated to Maroun al-Ras’s “Martyrs” and Iranian Gen. Qasem Soleimani. A statue of Soleimani pointing at Israel one kilometer away stood atop an observation tower. The park also included a replica of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, a museum, an obstacle course, a playground, picnic grounds, and a paintball course. The Dome of the Rock replica is unusual since the original sanctuary in Jerusalem is a *Sunni* shrine.

Iranian and Hizbullah flags prominently flew over Maroun al-Ras and the Iran Park, and loudspeakers blared the Hizbullah and Iranian anthems.



The flags over Maroun al-Ras – Hizbullah, Palestinians, Iran, Lebanon (Iran Press)



The Dome of the Rock replica overlooked Israeli communities in northern Israel.

Observation towers, bedecked with Iranian and Hizbullah flags, overlooked the border road. And Soleimani's statue pointed to Israeli communities.

The Lebanese Residents of Maroun al-Ras and Alliance with Iran

The 5,000 Lebanese residents of Maroun al-Ras proudly accepted their role as Iran's colonial subjects. Maroun's population was predominantly Shiite, and the (Sunni) Dome of the Rock replica looming over Israel's border was intended for propaganda purposes. The following blurb about the town appeared in an online Lebanese travel promotional site, *Lebanon Untravelled*.

Iranian Visitors to Maroun al-Ras

In October 2010, Iranian President Ahmadinejad visited Maroun al-Ras to dedicate the "Iranian Park," which would feature a replica of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

Subsequently, the Iranian Garden overlooking Israeli communities was popular with Iranian tourists like these leaders of the Iranian regime.



Ebrahim Raisi visited Lebanon in 2018 and was accompanied by Hizbullah to survey the border with Israel. Raisi served as chief prosecutor in the Tehran district and was nicknamed the "Executioner of Tehran." He became president of Iran in 2021 and died in a helicopter crash in 2024.

View a [video](#) of Raisi's tour of Hizbullah troops in southern Lebanon.

Iran's Foreign Minister Amir-Abdollahian and his entourage at Maroun al-Ras (*screenshot, i14*) Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Maroun al-Ras on April 26, 2023, where he declared, "We are here today to declare in a loud voice that we support the resistance in Lebanon against the Zionist entity." Amir-Abdollahian died in a helicopter crash on May 19, 2024.

On December 9, 2017, Qais al-Khazali, the Baghdad-born commander of the Iraqi Shiite militia *Asaib Ahl al-Haq* (League of the Righteous), toured southern Lebanon accompanied by Hizbullah commanders. Al-Khazali was an important link in Qassim Soleimani's "Ring of Fire."

The Iraqi militia commander declared, "I'm here with my brothers from Hizbullah Islamic Resistance. We announce that we're fully prepared and ready to stand as one with Lebanese people and the Palestinian cause in the face of unjust Israeli occupation."

Naqba Day, 2011. The Palestinian Invasion Was Launched from Maroun al-Ras

On May 15, 2011, tens of thousands of Palestinians arrived in 1,000 buses at Maroun al-Ras's Iran Park to "March to Palestine." Troops from the Lebanese Army feebly attempted to keep them from storming the Israeli border, but the marchers rushed past the soldiers. IDF snipers were forced to repel the mobs from the fences.

Who was behind the operation and securing the transportation, if not Hizbullah?



The crowds moved from Maroun al-Ras to the border.

Lebanese soldiers attempted to keep the mobs away from the border with Israel, firing bullets in the air and shooting tear gas, but they failed. The Maroun al-Ras march served as a prototype for the Gaza “Great March of Return” attacks on Israel’s southern border in 2018-2019. It can be argued the lessons learned by Hamas at the fences were applied on October 7, 2023.



The Gaza border and the “Great March of Return,” May 2018. (IDF Spokesperson, Wikipedia)

Maroun al-Ras Will Not Rise Again

Across southern Lebanon, Hizbullah – with Iran’s assistance – built a huge army, replete with rockets, missiles, drones, artillery, and guns. No location north of the Haifa-Tiberias line was safe from Hizbullah’s barrages. Finally, after almost 20 years, Israel resoundingly declared, “Enough is enough” and undertook a wide military campaign to clear southern Lebanon of Hizbullah terrorists and their weaponry. Already, in mid-December 2024, thousands of Israeli civilians are returning to their homes in Israel’s north.

