

# Commentary

MARCH 2026

## We Jews Have The Honor of Being Hated

BY BRET STEPHENS



## 'Zio' Is the New 'N-Word'

BY DAVID CHRISTOPHER  
KAUFMAN



## The Pornography of Anti-Semitism

BY ALVIN H. ROSENFELD



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## EDITOR'S COMMENTARY

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# Enough With Immigration

JOHN PODHORETZ

**‘Y**OU NEVER KNOW what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.” These immortal words from William Blake’s 1711 prose poem “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” offer a rueful perspective on the turn in Donald Trump’s fortunes in 2026. It appears his administration did “what is more than enough” in implementing its policies related to illegal aliens inside the United States and, in so doing, turned an unalloyed political and policy triumph into a possible defeat.

What was “enough” was stemming the tide at the border in 2025. Last year, the net number of illegal crossings into the United States was zero. All in all, according to the Brookings Institution, “net migration to the U.S. was negative in 2025, a sharp reversal from net inflows exceeding three million in 2023 and two million in 2024.” This came about due to better patrolling, increased apprehensions of those attempting to cross and their subsequent return south of the border, and the general sense among those outside of the United States that the effort to enter under this new administration would be a fool’s errand.

That change demonstrates just how out of control the border had become during the feckless Biden years, when the administration adopted a triumphally petulant “whatever the Trump

people did, we’re going to do the opposite” attitude. It arguably got Trump elected to his second term as a result. Trump promised to put an end to the Biden approach. And he fulfilled that campaign promise.

Polls suggested the public was overwhelmingly supportive of the results. And then Trump did “more than enough.”

Throughout 2025, even as the work at the border was uncontroversial in the eyes of the public, the decision to use ICE and the Border Patrol to go in active pursuit of illegals inside the United States proved to be a controversial policy. Closing the border was essentially an act of defense. But conducting raids across the United States to capture and deport illegals—some of them criminal actors but others simply people gathered in one place to seek temporary day jobs in parking lots—was more akin to a war of choice. It did not come in response to an immediate existential threat—unless, that is, you are single-mindedly focused on the idea that the presence of illegals among us constitutes a fast-acting social poison that we must flush out of our system without delay.

It’s true that Trump promised to conduct “mass deportations” in his second term, but he never offered a clear definition of what that meant or how it would be done. And while 6 in 10

Americans said they were in favor of deportations in 2024, the visible effort to pursue them in 2025 seemed to make Americans queasy. Nate Silver's poll average calculates that overall public support for Trump on immigration turned negative in June 2025 and has stayed that way since. The news coverage of ICE's actions in cities, showing masked agents moving aggressively on what appeared to be unthreatening people, surely played a significant role in the shift.

Then things took a particularly bad turn for Trump when he made the decision to "surge" forces into Minneapolis in December. This was not a direct reaction to any specific change on the streets there but a naked effort to shine a national light on an important story dating back to 2018: the channeling of public dollars into fraudulent and non-existent relief organizations run by members of the Somali community in the Twin Cities. The details were so egregious that the state's sitting governor, 2004 Democratic VP candidate Tim Walz, found it necessary to announce he would not run for another term.

The Walz humiliation could have been a *Dayenu* moment—that's the word Jews sing on Passover that means "it should have been enough." The Somali fraud scandal was a slow-acting agent that turned suddenly lethal at the end of 2025 when it came to Walz's career and offered the promise that all kinds of blue-state coziness between leftist politicians and not-for-profit groups might be exposed and more fraud uncovered. The Somali scandal didn't need ICE. It was going to ice liberals all on its own.

That was not good enough for Trump. No, in the Blakean marriage of heaven and hell that is his administration, Trump evidently needed to learn what was more than enough. He surged ICE. He added Border Patrol agents. The city's (and the country's) highly organized network of leftist activists was there and ready for it. They instantly

redirected the national spotlight away from Walz and Co. and toward the immigration-enforcement officers. They sought to provoke confrontations and they succeeded. Two activist citizens, both personally imprudent but politically more useful than they could ever have known, were killed by ICE and Border Patrol agents during chaotic scrums lasting fewer than 10 seconds. One was minimally defensible, the other in no way defensible. The whole business of the Minneapolis surge became at best tragically unnecessary—a war of choice gone wrong—and at worst either a

sign of an armed agency out of control or of a brilliantly manipulated PR campaign that was turning Trump's greatest strength into a liability.

American attitudes on immigration are incredibly confused and incredibly confusing. We believe immigration is a benefit to the country. At the same time, we do not support illegal immigration and say in large numbers that it should be prevented and that illegal aliens

should be deported. There's something irreconcilable there. And matters become even more knotted due to the influence of a radical vanguard led by White House deputy Stephen Miller that opposes *all* immigration, illegal and legal, and is actively working to eliminate it. The vanguard is also seeking to end birthright citizenship, which has been accepted as a constitutional right since the passage of the 14th Amendment (and which was implicitly seen as such in the nine decades that followed the inception of the United States in 1776).

Miller and others define what is "more than enough." Trump has largely been walking along the path they laid for him. He is showing signs of stepping off because he sees that the American people do not like how it feels to live in a country whose government acts in the way it has. Mere self-preservation suggests it's time for him to say enough. 📌

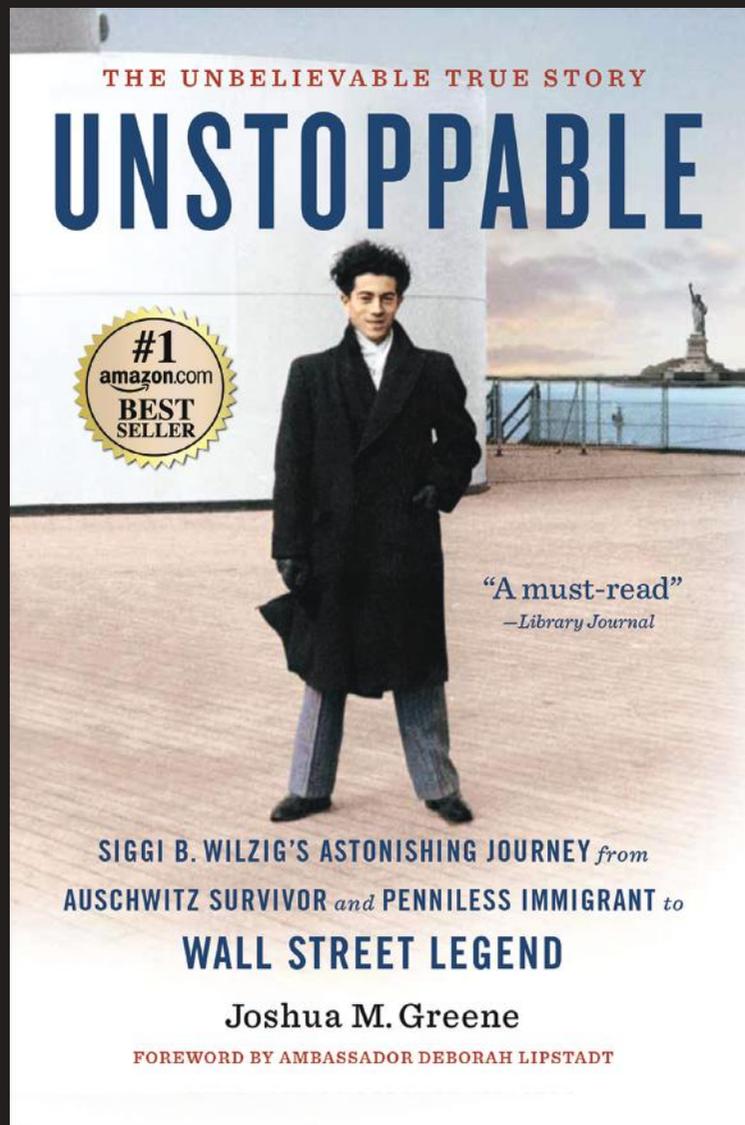
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**The Walz humiliation could have been a *Dayenu* moment—that's the word Jews sing on Passover that means 'it should have been enough.' The Somali scandal didn't need ICE. It was going to ice liberals all on its own.**

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## READER COMMENTARY

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# Happy Anniversary

*To the Editor:*

**J**OHN PODHORETZ'S column about America's 250th anniversary reminded me of my own youthful education on the rights and wrongs of our country ("250 Years," January). A couple of years before the Bicentennial, I was sitting in a 10th-grade civics class listening to the teacher praise the importance of our government's bureaucracy. The idea was that, while presidents and Congress come and go, the bureaucracy remains. And it alone provides consistency and

saves our democracy.

During that same year, I sat in another class while the teacher discussed, as absolute fact, that within 20 years' time, the air in our country would be so foul that you would be able to chew on it, and the water would be so polluted that you would be able to walk on it. What wonderful things to tell young students who were just beginning to make sense of their world.

We, of course, all sat in an air-conditioned brick building. We were clean and well fed.

About a decade and a half later, I sat in my daughter's school auditorium. There, I was subjected to songs about conserving water and the evils of Styrofoam cups. Afterwards we all went to the back of the auditorium and used plastic forks to enjoy our small pieces of cake served on Styrofoam plates.

I've seen that Vladimir Lenin is credited with the quote, "Give us the child for eight years and it will be a Bolshevik forever." Children raised on lies can become so used to them that they don't

realize how serious or harmful they can be.

ANTHONY J. PASSANITI  
*Wyoming, Michigan*



# Pro- Palestine, Anti-U.S.

*To the Editor:*

**E**LI LAKE'S excellent piece about "The Palestine Firsters" chronicles Ben Rhodes's obsession with the creation of a Palestinian state and how he and others in his camp overlook a number of important factors (January). One consideration that I have yet to read or hear mentioned is a fairly basic one: Would this wished-for Palestinian state align itself with the interests of the United States? I think we all know the answer. Among other things, it would be certain to vote against the U.S. at the UN and in other international arenas. This raises a question: Why should any American argue for a state that would, in all likelihood, align with our adversaries?

RABBI STUART WEINBLATT  
*Bethesda, Maryland*



# Commentary

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# Tough Jews

*To the Editor:*

**T**AL Fortgang and Ella Fortgang's manifesto on Jewish American life is superb ("The New American Jews," January). I strongly support Jewish self-defense, including the right to bear arms. This still shocks many of my Jewish friends. But, as Hillel said, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Too many American Jews ignore this part of his maxim.

We must not believe that anti-Semitism will not cease—any more than racism will cease. But we can stand up for ourselves against Jew-hatred and actively find partners. They are out there.

JUDY SHERWOOD-JANOSKI  
*Baltimore, Maryland*



*To the Editor:*

**A**MENOTAL and Ella Fortgang. I loved their article envisioning the future American Jew. It aligns with what I've been living and preaching for years. I own a bakery (not a law firm); I drive a pickup truck; my Jewish friends carry guns; we love Chabad; and I wear a baseball hat that shows both the Stars and Stripes and a Magen David.

I openly and outwardly show

that I'm a proud American Jew.

JAMES GRANT  
*Akron, Ohio*



*To the Editor:*

**A**S A conservative Christian and a strong supporter of the Jewish people, I found the article by Tal and Ella Fortgang both helpful and encouraging.

Many perceive the Jewish community as only a somewhat insular and resilient survivor, shaped by centuries of adversity. This article, however, presents a refreshing perspective: It calls on Jews to confidently own their considerable influence and power in American society, while framing that ownership within the context of our nation's founding principles.

I appreciate the tone throughout. It promotes self-actualization for Jewish Americans not in isolation, but in partnership with others—emphasizing "us working together" rather than an "us versus them" mentality. Equally important, the piece avoids endorsing any specific political ideology. Instead, it assumes that Americans of goodwill can move

forward together by focusing on areas of common ground and shared values. Working together does not mean the loss of group identity, traditions, or culture.

Like many, I am deeply disappointed by the evident surge of anti-Semitism in America today. I firmly oppose any mindset—on any side—that believes one group must harm or diminish another in order to thrive. True strength comes from mutual respect and cooperation, not from tearing others down.

WILL WADSWORTH  
*Geneseo, New York*



*To the Editor:*

**I**AM AN OBSERVANT Christian, and I found the Jewish manifesto by Tal and Ella Fortgang to be one of the most meaningful, impactful pieces of writing that I have ever read. It is incredibly well wrought and well reasoned. Bravo to the authors, and my fingers are crossed that its message will spread. Simply excellent.

JOHN NORRIS  
*Birmingham, Alabama*

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# Ireland's Anti-Semitism

*To the Editor:*

**A**S A JEW whose father was born in Ireland, I believe

that Rabbi Meir Y. Soloveichik's column on anti-Semitism in Ireland is spot-on. (I, too, have

noted the discrepancy between Ireland's efforts to restore the Irish language and Israel's great success in increasing the use of conversational Hebrew among Jews worldwide.) There is doubtless a whole world of unexplored analyses of the similarities and differences between Ireland and Israel. Perhaps the former will eventually be honest with itself and reckon with its ignorance and hatred of Jews, Zionism, and Israel.

MARGARET O'NEILL  
*Beverly Hills, California*



*To the Editor:*

**M**EIR Y. Soloveichik's article is an interesting case report on the power of Israel-envy to turn an entire nation mad. So mad, in fact, that it can trigger a plague of virulent anti-Semitism.

Rabbi Soloveichik explained that Israel, simply by existing, has become a "mirror of mortality" and is reflecting an image back to Ireland that, on some level, instills deep envy and resentment. Like the painting in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the Israeli image in the mirror only served to highlight its behold-

er's failure to preserve and nurture its own unique ancient language and culture.

I appreciated the article's introducing me to the work of Franz Rosenzweig and his theory connecting anti-Semitism with Jewish survival through the ages. Jews have been envied for their seeming immortality

while being resented for reminding others of their own historical evanescence. There is no explosion of anti-Hittitism today because there are no more Hittites.

ARNOLD ROSEN, M.D.  
*New York City*



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# Dictionaries and Definitions

*To the Editor:*

**I**DEEPLY enjoyed Joseph Epstein's article on the definition of words ("You Can Look It Up: A Threnody for the Dictionary," January); however, I did have to look up the word "threnody" in the dictionary.

THOMAS J. STRAKA  
*Pendleton, South Carolina*



*To the Editor:*

**R**EADING Joseph Epstein's article about dictionaries

stirred my thoughts on the matter. I maintain that, in the end, an "up-to-the-moment" dictionary is a pipe dream. All words are placeholder words. No single term in any language, from "God" to "science" to "garden hose," is absolutely or perfectly definable. Words are constantly in flux. Like life itself.

GARRY APGAR  
*Bridgeport, Connecticut*





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## WASHINGTON COMMENTARY

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# The Chutzpah of Yoram Hazony

JAMES KIRCHICK

ON JANUARY 27, Israeli-American political commentator Yoram Hazony delivered a speech at the Second International Conference on Antisemitism in Jerusalem. Founder of the Edmund Burke Foundation and convenor of its National Conservatism (“NatCon”) conferences, Hazony was well situated to discuss the subject of his address, “Anti-Semitism and the American Right.” Last November, after Heritage Foundation president Kevin Roberts released a bizarre video denouncing a “venomous coalition” of “globalists” for attacking his “close friend” Tucker Carlson, Hazony hopped the next flight to Washington to assist the embattled think tank president with damage control. “I’ll never forget how these jackals circled, sniveling for blood,” Hazony later wrote of the conservatives who had taken Roberts to task for defending the country’s most influential promulgator of anti-Semitic ideas, and for using anti-Semitic tropes in doing so.

In Jerusalem, Hazony’s message was the same: The problem with anti-Semitism on the

American right lies not with the anti-Semites but with those—President Donald Trump excepted—who call it out. “On January 11, President Trump took the clearest possible stand against anti-Semitism in his political coalition,” Hazony declared. “Asked if he condemns anti-Semitism on the right, he said, ‘certainly,’ and then he added: ‘I think we don’t need them. I think we don’t like them.’”

Trump’s clarion call against anti-Jewish bigotry—which ranks among his denunciations of David Duke (“I don’t know anything about David Duke”) and the Proud Boys (“stand back and stand by”) in its moral clarity—was undermined by his decision to host Carlson in the Oval Office just five days later. Acknowledging the gulf between Trump’s supposedly strong words and his actions, Hazony assessed the effort to convince people that Carlson is beyond the pale. “Judging by President Trump and Secretary Rubio’s photo op with Tucker at the White House two weeks ago, I’d say it’s been a total failure,” Hazony concluded. “How do we explain this defeat?”

According to Hazony, the fault lies with the “Jews and Christian Zionists” who have called out Carlson for being “one of the leading promoters of anti-Semitic propaganda in our time.” Blithely avoiding the substance of that accusation, which Carlson had himself confirmed months earlier at Charlie Kirk’s memorial service, where he insinu-

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JAMES KIRCHICK, *our new Washington Commentary columnist, is a contributing opinion writer for the New York Times and the author of Secret City: The Hidden History of Gay Washington and The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age.*

ated before an audience of millions that the Jews killed the conservative youth activist just as they had Jesus Christ, Hazony demanded evidence. “Where is the 15-minute explainer video that I can show my friends on the political right which proves that this very serious accusation against Tucker is true?” he asked not so much as ordered. “A 15-minute explainer video” and “serious research” into Carlson’s voluminous record of anti-Semitic vitriol “don’t exist because, for some reason, there are no Jews or Zionist Christians who think it’s their job to produce such things.” The failure to supply information to Hazony’s liking testified to “an extremely high level of incompetence by the entire anti-Semitism-industrial complex.”\*

Hazony sharpened his argument with a breakdown of the Republican Party’s three “wings.” The “liberal wing,” which Hazony estimates as representing 25 percent of the GOP electorate, is led by Senator Lindsay Graham, Senator Ted Cruz, and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The “nationalist” wing, where Hazony counts himself and “the great majority” of the GOP, includes Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Rubio. Finally, there is the “alt-right,” where Carlson and Candace Owens lurk among 10 percent of Republican voters. According to Hazony, the fight over the future of the conservative movement is taking place within the nationalist wing, where the “liberals” are creating more enemies than friends by “misbehaving” in their attacks on people who Hazony acknowledges are bigots.

A stickler for taxonomies, Hazony had offered a preview of this argument on December 29 with a 14-point Twitter memo titled “How to wreck the Trump coalition so it never recovers.” In Hazony’s telling, “High-Strung Liberal Zion-

ists” (a category that appears to include everyone from Ben Shapiro to the editors of this magazine to the editorial boards of *National Review* and the *Wall Street Journal*) are at war with “Wacko Anti-Semites.” In their zeal to defeat the “Wacko Anti-Semites,” the “High-Strung Liberal Zionists” are firing too wildly and hitting “normie nationalists and realists,” who in return “will become hurt and angry and start lashing out blindly and absolutely loathing everyone they believe to be a High-Strung Liberal Zionist or someone giving cover to a High-Strung Liberal Zionist.” The winners of this intramural fight will be “the Muslim Brotherhood, and the Commie Left, and the Chinese, and the Qataris, and the Iranians, and the Mexican cartels” who will “just laugh and laugh and laugh as they watch America, which could have been great again, sink like a stone.”

The thrust of Hazony’s argument is that combatting anti-Semitism is as alienating or more alienating to voters than anti-Semitism itself. This reasoning is both morally and tactically wrong. Polls continue to show that a large majority of conservatives support Israel and oppose anti-Semitism. And yet Hazony believes that the 25 percent of the party that is exercised about anti-Semitism should avoid hurting the feelings of the 10 percent who are anti-Semites. Tucker Carlson, Hazony said, is “a very smart, passionate, and very likeable man when you meet him in person.” At the first NatCon conference in Washington, D.C., “he gave one of the best speeches we have ever hosted.” Moreover, “Tucker has been saying—as clear as the day—that he is not an anti-Semite.” Acting like the tough Israeli sabra, Hazony is the cowering Jew of the shtetl, furious at his fellow Jews for provoking anti-Semites.

Hazony’s analysis of American politics and history—epitomized in his laughable claim that Lindsay Graham, Ted Cruz, and Mike Pompeo are the ideological heirs of Nelson Rockefeller and John Lindsay—is as apt as his prognostication skills. In a November interview with Ross Douthat of the *New York Times*, Hazony said that he was “hoping” Vice President Vance will have “the skill of determining what the boundaries of the coali-

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\* There was one small problem with Hazony’s complaint. It turns out there is such a 15-minute video documenting Carlson’s anti-Semitic obsession (a 14-minute and 57-second video, to be precise), which Hazony himself had commissioned and subsequently suppressed. “I am flabbergasted that Yoram would say that no such video exists, because *he* produced one,” the former director of communications of Hazony’s Edmund Burke Foundation, who had gathered materials for the video, wrote in *Tablet*. “He just didn’t have the courage to put his name or his organization’s name on it or to make it public.”

tion are.” The following month, Vance decried “endless, self-defeating purity tests” and righteously affirmed that he would not “bring a list of conservatives to denounce or to deplatform.” Hazony also told Douthat, “I assume that Heritage is going to solve the problem [of anti-Semitism]. I know a little bit about what steps they’re taking, and I think it’s very, very likely that Heritage is going to get on an appropriate and excellent path.” As of this writing, more than 60 senior Heritage staff have left the think tank since Roberts avowed the institution’s unflinching loyalty to Carlson.

While Hazony feigns at playing a moderating force within the movement, what he’s really doing is covering his own tracks, desperately attempting to retain his influence by whitewashing the egregious behavior of his allies and the logical outcomes of his own philosophy. Through his books (*The Virtue of Nationalism* and *Conservatism: A Rediscovery*) and conferences, Hazony has been a principal figure in the drive to undermine universalist Enlightenment values as the basis of the American founding. According to Hazony, those who believe such hogwash are “imperialists” who support “the ideal of an international government or regime that imposes its will on subject nations when its officials regard this as necessary.” Proper nationalists, by contrast, believe that “nations should be free to set their own course in the absence of such an international government or regime.” Into the former category Hazony places the Third Reich, the European Union, and the late Charles Krauthammer.

