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May 30, 2016: Anti-Zionism or Anti-Semitism?

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Title: Anti-Zionism or Anti-Semitism?

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5/30/2016—The really good newspaper, Pittsburgh's Jewish Chronicle, covers issues of interest to the Jewish community with amazing journalistic integrity. It is not unusual to find Arab and Palestinian voices in the newspaper criticizing the policies of the current government of Israel. And it is common to hear liberal voices within the Jewish community challenging unthinking support for Israel and defending American politicians who want America to play a more balanced role in the Middle East. The debate over the Iranian nuclear accord played out in the pages of that newspaper. I read it every week.

But one area where the magazine either is less even handed, or, perhaps, I don't know what is going on, is the issue of where the line is drawn between a genuinely anti-Zionist stance and antisemitism. By genuinely anti-Zionist, I don't even mean people who feel that the State of Israel should never have existed. The newspaper would undoubtedly call such people anti-Semitic. No, by anti-Zionist, I mean people who believe that the State of Israel has become racist in recent years and is so now. That its treatment of the Palestinian people is shameful—a violent occupation of a civilian population that would like to live in peace. That most Israelis no longer even want a Palestinian State to exist in the West Bank. That Arab Israeli citizens are second class citizens. In other words, that Israel is now a nationalist, dangerous apartheid State.

When this line, which I have never been able to make my mind up about—the Israelis I know are not representative, but they have come reluctantly to the conclusion that there cannot be peace with the Palestinians because Palestinians don't want peace and these Israelis oppose the policies that disadvantage Arab Israeli citizens; that would not be racist in any way—is presented on college campuses, the Jewish Chronicle sometimes characterizes it as anti-Semitic. And many Jews do the same.

One thing is clear. The current government of Israel does not want an independent Palestinian State—for religious reasons (it would be on land some believe was promised by God to the Jewish people) or security reasons (inevitably, such a State would be taken over by fanatics staging attacks on Israel). After all, the current random attacks on Israelis are the reason the consensus in Israel changed against peace.

But is such criticism anti-Semitic? I don't think it starts out that way. There are Jews, after all, who share this view of Israel. But we have to remember the insight of Carl Schmidt, the German/Nazi theorist. He wrote that once you have the friend/enemy distinction, all other oppositions follow. If a people occupy your land or oppose your policies, you eventually come to hate that people and not just what they do.

All this, of course, is miles away from the amazing anti-Semitic ranting that Jewish journalists are beginning to absorb from Trump supporters, which Jonathan Weisman wrote about in the New York Times a few days ago ([here](#)). That stuff is purely nativist. But it is comical. Impossible for me to take seriously as a threat to Jews. Donald Trump himself is a product of New York values. No one ever thought of him as anti-Semitic. The notion is ridiculous.

Well, why doesn't he call out his supporters? For the same reason Lincoln accepted support from anti-immigrant groups. In politics you take all the votes you can get.