Filed under: [Hizbullah](#), [Iran](#), [Israeli Security](#), [Lebanon](#), [Operation Swords of Iron](#)

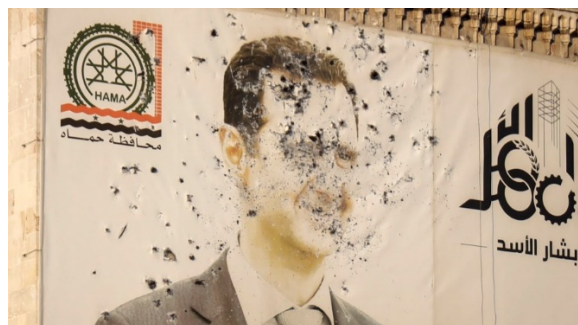


Lenny Ben-David worked for AIPAC for 25 years in Washington and Jerusalem. In 1997, he left to open an independent consulting firm, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tapped him to serve as Deputy Chief of Staff in Israel’s Washington Embassy. He is the author of the book *American Interests in the Holy Land Revealed in Early Photographs*, and he is completing his next book, *Secrets of World War I in the Holy Land Revealed in Early Photographs*. He is a Research and Diplomacy Fellow at the Jerusalem Center.



Post-Assad Syria: Winners and Losers, Crisis and Opportunity

JCFA Iran-Syria Desk



An image of Syrian President Bashar Assad, riddled with bullets, is seen on the facade of the provincial government office in Hama, Syria, on December 6, 2024. (AP Photo/Omar Albam)

Syria's pro-Iranian Alawite minority has fallen. Syria's ancient capital of Damascus was captured by the most formidable element of the anti-Assad coalition, the *Hayat Tahrir al-Sham* (HTS). The group is led by the Sunni Islamic fundamentalist Abu Mohammad al-Jolani. The opposition rebel coalition is a patchwork of several political, ethnic, and religious groups, including *jihadi* and pro-West factions. HTS, which staunchly rejected any negotiations with the Assad government, remains the likely kingmaker in any post-Assad-ruled Syria. Despite Western media re-broadcasts of Jolani's recent messages "We come in peace," Julani is suspected of remaining a committed Islamist who has vowed to establish an Islamic Republic in Syria. Historically, he has been an avowed enemy of the West and Israel. Julani was formerly affiliated with al-Qaeda and its spinoff, the al-Nusra Front. Western countries are testing if HTS has moderated. It would be prudent for the West to remember that HTS stands for the liberation of the entire Levant, which, in its contemporary context, includes not only Syria, but Lebanon, Israel (including Judea and Samaria), and Jordan as well.

But will Syria look the same on maps drawn up by the UN in 1946 when the country was declared an independent republic? How much of today's Syria will remain following its having been picked apart by regional contending powers? Some of these powers are winners, others losers, in this sudden and surprising turn of events. Turkey, a major supporter of HTS appears

the one nation-state most committed and equipped to feed on the Syrian carcass. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared in a troubling November 26, 2024, speech in Ankara that the West's progress is built on "blood, tears, massacres, genocide, and exploitation." Despite his alliance with NATO, Erdoğan's remarks could have been written by Turkey's *jihadi* proxy in Syria. "The West progress...is to the exclusion of the East's civilization of divine and humane love." The day will come when Western civilization "collapses with a great clamor, and Eastern civilization will flourish and rise up."

Turkey has hosted at least three million Syrian refugees during the 12-year Syrian civil war. Moreover, Istanbul has been the site of several assemblies of Syrian opposition groups. Significantly, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government has dispatched several pro-Turkish Kurdish militia units to seize several stretches of Syrian territory along Turkey's southern border. Such jingoist projects serve Erdoğan's desire to be elected to another term despite his Justice and Development Party's decline in popularity. Russia and Iran, the former regime's erstwhile supporters, are the losers in the fall of the Assad dictatorship. Russia's failure to attack rebel forces or provide air support to the fleeing ranks of Assad's troops is emphatic proof that the Kremlin sees the handwriting on the wall. The Russians will need to negotiate with the new sheriff in town, presumably to oversee Russia's withdrawal from its Syrian air bases and naval facility. Moscow's other option might be to support a Syrian mini-state on the Mediterranean Coast. The Alawites hold a majority in the coastal region of Latakia.

Iran withdrew its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) Qods Force's special advisors from Syria in still another setback for its strategy to light a circle of fire around Israel. The loss of Syria, combined with the Israeli evisceration of Iran's proxies, Hamas and Hizbullah, has knocked the Islamic Republic even further back on its heels.

What Should Be Done Now?

