Anti-Semitism Versus Anti-Israeli Sentiment

Steven K. Baum, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Masato Nakazawa, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque

Abstract

Adults from four religious/ethnic groupings: Arab Muslim, Arab Christian, Non-Arab Muslim, and North American Christian were administered measures of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment to determine if the concepts were related. Correlation strength was r=.61, and anti-Semitism remained even when the effects of anti-Israeli sentiment were parceled out. The reasons for such differences are the basis of discussion and further inquiry.

Introduction

[1] Conor Cruise O'Brien observed that anti-Semitism was a very light sleeper, though since September 2001 it has been something of an insomniac (Runnymede Commission: 17). Perhaps a misnomer since the old anti-Semitism never quite disappeared, the new anti-Semitism incorporates labor, NGOs, and those on the political left. The new anti-Semitism is decidedly anti-Israeli. Largely underreported, anti-Semitic hate crimes throughout Europe are thought to be the work of young Muslim males with pro-Palestinian leanings (EUMC; Human Rights First).

[2] Criticisms of Israeli policy toward the Palestinians have met with charges of anti-Semitism – some fairly and some unfairly – but the linkage of the stereotypical Jew and Israeli policy toward the Palestinians has become prominent. For instance, criticism of Israel is rarely devoid of anti-Semitic metaphors. One needs only to look at the barrage of anti-Semitic anti-Israeli cartoons in mainstream Arab news sources as well as some mainstream Western newspapers, e.g. *La Stampa*, *The Independent*.

[3] Anti-Semitism disguised as criticism of Israel is not unknown. Wire services transfer the bias report to other newspapers creating at times intentional media distortion as the inflated casualties at Jenin attest (HonestReporting). The Bonn based watchdog group Media Tenor has found the BBC's Middle East coverage was 85 percent negative, 15 percent neutral, and

0 percent positive toward Israel (Fleischer). Not surprisingly a recent Versailles court decision cited three journalists for racism when the popular newspaper *La Monde* printed their 2002 article entitled, "Israel-Palestine: The Cancer" (Gross).

[4] The linkage between anti-Semitism and an anti-Israeli bias may be noticeable in these cases of impartiality, but it is not limited to such media bias. There is over-sanctioning of Israel by the United Nations compared to other nations, e.g., 101 UN resolutions for the Palestinians and none for the same Jews ejected from Arab lands (see forgottenrefugees.com). There are notions of Israel as illegitimate with calls for genocide by Muslim heads of State and Holocaust denial conferences. There is the court of public opinion, which has ranked Israel the least liked of all nations (BBC News), as well as proposed boycotts of Israeli academics by the teacher's and trade unions in England and one Canadian province (Ontario), as well as a boycott and censure proposed by the Anglican Church. More to the point, with the exception of United States, anti-Semitic attacks have doubled globally primarily as a function of what is called the new anti-Semitism (U.S. Dept. of State; Wistrich).

[5] While anti-Semites are likely to be anti-Israeli, the reverse may not be true. Critics of Israel may not be anti-Semitic, as one French survey suggested (Mayer). However, a major European study has found just the opposite: statistically those who endorse anti-Israeli statements tend to endorse anti-Semitic statements (Kaplan and Small). A recent survey as well reports that about a third of Europeans believe that violence against Jews is directly due to anti-Israeli sentiment (ADL).

[6] If disdain of Israel was unrelated to anti-Semitism, then it seems unlikely that global anti-Semitic attacks on Jews and their property would have doubled. If Israeli disdain was unrelated to anti-Semitism, how can the high "unfavorable" rating of Jews in Muslim nations where few or not Jews reside be explained (Pew Global Attitudes)? If anti-Israeli sentiment and anti-Semitic belief were not fused, then there would have been no historical precedent of Jews being murdered in the Middle East prior to the birth of the State of Israel, but there has been hundreds of incidents resulting in thousands of deaths in the last millennia (Gilbert).

[7] Until recently, anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli attitudes has not been researched in an Arab or Muslim population (Gallup; cf., Frindte *et al*; Kaplan and Small) and the effects of culture have not been examined independently from the effects of religion as a source of anti-Semitism. The two religions that have traditionally fostered anti-Semitic beliefs are Christianity and Islam. To that end, four distinct groups separating out the effects of culture from religion will be examined.

Method

[8] Respondents were obtained from a large Midwest American city and nearby middle-size Canadian city. All respondents were selected through a series of friendship networks. Interview schedules were administered to English speaking respondents. Two Arabic interpreters administered the same interview schedule translated backward and forward to Arabic Christian and Muslim respondents. The anonymity of responses was assured and 15-20 minutes was the approximate response time for all applicants to complete the measures.