Furthermore, American conservatives have got their history all wrong, a failure for which they must “repent.” The real intellectual fathers of the American Revolution are not John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, whose classical liberalism Hazony conflates with the antinomianism of the 1960s, but rather the 15th-century English jurist John Fortescue and the 17th-century John Selden, whose writings he uses to endorse the concept of America having a state-backed religion (Christianity). If this fake history sounds like a right-wing version of the 1619 Project, that’s because it is.

The rise in anti-Semitism on the right is attributable to a handful of individuals whom Hazony is too cowardly and embarrassed to condemn. Like a vengeful alcoholic at an intervention, he is lashing out and blaming everyone but himself for the wreckage he helped create—the mirror-image of the left-wing Jew who makes excuses for his anti-Semitic comrades. Imagining himself a world-class intellectual, he is, for lack of a better term, a moron. How else could he have thought that forging alliances with European-style blood-and-soil nationalists would be good for the Jews, or America?

Hazony sees himself as a scholar-statesman on the level of a Jabotinsky or Ben-Gurion when he’s really an arriviste. In a reprehensible attempt to protect his access to power, Hazony is willing to gainsay his American co-religionists, who know better than him the threats they face. Watching Hazony’s Jerusalem speech reminded me of no one so much as Rabbi Lionel Bengelsdorf from Philip Roth’s novel *The Plot Against America*, in which Charles Lindbergh defeats Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 presidential election and keeps the country out of World War II. The oleaginous Bengelsdorf, who supported Lindbergh, becomes the new president’s court Jew. “I have encountered considerable hostility from members of the Jewish community for allying myself in the 1940 election with the Lindbergh campaign,” Bengelsdorf tells a Jewish family, one of whose sons lost a leg fighting with the Canadian army against the Nazis. “I am pleased to tell you that it took no more than two or three sessions alone with the president to get him to relinquish his misconceptions and to appreciate the manifold nature of Jewish life in America.”

Alas, not even Bengelsdorf’s obsequiousness can outweigh the fact of his Jewishness, and the FBI arrests him for being “among the ringleaders of the Jewish conspiratorial plot against America.” At the end of the book, Bengelsdorf is released and writes a face-saving memoir in which he admits the error of his ways. At this point in his intellectual career, a mea culpa is the least Yoram Hazony can do. 📖➡️



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## SOCIAL COMMENTARY

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# The Evil of Empathy

CHRISTINE ROSEN

**I**N A RECENT ISSUE of the *Nation*, essayist Anna Krauthamer told a harrowing story: “I was raped by a group of men during a three-day trip I took to Las Vegas with two of my best friends,” she wrote of an incident that took place four years earlier. “Of the rape, which lasted all night, I remember both too much and too little. I never did anything about it.”

Rape is a horrific crime that too often goes unreported; victims can experience feelings of shame and fear, and many blame themselves, especially if the rapist was someone they knew. But Krauthamer had other motivations for not pressing charges. “The simple answer to the question of why I never reported the rape is that I believe in the abolition of police and prisons,” she wrote, adding that “to pursue prosecuting and potentially incarcerating other people is inconceivable to me.”

What is also evidently “inconceivable” to her is the logical consequences of a world where everyone acts like Krauthamer, refusing to report crime because they feel bad for the perpetrators. Krauthamer’s solipsism and self-regard are on

full display when she admits, “I don’t want to ruin the lives of my rapists and I don’t know if they have children. The only thing I want is for them to never have done what they did to me—and nothing, including sending them to prison, will ever change that reality.” Nowhere does she acknowledge that by refusing to report her own rape, she guarantees that her rapists remain free to attack other women. If her prison-abolition fantasies were ever realized, she would also take away from others the right to pursue justice for the crimes committed against them.

Not surprisingly, the response to the piece was overwhelmingly negative. Many people questioned its veracity and noted that Krauthamer wrongly claimed she could not press charges now because the statute of limitations had passed; in Nevada, the statute of limitations for rape is 20 years, something that basic fact-checking by editors at the *Nation* would have revealed. Other observers wondered whether the essay was perhaps a bit of fabulism in service to career goals, given that Krauthamer is pursuing a Ph.D. in literature at Columbia University and her research “addresses sexual violence and contemporary narrative.”

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This was not the first essay on rape that Krauthamer has authored; in the *Baffler*, she criticized Hillary Clinton for noting that rape and gender-based assault have been used as weapons of war in conflict zones such as Ukraine and in Israel during the October 7 attacks. Krauthamer's criticism wasn't that Clinton was wrong (Krauthamer herself goes on at length defending Hamas by claiming falsely that its people never raped Israeli women). It was that Clinton didn't admit that her real aim in drawing attention to gender-based violence around the world was to encourage Western imperialism.

But the most frequently invoked criticism of Krauthamer's story was that it was an example of "suicidal empathy"—that is, a maladaptive and harmful form of the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. Empathy has been enjoying a cultural moment. You can buy sweat-shirts with "EMPATHY" emblazoned on them and bumper stickers that say "Practice Radical Empathy." Bookstore self-help aisles are filled with titles such as *Sensitive Is the New Strong* and children's books that purport to teach empathy-building skills.

We are told to read more literature because it will make us more empathetic (an update of an older notion of literature's ability to cultivate the sympathetic imagination), and even technologists are claiming they can build "empathetic AI."

And yet, as a society, we are evidently failing to be sufficiently empathetic. President Bill Clinton once told the public, "I feel your pain," but former Democratic leaders can't seem to stop scolding Americans—particularly those who aren't supporters of the Democratic Party—about their lack of empathy. Barack Obama has complained about the "empathy deficit" among Americans, and in a recent issue of the *Atlantic*,

Hillary Clinton used the recent killing of Minneapolis resident Alex Pretti as a jumping-off point for condemning "MAGA's war on empathy." Invoking Jesus's guidance to love thy neighbor and help others, Clinton notes that Jesus said, "Do this and you shall live." "Not in Donald Trump's America," she writes.

On the right, a debate has been raging about the dangers of too much, rather than too little, empathy. Last year, during an appearance on Joe Rogan's podcast, Elon Musk said, "We've got civilizational suicidal empathy going on...and it's like, I believe in empathy. Like, I think you should care about other people, but you need to have empathy for civilization as a whole and not commit to a civilizational suicide." He noted open-border policies and unrestricted immigration as evidence of the practice. Likewise, Christian podcaster Allie Beth Stuckey's book decrying the effects of "toxic empathy" has generated significant controversy among Christians. Canadian marketing professor Gad Saad's forthcoming book about suicidal empathy, subtitled *Dying to Be Kind*, promises to continue the

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**The arguments about too much or too little empathy overlook the greater danger embedded in the logic of Anna Krauthamer's thinking: the radical ideological motivation behind such seemingly irrational decisions. Krauthamer and her ilk are not expressing an extreme form of empathy. They are weaponizing pity.**

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debate in a secular context.

But the arguments about too much or too little empathy overlook the greater danger embedded in the logic of Krauthamer's argument: the radical ideological motivation behind such seemingly irrational decisions. Krauthamer and her ilk are not expressing an extreme form of empathy. They are weaponizing pity. A genuinely empathetic person would understand the risk of not reporting her rape because of the potential harm to other women. And in doing so, she would recognize that the incarceration of criminals is both punitive *and* protective of society.

A revolutionary, by contrast, weaponizes pity in service of radical ideological goals such

as prison abolition. In *On Revolution*, Hannah Arendt outlined the result. As it did for Robespierre during the French Revolution, pity becomes a tool for abstractions about the “sufferings of mankind,” as opposed to compassion (what we now call empathy), which is supposed to be singular and focused on another person. Once this abstraction of “suffering people” is invoked, it encourages the use of any means to end it. “Politically speaking, one may say that the evil of Robespierre’s virtue was that it did not accept any limitations,” Arendt wrote. His “pity-inspired virtue, from the beginning of his rule, played havoc with justice and made light of laws.”

Such notions have not disappeared. “Since the days of the French Revolution, it has been the boundlessness of their sentiments that made revolutionaries so curiously insensitive to reality in general and of persons in particular, whom they feel no compunctions in sacrificing to their ‘principles,’ or to the course of history, or to the cause of revolution as such,” Arendt noted.

Labeling revolutionary behavior an extreme form of empathy risks overlooking both the appeal of, and the greater harm caused by, the ideological mission. These are radicals—knock-off Robespierres—whose abstract notion of the good is unconnected to the real-world experiences and needs of actual human beings. (It is not a surprise that Krauthamer cites as one of her intellectual heroes a supporter of political violence: the Soviet apologist, card-carrying Communist, and Black Panther supporter Angela Davis.)

The motivating force of people like Krauthamer is ideological victory in the battles they have chosen (in her case, the abolition of prisons). Her claim to victimhood allows her moral grandstanding to carry greater weight and visibility, even as it turns into distant abstractions the individual women who are at real risk of being assaulted by the men she refuses to report.

The danger isn’t empathy; it’s the way such abstraction can lead to dehumanization.

This form of radical pity in service to ideology might explain why, in recent months, many nurses—practitioners of a “caring” profession—have been fired and lost their licenses for posting on social media their intention to harm people with whom they disagree. One nurse stated her intention to refuse to provide anesthesia to supporters of Donald Trump; a labor and delivery nurse wished of Trump Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who is expected to give birth in May, “I hope that you f—ing rip from bow to stern and never sh— normally again, you c—.” Yet another nurse encouraged people to drug ICE agents. Their duty to individual patients was sacrificed to the radical pity they feel for the people targeted by the Trump administration. In the face of such cruelty, they argue, anything goes.

Is there a solution to our “empathy” problem? After cataloging the many vices of the anti-empathy MAGA universe, Hillary Clinton claims, “If we give up on empathy, we give up on any real chance of coming together to solve our problems. Empathy...opens our eyes to moral complexity. It’s not a sign of weakness; it’s a source of strength.”

This is wrong. As Paul Bloom argued a decade ago in *Against Empathy*, empathy is “a poor moral guide. It grounds foolish judgments and often motivates indifference and cruelty. It can lead to irrational and unfair political decisions.” He makes a much more persuasive case for rational compassion as a guide to resolving conflict. I would add respect for the rule of law and rejection of political violence. Whether or not we heed this advice, it’s useful to have case studies like Anna Krauthamer, someone whose own sense of right and wrong has become so deformed by ideological devotion to extremist ideas that she found herself performatively pitying her rapists while insisting they shouldn’t be prevented from raping again. 📌



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## JEWISH COMMENTARY

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# Bring Back the Bell

MEIR Y. SOLOVEICHIK

**I**N THE MIDDLE of a park, in the middle of Jerusalem, sits an exact replica of the Liberty Bell. Because the area is named for it—*Gan Ha-Pa'amon*, Liberty Bell Park—it is often assumed that the bell was created specifically for that space. The true tale of Jerusalem's Liberty Bell is far more interesting.

In 1956, Richardson Dilworth, the mayor of Philadelphia, visited Israel. As a gift from his city, he brought an exact replica of the bell that had been cast in 1751 to mark the 50th anniversary of William Penn's charter of liberties. Photographs uncovered in 2023 by Knesset archivist Inda Novominsky reveal that the new bell was originally placed on the grounds of the original building in which Israel's legislature, the Knesset, convened. And it was emblazoned with words from Leviticus: "Proclaim Liberty unto all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." The

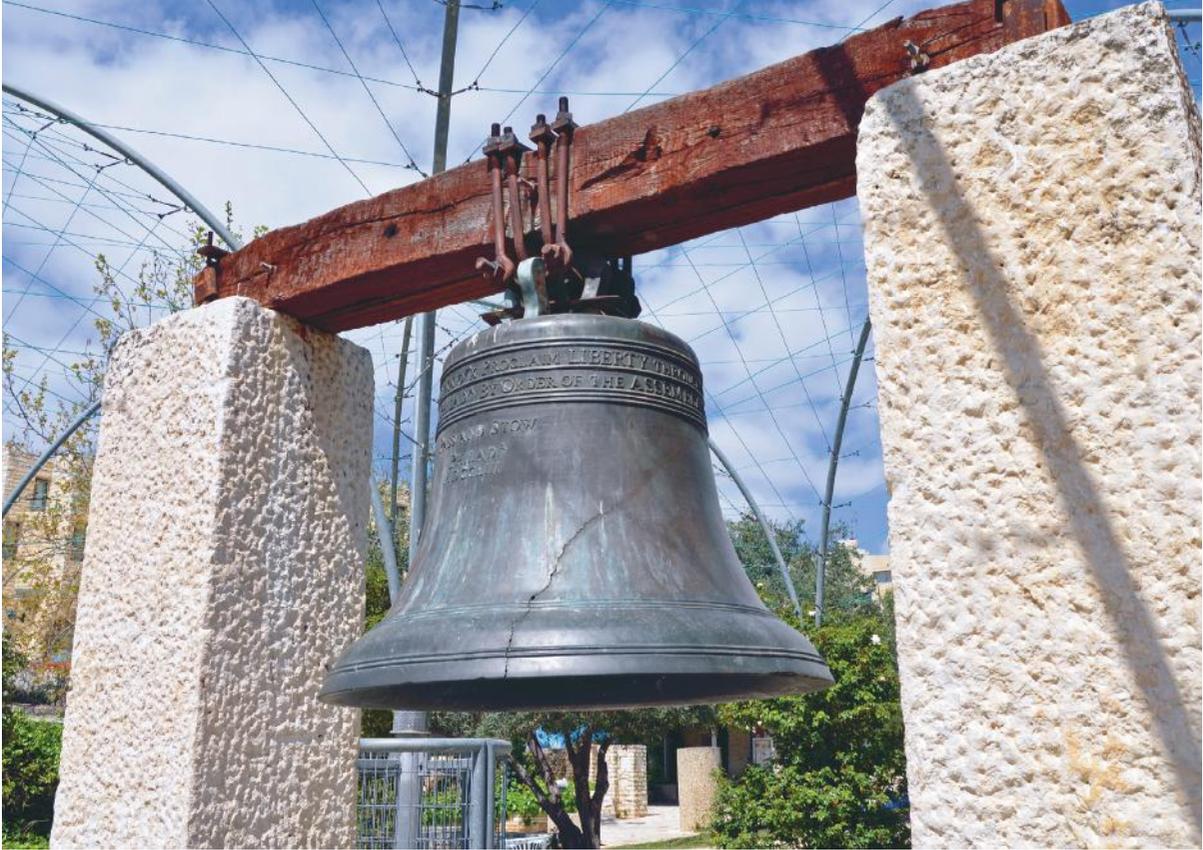
gift was a way of quite literally linking America and the biblical heritage of Jerusalem.

When the new (and present) Knesset edifice was about to be inaugurated in 1966, the bell was moved elsewhere on the Knesset campus. A decade later, Teddy Kollek, the legendary mayor of Jerusalem, had an inspiration. He had planned to place a bell in a new park that was to be opened in honor of America's Bicentennial in 1976 as "an expression of the esteem in which we hold the American people and for their great assistance in the renaissance of the Jewish people in its land." But why do so when there was exactly the thing nearby? "I would like the Knesset to make available to us the bell that is in the Knesset garden," Kollek wrote to the speaker of the House, who agreed to relocate it from the Parliament area to the new park.

It was an entirely understandable move—but, in my view, a grievous error. The gift from Philadelphia was a remarkable object, an American version of France's gift of the Statue of Liberty. Just as the latter was intended to commemorate the alliance that won the Revolution, the second

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*Gan Ha-Pa'amon (Liberty Bell Park) in Jerusalem.*

Philadelphia Bell was meant to link American liberty with the only democracy in the Middle East. Its proper place was therefore the legislature, to be seen by the dignitaries and citizens visiting the Knesset, not the denizens of Jerusalem picnicking in a park.

Today, with so many seeking to create divisions between America and Israel, this moving representation of the bond between the two nations is all the more important. That was supposed to be noted on the bell itself; the *Jerusalem Post* reported that the Knesset speaker agreed to transfer the Bell on condition that there was a “clear indication that the bell was placed there at the discretion of the Knesset,” which would signal that Israel continued to honor the original intention of the Philadelphia mayor in bringing it to Israel. Yet no such sign or indication “was ever put in place”; the Bell’s sudden appearance in the park has been a kind of mystery ever since. Few know that it was created as a sign of American esteem for the Jewish state and the biblical bond between the two nations.

Fifty years later, one way of Israel’s congr-

tulating America on its 250th birthday presents itself: Move the bell back.

This proposal should appeal to the prime minister of Israel, who cares greatly about the intellectual links between America and Israel, and the way in which the latter sits in the Middle East as the vanguard for liberty on behalf of the Western world. The bell, at least for the coming year, could be placed in a prominent location inside the Israeli legislature. An accompanying plaque could give the historical and biblical background of the Bell’s inscription.

And in celebration of America’s birthday, and the role of the Bible in inspiring it, the bell could, perhaps, also be accompanied by a quote from Abraham Lincoln, who, visiting Philadelphia and Constitution Hall before his inauguration in 1861, was inspired to make a biblical allusion of his own:

Your worthy Mayor has expressed the wish, in which I join with him...to listen to those breathings rising within the consecrated walls where the Constitu-

tion of the United States, and, I will add, the Declaration of American Independence was originally framed, I would do so. I assure you and your Mayor that I had hoped on this occasion, and upon all occasions during my life, that I shall do nothing inconsistent with the teachings of those holy and most sacred walls. I have never asked anything that does not breathe from those walls. All my political warfare has been in favor of the teachings coming forth from that sacred hall. *May my right hand forget its cunning and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if ever I prove false to those teachings.* (Emphasis added.)

“If I forget thee, O Philadelphia,” may not

have the same ring to it as “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,” but gratitude and decency dictate that its mayor’s gift not be forgotten. To read of the creation of the *Gan Ha-Pa’amon* is to ponder the wonder that is the expansion of Jerusalem itself. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported in the 1970s that the park would replace “a waste patch in the south of the capital, between Keren Hayesod Street and the railway station.” Those who have been to the park know that today, it is miles away from Jerusalem’s “south,” as the city has grown. But the replica of the Liberty Bell also inspires us to ponder the wonder that is America: a young country, to be sure, but the oldest continuous democracy in the history of the world. The original bell has been broken for almost 200 years; on July 4, 2026, Israel has the unique opportunity to sound its version and let freedom ring. 🇺🇸➡️



# We Jews Have the Honor of Being Hated

Jews must cease hoping to solve  
anti-Semitism and  
make their own way forward

BY BRET STEPHENS

**A**FTER ÉDOUARD MANET caused a firestorm in the late 1860s with his politically provocative paintings *The Execution of Maximilian*, he got a consoling note from his friend, the poet and critic Charles Baudelaire. “Monsieur,” Baudelaire wrote, “it seems you have the honor of inspiring hatred.”

And that, in a sentence, is also the state of world Jewry in 2026. The Jewish people—Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews; observant Jews and secular ones; right-wing Jews and left; all of us together; all of

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us, ultimately, in the same boat, whether we like each other or not—have the honor of being hated.

We should take it as a compliment, just as Baudelaire intended it.

We have the honor of being hated by the people who say “Zio” when what they mean to say is “Jew.” We have the honor of being hated by the campus lemmings chanting anti-Semitic slogans whose meaning most of them aren’t bright enough to understand—though some of them understand it perfectly well. We have the honor of being hated by Ali Khamenei, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and other despots whose loathing of Jews is directly proportionate to their crimes against their own people. We have the honor of being hated by Nick Fuentes, Candace Owens, Alice Walker, Roger Waters, Francesca Albanese, Tucker Carlson—the out-and-out Jew-haters and their sly enablers. We have the honor of being hated by those who think Jesus was a Palestinian. We have the honor of being hated by the so-called feminists who downplayed the rape of Israeli women on and after October 7, and by the so-called progressives who denied it. We have the honor of being hated by virtually every political movement, left or right, that also opposes the idea of personal merit as an organizing social principle. We have the honor of being hated by UN mandarins who would like you to know that the preponderance of human rights violations are committed by one small country: Israel. We have the honor of being hated by “Queers for Palestine,” who have neglected to notice what happens to queers *in* Palestine. We have the honor of being hated by the Hamas water carriers masquerading as reporters at the BBC and other media. We have the honor of being hated by all the Hollywood celebrities who see nothing amiss with demanding boycotts of Israeli artistic institutions but not of, say, Chinese ones. We have the honor of being hated by our charming new mayor, who thinks that he can endorse the erasure of one state and one state only, the Jewish state, and still acquit himself of the charge of anti-Semitism. We have the honor of being hated by people who parade their so-called Jewishness only

when it serves as a tool to defame and endanger half the Jewish people—as if they’ll be spared the furies should, God forbid, Israel someday fall.

In short, we have the honor of being hated by an axis of the perfidious, the despotic, the hypocritical, the cynical, the deranged, and the incurably stupid. What shall we do with all this hatred—other than to take it as a badge of honor and turn it to our advantage?

**I** DON’T WANT TO sound flip about this or put on airs of false bravery. This is a scary time to be a Jew. The “honor of being hated” is also what led to the massacre at Bondi Beach in Sydney, the “Jew hunt” in Amsterdam, the atrocities of October 7, the Tree of Life massacre in Pittsburgh. It is why Israeli writers struggle to find publishers in the United States, and why so many Jewish undergrads and Jewish professors feel ostracized on college campuses.

It’s an honor we all yearn to do without. But we can’t. We can’t, because for as long as there have been Jews, there have been Jew-haters. And for as long as there will *be* Jews there will be Jew-haters. What’s been going on for over 3,000 years is not about to end anytime soon. And with that in mind, I want to make four specific arguments about how to move forward with the knowledge we have gleaned.

The first point is that “the fight against anti-Semitism,” which consumes tens of millions of dollars every year in Jewish philanthropy and has become an organizing principle across Jewish organizations, is a well-meaning but mostly wasted effort. We should spend the money and focus our energy elsewhere. The same, I might add, goes for efforts to improve the quality of pro-Israel advocacy, or *hasbara*.