Israel should leverage the regional chaos and confusion to bolster its own interests. It should not permit Turkey alone, to make territorial acquisitions and political gains. Israel should seize the UN-administered buffer zone between Israel and Lebanon opposite the Golan Heights. In fact, Israel should consider annexing any areas adjacent to its current Golan Heights territory, including Mt. Hermon peaks not under Israeli

control now. These additional lands will be useful in defending against a prospective Islamization of Syria, which was a relatively secular country under Assad. Israel is in contact with the Syrian Druze community, which is close to the Israeli Druze community. The Syrian Druze recently occupied Syria's southwestern region of Daara.



A pro-independence rally in Irbil, Kurdistan in 2017 included Israeli flags.

Syria's large population of anti-Turkish Kurds might also serve as valuable allies to prevent, or at least impede, any determined imperial effort by Ankara to transform large portions of Syrian territory into Turkish fiefdoms. Kurdish areas in northern Syria have been under rebel attacks. Israel maintains good relations with the Kurds in northern Syria.

Of course, the incoming Trump administration will set its own policy in a post-Assad Syria. The United States has several mini-bases in northeastern Syria. American servicemen stationed in the area work with Kurdish militias and the Free Syrian Army. The Kurds help the U.S. forces to keep a lid on any revival attempts by Islamic State (ISIS) remnants.

U.S. President-elect Trump has already intimated that he is reluctant to get enmeshed in the Syrian imbroglio. Trump's instincts also reflect the American people's reluctance to get dragged into another forever war. However, President Trump, in consultation with Israeli allies, might devise a strategy that encourages American and Israeli enemies in crisis to struggle against one another while the forces of freedom remain vigilant and poised to exploit opportunities.

December 8, 2024

A Trump Win Has Iran Recalculating Its War with Israel

By Aviram Bellaishe



Imam Khamenei, the Leader of the Islamic Revolution on October 27, 2024

Three days before the U.S. presidential elections, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gave a Nov. 2 speech to students. One of them, invited in advance, asked him to alter his *fatwa* ("religious decree") that forbids the production of nuclear weapons. Khamenei responded that Iran will do all that is necessary regarding warfare and armament.

In the Iranian propaganda sphere, Khamenei's statements quickly turned into declarations by military officials. The commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps., Gen. Hossein Salami, warned the United States and Israel that Iran will arm itself with whatever it needs to achieve victory. If Salami was hinting at Iran's nuclear capabilities, Kamal Kharrazi, a senior adviser and head of Iran's Strategic Council on Foreign Relations, stated openly that Iran is capable of producing nuclear weapons and "the only barrier is Khamenei's *fatwa*, which forbids [their] production."

In the days leading up to the U.S. elections, the Iranian regime built a narrative of "nuclear threshold deterrence" based on the assumption among Iranian analysts that this was what had restrained Israel militarily. No less important, the narrative claimed, this deterrence had given Tehran the confidence to carry out two direct attacks on Israel. Alongside the Biden administration's admonitions, it had prevented Israel from attacking Iran's nuclear facilities in its Oct. 26 counterstrike.

When it turned out former President Donald Trump had won the elections, Iran realized that it would have to reassess its strategy. In particular, when Trump's high-level appointments were announced, the regime recalculated its moves out of fear that any provocation could turn the incoming president into a more dangerous adversary and could give Israel the green light to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.

The Iranians now understand that the order of the day is to maintain the status quo. That means they need to establish a communication channel for a nuclear agreement, primarily with the Trump administration. This would allow them to buy time, preserve the nuclear threshold status they have reached—and above all, forestall an Israeli attack on their nuclear program.

The danger lies in the “new Israel” that has emerged. Iranian analysts have concluded that Israel no longer sees itself as fighting an “existential war” and will not repeat its past behaviors. They now feel that they misjudged Jerusalem's capabilities in the past. Israel, it turns out, is capable of enduring a prolonged war. Israel, in Tehran's view, had the audacity to target and kill Hamas senior leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran and was prepared to attack inside Lebanon, including successfully assassinating Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. This revised outlook on Israel reinforces Iran's belief that Israel will eventually attack Iran's nuclear facilities once the opportunity arises. Amid the threat of such an Israeli attack, Iran decided to alter its messaging both internally and externally. In recent days, residents of various Iranian cities, particularly Tehran, have been experiencing intentional power outages caused by the stoppage of electricity production.

