

GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM: A CRISIS OF MODERNITY

An Introduction

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Introduction

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In August 2010, the largest-ever academic conference on the study of antisemitism took place at Yale University. The conference, entitled “Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity,” was hosted and organized by the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA) and the International Association for the Study of Antisemitism (IASA). The conference featured over 100 speakers from more than 20 countries from around the world. They included recent graduates at the beginning of their academic careers, experienced academics, and leading senior scholars who have dedicated their intellectual pursuits to the study of antisemitism, as well as legal experts, practitioners and others. More than 600 people attended the conference, including undergraduate and graduate students, scholars from many universities, including Yale University, practitioners and members of non-governmental organizations, civil servants and diplomats interested in the policy implications of the subject matter, and members of the general public. This volume presents a selection of the many important and challenging papers presented at the conference. It is one of five volumes reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the conference as well as the diverse nature of the subject of antisemitism in general.

The Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP) was established in 2004, with a network of scholars from around the world and the support of a group of dedicated philanthropists led by the humanitarian and professor of pharmacology William (Bill) Prusoff, in response to a clear and ominous increase in global antisemitism.¹ In 2006, ISGAP approached Yale University with a view to establishing an academic research center within the university. After determining that the center would meet all the necessary administrative, financial, and academic requirements, Yale University inaugurated the Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism (YIISA) in 2006. It was the first academic research center focusing on the interdisciplinary study of antisemitism to be based at a North American university.² ISGAP’s Board of Trustees supported and funded all of YIISA’s activities, co-sponsoring

¹ In his opening remarks at the United Nations conference “Confronting anti-Semitism: Education and Tolerance and Understanding,” June 21, 2004, New York, Professor Elie Wiesel examined the rising levels and threat of antisemitism. The rise in contemporary global antisemitism is examined and substantiated in several chapters in this volume.

² The fact that the first interdisciplinary and fully fledged research center on antisemitism at a North American university was only established in 2006 ought itself to be a focus of a research project, especially given the role antisemitism has played in Western civilization.

its seminar series and various other events and paying the salaries of its 14 employees. It also underwrote the August 2010 conference on which the above-mentioned five volumes are based.³

From 2006 to 2011, YIISA offered a successful graduate and post-doctorate fellowship program. Each year, it welcomed a group of scholars from leading universities in the United States and around the world, including several senior visiting professors. YIISA had a robust programming agenda. It organized over 120 seminars, special events, a series of films, four international conferences, symposiums and other gatherings at Yale University in New Haven, as well in New York, Washington, and Berlin. Its scholars carried out research projects and published important material on the interdisciplinary study of antisemitism. ISGAP and YIISA met the need to examine the changing contemporary state of and processes pertaining to global antisemitism. The fact that over 100 speakers participated in the aforementioned 2010 conference, and that all but ten of them attended at their own expense, is testimony to the extensive interest in the study of contemporary antisemitism.

The conference, "Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity," offered an environment in which scholars from a wide array of disciplines, intellectual backgrounds, and perspectives would be able to present their research and engage in interdisciplinary debate. The call for papers was inclusive and encouraged scholars from around the world to present their work. Without such a free exchange of ideas, any notion of academic freedom is tantamount to rhetoric. The subject of antisemitism is complex and controversial, as many students and scholars of this subject know. It was therefore important to YIISA to provide a forum in which this important issue could be freely discussed and explored.⁴

³ ISGAP continues as a research center with its head office in New York. It develops academic programming at top universities, including McGill, Fordham (Lincoln Center Campus), Harvard Law School, and the Stanford's Hoover Institution.

⁴ It is not uncommon for scholars of antisemitism, especially those engaged in the study of its contemporary manifestations, to be labeled as right-wing, neo-conservative, or Islamophobic. Likewise, despite their obvious and sometimes extraordinary credentials, their scholarship is often unfairly categorized as "advocacy." Such accusations, which are often made by those who engage in advocacy themselves, actually constitute a form of antisemitism. Others simply embrace the "gatekeeper" role within the academy, which Cohen describes as an attempt to maintain the status quo on behalf of institutional interests. See Robin Cohen, *The New Helots: Migrants in the International Division of Labour* (Gower Publishing, Aldershot 1987) and E. Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 38 (1973) pp. 583-594. This is reminiscent of the McCarthy era interference with academic freedom. At that time, a notable scholar, Nathan Glazer, took it upon himself to report on members the Jewish community to the "Committee" in order to silence political views that were deemed unacceptable at the time (Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Zed Books, London 1983)). The academic activities of YIISA, in particular its work on state-sponsored antisemitism, Iran, and the Muslim Brotherhood, was denounced as "advocacy" by those with an interest in promoting the US administration's general policy of "engagement" with Islamic states. Analogous views also found support within the Yale Corporation and administration, as well as among several tenured faculty, resulting in a *de facto* limitation of academic freedom. These perspectives were conveyed directly to my colleagues and me by leading members of the Yale administration and faculty members. It thus appears that the scholarly analysis of antisemitism in contemporary Middle Eastern societies infringed upon various political and economic priorities. Moreover, the possible investment of Gulf funds in Yale University, and other universities around the world, or fear of the discontinuation of such funding, is a

In June 2004, the United Nations, an institution that emerged from the ashes of World War II and the Holocaust, held its first official conference on antisemitism. This gathering served as a formal acknowledgement of the re-emergence of antisemitism as a contemporary matter of concern in a changing and globalizing world. It was hosted by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and Nobel peace laureate Professor Elie Wiesel at the UN headquarters in New York.⁵ Wiesel, the keynote speaker in a packed General Assembly Hall, noted that antisemitism is the oldest collective form of hatred in recorded history and that it had even managed to penetrate the United Nations itself. He questioned whether the world body, despite its role as a moral and political global leader, had forgotten the destructive and deadly impact of antisemitism. Some in attendance, Wiesel pointed out, actually endured its consequences: "We were there. We saw our parents, we saw our friends die because of antisemitism." In my view, the 2004 UN conference on antisemitism marked a turning point in the response of academia to the subject of antisemitism. This renewed interest was a contributing factor in the establishment of ISGAP several months later.

The YIISA conference addressed two inter-related and important areas of research that both encompass various disciplines, namely (1) global antisemitism and (2) the crisis of modernity currently affecting the core elements of Western society and civilization. Is it possible that the emergence of the current wave of global antisemitism both reflects and forms part of a wider attack on the core elements of modernity, notions of Enlightenment, and Western civilization more generally by reactionary social forces empowered by the crisis of capitalism? Against this background, the participants in the conference addressed conceptual and empirical questions from a wide array of perspectives and disciplines. The diversity in approach and opinion was itself a sign of academic health.