[9] A total of 194 subjects participated in this study.[1] The total mean age of the sample was 36-years old with four years of college education, approximately equally male and female, mostly married and of middle income. In terms of demographics, the Arab Muslims had a mean age of 33 years, predominately female (69%), married (75%), less educated (some college; 3.7 years) with less than one-third identifying as low income, and residing in North America for an average of 6.4 years. By contrast, Arab Christians, of mostly Lebanese descent, had a mean age of 40, were better educated (college; 4.7 years), mostly female (65%), slightly more than half married (57%), with 10% identifying themselves as lower income and residing in North America for 9.2 years. Non-Arab Muslims were mostly of Bosnian descent and had a mean age of 35. Education was some college (4.0 years), mostly male (52%), married (64%), with 29% identifying with lower income, and residing in North America for 6.1 years. Non-Arab Christians were 36 years old, educated with college (4.0 years), predominately more female (64%), less married (29%), of less income (35% identifying as lower income), and residing in North America all their lives. With respect to anti-Semitism, there was no statistical difference in Shia and Sunni identity (p<ns) so Muslims were treated as a unitary group.

[10] The interview schedule consisted of a revised version of the 11-item Index of Antisemitic Beliefs (Selznick and Steinberg) randomized and set in a seven point Likert-type scale. The anti-Semitic index has been used since 1964 and in this sample had an internal consistency of .94. Anti-Israeli Sentiment was determined from four items by employing one item from the Antisemitic Beliefs and three items from prior surveys of the Anti-Defamation League. The four items that measured anti-Israeli sentiment had a Cronbachs alpha of .81.

Results

[12] The means and standard deviations for all data are presented in Table 1. In terms of anti-Semitism, Arab Muslim mean scores were highest followed closely by Non-Arab Muslim and Arab Christian scores. These mean scores were double those of their Non-Arab, Christian counterparts. A slightly different pattern emerged regarding the mean scores for anti-Israeli sentiment. Non-Arab Christians again scored lowest, followed by Arab Christians and their Arab Muslim counterparts. However, Non-Arab Muslims scored highest, doubling the scores of Non-Arab Christians.

---

[1] A portion of the subjects did not provide demographic information.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations of Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israeli Sentiment

Anti-Semitism

Ethnicity	Religion	Valid n[2]	Mean	Standard Deviation
Arab	Muslim	32	56.0	12.7
Arab	Christian	46	44.9	18.3
Non-Arab	Muslim	29	45.9	11.5
Non-Arab	Christian	42	20.6	16.7

Anti-Israeli Sentiment

Ethnicity	Religion	Valid n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Arab	Muslim	73	16.6	6.7
Arab	Christian	45	13.9	6.5
Non-Arab	Muslim	25	18.6	3.6
Non-Arab	Christian	39	9.8	3.6

[13] In order to examine the effects of religion and ethnicity and possible interaction on anti-Semitism, we conducted a two-way ANOVAs with Religion (Muslim vs. Christians) and Ethnicity (non-Arab vs. Arab) as between-subject factors separately with Anti-Semitism and Anti-Israeli Sentiment as the dependent variable. The data was slightly limited in N, but did not violate statistical assumptions (see footnote 1). As anti-Israeli sentiment may account for differences in anti-Semitism, we conducted an ANCOVA with the Religion and Ethnicity as between-subject factors and with Anti-Semitism as the dependent variable and Anti-Israeli Sentiment as the covariate.

Religion and Ethnicity Effects and Anti-Semitism.

[14] The effect of religion significantly differed between non-Arabs and Arabs, as indicated by a significant Religion by Ethnicity interaction effect ($F_{(1,145)} = 8.43$, $p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$). Specifically, Muslims had higher anti-Semitism scores than Christians (45.9 vs. 20.6, $p < 0.05$) while among Arabs, this difference was considerably less (56.0 vs. 44.9, $p < 0.05$). In addition, both the main effects of Religion and Ethnicity were significant (Religion: $F_{(1,145)} = 56.48$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.28$; Ethnicity: $F_{(1,145)} = 50.41$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.25$).

Religion and Ethnicity Effects and Anti-Israeli Sentiment.

[15] Similar to the anti-Semitism pattern, there was a significant interaction effect between Religion and Ethnicity on Anti-Israeli Sentiment ($F_{(1,178)} = 15.38$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.08$). Regarding non-Arabs, Muslims had considerably higher anti-Israeli scores than did

---

[2] Forty-five subjects (N=45) were excluded from the anti-Semitism and 12 (N=12) from the anti-Israeli Sentiment analysis due to incomplete data.

Christians (18.6 vs. 9.8, $p < 0.05$) while among Arabs, this difference was smaller (13.9 vs. 16.6, $p < 0.05$). The main effect of Religion was significant (Religion: $F (1,178) = 54.41$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.23$) but that of Ethnicity was not ($F (1,178) < 2.0$, $p = 0.20$).