Simultaneously, regime-affiliated outlets began circulating Khamenei's declarations from seven years ago that “nuclear energy is essential for Iran's future, which requires the production of 20,000–30,000 megawatts of nuclear-generated electricity in the coming years.” This looks suspiciously like an Iranian attempt to signal to the world that: “We need nuclear energy for electricity and energy independence, and so we need nuclear facilities in the country.”

According to supporters of Iran's regime, the visit to Tehran on Nov. 14 by International Atomic Energy Agency director Rafael Grossi offered an opportunity to undermine Israel's media campaign about the urgency of the Iranian nuclear threat and the need to attack it amid the current tensions. Iran has warned the agency and countries of the region that an Israeli attack

coupled with an Iranian response would expose the region to a significant nuclear threat involving extensive radiation.

At the same time, Iran is aware of the complexity of dealing with the IAEA, since it does not want or is not yet in a position to make concessions to the agency before reaching an understanding with Washington. Iran views concessions to the IAEA at this stage as weakening its negotiating stance with the main party holding sway over sanctions relief—Donald Trump.

Trump, commentators say, does not trust international institutions and would prefer that all disputes and resolutions be directly handled. He is likely to view any agreement with the IAEA as resulting from fears about his election, and that could influence his stance towards Iran and the nuclear issue in the near future.

This perspective aligns with a recent report in *The New York Times* that Trump's close ally, Elon Musk, met with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations in New York City for exploratory talks. Iranian analysts believe that the meeting was coordinated with Trump and marked an attempt to create a direct negotiation channel with Tehran. By choosing a prominent businessman like Musk for this task instead of a political or military figure, Trump, they say, is signaling his readiness for negotiations and an agreement. Assuming that the leakers were Iranian, as the *Times* claims, their main objective was to lower the anxiety level in Iran over Trump's victory. Similarly, Iran's denial of the meeting is viewed as a “negotiation game” aimed at emphasizing its internal constraints amid opposition to dialogue with the United States, so that Washington will not present tough demands at the outset.

Iran's fear of an Israeli attack is driving the need to stall for time and recalibrate. Iran understands that, from the start, it must avert an Israeli strike on its nuclear facilities. In Iran's view, the Trump administration may allow such an attack, especially considering the recent pro-Israel appointments and the backdrop of the ongoing war with Hamas, Hezbollah and other Iranian-supported terror proxies.

In light of these developments and the primacy of energy concerns, Iran seeks to undermine the “nuclear threshold” narrative and portray nuclear power as a solution to its energy crisis. Tehran understands that, at this point, it is better to project a willingness for dialogue and work toward an agreement that will provide immunity from an Israeli strike while preserving its nuclear capabilities for a future date. Iran's ultimate goal

of destroying Israel is seen as immutable and extending beyond Trump's administration, so a temporary delay—a new “poisoned chalice”—is a necessity.

Israel must act in concert with the Trump administration to damage or destroy Iran's nuclear facilities and set back its arms race for years. Only after that can Iran present a “plan” for an agreement and oversight.

Aviram Bellaishe, a leading expert in regional geopolitics, Middle Eastern affairs, and Arabic language and culture, served for 27 years in Israel's security apparatus. He gained extensive experience in negotiations, operating mechanisms of influence and perception, and developing strategic and international collaborations. His professional achievements earned him three prestigious excellence awards from the head of the security directorate. After his discharge, Bellaishe transitioned to commercial, economic, and technological cooperation with Arab countries, leveraging his expertise to expand business and financial partnerships in the region. He served as the Head of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the law firm Doron, Tikotzky, Kantor, Gutman, Amit, Gross & Co., and as Co-CEO of the firm's commercial arm. Additionally, he managed the “Israeli Peace Initiative” steering committee for several years and currently serves on the executive committee of *Mena2050*, an organization dedicated to advancing regional cooperation. Bellaishe holds a bachelor's and master's degree in law (with honors), specializing in conflict resolution and mediation. He is a doctoral candidate focusing on consciousness engineering and religious propaganda, with an emphasis on studying influence mechanisms in the Arab world. His extensive experience and unique expertise position him as a key figure in regional dialogue and cooperation efforts.

This article originally appeared on [JNS](#) on Nov. 25, 2024.
December 1, 2024

Arab Israelis show increasing sense of ‘shared destiny’ with Jews and Israel

By Gavriel Fiske

A new Tel Aviv University study has revealed “encouraging data regarding coexistence in Israel,” with 57.8% of Arab Israelis saying they “believe that the ongoing war has fostered a sense of shared destiny between Arabs and Jews in Israel,” the university says in a press release. The study was conducted by the Konrad Adenauer Program for Jewish-Arab Cooperation at the university's Moshe Dayan Center. The announcement noted that a June 2024 survey had found only 51.6% of Arab respondents felt the same. And a similar study conducted in November 2023, just a month after the October 7, 2023, attacks, showed that “the majority of the Arab public (69.8%) said the war had harmed solidarity between Arabs and Jews,” it says. And so “the current figure represents a statistically significant increase in this metric,” the release notes.