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Antisemitism is a complex and, at times, perplexing form of hatred. Some observers refer to it as the "longest hatred." It spans centuries of history, infecting different societies, religious, philosophical and political movements, and even civilizations. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, some have even argued that antisemitism illustrates the limitations of the Enlightenment and modernity itself. Manifestations of antisemitism occur in numerous ideologically-based narratives and in constructed identities of belonging and Otherness such as race and ethnicity, as well as nationalist and anti-nationalist movements. In the contemporary context of globalized relations, it appears that antisemitism has taken on new complex and changing forms that need to be decoded, mapped, and exposed. The academic study of antisemitism, like prejudice more generally, has a long and impressive intellectual and research history. It remains a topic

question meriting unfettered research rather than a statement of fact. The question whether this so-called "advocacy," which allegedly affected research on antisemitism, ought to be replaced by kosher "non-advocacy" research that does not disturb governmental or foreign donor sensibilities must now be on the table as an open question for research. Additionally, against this background, the possibility that the term "advocacy" itself has become a euphemism for "research relevant to current affairs and therefore likely to offend some powerful parties" must be subjected to critical scholarly scrutiny.

⁵ Professor Elie Wiesel is the Honorary President of ISGAP.

of ongoing political importance and scholarly engagement. However, especially at this important historical juncture, unlike prejudice and discrimination directed at other social groups, antisemitism—in particular its contemporary forms and processes—is almost always studied outside an organized academic framework.

The purpose of YIISA's 2010 conference was therefore to explore this subject matter in a comprehensive manner and from an array of approaches and perspectives, as well as in its global, national, and regional contexts. The development of an interdisciplinary approach and consciousness, while encouraging analytical studies examining a prejudice that remains widespread and but also appears to be experiencing a resurgence, was a key objective of the conference and YIISA's general mission. The conference aimed to create a vibrant space in which high-caliber scholarship and open and free debate would develop, be nurtured, and have an impact.⁶

The process of globalization has led to an increase in adversarial identity politics. In this environment, Israel, as a central manifestation of contemporary Jewish identity, and Jews more generally have become the focus of scapegoating and hateful rhetoric. At a more structural and socio-historical level, the old ideologies and tendencies of anti-semitism have re-emerged and are being fused with anti-Zionism or what in many cases might be more appropriately described as Israel-bashing.⁷ The old theological and racist forms of European antisemitism are being amalgamated with anti-Jewish and anti-Israel pronouncements emanating in particular from the Muslim world, which is located mainly, but not exclusively, in and around the Middle East. Contemporary globalization and the related socio-economic, cultural, and political processes are being fused with these histori-

⁶ The establishment of a research center similar to YIISA is urgently required within the academy. The approach of such an entity should be analogous to the one adopted by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham (UK) and the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations (CRER) at the University of Warwick (UK), yet with a specific critical approach to antisemitism. Both centers adopted an interdisciplinary approach with an emphasis on critical conceptual analysis based on solid empirical research. Currently, there are several small entities that study antisemitism, but they are all led by European historians with little or no background in the contemporary, regional, or interdisciplinary context. In fact, several of these scholars actually blame Israel for contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and underestimate the relevance of Islamism. This perspective is often based on "politically correct" views rather than rational scholarship. There is a need for vibrant analysis, study, discussion, and debate. A new entity for the study of antisemitism ought to combine an understanding of Western antisemitism and notions of "Otherness" with a willingness to tackle the contemporary changes sweeping the Middle East and knowledge of the region and its culture, including Islam and Islamism. The study of terrorism as it relates to contemporary antisemitism is also very much required. All these issues should obviously be examined in the context of processes associated with globalization, as opposed to the more frequently-used and descriptive concept of global antisemitism. Descriptive work without a critical, comprehensive, and conceptual interdisciplinary analytical framework will not be effective in assessing the contemporary condition, nor in creating appropriate policy responses. Policy development is a recognized and respected field of study within academia. This must be stated, since many who analyze antisemitism are "gatekeepers" who dismiss this vital scholarship as advocacy. This is not only problematic but also hinders the finding of solutions to key issues, indirectly undermining the safety of many.

⁷ For an analysis linking classical forms of antisemitism with contemporary Israel-bashing, see Edward H. Kaplan and Charles A. Small, "Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 50, No. 4, August 2006.

cal tendencies, creating the conditions that pose a threat to Jewish people and Jewish communities in the Diaspora. In addition, new structural realities within the realm of the international relations and the emergence of anti-Israel propensities appear to pose a threat to Israel and the Jewish people in a manner not seen since the end of World War II. Once again, in this age of globalization, the Jewish people seem to be caught between the “aristocracy” or “wealthy establishment” (core) and the marginalized or disenfranchised masses (periphery), as they have been throughout most of history.⁸

With the advent of the “socialism of fools,” a term describing the replacement of the search for real social and political equity with antisemitism that is frequently attributed to August Bebel, Jews continued to be targeted.⁹ In much the same way, the current marginalization of the Jewish people in the Arab world—or, more accurately, the marginalization of the image of the Jew, since most of them were pressured to leave or expelled from Arab countries between 1948 and the early 1970s after a strong continual presence of thousands of years—is staggering. As the social movements in the Middle East have turned to their own version of the “socialism of fools” (i.e., the antisemitism of radical political Islamism), they have incorporated lethal forms of European genocidal antisemitism as their fuel.¹⁰ However, many scholars, policy-makers, and journalists of record still refuse to acknowledge this fact and to critically examine the ideology and mission of this social movement.

Anti-Judaism is one of the most complex and at times perplexing forms of hatred. As evident from the range of papers presented at the conference and in these volumes, antisemitism has many facets that touch upon many subjects and scholarly disciplines. The term “anti-Semitism,” which was coined in the 1870s by Wilhelm Marr,¹¹ is also controversial and at times confusing. Yet despite its etymological limitations and contradictions, it remains valid and useful. The term refers specifically to prejudice and discrimination against the Jewish people. Some incorrectly or for reasons of political expediency use the term to refer to prejudice against all so-called “Semitic” peoples, claiming that Arab peoples cannot be antisemites, as they are Semites themselves. This is

⁸ See the *Arab Human Development Report* (United Nations Development Programme 2005). This report and other subsequent reports examine the impact of globalization on aspects of socio-economic marginalization stability in the Arab world.

⁹ Steve Cohen, *That’s Funny You Don’t Look Anti-Semitic. An Anti-Racist Analysis of Left Anti-Semitism* (Leeds 1984). The well-known saying “Anti-Semitism is the socialism of fools” (“Der Antisemitismus ist der Sozialismus der dummen Kerle”) is frequently attributed to Bebel, but probably originated with the Austrian democrat Ferdinand Kronawetter; it was in general use among German Social Democrats by the 1890s (Richard J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (Penguin Group 2005)). For a discussion of antisemitism, including the notion of the socialism of fools, see David Hirsh, *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections*, The Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism Working Paper Series, Editor Charles Asher Small, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007).

¹⁰ In *Islamism and Islam* (Yale University Press 2011), Bassam Tibi makes the important distinction between antisemitism that was European in origin and genocidal, on the one hand, and the kind of anti-Judaism that was discriminatory in nature, which was historically prevalent in the Middle East and Islamic context, on the other. For various reasons why the antisemitism taking hold in Muslim societies in the contemporary condition has much in common with European genocidal antisemitism, see the contributions on this subject in the present volume.