The second point is that while anti-Semitism may be history’s most demented hatred, it’s also the world’s most unwitting compliment. And here I am going to say something that may be misconstrued but needs to be said: The Jew-haters have a certain point, because Judaism and Jewish values and Jewish habits of mind are

indeed subversive of many social orders.

The third point is that the proper defense against Jew-hatred is not to prove the haters wrong by outdoing ourselves in feats of altruism, benevolence, and achievement. It is to lean into our Jewishness as far as each of us can irrespective of what anyone else thinks of it. If the price of being our fullest selves as Jews is to be the perennially unpopular kids, it's a price well worth paying.

Finally, the fourth point is that what Jews need now isn't allyship or sympathy or a seat at the table of the world's victimized groups. What we need is the wisdom of the composer Philip Glass: "If there's no room at the table, build your own table."

So, to my first point: Does anyone think the fight against anti-Semitism is working?

I know we all wish it could work. I know we'd like to think that if only we ensured that Holocaust education was part of every public school curriculum; or universalized the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism; or persuaded universities to stop inviting Israel-hating speakers; or got the news media to deliver fairer coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; or alighted on history's most brilliant PR strategy for Israel; or switched prime ministers to nearly anyone other than Bibi—that if we did all this and more, we could turn the tide that's been running so heavily against us in recent years. I also know that, now and then, we do achieve some victories, particularly when it comes to getting university administrators to crack down on the most overt

**The proper defense against Jew-hatred is to lean into our Jewishness as far as each of us can irrespective of what anyone else thinks of it.**

**Commentary**

expressions of anti-Semitic speech.

But here's what I also know: that Tucker Carlson's popularity and influence as a podcaster have only soared as his bigotry has become more blatant. That journalistic disgraces such as the

**All this is happening at a moment when the Jewish community has never been more alarmed, more engaged, more eager, more courageous.**

fake report about the 500 dead Palestinians at the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza did nothing to prevent subsequent fake or grossly sensationalized reporting about the war that perpetuated anti-Semitic stereotypes. That the governor of Pennsylvania was asked if he'd ever been a "double agent" for Israel while he was being vetted for his party's vice-presidential nomination. That the vice president of the United States dismissed the idea that anti-Semitism was widespread and rising and instead pointed the finger at "people"—by which, of course, he meant Jews— "who want to avoid having a foreign-policy conversation about America's relationship with Israel." That, in New York State, with its abundance of Jewish cultural institutions open to the public, 1 in 5 Millennials and Gen-Zs believe the Jews caused the Holocaust.

All this is happening at a moment when the Jewish community has never been more alarmed, more engaged, more resourced, more eager, more courageous, and more willing to "do something." So what is it that those of us who are in this fight against anti-Semitism are missing?

The mistake we make is this: We think that anti-Semitism stems, fundamentally, from missing or inaccurate information. We think

that if people only had greater knowledge of the history of Jewish persecution, a fuller grasp of the real facts of the Israeli–Arab conflict, a finer understanding of all the ways anti-Semitism manifests itself, a deeper appreciation of the Jewish contribution to America’s success and to human flourishing, that the hatred of us might dissipate or never start in the first place.

But that thesis is wrong. Jew-hatred is not

## **We are a countercultural nation. To make matters worse, our countercultural convictions have helped us flourish nearly everywhere we have put down roots.**

the result of a defect in education: From Martin Luther to T.S. Eliot to Sally Rooney, the world has never suffered a shortage of educated anti-Semites. Jew-hatred is the product of a psychological reflex—and that kind of reflex can never be educated out of existence even if, for a time, it may be sublimated into quiescence. Anti-Semitism, in other words, isn’t just a prejudice or a belief. It’s a neurosis.

This brings me to the second point we must examine, not least because so many of the usual answers are so superficial: What is it about Jews that has, over the centuries, aroused so much venom and violence?

Are Jews hated because of Israel’s alleged misdeeds? That’s a common view these days, but it fails to explain the thousands of years of anti-Semitism that preceded the creation of Israel, or account for why hatred of Israel mimics classic anti-Semitic tropes of insatiable Jewish bloodlust and secret manipulation of global affairs.

Are Jews hated because we represent the eternal “other”? This, too, is often said, and of course there’s some truth to it. But there are many

“others” in every human society, yet none that are so persistently subjected to such lurid conspiracy theories, such murderous designs, such blatant double standards: Why has nobody written the book called “The Protocols of the Elders of the Amish” or “The International Quaker”?

Are Jews hated because we refused to accept Christ as Messiah or Mohammed as Prophet? Yes, sort of—but again, how do we account for the centuries of Jew-hatred before the births of Christ or Muhammad, or for the persecution of Jews whose families converted to Christianity?

All these explanations fail for the same reason that our attempts to educate people out of their anti-Semitism fail: They do not account for the psychological basis of anti-Semitism. That basis has a name: resentment, marinated in the emotion of envy.

Resentment of what, exactly? Of just this: The Jewish people are a countercultural nation. To make matters worse, our countercultural convictions have helped us flourish nearly everywhere we have put down roots.

What are some of those convictions? We believe there is one God—not many, not none—and therefore a common moral universe with a common moral code that applies to all people, everywhere. We believe that human beings are made in the image of God, and therefore that human life is inherently precious, and that the lowest among us is equal in basic dignity to the highest. We believe in freedom and the quest for freedom, and therefore we pose a fundamental challenge to every tyrant who would deny that freedom. We believe that the Messiah has *not* come, and therefore we are *not* beguiled by any self-declared redeemer. We believe in the word and in the text, and therefore in literacy as a foundation for faith, not a threat to it. We believe that questions are of equal if not greater importance than answers, and therefore that curiosity, second-guessing, and the quest for knowledge are social goods. We believe in “argument for the sake of heaven,” and therefore in disagreement that isn’t impudence and heterodoxy that isn’t heresy.

Above all, we believe in the word “no.” No to sun gods and graven images and child sacrifice. No to Pharaoh and Caesar, the Inquisition and the Reformation, the Czar and the Commissar. No to emancipation from our peoplehood by the French Revolution or to the erasure of our faith by the Russian Revolution or to the destruction of our statehood through the siren song of bi-nationalism. No to the dethronement of God by reason, or of moral judgment by moral relativism. No to the seductive offer of eternal salvation at the cost of our covenant with God.

I don’t mean to suggest by any of this that Jews are incapable of making our peace with our political and cultural surroundings. Obviously we can, we have, and we do. But our yesses to our surroundings have always been predicated on our noes, and what we affirm also requires that we maintain the courage to reject. It is this courage that is the central source of our inner strength as people and our endurance as *a* people. We must never let go of it.

But “no” is also an infuriating word, however gently and quietly it may be uttered. And that

## It should go without saying that there is nothing Jews can do to cure the Jew-haters of their hate—they can hire their own psychiatrists.

makes it a dangerous word. Ask anyone who has been turned down by a college, an employer, a love interest: The normal reaction to rejection is rage. That rage only grows when it is suffused by the sense that, as with Cain in Genesis, one’s offering was not good enough; that it was rejected from a place of judgment and therefore a position of superiority. That is a basis for toxic rage. Conversely, the reason “people love dead Jews,”

to borrow Dara Horn’s memorable phrase, is that it replaces that gnawing sense of inferiority with the pleasure of feeling pity.

**I**T SHOULD GO without saying that there is nothing Jews can do to cure the Jew-haters of their hate—they can hire their own psychiatrists. And there is nothing that we should want to do, either. Which brings me to my third point: If it’s impossible to cure an anti-Semite, it’s almost impossible to cure Jews of the delusion that we can.

You’re familiar with the sound of this delusion—you’ve probably heard it from your uncle. It goes something like this: “Don’t they notice the names on the hospital wings and the new campus centers? Aren’t they impressed by all the Jewish Nobelists in medicine and physics and chemistry? What about the fact that Israel is the only real democracy in the Middle East, the only place you’d want to be if you’re gay, the only place where brains are more valuable than oil? And wasn’t it a Jewish doctor who cured polio?”

All true, of course, and it’s a wonderful thing that there are so many creative Jewish minds and generous Jewish donors. It’s wonderful, too, that Israel remains a beacon of democratic courage and social creativity in the face of its adversaries. But this earns us no favors with the haters. They do not hate us because of our faults and failures; they hate us because of our virtues and successes. The more virtuous or successful we are, the more we’ll be hated by those whose animating emotions are resentment and envy.

And yet, as a Jewish community, we rarely seem to draw the obvious conclusion: Constantly seeking to prove ourselves worthy in order to win the world’s love is a fool’s errand. In the 1990s, Israel repeatedly took “risks for peace” for the sake of trying to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It culminated in the second intifada and the rise of the BDS movement. There isn’t a social justice movement in America in which Jews haven’t played a founding or leading role. Yet virtually every one of those movements

is shot through with anti-Semitism.

This always seems to come as a shock to us, perhaps never more so than after October 7, when we witnessed just how little compassion there was for Jewish anguish, most of all from the very people to whom we have given so much. We need to stop being surprised. We need to stop being wounded. We need to stop being aggrieved and indignant.

I'd go further: We need to take this as an opportunity to stop caring. The goal of Jewish life is not to ingratiate ourselves with others so that they might dislike us somewhat less or love us somewhat more. The goal of Jewish life is Jewish thriving. And by "Jewish thriving," I don't mean thriving Jews, individually speaking. I mean a community in which Jewish learning, Jewish culture, Jewish ritual, Jewish concerns, Jewish aspiration, and Jewish identification are central to every member's sense of him or herself.

## **Jewish thriving happens when being Jewish is the centering fact of life, the source from which we derive meaning and purpose, our moral anchor.**

How we choose to invest in our Jewishness—whether more religiously or more culturally or more politically or whatever—is up to each of us to decide. But the main point is this: Jewish thriving happens not when there are a lot of rich and successful and well-integrated Jews doing well and feeling safe in their host societies. Jewish thriving happens when being Jewish is not merely an incident of ancestry but rather the centering fact of life, the source from which we derive meaning and purpose, our spiritual compass and moral anchor and emotional safe harbor.

By this measure, what Franklin Foer called

the "Golden Age of American Jews" was fading long before October 7. It has been fading for decades, starting when American Jews began to treat their Jewishness as the most disposable part of their identity. It was fading when bar and bat mitzvahs became the last Jewish ritual many American Jews observed in their life. It was fading when intermarriage rates crept above 50 percent. It was fading as a growing percentage of American Jews started to feel more embarrassment than pride in Israel.

Now, however, we have an opportunity to reverse that trajectory. And, paradoxically, this opportunity has been handed to us by our awareness of our vulnerability, our unpopularity, our being hated. I'm the person who coined the term "October 8th Jews" in a *New York Times* column. Yet, in hindsight, I got the definition only half right. I said at the time that the October 8th Jew was the Jew who "woke up to discover who our friends are not." What I should have said was that the October 8th Jew was the one who "woke up trying to remember who he truly is."

And this brings me, finally, to my fourth point: Building our own table.

There are three great stories in the history of American Jewry. The name for the first story is called "Arriving": the story of the first generation who came off the boats and lived in the tenements and never forgot the old country. This is what Irving Howe called "The World of Our Fathers."

The second story is what Norman Podhoretz called "Making It"—the story of American-born Jews who went through schools like Stuyvesant and City College and went into professions like medicine and law; and of their children, who went through Dalton and Yale and became investment bankers and tech entrepreneurs.

Then there's the third story. It's called "Departing." Some of those departures have been to Israel: They include people like Jon Polin and Rachel Goldberg-Polin of Chicago, parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin; or Jim and Myrna Bennett of San Francisco, parents of Naftali Bennett. But there are also internal departures: of Jews who,

at some point in their careers, were told they weren't allowed to sit at the cool kids' table and so went off and sat at their own—ultimately creating investment banking, Hollywood, private equity, most of today's biggest law firms, not to mention Bloomberg and Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts and 1,000 other iconic American brands.

Those individual departures can serve as a model for what the Jewish community, as a whole, must do to achieve the kind of Jewish thriving I spoke of earlier. The infrastructure is already mostly there; the scale isn't. We have superb day schools. But we need many more of them—at Catholic-school tuition rates—to give every Jewish family in America a chance to give their children an excellent education rooted in Jewish values. We have extraordinary Jewish philanthropies. But they need to become the primary locus of Jewish giving, not the relative afterthought they are to too many major Jewish philanthropists. We have Jewish priorities, but not a coherent funding mechanism: Perhaps, as Jordan Hirsch suggested recently in *Sapir*, we need the private equivalent of a Jewish Sovereign Wealth Fund. We have a Jewish media that, to be honest, is something of a mixed bag but could, with investment and vision, be put on a path to becoming the most desirable employment destination for the best writers and reporters and editors in America. We have an emerging rabbinate that, frankly, runs the risk of being captured by ideological forces that do not represent the Jewish community—we need to dedicate a great deal of effort to ensuring that more liberal Jewish congregations don't suffer the same fate as the collapsing Presbyterian Church (USA). We have millions of engaged Jewish readers who are currently being disserved by a publishing industry in which “Zionism” has become a dirty word; let's rescue publishing, too.

In short, we have a lot; we need a lot more. We need it because we are not going back to the America we knew as Jews 50 or 40 or even 10 years

ago. We need it because we know what has happened to Jewish communities throughout history, from Cordoba to Cologne to Cairo, that lost their instinct for danger and failed to notice that their zenith was just a step away from their precipice. We need it because too many of our

**In short, we have a lot; we need a lot more. We need it because we are not going back to the America we knew as Jews 50 or 40 or even 10 years ago.**

children are walking away from, even turning against, their own Jewish inheritance. We need it because “Departing” is only a synonym for a new beginning, and Jewish vitality has, for millennia, been renewed and strengthened by that cycle of departure and beginning.

And we need it because America needs it—because America needs us. America needs us as its witty gadfly and loyal critic and skeptical moral conscience; as the keeper of its tolerant and pluralistic flame; as its no-sayer in moments of overweening certitude and its yes-sayer in moments of crushing self-doubt. America needs us because the hope of the New Jerusalem that our founders sought to create in Plymouth in 1620 and Philadelphia in 1776 and the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 could never come to pass if it were built on anything but the memory and inspiration of that other Jerusalem, the one that was—and is—ours.

All this was understood once and will be understood again. Until then, we will endure the honor of being hated, as we continue to work toward a thriving Jewish future. [S▶](#)

# The Age of Trump: A Sobering Return to Reality

After decades of wishcasting abroad,  
a new vision of power and purpose is forming

By Tod Lindberg and Corban Teague

**A** DECADE AFTER Donald Trump's descent down an escalator in his New York City apartment building in 2015, it can no longer be denied, either by friend or foe, that we are living in the Age of Trump, and that his shadow will

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be cast over the first half of the 21st century for as long as historians write their chronicles. But what does this even mean? Trump makes it difficult to discern. We cannot tell what, for him, is a core conviction rather than a negotiating point. He pivots so rapidly between seemingly contradictory positions that his policy framework has become a Rorschach test for the various factions within his coalition. Nevertheless, as we enter the second decade of the Age of Trump, we can begin to define the fundamental values that are undergirding his administration, especially in

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## The predecessor to the Age of Trump was the ‘post-Cold War era consensus,’ and the critique Trump and his supporters make of it is, to put it mildly, robust.

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the realm of foreign policy, even if it often seems as though Trump is allergic to any kind of core principle. But even that, if true, is a matter of values. It’s just a question of what he values and what he is willing to put on the line for it.

Trump began as a candidate in revolt against Democrats and Republicans and all the niceties and rituals that had been established to help mediate the spaces between the parties. Trump-era values are therefore, at least in part, a critique of the animating principles of the past—but how far back in the past?

The predecessor to the Age of Trump was the “post-Cold War era consensus,” and the critique Trump and his supporters make of it is, to put it mildly, robust. The collapse of the Soviet Union brought with it a generation of American hegemonic dominance across the globe that seemed, on balance, quite satisfactory to those involved in creating and perpetuating it. But it was unsatisfactory to Trump and many of those he represents. They rail against the consensus’s supposed preference for “endless wars” and against an economics seen as favoring the interests of shareholders and great wealth over the concerns of the working class and Main Street.

But Trump’s doings and undoings are more than merely a reaction to the triumphalism of the period, including the notion that we had reached the “end of history.” The objections extend back to the basic elements of the post-World War II liberal order itself. Though this order was largely American in origin and a product of the unprecedented global dominance of the United States across all measures of power in the aftermath of World War II, for many it has become a euphemism for a system that allowed our allies a free ride on our defense dollar and the entrenchment of trade rules that allowed foreign countries to place barriers to entry on

American-made products while the United States opened itself up to a flood of imports grounded in cheap labor abroad. Even after the Cold War, the United States maintained a disproportionate security burden, while NATO allies shirked defense commitments to boost their domestic welfare programs. American-led interventions in Kuwait and the former Yugoslavia went off smoothly in the earliest post-Cold War years, but the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan created a crisis of confidence and fueled debates about American military presence abroad.

Meanwhile, the economic model that emerged at the end of the 1970s—with Margaret Thatcher’s ascendancy in the UK, the beginnings of U.S. deregulation in the late Carter administration, and finally the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980—is viewed with deep skepticism despite the fact that the American economy has grown sevenfold over the past four decades and remains the worldwide engine of innovation and productivity. The model, some in the Trump camp argue, led to American manufacturing moving offshore in pursuit of low-cost labor. That produced cheaper goods for American consumers but shuttered U.S. factories and thereby hollowed out middle- or working-class lifestyles across the country.

During that same time, they point out, American strength was being degraded from within. Progressive elites have grown increasingly committed to a worldview that rejects classical liberal and Judeo-Christian values in favor of a self-loathing disrespect toward Western heritage and culture. The very notion of “human rights” went from serving as an international bulwark against another Holocaust and a rallying cry against Communist totalitarian oppression to a weapon used to advance progressive policy preferences—from new forms of marriage

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to radical notions of gender identity, as well as twisted conceptions of “oppressed versus oppressors” used to justify or excuse anything from antiwhite bigotry to Pakistani grooming gangs in the UK to the heinous attacks of October 7. The values-based case for preserving the postwar liberal order rings hollow when Christians are arrested in the United Kingdom for praying silently outside abortion clinics at the same time that Islamists march freely down British streets chanting anti-Semitic and anti-Western hate, or when free speech is censored under the guise of fighting disinformation and “hate speech” as defined by leftist NGOs.

For these and other, less seemly reasons, more radical elements of the Trump coalition claim that anyone who speaks in favor of maintaining the “postwar foreign policy consensus” is just part of a shameful and entropic “uniparty”—members of a camp pushing for an international order determined to constrain U.S. freedom of action abroad and diminish American sovereignty in favor of the interests and values of a global and “globalist” class.

But even if, as its defenders argue, this order still manages to provide more benefits than any available alternative, it is hard to dispute that its returns have begun falling short relative to the investment of American blood and treasure. How did we manage to reach a point where the nation that established and has led this order is now seeing such diminishing returns? The answer lies in the underlying animating value at the heart of America’s grand strategy for the past century—and ultimately at the heart of the Age of Trump’s critique.

**T**HE UNITED STATES has treated its role as a global superpower much differently than past hegemony. For nearly a cen-

tury, a fundamental assumption underpinning American grand strategy has been the belief that it was possible (and desirable) at some level to replicate on the international stage what the American experiment aims to do domestically—“to form a more perfect Union.”

For all of its very real triumphs, American foreign policy throughout much of the 20th century and into the 21st century suffered from a misguided, idealistic hubris—certain that our American way was establishing the conditions for permanent peace and stability across the globe. It was within reach; we had only to pave the road. After defeating existential threat after existential threat at significant cost, from Nazi Germany and Japan to the Soviet Bloc, our strategic priority in victory was not to prioritize our own sovereignty and enlightened self-interest but instead to look for ways to foster global cooperation and harmony. Rather than concentrating on identifying and preparing for the inevitable rise of the next great threat, our time and energy were spent trying to create a world in which new threats would not emerge.

Woodrow Wilson was the first to begin advancing this vision of a glorious future—believing that our World War I victory had created an opportunity to secure world peace by creating collective security arrangements grounded in binding multilateral commitments, with the aid of a new international body. Wilson hoped an elite expert class could help set international rules and standards to enable countries to transcend the messy notions of national interests and balances of power in the joint pursuit of the greater global good. Should any threat to this new order arise, each country was expected to jump to its defense, regardless of where the threat originated. Of course, Wilson and fellow idealists believed there would be little need for

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any such enforcement, because states would adhere to it, being rational actors who wanted good things. Wilson envisioned a self-sustaining order whose foundation lay in the power of institutions and law, rather than what we have come to call “hard power.”

In the end, Wilson’s vision was a resounding failure. Nations were not amenable to being told by an international bureaucratic elite working at his League of Nations what their interests should and should not be, nor were they interested in enforcing multilateral collective security commitments that did not take their concrete national interests into consideration. Wilson’s idealism was no match for the hard realities of power and conflict, and critics like Senate Majority Leader Henry Cabot Lodge were rightly skeptical of the proposition that open-ended universal commitments had an automatic claim on precious American blood and treasure.

Two decades later, as World War II was coming to its end, Franklin Roosevelt tried a different approach. Rather than trying to avoid the problem of national interests, Roosevelt bet that the victorious Allied powers would all see it was in their interest to maintain a stable, peaceful global order. Recognizing this required actual power, he came up with the “Four Policemen” idea, according to which four of the most powerful nations emerging from World War II—the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China—would work together as enforcers, a concept later echoed in the formation of the United Nations Security Council.

The problem this time was that the United States and the Soviet Union had vastly different views on what that global order should look like, given their fundamentally incompatible ideologies and core values. It took the likes of Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg—who as a young

newspaper editor championed Lodge’s opposition to Wilson’s League of Nations idea—to find common ground with President Harry Truman in shifting American foreign policy to deal with the Soviets as the adversaries they were rather than the permanent allies Roosevelt naively hoped they could be.