The press release highlights further results from the current survey:

Only 9% of Arab Israeli respondents said that “their Palestinian identity is the dominant component of their identity,” with 33.9% noting Israeli citizenship, 29.2% citing religious affiliation and 26.9% their Arab identity as the “dominant elements” in their personal identity.

The Times of Israel



Gavriel Fiske is a reporter at The Times of Israel

One Year after October 7

By Fiamma Nirenstein

Moving on after October 7 is difficult. The Jewish people have the primary task of doing so, and it is simply a stage in their infinite journey. Today, October 7th poses questions that we can choose to answer or ignore. The questions posed to the Jewish people are also fundamental for all humanity. They concern good and evil, from history's beginning to its end, in the flow of time throughout the millennia, while facing the present, which we do in tears while fighting and rebuilding at the same time.

Exhausted from the effort and mortally wounded, the Jews futilely seek support. Sometimes people wonder whether Jewish existence is worth its high price. Abraham Heschel, the philosopher who gave meaning to Jewish courage, making it a universal good, asked this question after the Holocaust.

October 7th once again places the Jewish people at a central global turning point; it makes them both the cause and the victim, the protagonist and the antagonist and, as in the past, places them at the center of the history of the entire Western world.

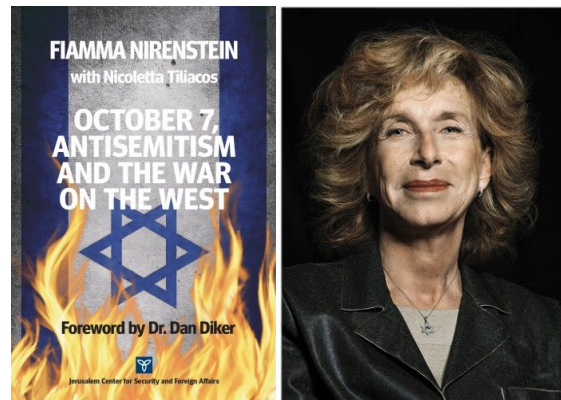
Today, as a Jew, I am with my people. Not as a spectator but as an activist, a protagonist, as the target of October 7th with all my people – the worst racist massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. Over the millennia, I could be a Jewish woman enslaved, in the great exodus from Egypt; one that fought against the Romans, overwhelmed by them, clinging to Jerusalem; or a small part of our story that passed through the hands of the Crusaders, the Arabs, the Inquisition, the pogroms, communism, the Holocaust, to resist, an keep rebuilding before rebuilding after returning to our original home.

Today, here we are once again in Israel, the same Jews, the same people. Nothing has changed, we have resisted throughout our daily lives and now another frightening wave of antisemitism accompanies us. Once again, we must overcome with courage and determination to survive, as always – and we will succeed – as we have after all the other October 7ths of our history. We're the only ones that can do it, the Jewish people. This time, too, all those who want to live in peace and freedom, Christians or Muslims or those of any other faith, who have learned the lessons of history, will have to decide to stand by their irreplaceable brothers and sisters.

Our existence is vital for the West. Our death is the objective of any enemy of the West. We must

fight together a battle that is not obvious to everyone: one against antisemitism. We could give up because of disgust, exhaustion, or fear. Or we can continue believing in the inestimable price of Judaism living on. We can believe in the Jewish people who have walked this earth for thousands of years, burdened with the Ten Commandments, with the history of civilization and democracy, with the resourcefulness with which they were able to build a nation after the catastrophe of the Holocaust, and with the determination, amidst a thousand criticisms, that defends it. Never before have Jews and the West been so connected in the task of defending the democratic world's aspiration to "human rights," the rights of all people.

When a Jew acts, he is always first of all a Jew – even whenever we say "good morning" to anyone. Jewish identity is a gift for Jews who support Israel, helping them to defend their own existence. The Jews, by remaining who they are, offer humanity a strenuous and indispensable service. Today it is up to those who want to accompany Jews to pay the price of courage. Now is the time to fight together, since antisemitism threatens the Western world and its freedoms. Israel, the land that God gave to the Jews, is the pledge of the moral salvation of all men, and Israel seeks to preserve it for all, in a difficult war as all wars are.