¹¹ Shlomo Avineri, *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization* (New York 1968).

fine in terms of etymological musing but not in terms of the history of language and thought, where terms acquire specific meanings over time that diverge from their etymological origins. In fact, antisemitism refers to a specific form a hatred that is mainly European in origin and focuses upon the Jewish people. Some scholars prefer to use the term antisemitism, without a hyphen and uncapitalized, since it refers to a form of hatred or a phenomenon rather than to a specific race or biologically determined group. Emil Fackenheim, for example, used the unhyphenated form for this reason.¹² These volumes and all of ISGAP's other work also follows this approach.

Some scholars who have examined the complexities of antisemitism claim that it takes several forms, including social, economic, political, cultural, and religious antisemitism. René König, for example, contends that these different forms of antisemitism demonstrate that the origins of antisemitism are rooted in different historical periods and places.¹³

When religion, in particular Christianity, represented the dominant way to perceive reality, the Jews were regarded as followers of the wrong religion. It was also believed that their refusal to accept the Christian messiah disqualified them from any form of redemption and even that Jewish stubbornness hindered world redemption. Finally, it is hardly necessary to recall that the Jews were accused of deicide. When the dominant manner in which Europeans perceived reality was based on the nation state and biological notions of race and ethnicity, the Jews were constructed as belonging to another, inferior race. According to the Nazis and others who subscribed to racist beliefs, for example, they were perceived as polluting the Aryan race and needed to be removed completely in order to save the purity of the "race" and "nation."

At present, some argue for religious reasons that the self-determination of the Jews—the non-Muslim "Other"—on so-called Islamic land is a sin and should not be tolerated. Others, in the West, see Jewish stubbornness as the cause of radical Islam, Jihadism, and the instability in the region. When it comes Israel's policies and existence, they believe that if only the Jews would change the problems in the region and in international relations as a whole could be resolved.¹⁴ If taken to its logical conclusion, this perspective could lead to great destruction, like other historical manifestations of antisemitism, since its aims is the eradication of Israel or any semblance of Jewish self-determination in the region.¹⁵ Despite the complete rejection of the Jewish narrative by the Iranian regime, Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Salafists and Islamists, many observers focus on the "Other" and are content to blame the "victim" of this ideology without properly examining it. In fact, attempts to critically examine these reactionary views are often deemed politically unacceptable. This contemporary form of antisemitism has many layers. New forms are mixed with older ones, such as conspiracy theories about Jewish power and culture, apocalyptic theories concerning the Jews. For example, the *Protocols*

¹² Emil Fackenheim, "Post-Holocaust Anti-Jewishness, Jewish Identity and the Centrality of Israel," in Moshe Davis, ed., *World Jewry and the State of Israel* (Arno Press 1977).

¹³ René König, *Materialien zur Kriminalsoziologie* (VS Verlag 2004).

¹⁴ It is important to note that, in the contemporary US context, some political realists certainly fall into the category of those who blame Israel for all the problems in the region and beyond.

¹⁵ Cf. Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (2000) (originally published as *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* in two separate volumes in 1939 by Haus zum Falken, Basel). Refusing to recognize the Other and insisting on changing them fundamentally will inevitably lead to violence and even destruction.

of the *Elders of Zion*, which played a key role in creating the conditions for the Holocaust, as well European antisemitism more generally, has now become part of the political and cultural mainstream in several Arab and Muslim societies.¹⁶

The above-mentioned complexities make it difficult to define the different forms that antisemitism takes. This in turn makes it problematic to address and analyze the subject matter. It is no wonder, then, that contemporary forms of antisemitism have always been difficult if not impossible to acknowledge, study, measure, and oppose. One hopes that it will not only be future historians who come to understand and address today's lethal forms of antisemitism, too late to affect policy, perceptions, and predispositions.

The context of contemporary global antisemitism, on which the conference focused, covers international relations, which are increasingly in a state of flux and turmoil, as well as notions of tolerance, democratic principles and ideals, human rights, and robust citizenship. These values appear to be receding within many institutions and societies, while the international community seems to be less strident in trying to defend them. It would appear that the Jew, or perhaps more importantly the image of the Jew or the "imaginary Jew" as described by Alain Finkielkraut,¹⁷ is at the middle of this global moment. Both historically and today, antisemitism is a social disease that begins with the Jews but does not end with them, making the Jewish people the proverbial canary in the coalmine. This deadly strain of hatred often turns against other groups, such as women, homosexuals, moderate Muslims, and other sectors of the population who are perceived as not being ideologically pure, as well as against key democratic notions such as robust citizenship, equality before the law, and religious pluralism. Antisemitism is consequently a universal human rights issue that should be of importance to all.

In view of its character as the "longest hatred," with a destructive power that is both well known and well documented, the historical lessons of antisemitism ought to reach beyond the Jewish people and concern scholars from a wide range of disciplines, both academic and policy-oriented. In fact, antisemitism should be perceived as a key aspect in the development of Western civilization, yet it is often perceived as a Jewish or parochial issue.¹⁸ This perception forms an impediment to the study of antisemitism in current academic culture, which favors the universal over the particular. In fact, the study of antisemitism is often regarded as unworthy of consideration or even as an enemy of the progressive universalistic worldview that is currently in vogue.

Certain members of the academic community, especially those who claim to espouse progressive and/or postmodernist views, often perceive the study of antisemitism as an

¹⁶ See Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (Yale University Press 2011); Neil Kressel, *The Sons of Pigs and Apes: Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* (Westview Press 2012). Bassam Tibi was a Visiting Professor and Neil Kressel a Visiting Fellow at YIISA. As Israel becomes the focus of contemporary discourse and manifestations of antisemitism, even in the United States, the notions of "dual loyalty" and the "Jewish lobby," which were previously articulated mostly by extremists, have gained credibility with the publication of a controversial book on the subject by Walt and Mearsheimer in 2007 (*The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy*) and the approach of some "realists" who have gained influence in the past several years in the media and policy circles.

¹⁷ Alain Finkielkraut, *The Imaginary Jew* (University of Nebraska Press 1994).

¹⁸ The members of ISGAP specifically established YIISA, the first-ever research center focusing on the interdisciplinary study of antisemitism at a North American university, to create a space to engage in this subject matter freely.

attempt to undermine criticism of the State of Israel and accuse those engaged in this study of being political advocates rather than pursuers of real scholarship.¹⁹ In fact, in this postmodern age, this is a fairly common view in academic and intellectual circles.²⁰ It is therefore important to embark on a systemic critique of the intellectual and political impact of this philosophical movement not only with regard to the safety and security of the Jewish people and their right to self-determination but also with regard to the integrity of the Enlightenment project and perceptions of modernity.