By the time Francis Fukuyama put forth his “end of history” thesis in 1989, however, it did seem to many that this time could be different. With the United States emerging as the sole superpower, great-power competition seemed relegated to the past, and thanks to the triumph of democratic capitalism over Communism, it appeared there also was finally an answer as to how nations could organize their affairs in a universally satisfying manner, one capable of unlocking the full potential of the postwar liberal order.

Capitalism and free trade made it possible to envision the interests of nations playing out in a constant series of win-win interactions, fostering strong incentives for peace as a means of maintaining economic prosperity and encouraging the transition of the likes of Russia and China into liberal democracies and responsible global partners. And since, according to the “democratic peace” thesis, mature democratic states do not make war on each other, this would only further reinforce a permanent global peace. American post-Cold War strategy, then, was to ensure this progression continued apace. That it would happen was rarely questioned; the only real doubts were how quickly it would happen and how much work it would take to convince holdouts.

Yet just as with Wilson and Roosevelt, the post-Cold War promise of a universally accepted democratic capitalist system solidifying a permanent global peace came crashing down, in part due to the machinations of a radical Is-

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lamist terrorist and the 19 hijackers who brought the fantasy of universal democratic and Western consensus to a fiery end on a sunny September morning. The war that began in 2001 came to an ambiguous end two decades later with our pullout from Afghanistan, an event many think gave the Soviet Union's dictatorial successor in Russia an implicit green light to start a war on the European continent for the first time in nearly 80 years.

And then there's China. For not only has the liberal order failed to meet the expectations of Trump and his supporters, but as was true in the aftermath of World War I and World War II, another great-power threat has emerged in Beijing from a nation with the desire and increasing capability to significantly harm our interests—ironically, and inexcusably, thanks in large part to our help.

In a misguided effort to push China toward political liberalization, the United States went to great lengths to bring China into the international economic system. But far from following the rules, China went to great lengths to cheat and steal to gain every economic and technological advantage possible. At the same time, it began conducting what is widely believed to be the largest peacetime military buildup in history, all while significantly ramping up information warfare and malign influence operations aimed at the United States and our allies. Underlying all of this is a desire not just to gain a competitive market advantage or achieve regional hegemony, but to recast the global order in Beijing's favor—and to the detriment of American interests and values.

In spite of the best intentions of American politicians, history returned with a vengeance—great power confrontation in a fight for global dominance, wars of aggression, economic un-

certainty, competition for critical resources. And with the return of history came the Age of Trump.

**A**T ITS CORE, the Age of Trump's foreign policy is in part a rebuke of the idea that history will end, that the universal principles that animate our nation will be universally accepted, and that peace and stability will be everlasting. The question is what to do about this reality. How should this dark and skeptical view inform American foreign policy and America's place in the world going forward? And how, if at all, do our founding values fit into this future?

A small but vocal Trump faction seeks an Age of Trump that eliminates all vestiges of the postwar liberal order and looks instead to the isolationist, or at least anti-interventionist, spirit that existed prior to World War II. Given how history actually played out, it is easy to forget how strong that current of thought was. Even after having been attacked by Imperial Japan on December 7, 1941, with war in the Pacific a certainty, it was not clear until Hitler declared war on the United States a few days later that we would join the fight against Nazi Germany. From its foundation in 1940, the America First Committee, which claimed 850,000 members—and whose chairman, Robert Wood, was a former general and then-chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Co.—held large rallies against going to war in Europe. It dissolved the day Hitler declared war. The committee's present heirs seem perfectly comfortable letting American power diminish if doing so furthers the cause of a new Age of Trump characterized by non-intervention.

However, there are two significant reasons why even attempting to make the Age of Trump an isolationism redux will fail. First, Trump's

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own actions and policies have made clear at this point that, while he views nearly everything as negotiable, he is not an isolationist and is perfectly willing to use American power to intervene abroad in service of American interests. The narrative that the muscular foreign policy of his first term was just the product of secret Never Trumpers in his administration has been resoundingly crushed by his actions in the second term. One does not send stealth bombers to obliterate Iran’s nuclear facilities or conduct a major military operation to arrest Venezuela’s illegitimate dictator in his bed and bring him to trial in the United States on narco-terrorism charges if there is any squeamishness about the use of American power.

Second, and every bit as important given that Trump has just a few more years in power, his voters actually overwhelmingly reject a United States that has accepted decline and isolation. Polls consistently show that Trump voters are far more hawkish and supportive of a strong U.S. presence on the global stage than the isolationist faction has sought to delude us into believing. Trump voters, including those within his most loyal MAGA camp, have no problem recognizing China, Russia, and Iran as adversaries, and they continue to recognize the value of those allies like Israel who pull their own weight and provide a benefit to American security and prosperity. Trump supporters overwhelmingly prefer a United States willing to confront adversaries rather than a United States that has accepted a supposedly inevitable decline. And even as they may dislike elements of the current postwar order, they have no desire to see a Chinese global order take its place or see someone else’s values and principles dictate global norms. There is a reason why Trump campaigned on slogans like “Make America *Great* Again” and

“peace through *strength*”—that’s what his voters actually want.

So two things appear to be simultaneously true. Yes, there is a real discontent in the Age of Trump with how the postwar order has evolved in the post–Cold War era. There are real frustrations that the current order has not only required too much of the United States, but that many of its most influential thinkers are now advancing principles and values fundamentally contradictory to those upon which our nation was founded and that form the bedrock of Western civilization. At the same time, neither Trump nor the majority of his supporters wants to forswear U.S. global leadership in favor of a simplistic pre–World War II isolationism that meekly accepts the decline of American power.

In the end, what the Age of Trump’s protagonists seem to want is for the United States to start actually acting like a global power. That means ensuring that any global order we lead and sustain definitively serves the interests of the American people and reflects our founding values and principles. They have no problem with American intervention *per se*—they simply (and quite reasonably) want American power to be used successfully and in furtherance of America’s enlightened national interest. The goal is not retreating from the world or destroying all vestiges of the order that we helped build, but to remake it as necessary to ensure it is consistent with our national purposes. And if that is indeed the kind of foreign policy this era will pursue, the Founding Fathers provide a worthwhile blueprint for the future—and a bridge back to the moral core of our nation’s founding.

The truth is that the Founding Fathers would have felt far more at home in the rough-and-tumble Age of Trump than the heady early days of the post–Cold War period with all its un-

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## The Founding Fathers would have felt far more at home in the rough-and-tumble Age of Trump than the early days of the post-Cold War period with its unrealistic wishcasting.

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realistic wishcasting. While they were animated by the belief that each person possesses unalienable rights flowing from an intrinsic, God-given dignity, the Founding Fathers did not share the impractical idealism of Wilson or Roosevelt. These 18th-century men refused to harbor unrealistic expectations about human beings and the way politics and power work. While they espoused principles universal in nature, the Founding Fathers were under no illusion that their principles would ever be universally accepted. They knew that their claims would meet resistance; most kings, including the colonists' lawful sovereign, George III, had little use for dignity-grounded arguments that undermined the legitimacy of royal authority. The question of the vindication of the founding principles of the United States of America was therefore never separate from the need to defend them—and win them—by force.

The Declaration of Independence was not a suicide pact. Revolution is a risky business for those rebelling. Failure means a date with the hangman. But those who signed the Declaration had a plan. The Declaration was not merely a statement of principle and a catalogue of the abuses of the colonies by the crown. It was a strategic document as well.

The commander of the Continental Army, George Washington, had in mind a drawn-out war for independence, one that would avoid a decisive engagement between his force and the formidable British army and its German hireling auxiliaries, the Hessians. Washington sought to make use of the vast territory of the colonies to wear down the British to the point that they'd give up.

But that was not the only aspect of the American power-based strategy for independence. The United States needed, and through

the Declaration sought and soon obtained, a willing ally capable of assisting with “boots on the ground” and substantial naval power, of which the United States had none.

France was the key. French strategists anticipated that the power balance in their long-running rivalry with Britain would tilt decisively in favor of the latter if Britain retained its colonies in the New World. Assisting the colonies in their struggle for independence would have the short-term benefit of tying up British forces there and, in the long run, if successful, prevent the British crown from making use of its assets and resources in America in the struggle for position in the Old World. For France, the future of Europe ran through the American Revolution.

The problem was that France couldn't overtly support the Continentals in the sovereign territory of its British rival so long as the conflict remained at the stage of the tiny 1775 battles of Lexington and Concord. As the historian Larrie D. Ferreiro argues in his 2016 book *Brothers at Arms*, this was the problem the Declaration of Independence solved. Once the Continental Congress took decisive action, there was no turning back. The equation for France changed. Providing military aid to an independent country was a different proposition from interfering in internal disputes on someone else's sovereign territory.

While France immediately started providing clandestine support to the Continental Army, the formal French-American alliance against Britain awaited the Continental Army providing the French with proof of concept for the viability of the military endeavor. That came in fall 1777, with the Battles of Saratoga in New York, which ended with the surrender of a surrounded and outnumbered British force of more than 5,000. The French would go on to play a critical role

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## The Age of Trump's protagonists are right to vehemently reject the voluntary and unnecessary erosion of U.S. power. The challenge is if they can build something positive.

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in the war's final battle at Yorktown in 1781, where their naval forces deprived the British of their anticipated access to the Chesapeake Bay, and the Marquis de Lafayette and the Comte de Rochambeau led French troops alongside Washington's Continental Army to victory over British General Charles Cornwallis. His surrender effectively ended the war and vindicated the Declaration.

France was not acting altruistically in support of the American Revolution. It was deploying its power in pursuit of its interests, namely, a weakened British Empire humiliated by the loss of its American colonies. The Continental Army had something bigger to strive for, not only independence and survival but also the principles Jefferson set forth in the Declaration. Without the power to defend them by prevailing against the Crown, the principles by themselves might have lived on to inspire others to take them up and fight for them. But with power, they marked the beginning of the United States and its advance to the pinnacle of global power in support of ideas grounded in equal God-given human dignity and the rights that flow from it.

**T**HIS COMBINATION of power and principle, present at the creation of the United States and continuing to animate its growth and vitality for 250 years and counting, remains a reliable guide for American leaders and policymakers in the Age of Trump and beyond. It's a legacy Americans have made for themselves. The nature of politics is to produce ugly outcomes. What's unusual is a good outcome, and the United States by 2026 has produced more of them than history has recorded for any other polity, not merely because of our values but also because of the way our power sustains them.

The Age of Trump's protagonists are right to vehemently reject the voluntary and unnecessary erosion of American power. The challenge is whether they can build something positive—whether they can retain the needed emphasis on power to secure American interests while remaining true to the founding principles that have made and continue to make our nation great.

Doing so will require clarity on several fronts. First, the United States does not merely face strategic competitors, but enemies. These enemies do not need to be manufactured—they have made themselves and their intentions clear. China is leading an anti-American bloc that includes Russia, Iran, North Korea, and (at least until his arrest) Maduro's Venezuela, all united around a single goal, which is to bring the United States to its knees. China is ultimately not interested in securing a better trade deal or being placated with a sphere of influence, as ironically, Trump and some of his advisers seem to believe. China wants a Washington subservient to Beijing, and it knows it can count on its revanchist partners in a campaign to harm American interests and standing.

Second, while American foreign policy must be completely oriented toward denying and degrading the threat from this Chinese bloc, we must be realistic about what success means. While America's 20th-century experiences with great-power clashes resulted in outright victories, history shows us that this is not necessarily the norm. We instead should expect decades, or even centuries, of the kind of long struggles seen throughout European history, where success more often looks like consistently tipping the scales in one's favor rather than a decisive defeat that catapults us back into the status of uncontested global hegemon. This means steeling the

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## Rather than running from the reality that our values will always be under various forms of attack, the Age of Trump should use it as the glue that marries principle with power.

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American people and orienting our defense and economic policies on a timeline lasting decades while unabashedly employing hybrid-warfare tactics to weaken and undermine the enemy regimes—as they are doing to us now.

Relatedly, even if we did secure a more decisive victory reminiscent of World War II or the Cold War, we should not make the mistake of assuming that such a victory will be permanent. For every Japan that becomes a useful ally, there is the Soviet Union that simply morphs into the same adversary in a different form.

Third, our interests are best served when we both set and enforce the rules. The postwar order's failures are lessons that must be learned and not repeated. We should not allow our adversaries into an order we lead. We should require even our allies to shoulder a fair burden, and we should hold them to account when they abandon shared values and principles. Preserving an order in which America remains predominant will require a lot of work. It will be far harder than throwing up our hands and walking away, as our enemies would like and as the isolationists among us dream of doing. But our order is far preferable to a world dominated by the Chinese Communist Party.

And fourth, the Age of Trump must be one that faces up to the “clash of civilizations” framing articulated by Fukuyama's great antagonist, Samuel P. Huntington. It's not just that our allies sometimes need cajoling to recommit to

shared civilizational values; we also need to remind ourselves why we fight our enemies. Our national interests are morally superior to those of our adversaries because the values that inform them are morally superior. The principle animating our nation from the beginning is the unshakeable belief in the dignity of every human, and it is fundamentally incompatible with the values that animate the Chinese Communist Party, Putin, or any of our other adversaries. We know from history that our values will never be universally accepted but will always be under various forms of attack. Rather than running from this reality, the Age of Trump can and should use it as the glue that again marries principle with power.

We did not know it then, but Trump's escalator entrance was the start of a sobering return to reality. History is clear: No peace is permanent, and human beings are incontrovertibly imperfectible. Conflict and war between states will never be relegated to the ash heap of history, and international relations will always be a nasty fight for supremacy, one in which the winner gets to shape the future according to its interests and values. The test for the Age of Trump is whether it ultimately will repeat past mistakes and abandon either principles or power (or both), or whether it will reconnect power to America's founding values and lay to rest the dangerous delusion that power is unnecessary or self-sustaining. ▶

# The Case for Greenland

The Trump administration's push for a greater role in Greenland is sound strategy hampered by terrible tactics

By Mike Coté

**O**VER THE past year, Donald Trump and his administration have returned again and again to the issue of Greenland. The president has used heated and bluster rhetoric as he makes clear his view that the United States should take possession of the island away from Denmark.

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MIKE COTÉ is a writer and historian focused on geopolitics, great-power conflict, and diplomacy.

His take-no-prisoners approach flummoxed and inflamed the annual conference of economic and political pooh-bahs in the Swiss town of Davos and led leading figures in NATO to suggest Trump's language was hastening the end of the West as we know it. The focus on Greenland has been a subject of satire, general merriment, and genuine concern that Trump's fixation with something that has never been on the American public's radar—ever—is nothing less than a sign of Trump's madness.

Trump's approach might be bizarre, but his

interest in Greenland is in no way crazy. In fact, the goal of a larger, more permanent, more direct U.S. role in Greenland is in line with our history, security, and national interests.

Greenland has been a quiet and enduring presence in American life going back to the colonial era. Its territorial waters were a

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far-off but regular destination for northeastern whalers, whose pursuit of the precious oil to be leached from the sea leviathans helped build a core American industry a century before the discovery of petroleum. Official American interest in the Danish colony goes back over a century and a half to 1867, when Secretary of State William Seward, fresh off the Alaska Purchase (another excellent idea labeled a folly at the time), mooted the notion of buying both Greenland and Iceland from the Danes. At the time, the value of the island was primarily its fisheries and novel coal-deposit discoveries, but it also offered a platform for America as it sought to control transatlantic trade. No formal purchase offer was made, but the concept remained in the ether and resurfaced in 1910, when America's ambassador to Copenhagen floated an exchange of Greenland and other Danish territory for parts of the then-U.S. colony of the Philippines. That idea never left internal diplomatic back channels, but we did buy the Danish West Indies in 1917 to keep it out of the hands of Imperial Germany. That agreement was the last annexation of territory to date. It gave us the U.S. Virgin Islands and helped convert the Caribbean Sea into an American lake.

Washington went back to the well in 1946, when Secretary of State James Byrnes made a confidential offer to the Danes of \$100 million for the territory. This was in the immediate

aftermath of World War II, during which the U.S. had essentially occupied Greenland, establishing more than a dozen military bases there and stationing thousands of active-duty troops. That experience proved to American military planners that, in the words of a contemporary State Department official, "Greenland is indis-

pensable to the safety of the United States." The Truman administration's offer was politely rejected, but Greenland remained crucial to our security during the Cold War. Agreements were made with Denmark in the early 1950s that

allowed certain military uses of the area with Danish consent; this allowed the U.S. to bolster its strength in the Arctic and track Soviet missile launches, and the American presence there acted as a trip wire for a potential invasion. After the fall of Communism, the era of the "peace dividend" took over, and Greenland became a deprioritized backwater. Now, we maintain only a single base on the island, Pituffik Space Base, and a paucity of troops.

**S**O WHY SHOULD we change all of that now? Is Greenland really still "indispensable" to American national security? Yes. Greenland has always been geographically positioned as a key spot along the northern transit path of the Atlantic Ocean. That route remains important, but global developments have begun to open a new, possibly even more significant, pathway through the planet's waters. We are constantly told that climate change is breaking up sea ice, causing warming in polar regions, and pushing sea levels to rise; if these predictions are indeed accurate, even to a modest extent, the centuries-old dream of widespread Arctic shipping could become a reality.

Since the first days of European exploration in the New World, the quest for a northern sea route to the Pacific has been ongoing. A connection point of the two major oceans at the top of the earth to match Cape Horn and the Cape of

Good Hope at the bottom would shorten trade routes and make global commerce work far more smoothly. But the large-scale sea ice, complex navigation, and dramatic weather of the Arctic have forestalled that objective. That is why the potential new realities of warming oceans, GPS navigation, and improved shipbuilding offer the possibility of surmounting these once-insuperable challenges. Russia and China have been seriously interested in making use of this alternative route. Greenland could serve as both a check on adversarial domination of the waterways and a way station for American use.

Shipping is not the only potential economic benefit for us. Greenland has vast untapped natural resources. Coal was an early focus of American interest in the territory, and energy remains an important aspect of Greenland's potential economic growth. The island's territorial waters host large deposits of fossil fuels, but the Greenlandic government, joined by the Danes, has stopped all exploration and extraction. American control would remove that impediment. On top of the energy resources, Greenland has sizable deposits of rare earth minerals, the critical elements in most modern high technology, including military equipment. As of now, China dominates the field globally, giving the Xi regime a potential whip hand over America and our allies. Finding alternative sources of these minerals has been a priority for years, and Greenland is an excellent candidate. The United States is far better positioned to advance these industries and, in turn, provide greater economic prosperity and stability to the native Greenlanders.

Still, Greenland's greatest value for America is not economic, but strategic. Just as the reduction of sea ice and the increased navigability of the Arctic are transforming it into a commercial superhighway, those same phenomena are contributing to its increased geopolitical salience. Russia is a natural polar power, so the

fact that it is rapidly increasing its Arctic fleet and building new nuclear-powered icebreakers is unsurprising, even if concerning. Moscow's militarization of its Arctic regions is a longstanding policy dating to the 1920s, but it has ramped up under Vladimir Putin. Like their Chinese counterparts in the South China Sea, Russian military vessels often harass civilian fishermen from nations such as Norway, seeking to enforce these broad claims. Over the past half decade, China has joined Russia in the militarization campaign. The two "no limits" partners have worked in tandem to test America's boundaries, engaging in naval patrols and flying bombers just off the coast of Alaska in 2024. Our adversaries clearly believe that the future of the Arctic should be dictated by Moscow and Beijing, and they're working assiduously to make that a reality. American policy must recognize this threat and act accordingly. Increasing our presence in Greenland is a step in the right direction.

Greenland has long been a locus for U.S. defense policy, with the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom) Gap being of paramount importance to controlling the maritime approaches to the North Atlantic. That became much less of an issue after the collapse of Soviet Communism. But now that Russia has made clear its hostile intent, the GIUK Gap has grown

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**On top of the energy resources, Greenland has sizable deposits of rare earth minerals, the critical elements in most modern high technology.**

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in importance. Placing additional American assets on bases in Greenland would allow us to exert more control over that passage. Greenland has existing, albeit degraded, U.S. military infrastructure ripe for regeneration. The island's deep-water ports present opportunities for maritime patrols in the Arctic that, in tandem with Alaska, would allow us to control these waterways more efficiently. Greenland could also host

American air assets, operating as an unsinkable aircraft carrier and helping the Navy and Coast Guard monitor the Arctic to deter our foes.

Another important national security use of Greenland is in strategic defense, both on Earth and in orbit. Our remaining site on the

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## As space grows in military prominence, American monitoring resources on Greenland would help in defending our assets against hostile forces.

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island, Pituffik (formerly Thule), is a space base that hosts early-warning systems, radar, and space surveillance. As space grows in military prominence, American monitoring resources on Greenland would help in defending our assets against hostile forces. Greenland's geographic position would allow us to monitor the northern approaches to the United States, tracking potential threats from our adversaries and providing information about their operations. These systems are especially crucial, as they sit astride the route that Russian or Iranian ballistic missiles would travel to reach targets on the Eastern Seaboard. Warnings of incoming attacks are important, but more vital would be our capacity to defeat those attacks. Today, all of our missile-interceptor forces—our means of shooting down enemy ballistic missiles—are stationed on the West Coast, split between California and Alaska. This positioning is useful but leaves us open to assault from the opposite direction. Greenlandic interceptors would rectify that weakness.

The current situation, in which both Denmark and Greenland have veto power over our military use of the island, is untenable given the realities of modern geopolitics. Denmark is a stalwart NATO ally that has sent troops to fight alongside us in Afghanistan and taken a leadership role when it comes to the war in Ukraine. The Danes are not the Atlantic alliance's biggest laggards, by any means. They have ramped up their defense budget as a percentage of GDP

and have announced that they will be increasing their spending on Arctic defense by \$2 billion. These are positive signs, but they are not enough to ensure American dominance. Simply put, \$2 billion is a drop in the bucket when it comes to America's national defense; if additional spending is needed, the Danes plainly do not have the capacity that Washington does.