Dr. Fiamma Nirenstein was a member of the Italian Parliament (2008-2013).

A founding member of the international Friends of Israel Initiative, she is the author of 13 books, including Israel Is Us (2009). She is a Fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

Orientalism

The Dragoman Renaissance

Diplomatic Interpreters
and the Routes of Orientalism



E. Natalie
Rothman

CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS

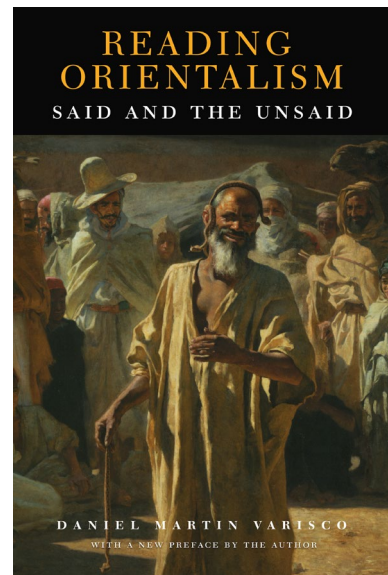
Published in 2021, 'The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism' by E. Natalie Rothman reveals how Istanbul-based dragomans shaped the development of Orientalism by mediating Ottoman imperial knowledge to European scholars and diplomats in the 16th and 17th centuries, challenging Eurocentric views in Renaissance studies.

Book Summary:

"In The Dragoman Renaissance, E. Natalie Rothman traces how Istanbul-based diplomatic translator-interpreters, known as the dragomans, systematically engaged Ottoman elites in the study of the Ottoman Empire—eventually coalescing in the discipline of Orientalism—throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Rothman challenges Eurocentric assumptions still pervasive in Renaissance studies by showing the centrality of Ottoman imperial culture to the articulation of European knowledge about the Ottomans. To do so, she draws on a dazzling array of new material from a variety of archives. By studying the sustained interactions between dragomans and Ottoman courtiers in this period, Rothman disrupts common ideas about a singular moment of "cultural encounter," as well as about a "docile" and "static" Orient, simply acted upon by extraneous imperial powers.

The Dragoman Renaissance creatively uncovers how dragomans mediated Ottoman ethno-linguistic, political, and religious categories to European diplomats and scholars. Further, it shows how dragomans did not simply circulate fixed knowledge. Rather, their engagement of Ottoman imperial modes of inquiry and social reproduction shaped the discipline of Orientalism for centuries to come."



READING
ORIENTALISM
SAID AND THE UNSAID

DANIEL MARTIN VARISCO
WITH A NEW PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

Published in 2007, 'Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid' by Daniel Martin Varisco challenges Edward Said's Orientalism with fresh insights and wit, offering a captivating new lens on post-colonial discourse.

Book Summary:

"The late Edward Said remains one of the most influential critics and public intellectuals of our time, with lasting contributions to many disciplines. Much of his reputation derives from the phenomenal multidisciplinary influence of his 1978 book Orientalism.

Said's seminal polemic analyzes novels, travelogues, and academic texts to argue that a dominant discourse of West over East has warped virtually all past European and American representation of the Near East. But despite the book's wide acclaim, no systematic critical survey of the rhetoric in Said's representation of Orientalism and the resulting impact on intellectual culture has appeared until today. Drawing on the extensive discussion of Said's work in more than 600 bibliographic entries, Daniel Martin Varisco has written an ambitious

intellectual history of the debates that Said's work has sparked in several disciplines, highlighting in particular its reception among Arab and European scholars.

While pointing out Said's tendency to essentialize and privilege certain texts at the expense of those that do not comfortably fit his theoretical framework, Varisco analyzes the extensive commentary the book has engendered in Oriental studies, literary and cultural studies, feminist scholarship, history, political science, and anthropology.

He employs "critical satire" to parody the exaggerated and pedantic aspects of post-colonial discourse, including Said's profound underappreciation of the role of irony and reform in many of the texts he cites. The end result is a companion volume to *Orientalism* and the vast research it inspired. Rather than contribute to dueling essentialisms, Varisco provides a path to move beyond the binary of East versus West and the polemics of blame...."

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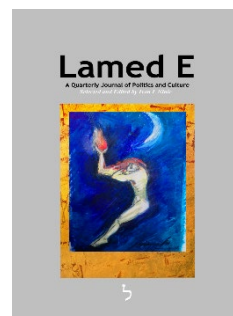
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***** *Orientalism***



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