The contemporary canon includes a critique of the traditional "Western" canon, for example by Michel Foucault and Edward Said, that has also helped to demonize Jewish cultural and historical narratives in relation to Israel and beyond. This perspective is now an integral component of many "good" university curriculums throughout the West.²¹ Foucault welcomed the Iranian Revolution of 1979 as a triumph of spiritual values over the profanity of Western capitalist materialism. He perceived this Islamist revolution as a critique of Western culture and a protest against the political rationality of modernity.²² This sympathetic view of the Islamist revolution has been largely ignored, but it undoubtedly influenced the subsequent philosophical discourse and scholarship. Said, who was in Paris in 1979, fondly recalls spending time with Foucault and notes that they both hoped that the Iranian Revolution would develop into what the French Revolution was to Kant two hundred years earlier. Despite its violence, they hoped that the revolution would be a crucial step toward progress and emancipation for the people of Iran and the oppressed peoples of other nations.²³ Their critique of modernity and Western colonial power, combined with the lack of an ethical alternative, prevented these early postmodernists from criticizing the excesses of the Iranian revolution and its failure to recognize the 'Other' as an equal and respected member of society. The works of Foucault and Said have thus helped to lay the foundations for the failure of many contemporary intellectuals to condemn the rise of Islamism as a social movement,²⁴ especially in relation to its lack of acceptance of basic notions of "Otherness" within Islamic society, a cornerstone of democratic principles, and its vitriolic prejudice against the Jewish people and Israel. This intellectual development should also be considered in the context of global politics and the prevailing environment in many academic institutions, where the need for funding unfortunately appears to be having a growing impact on the curriculum.

¹⁹ See Judith Butler, "No, it's not anti-semitic," *London Review of Books*, August 21, 2003.

²⁰ See Robert Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews, and Israel* (University of Nebraska Press 2012).

²¹ Charles Asher Small, "The Gaze of the Colonial and Post-Colonial: Judeophobia, Empire and Islamism," Conference: Orientalism Revisited: Art and the Politics of Representation, Paul Goodwin, Curator, Tate Britain, London, June 2008.

²² See Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seduction of Islamism* (University of Chicago Press 2005). Afary and Anderson examine Foucault's 1978 visit to Iran where he met with leaders of the Iranian-Islamist revolution, including Ayatollah Khomeini. The authors document how this period influenced the philosopher's understanding of issues such as the Enlightenment, homosexuality, and his quest for the notion of political spirituality. As the book demonstrates, this topic, which has been largely overlooked, is worthy of consideration.

²³ Ramin Jahanbegloo, *Iran: Between Tradition and Modernity* (Lexington Books 2004).

²⁴ For an analysis of the notion of social movements, which are transformational, and protest movements, which are reformist, see Manuel Castells, *City, Class, and Power* (MacMillan, London 1978).

Furthermore, Said's attempt to undermine the legitimacy of Jewish self-determination in Israel and the Jewish historical narrative in the Diaspora needs to be critically examined with regard to its role in the re-emergence of antisemitism among intellectuals and within the academy. Such a critique of the critique is especially urgent at this time, as there seems to be little possibility to address antisemitism forcefully within the academy or to express outrage and concern regarding the recent successes of Islamism despite its reactionary agenda and worldview.²⁵ Instead, these ideological and philosophical foundations enable leading and respected scholars such as Judith Butler to argue that Hamas and Hezbollah ought to be viewed as part of the progressive global left. It also encourages some observers, including scholars of antisemitism, to blame Israel for antisemitism throughout the world.²⁶

Even in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and despite the academy's preoccupation with colonialism, racism, sexism, socio-economic, political, and cultural inequality, domination, and critical understandings of "Otherness," antisemitism, especially its contemporary manifestations, does not exist as an area of study in the mainstream academic curriculum.²⁷ Unlike other forms of discrimination, antisemitism is not an issue of significant concern. These developments have had the effect of placing attempts to defend the Jews—and their legitimate connection to Israel and Jerusalem—outside the realms of what is acceptable and proper. This is most troubling, given that the legacy of antisemitism in the academy and in Western civilization more generally has yet to be understood and addressed in the same way as other forms of discrimination and hatred. The contemporary perception in some quarters of the Zionist movement as an unfash-

²⁵ Daniel Sibony, *Freud, Edward Said and Israel* (forthcoming).

²⁶ Id. It is fascinating to note that Jewish scholars who blame Israel for various crimes and even antisemitism itself often enjoy much attention and popularity, more so than scholars doing the serious analysis and research. In fact, this is a common phenomenon with regard to the politics of hatred more generally and historically.

²⁷ It is worth recalling that during the rise of Nazism the German academy as an institution voluntarily cleansed itself of Jews. See Saul Friedlander, *The Years of Persecution: Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933-1939* (Phoenix, London 2007). While I do not wish to compare the German academy of the Nazi era to the present academy, the role of the academy in studying, combating, or promoting contemporary antisemitism ought to be critically examined, regardless of the period. At present, the university campus atmosphere is once again becoming increasingly hostile in terms of the pressures facing Jewish students. In fact, US universities have a history of questionable relations with dubious interests, including the Nazi regime and Islamist interests. See Stephen Norwood, *The Third Reich in the Ivory Tower: Complicity and Conflict on American Campuses* (Cambridge University Press 2009) and Mitchell Bard, *The Arab Lobby: The Invisible Alliance That Undermines America's Interests in the Middle East* (Harper Collins 2010). In fact, in late 2009 and early 2010, YIISA was criticized by the Yale Corporation, the Provost, and faculty members for being critical of the Iranian revolutionary regime. The regime had just placed Yale University on a list of institutions considered hostile to the regime and called for Iranians not to have contact with them. See, for example, "Iran Intelligence Ministry Blacklists Yale and Dozens of Other Western Institutions," *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 2010. The Provost and several faculty members told me directly that members of the Yale Corporation were angered, as they saw YIISA's work as interfering with the free flow of academic exchanges with Iran and Iranian scholars. During this time, Yale Corporation member Fareed Zakarria (before he resigned over a plagiarism scandal) often supported the policy of "engagement" in his writings, while several YIISA scholars were critical. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gByfHdLCdhA>>.

ionable, intellectually defunct, and morally bankrupt remnant of Western colonial racist culture—a perception that pays no attention to the competing narrative of Jewish national aspirations or the Jewish people’s millennia-spanning history in the region—is therefore a recipe for disaster. At the very least, it creates an uncritical blind spot for the role that antisemitism plays in the contemporary Middle East. To engage in the study of antisemitism is somehow perceived as supportive of the Zionist narrative, while the real threat that antisemitism poses is not understood and no policies are developed to address it, let alone to help thwart it.²⁸

In this environment, it is more acceptable to study the role of the Church or the role of fascism in antisemitism rather than its contemporary manifestations.²⁹ In fact, if one looks at the history of antisemitism, it was never acceptable to study or examine contemporary forms of antisemitism at the time in which they occurred. The true challenge of effective and insightful scholarship is to understand the real threat that antisemitism poses to people and society today and to develop policies to protect ourselves against this threat. However, it is not uncommon to find scholars and institutions that are opposed to the study of contemporary antisemitism yet still blame Israel for its renewed prevalence without research to back up these claims. This response is not based on sound academic analysis but nonetheless finds appreciative academic audiences and in some cases enjoys the blessing of university administrations eager to receive funding from Gulf states and/or to avoid confronting inconvenient truths of the contemporary condition.³⁰ For instance, at a recent gathering at Yale University, a group of historians of French society concluded that Jihadist antisemitism should really be understood as a metaphor used for rhetorical and political impact. None of the scholars in question were students of Arabic, the Middle East, Islam, contemporary political or social movements, or contemporary or post-Holocaust antisemitism. However, this did not stop them from adopting a position that would no doubt be welcomed by their institutions and gatekeepers. One director of a research center on antisemitism admitted to friends that his hands were tied and that he had to keep to this line.³¹

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It is in this institutional and political context that Yale University’s Associate Provost addressed the opening session of the YIISA conference and managed to stun many of those in attendance, including those who were well aware of the various hurdles to the study of contemporary antisemitism within the academy. In her opening remarks, the Associate Provost, explicitly warned the participants not to allow the conference to descend into a promotion of Islamophobia, thereby reinforcing a common stereotype

²⁸ For a clear example of this sort of conflation, see Joseph Massad, “Palestinians, Egyptian Jews and propaganda,” *Aljazeera*, January 7, 2013.