They also do not share our security challenges when it comes to Greenland or our adversaries. The historic homeland of the Danes is not threatened by developments in the Arctic—but the security of the continental United States would be deeply affected by changes in the status of Greenland. Denmark shares our historic skepticism of Moscow and opposition to its expansionist drive, but its relationship to China is different from ours. Europe writ large has much less to lose than we do if Chinese hegemony in the Pacific becomes a reality. Denmark in particular was one of the first Western nations to recognize Mao's China, and it retains a "comprehensive strategic partnership" with Beijing today, focusing on maritime, climate, energy, and economic issues. If China gains privileged access to Greenland, that will not affect Danish security. It will, however, seriously undermine ours. China has already shown interest in Greenland's resources and has made several proposals for mining operations. So far, Denmark—at Washington's behest—has rejected them. But this may not last forever.

A case in point in that regard is the recent deal that Britain's Labour government struck with the government of Mauritius over the Chagos Archipelago in the Indian Ocean. This obscure arrangement may not seem to be a major concern regarding America's national security, but it has thrown into question much of our power-projection capability in the Indo-Pacific. Located within that remote island chain is one of our most important foreign military installations, the base at Diego Garcia. It hosts a deep-

water port, airfields that can handle strategic bombers (like the B-2 stealth bombers that destroyed the Iranian nuclear program), and highly specialized intelligence-collection centers that are able to monitor our adversaries. Diego Garcia is one of our greatest platforms for global power projection outside of the continental United States. And now it is imperiled. The Mauritian government is closely tied to the Chinese Communist Party, both economically and militarily. It has a major say in not only the fate of our base, but also in the fate of the islands surrounding it, one of which has been proposed as the site of a Chinese version of Diego Garcia. The United Kingdom is perhaps our closest ally, yet poor decisions by its government have made us less safe. After unfortunately and inexplicably supporting the deal, as did its predecessor, the Trump administration has changed tack, forcing the Labour government to shelve the idea—for now. Still, this incident must color our policy going forward. If a territory is of extreme importance to our security, the only way to be sure our interests are protected is to secure greater control of it ourselves.

**T**HUS THE CASE for a greater American presence in Greenland is a strong one. The administration's strategy is sound, but its tactics are extraordinarily counterproductive. The White House, led by the president, is using belligerence and hostility toward Denmark as part of its gambit. And for a time, Trump refused to rule out a military option for taking Greenland, despite the patent absurdity of an invasion of an ally's sovereign territory. This caused unnecessary consternation in Copenhagen and undermined the NATO alliance. Trump-aligned actors have even engaged in clandestine influence operations on the island. The White House seems dead set on either buying Greenland or taking it by force, ignoring other options that might be more fa-

vorable for the Danes and Greenlanders.

Trump's naked aggression, sense of entitlement, and flippancy have caused a great deal of hostility to America where once there was little. This was exemplified by the tepid (at best) local reaction to Vice President Vance's official visit last March. The administration believes that acquiring Greenland is a task that requires intimidation, but it is *persuasion* that is necessary. There are myriad benefits for all parties, not just America, in a change to the status quo. Greenlanders can achieve a much higher standard of living, increased security, and a future of growth. Danes can save several hundred million dollars annually on subsidies, remove the burden of defending a territory thousands of miles away, and allow Copenhagen to shift its defense spending to Europe, where it is more valuable and impactful.

These would be highly positive outcomes for both Greenlanders and Danes, and they could be persuaded with the right approach: friendly, diplomatic, mutually beneficial. America could also sweeten the pot considerably. In a more American Greenland, locals—all 57,000 of them—could receive annual disbursements of cash, either from a sovereign wealth fund taking profits from resource extraction or directly from the U.S. government. The Danish government, in the case of a sale, could reap significant monies, likely in the tens of billions of dollars. It could also be permanently allocated a revenue stream from any economic activity carried out

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**The Trump administration believes that acquiring Greenland is a task that requires intimidation, but it is *persuasion* that is necessary.**

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on the island. Any deal would be an economic windfall for both Greenlanders and Danes. And that deal could take a number of different forms, not simply a fairly complex purchase and annexation, as the White House contends.

The U.S. could form a joint condominium with Denmark over the island, allowing Greenland to retain internal autonomy and Copenhagen to maintain a level of sovereignty over their historic territory. At the same time, it would

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## **Greenland serves as a critical bulwark against adversarial penetration of our hemisphere, but it needs strengthening. Only America is situated to do that.**

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increase our access to the island, reduce limitations on its military and economic use, and give us a veto over policy running counter to our interests. If Greenlanders chose to break off from Denmark (a very popular stance on the island), we could engage in a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with them. An independent Greenland with a COFA could control its own internal politics while outsourcing defense and foreign policy to the United States. That would achieve our objectives without necessitating an outright

sale and all its attendant issues. Washington maintains such agreements with several Pacific island nations already, so adding Greenland to the ledger would be fairly uncomplicated.

A more American Greenland, no matter the

legal form that takes, would be a boon to our national interests. In an era of multipolar great-power conflict, the likes of which we have not seen in decades, American security cannot be taken for granted. We have already begun to reinforce

our southern approaches, removing Nicolás Maduro and pressuring the Venezuelan regime. It is time we start in the north as well. Greenland serves as a critical bulwark against adversarial penetration of our hemisphere, but it needs strengthening. Only America is situated to do that. Not only would it make us safer; it would be of great benefit to Greenland and Denmark alike. This is a win-win situation, if we choose to take it. The Trump administration should keep the strategy but change the tactics. [▶](#)

# ‘Zio’ Is the New ‘N-Word’

The anti-Semitic slur is becoming as acceptable as the racial epithet once was

By David Christopher Kaufman

I HAVE BEEN CALLED the “N-word” more times over the course of my life than I care to remember, but I started being called “Zio” in only the past few months. Both words have a similarly chilling effect. More than two years after Hamas’s October 7 attack and Israel’s military response in Gaza and elsewhere,

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“Zio” has become a standard slur for those, like me, who publicly affirm Israel’s right to exist as both a sovereign state *and* Jewish nation.

So powerful is the term right now that Odessa A’Zion, who plays prominent roles in the movie *Marty Supreme* and the Netflix show *LA Stories*, preemptively declared that she was “not a zio” in an Instagram post in December as a way to personally “debunk” concerns by pro-Palestinian followers over her alleged support for the IDF and Israel.

As the case of A’Zion confirms, the accusa-

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## Given the rise in anti-Semitic attacks across the globe, ‘Zio’ is increasingly wielded as a charge that could result in the accused being sentenced to death.

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tion of being a “Zio” has come to possess a tremendous and sinister potency. It’s the kind of label that might derail a buzzy and promising Hollywood career. But the accusation is also much more than a possible career-killer. Given the rise in anti-Semitic attacks across the globe, “Zio” is increasingly wielded as a charge that could result in the accused being sentenced to death. At the very least, it summons the specter of violence that has accompanied the “N-word” throughout most of American history.

To be clear, for the moment at least, “Zio” is still too niche and too culturally specific to evoke the institutional hatred and historic terror that finally rendered the “n-word” literally unutterable. Beyond the debates around Gaza and “Palestine,” most folks have yet to encounter the term, let alone understand its complex origins, nuances, and power dynamics.

But even if its reach is more modest than that of the “N-word,” the *intent* behind its use is certainly the same. After all, no one has done more to popularize “Zio” than David Duke, the former Louisiana politician and grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. He has used the term hundreds of times across various media platforms—and is as fluent in racism as he is in Jew-hatred. “Guns did not create the horror in that little school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut...The Zio masters of the media did,” declared Duke following the infamous 2012 school shooting that claimed 26 lives. “The Zio control of Hollywood...poisons the hearts and minds of hundreds of millions of people in the West,” he announced just a year later. And among the titles of Duke’s videos on his since-banned YouTube channel are “How we can defeat zio globalism” and “CNN Goldman Sachs and the Zio Matrix.”

Despite the term’s frequent use by overt bigots, however, some maintain that “Zio” is

not and could never be comparable to the “N-word.” The latter, so this thinking goes, targets an entire race, while “Zio” merely calls out adherents of an ideology. On the surface, this explanation has a false plausibility to it. The “N-word,” of course, directly references African Americans, and its etymological roots go back to myriad forms of the word “black.” There’s no mistaking its deep and clear historical significance. “Zio,” obviously, refers to those who embrace Zionism and believe in Israel as the rightful and historic Jewish homeland. When someone calls me a “Zio,” therefore, he can claim that he’s attacking a choice I’ve made—rather than a permanent condition, such as being black. A Zionist, after all, doesn’t even have to be a Jew.

But one need not retell the long history of the demonization of Zionism to discredit this defense. Zionism is understood by most as a central component of Jewish identity. And we can see, in the present day, violent attacks on Jews and synagogues worldwide in the name of anti-Zionism. It matters not at all to the perpetrators if those Jews or synagogues are in any way connected to or supporters of Zionism. Suffice it to say, the very attempt to cast Jewish nationalism—alone among nationalisms—as an evil ideology is naked anti-Semitism. There’s little doubt about who is being targeted by the word “Zio” and why they’re so squarely in its crosshairs.

Then there’s the diminutive formulation of the word. This too reveals the intent behind its use. “Zio” almost seems cutesy, doesn’t it? But there’s nothing innocent about it. The shortening of objective terms that describe groups of people is precisely how many slurs have been formed throughout history. Before “Zio,” there was, to cite a few examples, “Paki,” “Spic,” “homo,” and, yes, “heeb.” It is the shortening, the distilling, of the word that gives it its sting.

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## ‘Zio’ is tossed around cavalierly and receives—especially online—a remarkable degree of social and cultural acceptability. And if anything, that acceptability is growing.

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**U**NLIKE BLACKS, of course, Zionists don’t necessarily wear their targeted identity on the outside. But as someone who’s both African-American and a Zionist Jew, I can confirm that both identities are equally indelible. No matter how I might dress or comport myself, I can no more easily disavow Zionism and Israel than I can my own blackness.

This is why, for me at least, the increasing overlap between “N-gger” and “Zio” makes perfect ideological sense. Decades ago, kids—yes, even Jewish kids—called me “n-gger” to instill fear and render me impotent as a consequence of my darker skin. I was often the only African American in my classroom or camp cabin or synagogue group; branding me “n-gger” was a way of affirming that I would remain very separate and very unequal in these mostly white environments. And those who said it knew that I knew there was nothing I could do about it.

“N-gger” was a threat and provocation, deployed by people who understood—even as children—that using it would not merely hurt me, but leave me fearful, silent, imperiled. The terror wasn’t simply in the word itself, but in the racialized rage and the legacy of impunity enjoyed by so many generations who had used the word before.

It is the hope of anti-Semites that a similar legacy is now being forged for “Zio,” which is tossed around cavalierly and receives—especially online—a remarkable degree of social and cultural acceptability. And if anything, that acceptability is growing. “Zio” appears freely and often goes unchallenged in social justice debates on multiple platforms and at assorted activist gatherings.

Late last year, for instance, Lynn Boylan, an Irish representative in the European Parliament, blithely posted on X that her “twitter is

crawling with zios today, nice to know I get under their skin.” And “KILL YOUR LOCAL ZIO NAZI” was just one of the many incendiary anti-Semitic slurs that defaced the University of Pennsylvania campus last year.

Today, even the most ardently bigoted right-winger, such as self-described white nationalist Nick Fuentes, would think hard about publicly uttering the “n-word.” He would be loath to invite the inevitable political backlash, even though his belief system aligns perfectly with the use of the term. Yet there is little such gate-keeping for “Zio” right now, despite its use as a similar tool for terror and its indisputable targeting of Jews. Indeed, there is scarcely a taboo against the word on the right, left, or anywhere in between.

As a kid, I intuitively understood that being called “n-gger” was to be on the receiving end of the ultimate act of disempowerment and debasement. And this is nearly identical to how I feel every time I am branded a “Zio.” So long as they are hidden behind their various social media profiles, my accusers, of course, cannot *literally* do me harm for being a “Zio.” But I have little doubt that this is their goal. Much as “N-gger” conveys white sheets and crosses ablaze, “Zio” conjures up swastikas and keffiyehs. All are images of fear, violence, and loathing. Yet the “N-word” has been cast into linguistic exile, and “Zio” is nearing a kind of cultural legitimacy.

**W**HAT’S MOST TELLING—and disheartening—about the entire Odesa A’Zion saga is her use of the word “Zio” to distance herself from Zionism. Fear is clearly the dominant motivation here even if A’Zion cannot fully recognize it. Fear of career damage and professional decline. Of social media attacks or eventual ostracism. Fear of being

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## Both ‘Zio’ and the ‘N-word’ are agents of unbridled hate speech doing double duty as a call to arms. Except one is anathema, and the other flows freely without consequence.

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maligned and misunderstood—but ultimately fear for her safety.

This is where “Zio” and the “N-word” most odiously converge—both are agents of unbridled hate speech doing double duty as a call to arms. Except one is anathema, and the other flows freely without consequence.

Which is why I was so certain, upon receiving my first accusations of being a “Zio,” it was unlikely to be my last. In both the centrist precincts I currently inhabit and the progressive communities that shaped my past, “N-gger” is a word that is simply never spoken. But in both worlds, “Zio” is screamed louder than ever.

To be sure, some who use the term “Zio” think that they can deploy it to disavow the Israeli government without defaming Israel or its people. Seemingly, that’s what Odessa A’Zion

had in mind. This is, of course, an impossibility, as it is Zionism that created the State of Israel and all that it contains. But ultimately, most who chant “Zio” want Israel destroyed, and many want its Jews lynched en masse, just like so many African Americans before them.

The fact is that most Jews, across the political spectrum, are probably too fearful to openly compare “Zio” to the “N-word,” lest they be canceled or condemned. But having been the target of both slurs, I can attest that their ideological contiguity could not be any clearer.

“Gaza, Gaza make us proud, put the Zio in the ground,” shouted Oxford student Samuel Williams in London earlier this year at a demonstration by the aggressively anti-Israel Palestine Coalition.

Kind of reminds me of a Klan rally. [s▶](#)

# Trump the Corporatist

He's intervening in markets in an unprecedented and worrying way

By Michael A. Woronoff

**I**N 2009, THE OBAMA administration guaranteed \$535 million of loans to Solyndra, a solar panel manufacturer whose prospects were, to be charitable, uncertain. The president appeared in person to sanctify the arrangement. Two and a half years later, the company imploded; the triumphant photo op turned into a half-billion-dollar write-off for the American public.

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Republican leaders reacted with understandable outrage. House Energy Committee Chair Fred Upton denounced the arrangement as “a classic case of fraud and abuse.” Senator Marco Rubio called it a waste of taxpayer money. During his first presidential debate with Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump implied the deal was a disaster.

They weren't wrong. The criticism reflected a classic strain of Republican thinking: When politicians gamble the public's money without proper incentives or accountability, partisan priorities will always transcend market discipline.

How times have changed.

During the second half of 2025, the Trump administration went on a buying frenzy, acquiring stakes in several semiconductor and critical minerals enterprises. This activity would have provoked apoplectic denunciations from Republicans if conducted under a Democratic president.

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## The path forward doesn't require yet another subsidy layered atop the suffocating regulatory apparatus. It requires removing the apparatus itself.

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And justifiably so. The administration's departure from GOP orthodoxy embodies the same defects as the Obama strategy, only metastasized to a scale unprecedented in American peacetime.

Consider the government's \$8.9 billion investment in Intel. As with Solyndra, Intel's difficulties stemmed from strategic missteps. Outmaneuvered by competitors, the company's stock price cratered. In an attempt to stabilize the situation, management eliminated 15,000 jobs and suspended its dividend.

These problems cannot be solved by injecting cash while praying political resolve will repeal the laws of economics. They are warning signs that oblige prudent investors to weigh a multitude of risks and benefits cautiously before deciding to proceed.

Bureaucrats are incapable of performing this task. With no skin in the game, they are unbound by market constraints. Sound investment decisions are impossible when failure is consequence-free.

Private investors provide capital on terms reflecting financial reality rather than political wishful thinking. When outside investment is otherwise unavailable and the government steps in, one of two things has happened. Either the private markets saw risks the politicians missed, or electoral imperatives outweighed economic logic. In either case, markets allocate capital more efficiently than civil servants do.

If national security demands increased do-

mestic capacity—one justification offered in defense of the recent government investments—the true government solution is to remove the onerous regulations that caused the problem in the first place. The United States possesses abundant rare earth reserves and once dominated global semiconductor manufacturing. The exodus of these industries was a predictable consequence of decades of deliberate policy, not an accident of geology or the result of a decline in talent.

The permitting gauntlet alone is paralyzing. Various federal agencies operate under numerous statutes with no coordinating authority. State-level mandates duplicate and contradict federal obligations. Sequential requirements compel project developers to endure Kafkaesque odysseys. As a result, rare earth mining approvals take eight to nine years in the U.S., only two to four years abroad. Building a semiconductor fabrication facility on American soil costs twice as much and requires twice the time as one built elsewhere.

We didn't lose these industries to chicanery; we regulated them away. American companies with American capital, American talent, and American supply chains found it cheaper, faster, and less litigious to produce elsewhere. Now we are vexed by their absence, and we're throwing money at the problem to coax them home. But the problem is excessive interference, not insufficient capital. The path forward doesn't require yet another subsidy layered atop the suffocating regulatory apparatus. It requires the removal of the apparatus itself.

Even if one assumes that active intervention is required to return these industries to American shores, a question naturally follows: Should the state designate particular enterprises in those industries to receive aid?

Traditionally, Republicans answered this query with a resounding no.

Paul Ryan articulated the party's stance in the 2011 GOP response to the State of the Union:

“Washington should not be in the business of picking winners and losers.” The sentiment was and is sound. The government should adopt company-neutral policies, not play venture capitalist. For example, it could provide broad-based tax credits to those constructing foundries in America, or offer research grants to any qualified manufacturers. Such policies also create inefficiencies. Government programs almost always do. But at least they avoid the inefficiencies created when the state puts its thumb on the scale.

The alternative—permitting elected officials to select beneficiaries—substitutes political patronage for market constraints, creating the winner-and-loser dynamic that the GOP once reflexively opposed. National security becomes a pretext for favoritism. Even when such arrangements dodge the spectacular collapse of a Solyndra, they rarely redound to the benefit of ordinary Americans.

Let’s go a step further and accept the dubious premise that national security concerns justify supporting hand-picked “essential” firms; the question of method remains.

Howard Lutnick, the secretary of commerce, insists investments are superior to grants. He declared taxpayers *deserve* equity returns on the \$8.9 billion granted to Intel under the Biden-era CHIPS Act. The president concurred, implausibly claiming that re-cutting the original deal created \$11 billion in value “at zero cost” to taxpayers. To Trump and Lutnick, those who advocate for grants over investments are suckers.

Trump and Lutnick misunderstand the fundamental purpose of government intervention. It is decidedly not to make money. The U.S. isn’t a private equity fund, and taxpayers are not its limited partners. The goal should be to advance a particular societal interest, not commercial gain. And this interest should be advanced in the least intrusive way possible, minimizing knock-on problems that arise from any state intercession.

Grants afford a clean separation between public largesse and private management. Once a grant is bestowed, government involvement typically ceases; private investors keep control and bear the consequences of future failure or success. As a result, once awarded, a grant preserves market discipline.

Of course, grants are not immune to abuse. Congress passed the CHIPS Act to strengthen the domestic semiconductor industry. In implementing the act, the Biden administration channeled funds to the “underserved and economically disadvantaged” and required grantees to provide childcare, pay union-set wages, and forego stock buybacks. None of that did a thing to reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, illustrating that partisan priorities corrupt even well-intentioned programs.

Even so, if the government insists on bolstering individual firms, then grants remain preferable to equity investments because, unlike grants, equity arrangements encourage continued meddling even after they have been made.

As long as the government is a shareholder, it will continue to push the company to do more and more things having nothing to do with profit maximization. Perhaps that will be jobs, or domestic production, or alignment with some environmental goal. Whatever it is, the

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**Trump and Lutnick misunderstand the purpose of government intervention. The goal should be to advance a specific societal interest, not commercial gain.**

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perpetual interference creates continuous market distortions—not just of the anointed firm but of its business partners and competitors as well—as political considerations influence business strategy long after the investment is made. Ironically, these distortions undermine the advantages the policy aims to deliver.

The problem is the incompatibility between partisan ambitions and commercial effi-

ciency. Politicians want political outcomes. Businessmen want profits. When you merge those two, you don't get the best of both. You get the worst of both. They are as compatible as Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks.

On top of this, government investment leads to capital misallocation, as rent-seeking private

tools to implement this strategy extend beyond equity purchases to include many other mechanisms designed to subordinate private business decisions to executive-branch determinations of "national interest." Among other things, the president demanded royalties as a condition for granting AMD and Nvidia licenses to export their advanced AI chips to China. He insisted on a "golden share" (a non-pecuniary instrument that grants him veto power over major corporate decisions) before approving Nippon Steel's acquisition of U.S. Steel. And he issued an execu-

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## Continuing on this path risks transforming America's free enterprise system into something resembling Europe's sclerotic mixed economies.

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investors flock to state-backed firms not because they are efficient but because they are state-backed. This reduces resources otherwise available to genuine innovators. The result is inefficient and counterproductive, as the capital markets starve the next Apple to feed the next Amtrak.

The original planned grant would have furnished Intel with identical financial resources while preserving its independence. As a result, it would have been much more likely to achieve the legislation's stated aim. If the threat to the country is as considerable as the administration contends, that concern, rather than the prospect of investment returns, should be the focus. The gap between the rhetoric and the mechanism unveils the administration's true priority.

**F**ACED WITH THE choice of honoring the grant framework of the CHIPS Act or leveraging already committed funds to acquire equity in Intel, it is no surprise that this administration chose the latter. But this choice set a dangerous precedent, enabling the retroactive conversion of any existing commitment into an ownership interest in a wide variety of industries and enterprises.

By the end of 2025, the U.S. had acquired stock in at least a half dozen corporations, confirming that the Intel investment was part of a deliberate strategy, not an isolated occurrence. The

executive order curbing the ability of defense contractors to repurchase stock, pay dividends, and set the compensation of their executives.