²⁹ A good example of this phenomenon is Paul Gilroy’s book, *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures and the Allure of Race* (2001), which begins with a heavily nostalgic and sympathetic look at the Jewish refugees that fled Nazi Europe and arrived in the London cityscape of Gilroy’s childhood. It seems uncourageous, and is reflective of a general tendency within the academy, to condemn the horrible racist antisemitism of an era past while turning a blind eye to contemporary manifestations.

³⁰ See Alex Joffe, “Follow the Money,” *Jewish Ideas*, March 2, 2011; Ben Cohen, “Scholarship and Antisemitism at Yale,” *Jewish Ledger*, Hartford, Connecticut, March 28, 2012.

³¹ Paula Marantz Cohen, “The New Antisemitism,” *The Smart Set*, Drexel University, October 2012, available at: <<http://thesmartset.com/article/article10181202.aspx>>.

associated with those studying contemporary antisemitism. It seems incongruous that the Associate Provost—and by extension the university administration—deemed it necessary to issue such a warning to a gathering of some of the world’s most important and respected scholars on antisemitism and other forms of discrimination. Many of those in attendance viewed this as an example of the power of contemporary antisemitism, on the grounds that no other academic gathering on comparable forms of discrimination would be welcomed in this manner.³² In fact, it appears that Yale University’s Jackson Institute was happy to invite Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to speak to a group of Yale students just a month after the conference, in September 2010, without issuing a similar caveat.³³ Finally, as the conference was entering its last day, without citing any specific evidence, the PLO Ambassador to Washington DC, Maen Rashid Areikat, and a network of Muslim Brotherhood affiliated student activists accused the conference of being Islamophobic.³⁴ Soon afterwards, they began to attack YIISA itself as a platform for Islamophobia, which ultimately led to its demise.³⁵ These events represent a key failure of academia in the face of political pressures, both domestic and foreign.³⁶

³² As Ryan notes, there is a tendency to blame the victim in the politics of discourse. See William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim* (Vintage, New York 1971). Despite the complexities of Middle East politics, there is one particular social movement that clearly does not accept the other, yet some observers still find it difficult to critically assess and condemn its ideology.

³³ See Sam Greenberg, “Relating to Iran, in seminar and in person,” *Yale Daily News*, September 27, 2010, available at: <<http://yaledailynews.com/blog/2010/09/27/relating-to-iran-in-seminar-and-in-person>>. In addition, the Jackson Institute hosted scholars with connections to the Iranian Revolutionary Regime, as well as Judge Richard Goldstone, at the invitation of Yale professor Ian Shapiro, an advocate of the Obama Administration’s failing policy of “containment” of radical Islamism. See Michael Widlanski, *Battle for Our Minds: Western Elites and the Terror Threat* (Simon and Schuster, New York 2012).

³⁴ See Josh Rogin, “PLO representative accuses Yale of supporting ‘hate mongering,’” *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2010; Abby Wisse Schachter, “Yale’s latest gift to antisemitism,” *New York Post*, June 7, 2011; “PLO Envoy Slams Yale for Antisemitism Conference,” JTA, September 3, 2010, available at: <<http://www.jta.org/news/article/2010/09/03/2740789/plo-envoy-slames-yale-for-antisemitism-conference>>. See also Philip Weiss, “Yale conference on antisemitism targets Palestinian identity, self-hating Jews and anyone who criticizes Israel,” *Mondoweiss.net*, August 25, 2010. This is an example of a blog that demonizes the conference without reference to the facts and also quotes people who openly incite to destroying Jews and Israel as expert sources. (See YouTube videos and writings by Charlotte Kates and Yaman Salahi).

³⁵ Significantly, the head of Yale University’s Public Relations Department, Charles Robin Hogen, was active in making statements to the media supporting YIISA’s closure. Some of these statements were later found to be incorrect. See Abby Wisse Schachter, “Yale’s latest gift to antisemitism,” *New York Post*, June 7, 2011. Interestingly, Hogen introduced the fact and bragged about his close association with former PLO member Professor Rashid Khalidi at YIISA meetings. Hogen also stated in these meetings that he was at a point in his career where he did not need to promote projects he found distasteful, such as the antisemitism conference. In a fascinating twist, I recently came across materials that show that in the 1990s Hogan was the Vice President of Hybridon Inc. Days after the 9/11 attacks, investigators discovered that the Bin Laden family owned part of Hybridon. Hogan now works for Robert Wood Johnson. See Hogen’s professional associations at: <<http://www.prweekus.com/johnson-foundation-names-hogen-vp/article/233952>>; and a Harvard Crimson article pertaining to Hybridon’s political and terror connections at: <<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2001/9/27/local-company-distances-itself-from-bin>>.

³⁶ See Adam Brosky, “Yale’s antisemitism whitewash,” *New York Post*, July 7, 2011; and Walter Reich, “Saving the Yale Antisemitism Institute,” *Washington Post*, June 13, 2011.

The fact that YIISA's detractors could level such accusations in a prestigious Ivy League environment without providing any proof, or even attempting to document any discriminatory speech or providing any critique of the papers or academic presentations by leading scholars,³⁷ is testament to the contemporary state of antisemitism in the academy and beyond.³⁸ It also points to the urgent need for a "critique of the critique" and the need to create an interdisciplinary critical framework for the study of contemporary antisemitism in relation to ideology and power relations. This would be a difficult task for scholars who are concerned about maintaining the institutional and cultural status quo and obtaining professional appointments and acknowledgement. The current intellectual and institutional void, which also encompasses a general disinclination to contemplate Islamist antisemitism and the Islamism in general, enables many to continue speaking of an Arab Spring when there are many indications that it is turning into an Islamic Winter.³⁹ Any assessment of the region that does not address the global implications of radical political Islamism and antisemitism is fatally flawed and serves the reactionary forces by squashing analysis and debate at a key moment in Middle Eastern and global history. The reality is that these reactionary forces are gaining power, and they are doing so with the tacit or, in some cases, vocal support of "useful idiots" in the academy and the media. Paradoxically, the current refusal to explicitly oppose the rise of such forces, which are diametrically opposed to the basic human rights and democratic principles, due to a postmodern and/or post-colonial reluctance to hold them to Western standards is no less paternalistic than previous Western interventions in the region.