It appears the administration is far from done. In January, the Commerce Department agreed to buy a stake in USA Rare Earth, a critical minerals and magnet-manufacturing company, and administration officials recently announced they are considering acquiring equity in several quantum computing and defense companies. President Trump seems indifferent to the possible consequences.

Continuing on this path risks transforming America's free enterprise system into something resembling Europe's sclerotic mixed economies, a sprawling maze of state-backed enterprises entangled in patronage and cronyism. Not socialism exactly, but a system that shares socialism's fundamental defect: substituting bureaucratic judgment for market discipline.

The outcome will be both predictable and calamitous. By almost every measure, European economies have stagnated, while America's has thrived. U.S. GDP per capita exceeds that of Western Europe by 37 percent. Adjusted for purchasing power, Mississippi, the poorest American state, enjoys a higher per capita GDP than the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Spain. American median disposable income substantially exceeds that of every major European nation except Luxembourg.

Even in mundane domestic details, the contrast is revealing. American households own clothes dryers at twice the rate of Western European households. And 90 percent of American homes have air-conditioning versus a mere 20 percent in Europe. These differences reflect economic reality, not a stoic aversion to comfort.

Europe's underperformance has many causes, but state interference in critical enterprises ranks prominently among them. The damage extends well beyond the firms that receive government largesse, as private actors face relentless pressure to conduct business with state-backed enterprises, even when they deliver inferior value. The result is a market corrupted by politics.

History provides an instructive counterexample. When Margaret Thatcher took office in May 1979, Britain's economy suffered from double-digit inflation and stagflation; productivity had fallen significantly relative to other Western European countries. In response to these circumstances, the Iron Lady set about denationalizing Britain's expansive state sector. By privatizing British Telecom, British Gas, Rolls-Royce, British Airways, and dozens of other firms, Thatcher converted the "sick man of Europe" into one of its most vibrant economies.

The British example is not a fluke. A 1992 World Bank analysis found the benefits of properly executed privatization "to be considerable," with domestic well-being increases in 11 of 12 cases across the globe. The authors of the study conclude that private ownership "makes a difference. Some state-owned enterprises have been efficient and well managed for some periods, but government ownership seldom permits sustained good performance over more than a few years."

Ignoring the lesson of these examples, the Trump administration continues to embed itself deeper and deeper into private enterprise. Convinced it will succeed where others have failed, it embraces the state corporatism that cripples

other advanced economies.

**T**HE TRANSFORMATION of the U.S. economy would pose an even greater hazard than material decline: loss of political liberty.

Friedrich Hayek published *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944. Milton Friedman published *Capitalism and Freedom* in 1962. These classic works warn of the menace at the heart of state corporatism: Financial dependency erodes political freedom. When individuals depend on government-controlled or -influenced entities for employment or business opportunities, the capacity to challenge authority becomes, for all practical purposes, impossible. The stakes become existential; opposition invites economic ruin.

China offers the purest example. The Communist Party's dominance over the economy enables suppression of dissent. Citizens who challenge orthodoxy face exclusion from careers and commercial prospects. The Soviet Union operated identically.

Some contend that the robust democratic institutions in the U.S. prevent government interference from threatening individual autonomy. These people overlook the potent constraint fiscal dependency imposes on political participation. Transforming disagreement with the government from a civic right into an economic liability corrodes the independence necessary for

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**Convinced it will succeed where others have failed, the Trump administration embraces the state corporatism that cripples other advanced economies.**

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democratic engagement, even here.

Is there any doubt this process is already underway? The *Wall Street Journal* reported on a meeting of top-level CEOs and other executives convened by the Yale School of Management. Despite harboring serious qualms about the legality and consequences of Trump-

administration policies, participants refused to “speak publicly for fear that their companies could be targeted by the administration.” Separately, David Rubenstein, co-chair of the Carlyle Group, declared his amazement at the number of business leaders who sound alarms about the administration’s actions when they speak to him in private yet refuse to say a word in

ed in the delusion that central planning will work this time because they will be the planners. This assumption has failed every time it has been tried.

The president’s supporters insist that this time will be different. They argue that Donald Trump is the most accomplished businessman ever to hold the office. His résumé, they believe, qualifies him to micromanage the private sector.

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## When government officials substitute their own judgment for the guidance of market signals, the consequences will range from inefficient to catastrophic.

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But a talent for navigating the market hardly qualifies one to command it.

Moreover, their conclusion rests on a fantasy: that the same hands will always hold the levers of control. By January 20, 2029, President

public. A K Street lobbyist told Politico: “There is absolutely a sense that the administration is keeping a list, and no one wants to be on it.” These accounts indicate that the mechanism Hayek and Friedman described is more than theoretical.

The evidence is overwhelming: Countries with greater economic freedom outperform interventionist economies on growth, living standards, health, and general life satisfaction. This is not just correlation. A large body of research establishes that economic freedom leads to affluence. These countries are also substantially more likely to enjoy elevated levels of political liberty. These connections illuminate a fundamental axiom: When government officials substitute their own judgment for the guidance that market signals provide, the consequences will range from inefficient to catastrophic.

Too many in this country no longer recognize these facts. Recent polling shows a large majority of Democrats embrace “socialism.” Many, including New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, urge the government to “seize the means of production” or “nationalize major industries.” The Trump administration’s extraordinary interventions show that leadership on the opposite end of the spectrum is tempted to pursue a similar end. Both parties are sprinting toward increased state intrusion in private markets, unit-

Trump will be gone. Then what? How will these supporters react when a President Newsom uses his inherited authority to nationalize corporate decision-making in the name of decarbonization, DEI mandates, or unsustainable wage floors? The precedent, once established, stops being “Trump’s tool” and becomes the president’s, to be used by whoever comes next.

While the administration’s actions to date won’t topple American capitalism, we are careening in a perilous direction. If this continues, government equity ownership and other corporatist interventions will become normalized, then routine, then inevitable. The incremental nature of this process makes it particularly insidious. Each decision may seem justified in isolation, but the cumulative effect erodes the market independence essential to both our economic well-being and political autonomy.

Despite the catastrophic outcome of Solyndra, the true peril isn’t that taxpayer dollars will be squandered but that the foundations of our national greatness will be gutted. Both parties now embrace the delusion that they can manage what markets cannot. History offers no example of this ending anywhere but in stagnation, corruption, or worse. The question is not whether the U.S. can survive this development. It is whether Americans will tolerate the loss of prosperity and freedom that inevitably follows. [▶](#)

# Against Grievance Politics

The case for conservatism is as strong as ever

By Richard M. Reinsch II

**C**ONSERVATIVES IN AMERICA find themselves at a crossroads in 2026. For a half century, there was a pretty firm consensus on a few cardinal precepts. Conservatives advocated for economic growth as the primary means of generational advancement and American success, argued for limits to government power, supported the buildup of American military forces to be wisely deployed rather than un-

thinkingly restrained, and spoke out on behalf of the embodied person and the dignity of the unborn. All of these core beliefs have found themselves under challenge from inside the movement and the Republican Party. And yet, despite the impression given by both the mainstream media and the podcast wing of the GOP that the forces challenging these core beliefs have taken over the right, a recent authoritative survey of the same electorate in 2024 showed that conservatives of traditional stock retain the lion's share of the electorate on the right.

That means the current conventional wisdom that the GOP's future will be economically populist, isolationist, and anti-Israel is simply unsupported by data. But clearly conservatism

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## The economic ideas that would transform the GOP largely sprang from the arguments of Robert Mundell and Arthur Laffer, whose prescriptions, in retrospect, seem obvious.

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is in crisis, even if that crisis is the result of a false belief that people and politicians who don't reflect the true opinions of Americans on the right are the vanguard. So where do we go from here?

To determine the answer, a historical perspective is needed. We should turn to a previous hinge moment in American history, one that aligns with this one, and see how the arguments and policies to which conservatives gravitated created a bold new future on the right very different from the ideas and nostrums that preceded it.

Start with the conservatism that emerged and coalesced post-Nixon and -Ford: *a conservatism of economic opportunity and self-government*. This era is instructive because it began with Richard Nixon's triumph over left-liberalism in the elections of 1968 and 1972 even as his presidency followed a much less conservative path—creating new activist agencies, imposing government controls on wages and prices, working toward détente with the Soviet Union, and, in general, evading the battleground issues of abortion and cultural relativism that impassioned voters. In his history of conservatism, *The Right*, Matthew Continetti focuses on the political evolution of the “new right” in the 1970s. This group included supply-side economists, an emboldened National Rifle Association, the newly established Heritage Foundation, the anti-feminist activism of Phyllis Schlafly, the rise of first-wave neoconservative foreign policy, and the growing importance of evangelical Christians represented by the rise of the Moral Majority.

What the “new right” brought to the forefront after the Nixon and Ford presidencies was the belief that core principles had to be front and center if the right was to achieve its aims. This was necessary not only to speak honestly

to voters; it also allowed politicians and the movement to offer new answers and solutions to problems in American life and governance—both of which seemed to have gone off the rails.

**I**N THE EARLY 1970s, in the face of double-digit inflation and rising unemployment—what became known as stagflation—both the Ford and Carter administrations acknowledged that their policy solutions couldn't resolve this ongoing crisis. But that didn't mean there were no solutions; what arose, in the words of economic historian Brian Domitrovic, was “the most consequential revolution in economic policy since the New Deal.” It was made possible by a collection of thirty-something economists, journalists, and congressional staffers “removed from or hostile to the economic establishments in academia, Washington journalism, and business.”

The economic ideas that would transform the Republican Party largely sprang from the arguments of two—and only two—academic economists, Robert Mundell and Arthur Laffer, whose prescriptions, in retrospect, seem obvious and even simple. Their suggested tax cuts and changes in monetary policy changed the way Americans thought about the economy. Laffer and Mundell sought to restore and enhance the productivity and remunerative strengths of American economic activity. This approach resonated with owners, workers, and investors who were tired of punitive taxes and a mismanaged currency that were eroding their gains. The victory of the supply-side school, and the subsequent economic boom it brought about, revived support for free markets, the value of work, abundant energy, and national independence. More important, it renewed a general belief in the centrality of the individual—that a person's freedom, choices, and efforts are mean-

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## In *To Empower People*, Berger and Neuhaus argued that U.S. domestic policy was failing because it disregarded the institutions that are necessary for human beings to thrive.

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ingful and deserve recognition. These remain in force. The best results of President Trump's economic policy in his first and second terms derive from tax cuts for personal and corporate income, and from capital expensing for businesses—alongside pro-growth energy policies and deregulation.

Another revolution in conservative policy thinking came about in the realm of social policy. It was guided by the introduction of the term “mediating structures” by Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus in their 1977 work, *To Empower People*. Berger and Neuhaus argued that American domestic policy, almost across the board, was failing because it ignored or disregarded the institutions that are necessary for human beings to thrive. They stressed that political and economic legitimacy emerged through family, neighborhood, associations, and religion. These “mediating structures” both enriched the lives of the individual and provided a buffer against the iron hand of activist government. One idea they promoted was “school vouchers,” which would allow citizens to use their tax dollars to choose the schools their children attended—thus potentially strengthening families, neighborhoods, and traditions, rather than forcing everyone into one-size-fits-all, one-directional government schools. Wildly controversial at the time, vouchers are today a mainstream idea.

One area in which the “mediating structures” analysis continues to shape discussion is in family-policy debates. Some on the right are now advocating large transfer payments to American families to increase fertility, which currently stands at 1.6 births per woman in the U.S. Kevin Roberts, president of the Heritage Foundation, argues in his 2024 book *Dawn's Early Light* that the federal government should emulate Hungary's family policies and provide mortgage and

loan subsidies to families based on the number of children they bear. In the same vein, Oren Cass, president of American Compass, supports a monthly cash benefit paid to mothers or families for each child. The idea of using government subsidies to direct the behavior of a self-governing people is violative of conservatism—and Roberts and Cass are fully and proudly aware of this; they both want to supplant laissez-faire ideas in favor of direct government intervention into the lives of the citizenry.

These ideas, however, fly in the face of some uncomfortable realities. The fact is that America has *higher* fertility levels than Hungary, whose own programs have barely moved its fertility needle despite their massive expense. The hunger to intervene displayed by Cass and Roberts (and Vice President JD Vance, who is also attracted to this approach) ignores or downplays what most families in this country want: more economic and career opportunities, and better housing, educational, and health-care prospects. Also, while families seek lower prices for the unavoidable costs of raising a family, they intuitively yearn for a faith- and family-friendly culture.

That is one of the reasons economic mobility matters to Americans and their families. As University of Virginia sociologist Brad Wilcox recently observed, “American families have been migrating from blue states like California, New York, and Minnesota by the hundreds of thousands to red states like Idaho, Tennessee, and Texas.” It's not just that the red states are more socially welcoming to families and people of faith. Wilcox further explains that these states allow families to support themselves financially “more readily than in blue states” because red states have lower taxes, stronger job growth, and more affordable single-family homes.” A successful conservative alternative for Ameri-

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## Originalism and textual restraint have flourished in the past decade across race, abortion, transgenderism, separation of powers, and administrative law.

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can families would seem to be the revival of a supply-side economic and cultural agenda for families, not Hungarian traditionalism.

**B**EFORE ENTERING the White House, Ronald Reagan had absorbed the soulful anti-Communist prose of Whittaker Chambers and William F. Buckley Jr., Chambers's great supporter. Buckley's conservative movement had shaped Reagan. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* identified the intellectual and spiritual corruption of the postwar American elite, which mocked God and man, promoting ideas that inevitably lead to human degradation by claiming that man's freedom and spirit were arbitrary inventions of a fading patrimony. Reagan worked to reverse that trend. One surprising fruit of that success was the successful campaign for "originalism" in constitutional law.

A new book, *The Meese Revolution*, recounts the successful effort to adopt "originalism." Its authors, Gary Lawson and Steven Calabresi, show how Edwin Meese, Reagan's attorney general, brought together in his Department of Justice a formidable mix of lawyers and legal scholars who were developing the case for interpreting the Constitution through an understanding of what the Founders intended even as conventional thinking was dominated by the idea that the Constitution was malleable and should accommodate contemporary fashionable ideas. In three speeches in 1985 at the American Bar Association, the Federalist Society, and Tulane University, Meese set forth the terms of what he called a jurisprudence of original intention. They remain a remarkable achievement of statesmanship by an attorney general who was constructing a legal framework for future generations of constitutionalists.

Originalism doesn't mean there aren't pro-

found and important arguments to be had over the meaning of the words in the Constitution; it only disputes and discredits the idea that the plain meaning of the text can be ignored at will. Originalism and textual restraint have flourished in the past decade across race, abortion, transgenderism, separation of powers, and administrative law, highlighting some of the most consequential victories secured by Trump's presidency. Originalism's triumph also indicates that a rule-of-law conservatism remains superior to the strange insistence on the part of some thinkers on the right that conservatism pre-Trump was simply a form of liberal window dressing.

Numerous authors have voiced versions of this argument over the past decade, including Adrian Vermuele, in his *Common Good Constitutionalism* (2022); Michael Anton, in his *The Stakes: America at the Point of No Return* (2020); and Patrick Deneen, in his *Regime Change* (2023). A recent symposium at the Claremont Institute's *American Mind* featured arguments that, despite originalism's successes, the interpretive philosophy is incapable of achieving a conservative constitutional morality rooted in family, faith, and civilization. An originalist conservative court just couldn't be counted on to vindicate any conservative principles when it mattered.

It is true that the Supreme Court under Barack Obama approved gay marriage and other socially liberal desiderata. But the idea that originalism itself was somehow to blame for that—that it was too weak a philosophy to support the need for a judicial body that would uphold traditional values—has lost much of its force after a series of more recent victories in the last three years. The Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, has prohibited racial preferences in higher education, and has handed the conserva-

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## Christopher Caldwell suggests that Reagan cut a deal with the country to achieve power by implicitly refusing to question the legitimacy of most Great Society programs.

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tive movement victories in administrative-law cases and on transgender issues. Originalism's triumphs and contributions to restoring constitutionalism are manifestly evident. The war against liberal change remains a slog, true, but an adult understands that much of life is a slog.

**T**HERE IS ANOTHER unsavory feature of American life that has emerged in the past few decades, one that has inexorably redefined the quality and moral fiber of what it means to be an American, and with that, our collective understanding of American exceptionalism: the unabated explosion in the growth of means-tested entitlements. While conservative thinkers and some policymakers deserve credit for trying to keep the public's focus on this ruinous fact, in general the right has avoided engaging with the subject. That is very dangerous.

As the political demographer Nicholas Eberstadt explains, "Between 1983 and 2012, by Census Bureau estimates, the percentage of Americans participating in entitlement programs jumped by nearly 20 percentage points." Only one-fifth of this 20 percent increase can be attributed to Social Security and Medicare. Eberstadt notes, "By late 2012, more than 109 million Americans lived in households that obtained one or more such [means-tested] benefits—over twice as many as received Social Security or Medicare. The population of what we might call 'means-tested America' was more than two-and-a-half times as large in 2012 as it had been in 1983." Consider also that from 1983 to 2012, "the total U.S. population grew by almost 83 million," but "the number of people accepting means-tested benefits rose by 67 million." It has only gotten worse in the last decade. Means-tested benefits can no longer be considered an exception; they are woven into the fabric of American life.

Christopher Caldwell suggests in his book *The Age of Entitlement* that this was the result of an original conservative sin—that Reagan cut a deal with the country to achieve power by implicitly refusing to question the legitimacy of most Great Society programs and the enforcement apparatus set up by the civil rights legislation of the mid-1960s. Those receiving welfare-state benefits would continue to receive them, and the productive and investing members of the American economy would receive tax cuts, much of which was funded by debt. Successive Republican governments never questioned that general approach. President Obama's signature health-care achievement made things worse, as did the spending blowouts of both Trump and Biden during the Covid fiasco.

In view of this, we should not be surprised that the new "new right" Vice President JD Vance hopes to lead and usher into office in 2029 wants not to end or reform this spoils system but to turn it to the advantage of his followers. Like Democrats of old and of today, who always have a victim group that requires more federal programs and more federal spending because of what the country has unjustifiably done to it, Vance is a grievance-based politician. The small-town white male is no longer the salt of the earth; no, he's a victim. International trade took his job, he fought in the War on Terror for no purpose, and he fell victim to the opioid crisis that corporations imposed on him. Accordingly, the "new right" government must step forward with tariffs, industrial policy, a harsh anti-immigration posture beyond removing illegal aliens, pro-labor union policies, and progressive antitrust measures to provide for these new aggrieved Americans.

The hidden premise of the Vance right is that we are now living in a post-American Dream era. Reaganites have failed, leaving the vast ma-

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## Vice President JD Vance has embraced exactly the policies that would have crippled him as he sought to transcend his own origins: the politics of grievance.

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majority of adults who once aspired to stand on their own, living free and independent lives, unable to survive. According to a new caste of American right-wing leadership, taking its cues from European conservative statisticians, American citizens should lead lives scripted for them, and leaders should abandon policies rooted in growth, work, and citizenship grounded in freedom and virtue.

Vance has been consistently clear, both before and after entering public life, that drastic government action is warranted on behalf of the American people. He has expressed admiration for Lina Khan—President Biden’s director of the Federal Trade Commission, known for her aggressive and progressive antitrust posture—and has supported the Affordable Care Act, and he can be expected to adopt an accommodating stance toward the means-tested entitlement state. His rhetoric of emergency and of a country in extremis reveals an agenda to increase the size of government “for our own purposes,” as he noted in a 2021 interview on the *Jack Murphy Live* podcast.

At a 2023 Intercollegiate Studies Institute event featuring a panel on Patrick Deneen’s book *Regime Change*, Vance stated that “changing the regime” of the “uniparty” is imperative.

Other conservatives have made similar noises. But it’s what Vance doesn’t say next that matters. Vance reflected that he had observed “no meaningful distinction between the public sector and private sector in the American regime” in Washington, and that this public-private regime had conspired “against the people in the state of Ohio” (whom he represented at the time). Vance did not follow these observations with a commitment to rebuilding freedom and opportunity for his fellow Ohioans. Instead, he wants to throw them federal morsels.

Vance is one of the most successful Americans of our time, a creature who emerged all of a sudden at the beginning of the Trump era and rose stratospherically during the past decade of American disorder. He has embraced exactly the policies that would have crippled him as he sought to transcend his own origins: the politics of grievance. His mantra: Many are owed something from a few who have victimized them. Right-wing grievance policies will not succeed in pulling anyone out of misery, economically or otherwise. The only path forward for an America that wishes to remain the world leader through the 21st century is to restore the conservatism of self-government and opportunity. [▶](#)

# The Pornography of Anti-Semitism

Turning political arguments into sex-like violence

By Alvin H. Rosenfeld

**F**OR SOME OF its most ardent purveyors, anti-Semitism today has the appeal of the pornographic. Normally we think of pornography in sexual terms, but especially since the ravages of Hamas's sadistic onslaught in October 2023 and the aggressive passions directed against Jews and Israel that have follow-

ed, a distinct version of political pornography has emerged. Unlike its sexual counterpart, which seeks to arouse feelings of erotic pleasure, political porn aims to stimulate feelings of hostility, humiliation, exclusion, control, and domination. In advancing its case, facts don't matter. Feelings do, especially strongly adversarial ones. And one way to stir strong feelings is to focus on the formerly transgressive and overcome any lingering taboos about what is permitted and what is not.

When continually indulged, porn of all kinds is addictive. In matters of sex, it often leads to physical and emotional abuse. In political terms,

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it drives people to say and do malevolent things. Much of that malevolence focuses these days on Zionism, Jews, and Israel. Whatever restraints on public expressions of anti-Semitism had existed prior to October 7 were nullified by the celebratory outpourings of support for the vicious attacks on that day. One professor at Cornell University wasted no time in publicly declaring he was “exhilarated” by news of what had taken place at the Nova music festival and in the kibbutzim of southern Israel. Others rapidly joined him. They came together and collectively indulged in choreographed chants and slogans, drumbeats and symbolic dress codes, the waving of Palestinian flags, and the hoisting of ominously worded signs and posters—“Globalize the intifada,” “By any means necessary,” “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” and the like. All this activity bypassed anything like well-informed, rational argument about the situation in the Middle East and instead encouraged performative gestures of animosity toward Israel and its supporters. Minds shut down as signs and posters went up, proclaiming “Zionism is Nazism,” “Netanyahu is the New Hitler,” “Israel is guilty of genocide,” and on and on, in this vein of political sleaze. Its aim was clear: to deride, denounce, and ultimately defeat support for Israel and, by so doing, diminish any chance for a secure and viable Jewish future.

These actions were on abundant display on college campuses throughout the country dur-

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## The Jews who assembled at Manhattan’s Park East were cursed and whistled at, denounced as adherents of a ‘Zionist death cult,’ and told they don’t belong.

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ing the spring of 2024, especially at the height of the anti-Israel encampment period. Masks and keffiyeh dress-up rituals were part of the entry ticket for participation. More recently, people obeying this dress code showed up outside Manhattan’s Park East Synagogue on the

evening of November 19, 2025, to form a mob of some 200 protesters engaged in loud and sometimes threatening acts of political exhibitionism. “From New York to Gaza, globalize the intifada,” they screamed in chorus. “Resistance, you make us proud, take another settler out,” “Death, death to the IDF,” and other slogans of a similarly menacing kind were shouted at those entering the synagogue to participate in an information session about immigration to Israel.

The Jews who assembled there were cursed and whistled at, denounced as adherents of a “Zionist death cult,” and told they didn’t belong. The language of opposition and rejection was clear: “We don’t want no Zionists here.” “Here,” of course, is not only New York, the city with the world’s largest Jewish population, but any place where Jews, denounced as “Zio-Nazis,” have the temerity to dwell. Condemning them in the crudest of ways was not enough. “We need to make them scared,” one protest leader shouted repeatedly. “Jewish pricks!” screamed another, the vocalized smut adding a touch of pornographic spice to the anti-Semitic catcalls.

Fans of sexual pornography like to use dirty language, including the four-letter words there is no need to repeat. Fans of political porn like to do the same, and among the dirtiest words in their vocabulary are “Zio,” “Zio-Nazi,” and just plain “Zionist.” All are now familiar terms of denigration, angrily tossed about as accusatory slurs at anti-Israel protest rallies, including the one at Park East Synagogue.

A day later, representatives of Zohran Mamdani issued a statement saying that New York’s then mayor-elect “discourages” the kind of language hurled against those seeking to enter the synagogue—but he did not explicitly condemn the hostility directed against them. He was more direct in stating his objection to “sacred spaces” being “used to promote activities in violation of international law.” The presumed “violation” in this case is nothing more than offering guidance

to those entering a synagogue to learn about life in Israel. Nothing about that choice violates international law, but saying it is of a piece with Mamdani's long-standing political views. Shocking to many, his openly declared contempt for Zionism and Israel has appeal to others and probably helped to get him elected.

A similar appeal, but greatly heightened, attaches to October 7. Those who laud what took place on that day do not see it as what it clearly was, a well-planned and brutally executed pogrom, but instead celebrate it as a heroic act of Palestinian "resistance." Yahya Sinwar, the late head of Hamas, had far more ferocious things in mind when he and some of his chief aides issued orders to their fighters to go into Israel and "set fire" to everything: "Burn, burn, I want the whole kibbutz to be in flames.... Stomp on the heads of soldiers.... Slaughter some of them with knives.... Slit their throats.... Kill everyone you encounter.... End the children of Israel." To maximize their intended effect, all these acts were to be recorded on GoPro body cameras as they happened: "Document the scenes of horror and broadcast them on TV channels to the whole world."

As for what should happen specifically to Israeli women, according to the testimony of captured Hamas fighters, their orders were to "dirty them," "whore them," and rape them." And that is precisely what many of them did.

In addition to the merciless torture, killings, slashings, burnings, beheadings, mutilations, dismemberments, and kidnappings, there were gang rapes and other forms of sadistic sexual assault—including, according to some reports, the cutting off of women's breasts, nails driven into women's thighs and groins, and bullets fired into their vaginas. What took place on October 7, therefore, was far less an act of Palestinian "resistance" than it was an elaborate killing orgy.

Since Hamas terrorists faithfully recorded some of what their men did on October 7, two

images of abducted and terrorized Israeli women stand out as emblematic of the evil enacted on that day. One portrays the violent seizure of Naama Levy, 19, barefoot, beaten, and bloodied, her hands tied behind her back, the crotch of her sweatpants heavily soiled, possibly from being

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## Thanks to *Screams Before Silence* and other films, we know more than most can bear to take in about the sexual violence against Israeli women on October 7.

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sexually abused, dragged by her hair at gunpoint into a Hamas car, and driven off to Gaza to suffer an unspeakable fate among her captors there. Her assailants filmed every second of her ordeal; and as one watches the clips of her being taken away, one sees crowds nearby loudly shouting "Allah-hu Akbar"—"Allah is the greatest"—a victory cry that offered religious sanction to the malign treatment of Naama Levy and countless others taken, slaughtered, and abducted on that horrific day.

Another image featured in a Hamas-made video shows large numbers of people in Gaza celebrating the spectacle of Shani Louk's almost naked body spread out in a terrorist pickup truck, her captors all over her. Shani, who was of German and Israeli parentage, was one of the 364 people murdered at the Nova music festival. The video featuring her as a Hamas sexual trophy paraded triumphantly through the streets of Gaza is a Palestinian version of a snuff film—porno for jihadists and genocidists.

Thanks to Sheryl Sandberg's *Screams Before Silence* and other films, we now know more than most people can bear to take in about the sexual violence enacted against Israeli women on October 7. Reports from women hostages recently freed from captivity in Gaza add further detail to this sordid story. The same is true of testimony given by captured Palestinian terrorists, including a documented case of a father and son, Jamal Hussein Ahmad Radi, 47, and 18-year-

old Abdallah, who confessed to gang-raping an Israeli woman in Kibbutz Nir Oz. According to Abdallah, his father first raped the woman at gunpoint, “then I did, and then my cousin did, and then we left.” But the father then returned “and killed the woman after we finished raping her.”

Rape is not “resistance,” and murder is not “martyrdom.” Those who use this aspirational language to describe the depraved acts committed against the Jews of southern Israel are not just apologists for Hamas’s brutality but are looking to bring on more of the same. By repeating such mindless slogans as “Free, free Palestine” and “By any means necessary,” they advance an agenda designed to justify anything.

**T**HE ANTI-SEMITIC imagination is limitless, especially when linked to the pornographic and homicidal imagination. Stimulated by feeding it some 1,200 Jews and others on October 7, it will not be satisfied until it devours still more. Jew-hatred, once let loose, is ravenous, particularly so when it justifies its deeds as acts of virtue performed for a higher cause. In this case, the cause is called “Palestine.” In its name, Elias Rodriguez traveled from Chicago to Washington, D.C., and murdered Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim outside the Capital Jewish Museum on May 21, 2025. He then entered the museum after the killings, donned a red keffiyeh, and shouted, “Free, free Palestine!”

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**By repeating such mindless slogans as ‘Free, free Palestine’ and ‘By any means necessary,’ they advance an agenda designed to justify anything.**

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When arrested by museum guards, Rodriguez boasted, “I did it for Palestine.”

Condemned by some for his murderous deeds, he has been celebrated by others as a dedicated “resistance” fighter. As for the young couple whom he shot dead, Rodriguez did not know them, but he believed they were Jews at-

tending a meeting about Israel, and that was enough to put them to death. The Palestinian American writer Susan Abulhawa dismissed Lischinsky and Milgrim as “genocide cheerleaders” and “colonizer baby killers” who deserved to be done away with.

Less than two weeks later, on June 1, 2025, another assailant, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, carried out an arson attack against a group of mainly elderly Jews in Boulder, Colorado. They were demonstrating on behalf of the hostages in Gaza when Soliman went after them with a self-made flamethrower and Molotov cocktails. He killed an 82-year-old woman and injured 12 others, all the while shouting that he wanted to “free Palestine” and “end Zionists.”

Similar language was used by Cody Balmer, who broke into the residence of Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro on April 13, 2025, around 2 A.M. and set the dining room ablaze with Molotov cocktails. Shapiro had presided over a Passover seder the night before and was asleep with his family in the home when Balmer entered, seeking to find him and bludgeon him to death with a sledgehammer. He claimed he “hated” the governor “for what he wants to do to the Palestinian people.” Nothing whatsoever in Shapiro’s record shows anything remotely like aggressive intentions toward Palestinians, but it is well known that he is both a Jew and a Zionist, and, to today’s Jew haters, such an identity is enough to warrant being fatally assaulted.

Prior to these attacks, no one had ever heard of Elias Rodriguez, Mohamed Sabry Soliman, and Cody Balmer. That is not the case with Herman Brusselmans, a well-known Belgian author, who published an article in a prominent Belgian magazine in which he stated that he “wants to ram a sharp knife through the throat of every Jew I meet.” Why? Once again, because of his feelings about “Palestine,” “Jews,” and “Zionists.”

Many others could be added to this short

list of would-be and actual assassins of Jews. It is growing, as illustrated most recently by the father-and-son killers who murdered 15 Jews and wounded many more in their Hanukkah shooting spree on Bondi Beach in Australia.

As indicated in some of their writings, they, too, detest “Zionists,” a term that increasingly carries a death sentence for Jews everywhere.

What works in one place will be emulated in others, so we can expect further iterations of the examples cited above. Today’s anti-Semitism has what one critic accurately calls “the allure of the obscene.” The formerly taboo is now out in the open, energetically so, and shows no signs of abating. On the contrary, we are witnessing the eruption of an anti-Semitic exhi-

bitionism—loud, profane, and menacing. With the emergence of Palestinianism into almost cult-like status, accompanied by increasingly threatening forms of anti-Zionist derangement, the destructive aspects of the political imagina-

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**Today’s anti-Semitism has what one critic calls ‘the allure of the obscene.’ The formerly taboo is now out in the open and shows no signs of abating.**

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tion align with the appeals of the anti-Semitic imagination and pornographic imagination. Jew-hatred is enjoying a growth spurt. Unless it’s effectively curtailed, we can expect to see an ongoing stream of the moral horror shows already underway. 



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## Politics & Ideas

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# The Revolt of the Revolting

***The Revolutionists:  
The Story of the Extremists  
Who Hijacked the 1970s***

BY JASON BURKE  
Knopf, 768 pages

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Reviewed by NOAH ROTHMAN

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**I**LICH RAMÍREZ Sánchez was jubilant upon his return to London in 1971. When the Venezuelan national's parents had last seen their son, he and his brother had just secured positions to

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NOAH ROTHMAN, a former COMMENTARY editor now at National Review, is the author of the forthcoming *Blood and Progress: A Century of Left-Wing Violence in America*, out in May from Center Street Books.

study at Moscow's Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University—the front from which so much Soviet-sponsored radicalism and militancy was cultivated, refined, and exported. But that had been years earlier. On arrival, Ramírez was chided by a family friend for failing to tell his worried family where he'd been, but the reason for his prolonged absence was simple. "I've been in the Middle East," he confessed, "learning how to kill Jews."

That certainly explained the low profile. Ramírez embarked on that project under an assumed name, "Carlos," to which the appellation "the Jackal" would soon be indelibly appended. Although he was perhaps the most famous revolutionary left-wing terrorist and assassin of his generation,

Carlos actually had serious competition for the title. He would, however, make an outsize contribution to the bloodshed that bathed the decade to follow.

Although they talked a good game about proletarian solidarity and compassionate self-sacrifice, the violence that the Jackal and his terrorist allies dispensed was more often an outgrowth of narcissistic self-reverence that masqueraded as altruism. *The Revolutionists: The Story of the Extremists Who Hijacked the 1970s*, by the British author and journalist Jason Burke, tells Carlos's story and those of many others like him.

Burke's rich narrative distills a violent decade to its intellectual concentrate. He chronicles the international Marxist left's turn

from socialist ardor toward nationalism and Islamism. It was a transformation that occurred in tandem with Israel's progression from a fledgling state into a regional power. The Communist East and its fellow travelers turned on Israel as it evolved from an incipient socialist experiment into a Western-oriented capitalist democracy—one that had had the temerity twice to defeat the coalition of Arab nations in whose success Moscow had ill-advisedly invested substantial sums. The international left's bitterness did not die when the Warsaw Pact pivoted late in the Cold War from confrontation to accommodation with the West, leading the global Marxist vanguard to throw their chips in with the Islamist radicals still in the fight.

It's only proper, then, that Burke's story begins not with the rash of civilian-aircraft hijackings that closed out the turbulent 1960s and set the stage for the violence to come, but in 1948, with the Jewish state's founding. The birth of Israel was accompanied by the rise of a particular radicalism in the region influenced by "Marxist ideology," one of the earliest expressions of which was George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, founded in 1967.

The PFLP enjoyed support from the Soviets and Kim Il Sung's North Korea. Its members drew inspiration from the likes of Che Guevara, Mao Zedong, the Vietcong, and the French philosopher Régis Debray, whose outline

 Jason Burke's rich narrative in *The Revolutionists* distills a violent decade to its intellectual concentrate. He chronicles the international Marxist left's turn from socialist ardor toward nationalism and Islamism.

for how a small band of guerrillas could capture a state universalized the Cuban revolution's seemingly unique parameters. In short order, the PFLP would transform the increasingly common practice of ransoming unsuspecting air travelers for pecuniary gain and operationalize it as a tactic of statecraft.

In 1970, by corralling multiple hijacked targets into a remote Jordanian airstrip it called "Revolution Airport" in the largest mass hijacking in history, the PFLP set the tone for the decade to come. Theirs was a war of "liberation," from not just capitalism's shackles but Israeli perfidy and "occupation." After all, as the PFLP slogan contended, "Zionism Equals Nazism."

But the PFLP was just one of many militant outfits that terrorized the 1970s and early 1980s in the name of Marxism and, later, Allah. The Palestine Liberation Organization, led by Fatah leader Yasir Arafat, was not to be outdone. It, too, drew long draughts from the well of ideological Communism. Often at odds, their leaders competitive, the two gangs nonetheless did occasionally work together, as did so many like-minded but disparate socialist militant groups. There were dozens of them.

Burke recounts the work of the Red Army Faction in Germany, the so-called Baader-Meinhof Gang, detailing its campaign of terroristic bombings and its enthusiastic collaboration with left-wing Palestinian nationalist organizations. He writes about the Japanese Red Army, a militant outfit in league with the PFLP's Wadie Haddad, that massacred dozens of Israelis in 1972 at Ben Gurion Airport (then called Lod). He digests the events that culminated with the massacre of the Israeli Olympic team in Munich at the hands of the PLO-affiliated Mohamed Daoud Odeh with the support of the Red Army Faction. From a bloody attack on Vienna as vengeance against the oil-producing states that had given up on OPEC's 1973 embargo, to the Entebbe hijacking in 1976, to the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Lebanon by the nascent Hezbollah, Burke's narrative establishes an incontrovertible continuity between the socialist movements of the late-20th century and the

Islamist variety.

The author also paints a discomfiting portrait of the Western cowardice that prevailed in this decade. A contemptible timidity reigned in Stockholm, where then-Prime Minister Olof Palme thought that his being a “vocal critic of U.S. foreign policy” meant Sweden would avoid importing “the conflicts of the Middle East” to Swedish streets. It triumphed in Bern, too, where the Swiss capitulated to PFLP demands with an alacrity fueled by the assumption that the rest of Western Europe would capitulate as well, so they’d better be first. Cowardice gripped U.K. Prime Minister Edward Heath’s government when it convinced itself it had a “moral obligation” to its blackmailers. Fear drove the West Germans to blame everyone, especially the Israelis, for inspiring their own homegrown terrorist movement. The French and the Italians routinely deferred to the notion that their “best interests were served” by giving in to terrorist ultimatums. At the time, almost every international air carrier “had adopted a strict policy of total compliance” with their tormentors’ demands. Even the United States lent succor to this international terrorist enterprise to preserve the relationships Washington had cultivated within it.

But Burke’s is also an account of the free world’s awakening from its somnolence. As the author writes of one CIA assessment in 1976, “There was widespread frustration across much of the

 Burke’s is not a book about places and dates and bombs and guns. It is a fascinating collection of biographical portraits of the era’s Communist militants, each of whom seems to have suffered from main-character syndrome.

West with what was seen as a ‘weak and ineffective’ international response to ‘international terrorism.’” That changed with Israel’s successful liberation of the hostages who had been seized by the PFLP’s external operations unit (Popular Front-XO) and the German outfit “Revolutionary Cells” from the infamous Ugandan airfield in Entebbe. That operation, one American author observed at the time, “marks a turn in the tide of the Free World’s response to the new technique of terror.” He was right. West Germany found its spine, too, when it liberated Lufthansa Flight 181 from a Somali airfield and neutralized its PFLP hijackers in 1977 in the first German show of expeditionary force since 1945.

The British discovered a new sense of purpose—a “war on terrorism”—in 1980 when it opted to kill rather than appease the hostage takers who seized the Iranian Embassy in London. What followed was an “ecstatic surge of national pride in Britain” and the unmistakable indications that “the spirit that had won the Second World War was still alive.” Even France recovered its courage eventually, albeit only when it became clear that its pusillanimity would not spare its citizens from the horrors emanating from civil-war-torn Lebanon.

**U**LTIMATELY, though, Burke’s is not a book about places and dates and bombs and guns. It is a fascinating collection of biographical portraits of the era’s Communist militants, each of whom seems to have suffered, curiously enough, from main-character syndrome. The decade was replete with flashy personalities who, despite their devotion to collectivism, were exceptionally hungry when it came to their own celebrity.

There was Leila Khaled, the flamboyant PFLP devotee and alumnus of the American University of Beirut—an alma mater perhaps as infamous as Moscow’s Lumumba U. for the number of Western headaches it produced. Her bloody work was abetted by the committed but demure Japanese Communist Fusako Shigenobu, the “Mistress of Mayhem,” who brought an enigmatic beauty to the militant scene. The obnoxious Andreas Baader and self-

obsessed Ulrike Meinhof played starring roles, as did Gudrun Ensslin—a comely German girl who was the brains behind the Baader-Meinhof Gang but whom history promptly forgot.

The gun-toting female terrorists of the 1970s captured Western imaginations, but their exploits were often overshadowed by those of their male counterparts, most of whom were just as self-absorbed. The book follows the theatrical Arafat's unlikely career in global affairs, which ended only with his death in 2004, despite the PLO chairman's terrible political judgment and inept navigation of the Cold War-era geopolitical landscape. The ostentatious Mohamed Boudia was a playwright and theater director before he lent his dramatic talents to the PFLP's quest for Jewish blood. The revolutionary zeal of Jackal associate Hans-Joachim Klein is tested throughout the arc Burke constructs. It hits a breaking point when the anti-imperialism to which Klein was once attracted begins to look suspiciously like "anti-Jewish prejudice," which comes into conflict with the lessons he gleaned from what he believed was his mother's tenure in a Nazi concentration camp, leading Klein to confess his and his comrades' sins in a tell-all manuscript.

Klein's disenchantment was inspired by his closest associate's career as an international hit man and chaos artist. A useful tool of anti-Western regimes across the planet, Carlos gradually lost his

sponsors in the Eastern Bloc and the Middle East. The judiciousness of the anti-capitalist world was confirmed when they got wind of one of the Jackal's more ill-conceived plots, this time to liberate the concentration-camp commandant Klaus Barbie from French custody.

Indeed, though a network of self-described anti-fascists, the "Revolutionists" benefited from the Nazis' legacy and employed their practices. Ensslin helped midwife Baader-Meinhof into existence by leveraging the funds derived from the sale of national socialist "blood and soil" poetry written by her boyfriend's father. The German hijackers at Entebbe who stood over their captives, long guns in hand, separating Jews from non-Jews, reminded their victims of a familiar foe reborn. The resemblance did not trouble their captors. Unlike the Nazis, the Entebbe hijackers assured their prey, "We are very correct."

Likewise, the PFLP-Revolutionary Cells plot to assassinate the Holocaust-surviving author Simon Weisenthal as a "collaborator with Zionism," or the unrealized conspiracy to slaughter Jewish community leaders in West Germany, do not make much sense outside an anti-Semitic context. From a plan to bomb a Jewish community center on the anniversary of Kristallnacht to a plotted attack on a Jewish kindergarten, the international New Left's claim to be anti-fascist was certainly debatable.

Indeed, there can be no doubt

that these terrorist networks, their militant Islamist allies included, were inspired by and leaders of the New Left. They read all the works of the revolutionary left-wing canon, from Debray and Michel Foucault to Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon. They evinced great admiration for their American comrades, such as the Black Panther activists Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton—an admiration shared by American left-wing militant groups like the Weather Underground. The revolutionaries who pushed the Shah out of Iran lifted their ideological appeals to the outside world "more or less directly from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*," Burke observes. Through religious devotion as much as socialist ardor, the "Revolutionists" could beat back "world imperialism, including multinational corporations and cultural imperialism, racism, class exploitation, class oppression, class inequality, and *Westoxification*," he continues, citing the title of Iranian author Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's pious attack on consumerism.

**T**HE evolutionary trajectory that the decade's left-wing militants followed might seem like a roundabout one—an improbable journey from revolutionary Communism to pan-Arab nationalism to Islamism. That intellectual evolution makes more sense with Burke's emphasis not on ideology as the driving force of this change but on the personal circumstances of those who used ideology to

justify their preexisting bloodlust for violence.

Even the militants' doctrines shifted to justify whatever they were already doing. At no point did these self-described Marxists have any use for Marx's theory that revolution *follows* (instead of precedes) the mass promulgation of a revolutionary consciousness. They eventually adopted Debray's articulation of Castro's "foco" philosophy, in which small, rural, militant groups could bring whole societies down around them. And when the militants shifted to urban warfare, their doctrine shifted with them. Debray was summarily discarded in favor of the tactics enumerated in Carlos Marighella's *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla*.