* * *

Daniel Sibony, the French philosopher, provides insights into the above-mentioned attitudes, which appear to have taken hold in many elite academic institutions in the West.⁴⁰ In fact, Sibony contends that deep down those who insist on ignoring Islamism and its reactionary agenda are actually anti-Muslim themselves. The silencing of scholars and

³⁷ In fact, this prompted leading scholars from around the world to write to the President of Yale University defending the conference against these unfounded allegations. In particular, many scholars signed a letter comparing the contemporary study of antisemitism by YIISA to the groundbreaking work of Yale's historians on the issue of slavery written in the 1950s. Thousands of letters from concerned parties were sent to Yale protesting the closure of YIISA one year later.

³⁸ See Alan Dershowitz, "Yale's Distressing Decision to Shut Down Its Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism," *Huffington Post*, June 11, 2011. Dershowitz contends that a research center at Yale University has never been closed down on the basis of a confidential report, as in the case of YIISA. In "Yale's Jewish Quota: The University's Shameful Decision to Kill Its Anti-Semitism Institute," *Slate Magazine*, July 1, 2011, Ron Rosenbaum examines how the conference formed the beginning of the end for YIISA, due to its insistence that aspects of antisemitism throughout the world, including the Middle East, would be examined at the conference despite warnings from the administration not to do so. According to Rosenbaum, this is essentially a new form of a Jewish quota, namely one that distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable Jews. Writing in the *New York Post*, Neil Kressel claims that the accusations leveled at YIISA were baseless and never substantiated. See Neil Kressel, "Yale's Cowardice," *New York Post*, June 11, 2011.

³⁹ In *The Unloved Dollar Standard: From Bretton Woods to the Rise of China* (Oxford University Press 2012), economist Ronald McKinnon documents how money-flows from the US cause cyclical bubbles in global commodity prices, including food, "so much so that the so-called Arab Spring of 2011 could be interpreted as just a food riot."

⁴⁰ Daniel Sibony, *Freud, Edward Said and Israel* (forthcoming).

human rights activists who are concerned about antisemitism and human rights in Middle Eastern societies is a manifestation of a deep fear, or phobia, of the Islamic world. This fear, which is combined with guilt over the West's colonial legacy in the Middle East, is powerful.⁴¹ As a result, there is a tendency in certain circles to tolerate and justify reactionary Islamic attitudes, including sexism, homophobia, and antisemitism, despite their own liberal views.⁴² It is thus more convenient to blame the Jews for the stalemate in the Middle East and other related problems. Sibony traces this to the colonial mentality of not expecting the peoples of the Middle East and other parts of the world to adhere to the same criteria of human rights and civility as the "civilized" West. He also points out that those who continue to highlight these contradictions and dangers eventually come to be perceived as the problem and are targeted instead.⁴³

Sibony goes further, stating that there is an emerging fascination in the West with the genocidal antisemitic narrative of radical Islamism as expressed by the Iranian regime, the Muslim Brotherhood, and other Salafists.⁴⁴ In a similar vein, Colin Shindler argues that the growing red-green alliance has come to see the displaced and marginalized members of the Islamic world as the new proletariat, who deserve Western liberal support and admiration. Anyone perceived as being critical of the new Islamic proletariat is immediately branded a reactionary.⁴⁵ In this intellectual climate, voices condemning brutality, anti-democratic practices, sexism, homophobia, opposition to minority rights, and other violations of universal human rights are silenced, while expressions of genocidal antisemitism are dismissed as poor translations and/or hysterical rhetoric fashioned by the Zionist defenders of Israel.⁴⁶ This is what makes the task at hand,

⁴¹ An example of the manifestation of this fear occurred when Yale sociologist Jeffrey Alexander, speaking on National Public Radio (NPR), compared the work of YIISA to that of the Black Panthers. Such an irrational, ahistorical, and reductionist comment pertaining to the African American condition and to the complex issues of both racism and antisemitism provides an insight into the sort of hurdles that are prevalent in the academy with regard to this subject. "Yale Shuts Down Antisemitism Program," National Public Radio, June 17, 2011.

⁴² This may help to explain why, at a meeting called for by the Associate Provost days before the conference, I was told not to invite any scholars or organize events that were critical of Middle Eastern society or Islam. Echoing the policy mantra, she told me that we must "engage" Islam. I informed here that YIISA events were not critical of Islam but that YIISA was examining antisemitism throughout the world and that it was analyzing Islamism as it would any other social movement. It is also worth noting that there seemed to be a certain amount of fear within Yale's administrative ranks in this regard. A year earlier, in 2009, in the face of threats, Yale University Press refused to publish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in a book by Jytte Klausen discussing the publication of those very cartoons in 2006, which led to global riots in which at least 200 people were killed. See Patricia Cohen, "Yale Press Bans Images of Muhammad in New Book," *New York Times*, August 12, 2009; Jeffrey Herf, "Why Did Yale Close, Then Open, A Center on Antisemitism?" *The New Republic*, July 5, 2011.

⁴³ Daniel Sibony, *L'Enigme antisémite* (Seuil 2004). See also Daniel Sibony, "The Essence of Antisemitism: Is It Too Simple to Be Understood?" ISGAP Seminar Series, McGill University, October 16, 2012.

⁴⁴ Daniel Sibony, "The Essence of Antisemitism: Is It Too Simple to Be Understood?" ISGAP Seminar Series, McGill University, October 16, 2012 and Harvard University, October 17, 2012.

⁴⁵ Colin Shindler, "The Left Sees Islam as the New Proletariat," *New York Times*, October 28, 2012.

⁴⁶ This helps to explain why, at a recent seminar at Clark University's Strasser Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, David Feldman of Birbeck College, London, felt able to claim that YIISA was in fact the long arm of Israeli intelligence within the academy. Several of those in

namely to produce high-caliber scholarship and effective policy development and analysis for dealing with contemporary antisemitism—in particular its potentially genocidal variety—all the more challenging but also all the more urgent.

* * *

The crisis of modernity refers to the crisis of capitalism itself. Regardless of one's definition, the crisis is causing problems at local and global level and has become a key aspect of the contemporary condition. Institutions that play a key role in society, especially the state, are under increasing pressure. The crisis is affecting everything from the core to the periphery. Those in the periphery are experiencing high levels of socio-economic, political, and even cultural marginalization. In some areas of the world, the economic and political crisis in is so severe that it is causing failing and even failed states. Several states in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as several other Islamic states, are currently in this predicament.⁴⁷ When such states fail, marginalization increases. The resulting power vacuum is increasingly being filled by radical Islamism, whose adherents, like those who follow neo-liberalism, actually detest the state, perceiving it as a vestige of the colonial era and Western imperialism. In many cases, the political actors and interests that are rising to power subscribe to ideological worldviews that are also extremely hostile toward Jews.