The only consistency the Revolutionists observed was their own ceaseless desire to overthrow Western or Western-aligned power structures. "I find it pleasant," Ulrike Meinhof said of the wealth and comfort she enjoyed before abandoning her family for a life on the run that ended with her swinging from the jail-cell noose she fashioned from towel scraps, "but it doesn't satisfy my need for warmth, solidarity, belonging to a group." That this tale culminates in the rise of Wahabism in the Middle East, transnational Islamist terrorism, and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran—itsself a marriage of Islamic tenets and Marxian tropes—reveals the vanity of the revolution's proponents.

*The Revolutionists* is a well-told tale, but it is not without flaw.

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The author is careful to note—surely with the benefit of supporting documentation from Moscow archives—that the Soviets abjured terrorism even if the Kremlin was conspicuously friendly toward the practitioners of terror. But was this so? Burke sees a fine line between giving "substantial support" to terrorist networks and evincing no "scruples" in using "terrorist tactics," but I don't. Meanwhile, the Eastern Bloc nations under the Kremlin's thumb *did* sponsor attacks on dissidents abroad, the bombing of Radio Free Europe, and other violent actions designed to weaken the West and advance Communism. That would seem to render the debate over Moscow's "support" for terror tactics academic, despite the author's apparent discomfort with the belief in Reagan-era Washington that the Soviet Union was, in fact, a state sponsor of terrorism.

Ultimately, although it is a work of nonfiction, Burke's book reads like a spy novel. And like all great spy novels, the narrative weaves effortlessly from the individual and interpersonal to the grand and strategic. His work details the lives of the people whose actions captured the attention of nations and moved the superpowers. It details the sordid world of spy craft in which the CIA cultivated assets like Arafat's bloodstained right-hand man, Ali Hassan Salameh. It expounds on the KGB's development of Popular Front-XO mastermind Wadi Haddad, to Moscow's own detriment. It dwells on the machinations that led a handful of naive twentysomethings to become players in a great game between the West and its opponents, both behind the Iron Curtain and in the Middle East—a story in which Libyan despot Muammar Qaddafi and Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein play leading roles. It's a tale of fiery women, melodramatic men, ideologues, grandstanders, and self-promoters, each united by their thirst for carnage and a world reborn in fire.

*The Revolutionists* is of immense cultural relevance today, during what looks ominously like the dawn of a new age of left-wing militancy and small-cell terrorism. The lessons a careful reader should glean from the earlier decade's macabre exposition of hubris and self-infatuation will be lost on those who share a comparable fanaticism and egocentricity. The rest of us have no excuse. 📖

# Dis Unity

## *Muv: The Story of the Mitford Girls' Mother*

BY RACHEL TRETHERWEY  
Pegasus Press, 272 pages

Reviewed by CLARE MCHUGH

**I**N 2025, the Mitford industrial complex belched out of its smokestack a miniseries titled *Outrageous*. Mythmaking and the perpetual nostalgia for wacky British aristocrats have all too often distorted the truth about the infamous Mitford sisters—Nancy, Pamela, Diana, Unity, Jessica, and Deborah, born between 1904 and 1920 to David Mitford-Freeman, Second Baron Redesdale, and his wife, Sydney. Would this glossy Brit-Box show portray the family with subtlety and nuance? Place them accurately in history? Reveal both their talents and their grotesqueries? I suspected not.

My suspicions were merited. *Outrageous* reduces these complex women to cartoon figures and treats the ideological struggle of their day and within their family—literally, between Communism and fascism—as though it were a Gryffindor-versus-Sly-

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therin food fight, while entirely whitewashing the barbaric anti-Semitism of the elders.

So it was a relief to discover, a few pages into Rachel Trethewey's *Muv: The Story of the Mitford Girls' Mother*, that far from ignoring Sydney's odious views, Trethewey sets out to explain why such an otherwise gracious and cultured woman might hold them. Although her book does not equal the condemnatory power of David Pryce-Jones's 1977 masterful *Unity Mitford: A Quest*, it shares Pryce-Jones's seriousness of purpose.

**B**ORN SYDNEY Bowles, the woman later nicknamed "Muv" by her children lost her own mother at age seven. Her father, Thomas Bowles, was a magazine proprietor who launched *Vanity Fair* and later sat in Parliament as a Conservative. Thomas bragged about his independence of mind and uncompromising convictions. "As to the thing we really know, and as to the thing we really believe, no one of us can admit of toleration," he once wrote. Although, like many in his class, he heartily disliked Jews, he embraced Mosaic dietary laws, believing they helped Jewish people stay healthy. "Pork products

were banned from the house, and rabbit, hare and shellfish were never eaten," Trethewey writes. Thomas became Sydney's model in all things. Like him, she tended to view the world in black-and-white terms, and she shared his reflexive anti-Semitism. (Pryce-Jones actually ran across her copy of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and found passages underlined and comments including "Too true!" and "I always said so" scrawled in the margins.) After Sydney married David Mitford in 1903 and set up housekeeping in a series of Cotswold manor houses, she adhered to the kashrut-inspired rules her father followed.

Sydney eventually gave birth to six girls and a sole son, Tom. She and her husband spent time in Canada, where David prospected unsuccessfully for gold. Late in 1913, their fifth child, Unity Valkyrie, was conceived in the northern Ontario town of Swastika—a fact, along with the names chosen for her, that came to seem prophetic to her.

At home, the Mitford offspring created a culture of teasing, pranks, private languages, and intense competition among spirited girls cooped up in the country, not allowed to go to school. (Tom went off to Eton.) In her bestselling 1945 comic novel *The Pursuit of Love*—the wellspring of Mitfordmania—eldest daughter Nancy makes it all seem like so much posh good fun. But in *Hons and Rebels*, a memoir published in 1960, Jessica is candid about the boredom and frustration she and

her closest-in-age sister, Unity, felt, and how that discontent ended up widening the divide that split their family apart.

The Mitfords were fated to live in polarized times. In the 1930s, as Britain slid into the Depression, Nancy turned socialist, while Sydney, a stalwart of the local Conservative women's club, feared a Bolshevik-type revolution. Meanwhile, Diana, restless and unfulfilled in her marriage to brewery heir Bryan Guinness, met Oswald Mosley, the founder of the British Union of Fascists. This handsome, charismatic, hard-charging man could rescue the nation, Diana was convinced, and she desired to be at his side. To her parents' horror, Diana abandoned her husband and moved to a house in Eaton Square to conduct an affair with Mosley, who remained married.

Still stuck at home, lacking purpose, and absorbing the drama and arguments among their elders, Unity and Jessica also picked sides. Unity announced she was a fascist while Jessica pledged allegiance to the Communists. "At first, their different ideologies did not come between the sisters and they were still united against the grown-ups," Trethewey writes. The teenagers put up competing banners in their playroom and staged mock battles. After Unity turned 18 in 1932, she "came out" as a debutante, expressing her disdain for the ritual by bringing along a pet rat to balls. When the next year she announced—with typical Mitfordian bravado—that she



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intended to move to Germany to meet Hitler, her parents, exhausted by their disruptive daughter, let her go.

Unity haunted the Osteria Bavaria, Hitler's favorite Munich lunch spot, for months until she attracted his attention. "Whether it was her Aryan looks or her aristocratic connections, Hitler was flattered by Unity's admiration, and soon included her in his inner circle," Trethewey reports. Her mother came to visit in April 1935, and Unity took her to tea with Hitler. Sydney, wary at first, was gradually won over by the dictator. She likened him to Admiral Nelson, a great hero

of her father's, and praised the "marvelous" things Hitler was undertaking to restore Germany's greatness. Sydney's husband, David, likewise came to look kindly on Hitler and the Nazi project, despite the hatred he had felt for Germans as a soldier in World War I. In a letter to the *Times*, he described Hitler "as a right-thinking man of irreproachable sincerity and honesty."

The Mitford parents were furious with Unity when she took up with Julius Streicher, editor of *Der Stürmer*, who in July 1935 printed a letter by her attacking British Jews in which she declared, "I want everyone to know that I am a Jew hater." But it was the critical fallout in the British press more than Unity's opinions that bothered Sydney and David. Jessica later claimed that she showed her parents graphic accounts of the persecution of the Jews by Hitler's Stormtroopers, but they brushed the reports aside. When Hitler invited them to the Nazi *Parteitag* rally at Nuremberg in 1938, Lord and Lady Redesdale happily accepted.

Diana married Mosley, now a widower, in 1936 in Joseph Goebbels's Berlin drawing room, and Hitler was the guest of honor. The next spring, Jessica nailed her Communist colors to the mast by running away to the Spanish Civil War with her second cousin, Esmond Romilly. London newspapers pounced on this latest Mitford scandal with glee. In her memoir, Jessica describes how Nancy, sent out to

Spain to persuade her sister to come home, made an illuminating comment about press coverage of Jessica's elopement: "You were the first one in the family to be on posters.... [Unity] was frightfully jealous."

Perhaps because Unity's proclamations were so often over-the-top and attention-seeking, her family didn't believe her vows to kill herself should Germany and Britain go to war. Her parents also hated the prospect of war. After the Munich agreement, Sydney wrote a letter of praise to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, adding, "Hitler, whom I know personally, is above all a person of heart." When Mosley spoke at an enormous "peace" rally at Earl's Court Exhibition Hall in London in July 1939 and gave the fascist salute, Lord and Lady Redesdale, along with Tom and Diana, attended to support him. "The Mitfords were now described as 'the first family of fascism' in Britain," Trethewey writes.

Upon the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939, Unity went to the Englischer Garten in Munich and shot herself in the temple with a small pearl-handled pistol gifted to her by Hitler for her personal protection. She survived, but her parents had no news of her for months. Meanwhile in Britain, David immediately recanted his support for the Nazis, saying to the *Daily Mirror*: "The King's enemies are now the enemies of every honest Englishman. I made a mistake." His wife renounced nothing and

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blamed Winston Churchill, not Hitler, for the war. "It was to be the biggest act of defiance of her life," Trethewey writes. "Beneath the conventional façade she was as great a rebel as any of her daughters."

Only in December 1939 did the Mitfords learn that Unity had been gravely injured in her suicide attempt and that the bullet was still lodged in her skull. Hitler arranged for a hospital train to take Unity to neutral Switzerland; her mother and sister Deborah went to Bern to fetch her.

Back at home, distraught over world events, now caring for a

brain-damaged and incontinent 25-year-old daughter, Sydney began quarreling incessantly with David. He, in turn, was furious with her and her refusal to acknowledge that Unity's obsession with Hitler had ruined her life. "It was very painful for both Sydney and David.... But they could not find the common ground to live together anymore," Trethewey writes.

Sydney's caretaking duties increased after Mosley and Diana were locked up in Holloway Prison as threats to national security. Sydney made a grueling seven-hour round-trip journey from the Cotswolds to the London jail every week to spend an allotted 15 minutes with her daughter and pass her fresh food. Nancy disdained Diana, called her "Mrs. Quisling," and never visited. Doing her bit for the war effort, Nancy, with her father's approval, lodged numerous bombed-out Londoners and Jewish refugees in the family's Kensington mansion.

The war's conclusion brought little comfort to the Mitfords, devastated by the loss of Tom, whom everyone in the family loved and got on with, killed in action in Burma in March 1945. Unity died of meningitis, a consequence of her old gunshot wound, in May 1948. But the publication of *The Pursuit of Love* in 1945 brought Nancy the literary renown she had always longed for and, incredibly, managed to transform the public's perception of the family, "making them known more

for their amusing eccentricities than their controversial views,” Trethewey writes. Aunt Sadie, the character in the novel based on Sydney, is an innocuous aristocrat who floats around doing not much. “By downplaying Sydney’s politics...Aunt Sadie loses the essence of who Sydney really was,” notes Trethewey, who admits her own feelings about her subject fluctuated constantly as she wrote *Muv*. She suggests that she agrees with Jessica Mitford, who came to see Sydney as two different people,

a loyal and resilient mother on the one hand, and an obstinate individualist with detestable politics on the other.

This evaluation, while adequate, led me back to Pryce-Jones to be reminded of his take on the Mitfords. Lord and Lady Redesdale, in his view, were essentially incurious about the world, ensconced in a privileged, self-satisfied pocket of it and “expected their children to be like themselves. Faced with originality, they were defenceless. The onslaught of Unity...was to

knock them down flat.” And what motivated Unity? Pryce-Jones makes an observation resonant today as legions of cosseted campus radicals march in support of Hamas. Unity, he wrote, was a type, “a society creature who takes advantage of her position to smash it up.” To such young people, “values were of less concern, less style, than the art of rejection.”

We will wait in vain, I fear, for any filmed entertainment that will capture that aspect of the Mitford story. 📖➡️



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## HOLLYWOOD COMMENTARY

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 72     man, *don't buy the cow if you can get the milk for free. But then, 20 years later, you suddenly realize, Oh my God, I married a cow!*

We laughed and laughed. And the next day, at the cast run-through, one of the actresses pointed to that joke and looked at us with disapproval. *Really?* She asked. *Really?*

*What?* We said. *It's funny.*

*It's clear that you didn't have any women in the room when you wrote that joke,* she said.

Later, back in the office, we grumbled. *Women just aren't funny,* we told ourselves, but of course there were no women there to make the counterargument.

Women can be just as funny as men—and please remember I said that—but they're funny in two specifically different ways. In the first place, women in general are unlikely to be as obsessed with comedy routines as men. The guys I know in the comedy business can recite entire scenes from *Monty Python's Flying Circus* or perfectly quote comedy routines they listened to, and memorized, on comedy albums in their room late at night when the other boys who could play sports were out on dates. Men can look at each other and say *Serpentine, Shel* or *That escalated quickly* and mostly they know exactly where those snippets come from. We want to write those snippets.

Men tell jokes—as in *set up, punch line*—following the carefully established rubric heard on comedy albums and seen in movies and plays throughout time. Male comedy writers tend to embrace the rigidity and even the artificiality of the classic joke form. In some cases, the unnatural *setup, punch line* exchange makes the whole thing funnier. Here is a near-perfect example of the different ways the sexes respond to the classic form. It goes like this:

*Q: What's the worst thing a woman can hear after she's slept with Willie Nelson?*

*A: I'm not Willie Nelson.*

Men, mostly, think it's hilarious. Women, mostly, don't get it.

True Hollywood Story:

There was a comedy writer and showrunner. One day, in the middle of a production week, he announced to the writing staff that, come Monday morning, he was going to officially transition to female. This was a few years before the language and protocols of sexual identity and transition had taken root, so the announcement and the complicated mid-season adjustments were challenging for everyone.

But it's not like the staff didn't have a sense that something was up. Clearly, the showrunner had been on some kind of hormone therapy. They had noticed changes in the way the boss looked—a puffiness here and there, foundation makeup around the neck and face—and in the more gender-neutral wardrobe choices. So, Monday morning, the assigned-male-at-birth comedy writer was going to become a female comedy writer. This was a perfect way to get a final answer to the question: Are women as funny as men? On Monday morning, when the boss came into work in heels and a nice outfit, would he still be able to pitch a *setup, punch line* piece of dialogue?

Well, on Monday morning, the showrunner was just as funny as on Friday afternoon. Which proves that Jerry Lewis and Christopher Hitchens and all of the rest are wrong. They may laugh at different things, they may not tell jokes according to the rigid rubric preferred by men, but women are just as funny as men in every meaningful way. Even women with a five o'clock shadow and size 11-and-a-half shoes. And that's the sentence that I'm pretty sure is going to get me into trouble. ▶



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## HOLLYWOOD COMMENTARY

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# Funny Girl?

ROB LONG

LET ME START by stipulating that I think the next few paragraphs could get me into trouble. And if they don't, the sentence at the end *definitely* will. But because I'm an idiot, I'm going to wade into the long-standing debate among comedy writers, and others, about whether or not women can be funny.

Will you let me finish, please? I mean, yes, *of course* women can be funny. There are funny women all over the place. Still, this is something that (mostly male) comedy writers used to discuss openly. And not just comedy writers, either: *Women aren't funny* has been voiced by people as different as British journalist Christopher Hitchens and famous French filmmaker Jerry Lewis. Not these days.

Here's what I think is behind the fact that the question is posed at all. I'm posing it, by the way, because the wonderful Catherine O'Hara just died, who was one of the most brilliantly amusing performers who ever lived, and a writer of humor besides. But was she *funny funny*?

I grew up surrounded by men writing jokes and scenes and bits for television around a table in what are called writers' rooms. There's a lot of

locker-room swagger that goes on in the writers' room—or there used to be, when I started my career 35 years ago—that often compensates for an adolescence spent being bullied by the popular boys and ignored by everyone else.

Which makes psychological sense. Being funny, for a lot of people, is a way of getting people to notice you for something other than your mortifying weaknesses, like your struggles with weight, for instance, or your inability to play any sport. *Hurt people hurt people*, is how psychologists explain the way people who have suffered emotional trauma pass it along. But in the comedy writing world, it's more like *Hurt people pitch the great Act Two button*, and *Extremely Hurt People pitch out an entire cold open*.

All of that buried childhood anger and damage comes out in TV writers' rooms, in insults and imitations and jokes about Anne Frank. Aside from the cascade of truly objectionable, utterly unusable jokes that most comedy writers indulge in when they're together, there's often the kind of chummy misogyny that all-male environments can incubate. Years ago, I was in a room when a writer pitched this: An older male character is giving a younger man advice about dating and marriage. *You know what they say*, he tells the young

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ROB LONG *has been the executive producer of seven TV series.*

**YOU DESERVE TO KNOW THE TRUTH...**

# **Facts Shatter Gaza Genocide Lies**

**Of all the lies told by Israel's enemies, the slander of genocide is the greatest falsehood—refuted by the word's meaning and all facts. Why do they repeat it?**

*Despite any factual evidence that Israel intends to or actually is systematically eliminating Gaza's population—and despite Israel's unmatched efforts to spare and even feed enemy civilians—dozens of media, politicians and activists still spread the Israel genocide blood libel.*

## **What are the facts?**

Following Hamas's savage October 7 massacre and kidnapping of innocent Israeli children, families, young people and elderly, the accusation of genocide against Israel has become a hateful rallying cry. However, as a preponderance of facts prove, Israel's conduct of the war against Hamas in Gaza is entirely legal and in no way violates the UN Genocide Convention.

**What is genocide?** "Genocide" defines "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group." The Jews of Europe are the best-known victims of genocide. Hitler's Germany tried to eliminate the Jewish people—killed six million for their "crime" of being Jewish. Likewise, the Cambodian genocide (1981-83) killed 1.5-2 million people—some 25% of Cambodia's population. The Rwandan Genocide (1994) killed 800,000 to 1 million people in 100 days, and the Darfur Genocide (2003 to present) has claimed 200,000 to 400,000 deaths. Critical to the definition of genocide is specific intent to murder or physically displace a population group (not merely its individual members). *Thus, any given war between two parties, regardless of death counts, cannot necessarily be called genocide.*

**Is Israel intentionally trying to eliminate the Gazan people?** There's zero evidence that Israel has intentionally targeted innocent Gazan Palestinians. Indeed, Israel's attacks on its enemies uniformly target Hamas terrorists, who generally hide in hospitals, mosques and schools, using Gaza's citizens as human shields. To avoid harming innocents, the IDF consistently gives warnings to civilians of impending attacks, using phone and SMS, leaflets, social media and "roof-knocking." Israel also issues evacuation warnings prior to battles in populated areas. Finally, Israel facilitates delivery of thousands of tons of medicines, food and other essentials to sustain the enemy population in Gaza—unheard of in modern warfare. These actions prove irrefutably that Israel does not intend to destroy the Gazan people. No genocide.

**Are Palestinians victims of genocide?** In the Gaza War, an estimated 60,034 Gazans have been killed as of August 2024, of which an estimated 24,014 (40%) were males of combat age (18-59). Other estimates place the percentage of deaths of Gazan males aged 13-55 to be 72%, or 43,224 deaths. No surprise, then,

that the ratio of civilians to combatants in Gaza is much lower than in comparable wars. Whereas the civilian-fighter ratio in Gaza is estimated to be as high as 1.5:1, the average ratio in urban warfare worldwide, according to the UN, is 9:1 civilians to fighters. This ratio alone destroys the genocide argument.

Palestinian-Arabs have multiplied with no interference from Israel: Palestinian population at Israel's birth in 1948 was about 1.3 million—today it's about 6.8 million, of which some two million are Israeli Arab citizens. Such robust population growth also refutes accusations of genocide. Even in Gaza itself, despite the war, Gaza's population—measured by births vs. violent deaths—has actually increased. Estimates by such organizations as the United Nations Population Fund project births in Gaza from October 7, 2023 to the present at about 124,245.

Contrast that with violent deaths estimated at about 75,200 over the same period by the independent Gaza Mortality Survey: Using births vs. violent deaths, Gaza actually experienced a net gain in population—the opposite effect of a genocide.

## **Genocide liars deserve the label of "antisemite"**

**Why do Israel's enemies—against all evidence—repeat the antisemitic blood libel of genocide?** Instead of praising Israel's efforts to save civilian lives, increasing members of the "international community" employ the genocide accusation in the same manner blood libels were used to discredit, delegitimize and physically attack Jews over the centuries. Those who oppose Israel's existence cannot use honest facts to convince people of good will that Israel is evil. In fact, Israel wants peace and has offered it many times to Palestinians over 77 years. Yet, the Palestinians have greeted these offers with thousands of terrorist attacks, killing some 5,450 Israeli civilians.

*Time to refute the Israel genocide liars. False accusations of genocide are attempts to delegitimize the Jewish state, demonize Jews and destroy Israel. These tactics perfectly fit the globally accepted definition of antisemitism. Those who attack Israel with this falsehood fully deserve the label of antisemite.*

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# **FLAME**

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