In the context of the conference title, the term "modernity" refers to the processes that led to the emergence of the specific and distinctive characteristics of modern society. In this context, the concept of "modernity" does not simply refer to a phenomenon of contemporary origin. It poses an analytical and conceptual value that embodies the defining characteristics of modern societies. According to Stuart Hall, these characteristics include:

- (1) The dominance of secular forms of political power and authority and conceptions of sovereignty and legitimacy, operating within defined territorial boundaries, which are characteristic of the large, complex structures of the modern nation-state.
- (2) A monetarized exchange economy, based on the large-scale production and consumption of commodities for the market, extensive ownership of private property and the accumulation of capital on a systemic, long-term basis. [...]
- (3) The decline of the traditional social order, with its fixed social hierarchies and overlapping allegiances, and the appearance of a dynamic social and sexual division of labor. In modern capitalist societies, this was characterized by new class formations and distinctive patriarchal relations between men and women.
- (4) The decline of the religious world-view typical of traditional societies and the rise of a secular and materialist culture, exhibiting those individualistic, rationalist, and instrumental impulses now so familiar to us.⁴⁸

attendance demanded that he substantiate his accusation. He could not. The idea that one cannot engage in the scholarly examination of contemporary antisemitism without having a conspiratorial agenda, which is associated with notions of dual loyalty, is a powerful antisemitic canard with a long pedigree, especially in European discourses.

⁴⁷ See "The 2012 Failed States Index," An Eighth Annual Collaboration between Foreign Policy and the Fund for Peace, available at: <http://foreignpolicy.com/failed_states_index_2012_interactive>.

⁴⁸ Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in Stuart Hall et al., eds., *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies* (Blackwell Publishers 1996) p. 8.

The emergence of modern societies was spurred by new intellectual movements that developed during the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. The transformation of Europe's intellectual, philosophical, and moral framework was significant and played an important part in the formation of modern societies as encapsulated by capitalism and the rise of the nation state. In addition, Hall contends that the construction of cultural and social identities is an important aspect of the formation process. This then plays a key role in creating "imagined communities" and symbolic boundaries that define who belongs and who is excluded as the "Other."⁴⁹

In the context of the YISA conference, the "crisis of modernity" refers to the current breakdown of the political and economic system. However, this crisis also operates at a philosophical level, raising issues that are just as important as economic and political uncertainty. In fact, the uncertainty created by the crisis is eroding the moral and ethical rudder of Western institutions by creating a philosophical vacuum that is being filled by the moral relativism of postmodernism.

On one level, modernity offered a different vision of humanity, society, and the universe, but it also required a narrative to establish the legitimacy of its vision. This narrative constructed an image of the "Other," living in darkness and irrational ignorance due to his so-called primitive religious beliefs. In contrast, the so-called Enlightened thinkers and scientists succeeded in liberating man from his material and philosophical poverty and placed him on the path to progress and perfection.⁵⁰ This narrative, which was dominant in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, also provided the foundations for modernity's racism, slavery, and — as some argue — even the Holocaust.

The "crisis of modernity," then, is the recognition of the weakness of this narrative and the uncertainty of everything that has emerged from it, including the existing social order, ethical standards, and even our perceptions of ourselves. In this postmodern moment of uncertainty and competing relativist narratives, thinkers are prevented from thoroughly examining and speaking out against the forms of discrimination openly advocated by radical reactionary social movements, including but not limited to anti-semitism, that challenge notions of equality and robust citizenship.⁵¹ Another result of the "crisis of modernity" is the emergence of the aforementioned red-green alliance, which is gaining ground among scholars, practitioners, and activists, as well as within the political establishment.

* * *

Much of the scholarship on antisemitism is descriptive in nature, especially concerning its contemporary manifestations. However, there is also a need to analyze antisemitism

⁴⁹ Id.

⁵⁰ Id.

⁵¹ Leo Strauss, a strong critic of modernity, attributed modernity's intellectual degradation to the influence of several Enlightenment philosophers in the history of political thought who radically broke with classical political thinking. Strauss believed that, in doing so, these thinkers either directly or indirectly contributed to the emergence of historicism and positivism, and he held these movements accountable for modernity's relativism, nihilism, and moral and intellectual demise. See Jens Olesen, "The Crisis of Modernity and Its Interpretive Significance: Leo Strauss on Reading Political Philosophy," paper presented at the 14th International Graduate Conference in Philosophy, University of Essex, May 28, 2011.

in the context of other processes—socio-economic, political, cultural, and ideological—and the impact of globalization. Few scholars contextualize their studies in this manner. There is therefore a need to combine empirical and conceptual analysis of antisemitism within an interdisciplinary framework. The contemporary condition, which is characterized by the crisis of modernity, the processes of globalization, which are governed by a neo-liberal approach, the weakening of the state, the emergence of radical political Islamism as an effective social movement, the reluctance of Western intellectuals to critically engage these processes, and the re-emergence for the first time since the Holocaust of a deadly form of antisemitism, requires the development of a creative, interdisciplinary, critical approach within a cooperative research entity to begin to assess this phenomenon in all its manifestations and implications. This is especially true at a time when—for all sorts of reasons—such an entity has many opponents.

Globalization has a direct bearing on contemporary antisemitism. During the last several decades, nationalism and new forms of identity politics have exacerbated existing social, economic, and political cleavages. The causes of this emerging crisis include the extension of global competitive markets and the effects of structural adjustment, the intensification of socio-economic inequalities, the blurring of international and domestic political conflicts, and the world-wide escalation of adversarial “identity politics.”⁵² The extension of information technologies and travel possibilities has created a new network of “global spaces” within the interstices of metropolitan life across continents, inhabited by a growing coterie of transnational professionals and specialists. From the perspective of this high-rise corporate economy and corporate culture, the city down below appears to be inhabited by immigrant populations competing for low-wage jobs in an increasingly informalized urban economy, as the state retreats from its welfare functions. The combined economic and political imperatives of globalization seem to sweep away particularities of time and place to generate common outcomes everywhere: growing ethnic racial and cultural heterogeneity, coupled with social and spatial polarization.

At the most general level, it is possible to think of globalization in terms of movement and circulation, a complexity of criss-crossing flows: some of it capital and trade, some of it people, and some of it signs, symbols, meanings, and myths. A common thread which runs through the existing body of literature is the idea that such flows and mobility across space have accelerated, speeded up, or gained a new momentum in the contemporary era, captured in such key phrases as “time-space compression,”⁵³ “time-space distantiation,”⁵⁴ and “intersecting scapes.”⁵⁵ Thus the concept of globalization does not imply a shift from one period to another in the form of an historical rupture, as do other encompassing terms most frequently used to describe contemporary metropolitan experience, namely post-Fordism⁵⁶ and postmodernity.⁵⁷ Rather it denotes an

⁵² Charles Small, “Creating National Identity and Otherness: Canada and the First Nations,” in Olufemi Vaughan and Charles Small, eds., *Globalisation and Marginality: Essays on the Paradoxes of Local and Global Forces* (Sefer Academic Press, Ibadan, Nigeria 2007).

⁵³ D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1989).

⁵⁴ A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Polity/Blackwell, Cambridge 1990).

⁵⁵ A. Appadurai, *Globalization* (Duke University Press, Durham, N.C. 2001).

⁵⁶ A. Amin, *Post-Fordism: A Reader* (Blackwells, Oxford 1994).

⁵⁷ E. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso, London 1989); S. Watson and K. Gibson, eds., *Postmodern Cities and Spaces* (Blackwells, Oxford 1995).

intensification and stretching out of movements and flows, as captured for instance in Giddens's definition of globalization as "the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa."⁵⁸

Some social groups initiate flows and movement, while other do not; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it. There is thus a dimension of movement and circulation; there is also a dimension of control and initiation. The ways in which different social groups are re-inserted into, placed within, and seize upon these flows, which are themselves differentiated, can both reflect and reinforce existing power relations; it can also undermine them. What does not follow from the considerations above, and yet continues to inform much of the literature on global flows, is the social imaginary of a borderless world. Inherent to the concept of global flows, differentiated and differentiating, is the capacity to transgress taken for granted boundaries between nation states, between racial, ethnic, and gender groups, and between the public and private spheres. This does mean, however, an increasingly order-less world, one in which boundaries have lost their meaning. On the contrary, borders have become the locus of struggles among a variety of social actors, mobilized to reassert or redefine their boundaries *vis-à-vis* other relevant actors, and translate onto the space of the metropolis.

Globalization divides as much as it unites. Alongside the emerging planetary dimensions of business, finance, trade, and information flows, a localizing, space-fixing process is set in motion. Between them the closely interconnected processes sharply differentiate the existential condition of entire populations and of various segments of each one of the populations. What appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signaling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate. Some of us become fully and truly global; some are fixed in their locality. Being local in a globalized world is a sign of deprivation and degradation. An integral part of the globalizing process is progressive spatial segregation, separation, and exclusion. Neo-tribal and fundamentalist tendencies, which reflect and articulate the experience of people on the receiving end of globalization, are as much legitimate reactions to globalization as the widely acclaimed hybridization of top-culture—the culture at the globalized top. There is a break down in communication between the globalized elites and the ever-more localized rest.⁵⁹

* * *

It is in this context that contemporary antisemitism emerges. In a real sense, Israel is in the middle of a region in which societies are experiencing critical levels of marginalization, and in some cases collapse, threatening social cohesion and further complicating international relations. As mentioned above, globalization—through migration, trade and business, and advances in technology and telecommunications—is connecting people as never before, but it is also dividing them as much as it unites them. In the

⁵⁸ A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Polity/Blackwell, Cambridge 1990).

⁵⁹ Charles Small, "Creating National Identity and Otherness: Canada and the First Nations," in Olufemi Vaughan and Charles Small, eds., *Globalisation and Marginality: Essays on the Paradoxes of Local and Global Forces* (Sefer Academic Press, Ibadan, Nigeria 2007).

midst of these processes, contradictions, and emerging cleavages, antisemitism is once again flourishing in the form of the demonization of Israel and, by extension, Diaspora Jewry, with its real and supposed associations with the State of Israel.⁶⁰ During five years of interdisciplinary programming and research projects conducted at the highest levels of scholarship, several YIISA scholars examined the emerging socio-economic, political, and cultural vacuum that is being filled by the burgeoning social movement of radical political Islamism. This movement embodies the most pernicious forms of antisemitism, including a consistent call for, and incitement to, genocide against the Jewish state, consistent with its ideological and religious worldview. Many scholars and policy makers do not recognize or acknowledge these developments. It is within this context that Israel is emerging as the “Jew among nations,” finding itself geographically, politically, and metaphorically in the center of this process, as well as on the frontline of a conflict over basic relations of the state and notions of democracy. Like the Jews of Europe during the interwar period, the Israel and—perhaps more so—Jewish people in Diaspora communities around the world will find themselves separated from the elites on one side and the working classes on the other. They will be more separated politically, culturally, and economically in the middle of competing forces as the crisis of modernity continues to evolve and its manifestations deepen. As Bernard-Henri Lévy contends, it is the role of the intellectual to shed light where there is darkness. It is the study of contemporary antisemitism and the struggle to develop social policies that will promote human dignity and respect for all that is once again an urgent calling for scholars.⁶¹ With this in mind, it is important to consider the following three points:

- (1) The failure to recognize antisemitism studies as a valid academic discipline contributes to the ongoing mood of apologetic lethargy concerning this long-lasting prejudice. Now more than ever, there is a need for a vibrant, critical, open interdisciplinary research center to develop research projects and interdisciplinary curriculums. Policy and policy development are respected areas of study that need to be included in the area of contemporary antisemitism studies. Those who dismiss this as advocacy are pushing an regressive political advocacy agenda of their own.
- (2) The failure of academia to assert its independence from funding sources and government influence in the study of human rights and efforts to combat hatred is a failure worthy of research in itself, as it goes to the heart of free debate and democratic principles and practice.
- (3) Antisemitism is a major issue in the study of globalization, modernism, and post-modernism and also needs to be acknowledged as a legitimate issue in Middle Eastern studies. The study of contemporary antisemitism from an interdisciplinary perspective is crucial to scholarship, policy, and the protection of human rights, human dignity, and democratic principles, especially in these times of silence.

⁶⁰ It is important to consider the impact of social media and information technology on the dissemination of its ideas, discourse, and political culture, especially in the Middle East. This impact is like a double-edged sword, since it encompasses an utopian liberating effects but also empowers reactionary forces. In this context, it is interesting to note that certain hateful images of Jews with origins in European antisemitism are being “beamed” into Europe for the first time in many decades from the Middle East.

⁶¹ See Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism* (Random House 2009).

As Ruth Wisse has summarized the issue with insight and power: “Jews in democratic societies are not merely the proverbial canaries sent into the mine shaft to test the quality of the air: they function rather as the kindling used to set the system aflame. Why stop at the Jews?” In other words, the study of antisemitism is not a parochial matter, but a complex and explosive phenomenon that is bound up with matters of human rights, the protection of democratic principles, and citizenship, as well as notions of dignity. In the contemporary context of globalization, combined with the rise of reactionary social movements, we must not only examine and come to understand these complex processes as they relate to antisemitism: it is also incumbent upon us to develop approaches to safeguard and solve these attacks against all humanity.

* * *

This volume presents a selection of the papers presented at the “Global Antisemitism: A Crisis of Modernity” conference organized by YIISA in August 2010. It is one of five volumes reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the conference as well as the diverse nature of the subject of antisemitism in general.

Volume I includes papers that approach antisemitism from a wide range of conceptual perspectives and scholarly disciplines. Volume II deals with matters of antisemitism and the intellectual environment. The papers in this volume focus on the treatment of Israel in the media and the study of antisemitism in the academy. Volume III examines the manifestations and impacts of antisemitism in various regional contexts. Some of the papers focus on historical cases, while others focus on recent or contemporary matters. Volume IV on Islamism and the Arab world examines a form of antisemitism that has become especially virulent in recent times. It is also a form of antisemitism whose origins and manifestations are perhaps less well-known to academics and policy-makers due to the supposedly controversial nature of this topic. This volume includes papers from some of the leading experts in this area. Volume V, finally, comprises various “reflections” that were presented at the conference by a number of well-respected observers, academics, and practitioners. They provide insightful observations and important analysis but are not presented in the form of classic academic papers.

These volumes will be of interest to students and scholars of antisemitism and discrimination, as well as to scholars and readers from other fields. Rather than treating antisemitism merely as an historical phenomenon, they place it squarely in the contemporary context. As a result, the papers presented in these volumes also provide important insights into the ideologies, processes, and developments that give rise to prejudice in the contemporary global context.

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