Anti-Semitism Adjusted for Anti-Israeli Sentiment

[16] There was a strong positive correlation between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli Sentiment ($r (139) = 0.61$, $p < 0.001$). To further examine the effects of religion and ethnicity on anti-Semitism, we conducted an ANCOVA with anti-Semitism adjusted for anti-Israeli sentiment. Although the interaction between Religion and Ethnicity was no longer significant ($F (134)=1.33$, $p > 0.20$) partial $\eta^2=0.01$, both Religion and Ethnicity main effects did remain significant (Religion: $F (1,134) = 12.88$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.09$; Ethnicity: $F (1,134) = 74.05$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.36$). Muslims scored higher than Christians on anti-Semitism even when scores on anti-Israeli sentiment were similar. Along those lines, Arabs scored higher than non-Arabs on anti-Semitism after adjusting for anti-Israeli sentiment.

Discussion

[17] In regard to the question of whether there is a difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment, the answer, at least statistically, is no. Consistent with the findings in a large European study (Kaplan and Small) anti-Semitism is moderately associated with anti-Israeli sentiment and anti-Israeli sentiment is moderately associated with anti-Semitism. Even when the effects of anti-Israel sentiment are statistically controlled, anti-Semitism persists.

[18] The significant relationship between anti-Israeli sentiment and anti-Semitism does not imply that criticism of Israeli policies dealing with the Palestinian people is anti-Semitic. In Israel, where four-fifths of the population is Jewish, Jews regularly and vigorously debate their government policies regarding Palestinian issues.

[19] Yet, when anti-Israeli sentiment includes metaphors that employ traditional anti-Semitic canards, when anti-Israeli rhetoric mimics pro-Arab rhetoric, when attacks on Jews around the world have doubled, and when the levels of discourse include calling for the dismantling of the State of Israel and the genocide of its people, then it is not surprising that this study and others have found high statistical correlation between anti-Israeli sentiment and anti-Semitism.

[20] Specific to this study, some group differences were surprising, while other findings could have been more anticipated. Perhaps not surprising was that Christians who resided in North American all their lives consistently held the lowest scores for any anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli beliefs.

[21] It may not be surprising either that recent Arab immigrants from the Middle East would be more anti-Semitic and more anti-Israeli. But why should Non-Arab Muslims – those from Bosnia and Pakistan also be anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli? These Muslims have little in common geographically and even less in common ethnically, but share the same religion – Islam. While other factors may be involved, Islam infused with anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment, appears as key to Muslim identity. Researchers are just beginning to grapple with the subtleties of Arab and Muslim identity (Saroglou and Galand) and future researchers may

wish to examine the salience of anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment as a threat to identity coherence.

[22] The results of this study address the larger problem regarding the acquisition of "everyday racism" (Essed) – how widespread culturally accepted beliefs are communicated within and between groups. It begs the question as well of those who are religious or nationalistic as compared to say those who are not religious or nationalistic, and future researchers may wish to examine the within-group differences. It is incumbent upon researchers to explore if one can be a "good Muslim" without being anti-Israeli or anti-Semitic, which begs the question of the stauration point – the point where public opinion moves from anti-Semitic beliefs to calls for genocide (Baum 2008).

[23] Do people become overly identified with their religious or ethnic group in the course of assuming a social identity? Or, is anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiment so saturated in the cultural air that it is accepted? (Harrison). Is anti-Semitism based on anger and hate? Or, is anti-Semitism based on fear and ignorance due to long held tales and myths of "The Jews"? (Baum, in press).

[24] Do such questions even matter if everyone around them holds similar thoughts. One interviewee's experience was telling. Mohammed, age 37 is a Pakistani Muslim, a father of three with an advanced degree. His manner was gentle and mild. Yet, he endorsed several anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli responses. When asked how he knew that "Jews were evil" and that "world terrorism would cease if America stopped supporting Israel," he replied, "everybody knows." For Mohammed, social truth was established by like-minded friends, his cleric, and the imagined community of Arab satellite television.

[25] Researchers as well may wish to examine why North American Christians have lower levels of anti-Semitism? Has years of Christian-Jewish dialogue been effective in reducing anti-Semitism? Has direct contact with Jews and Christians lowered anti-Semitism levels? If any of these concerns are true, then the next steps may include dialoguing with the Muslim community. Though, the real answers to these questions and their solutions are the domain of future researchers.

Acknowledgement

Bibliography

ADL

2007   *Attitudes Toward Jews and the Middle East in Five European Countries.* http://www.adl.org/anti_semitism/European_Attitudes_Survey_May_2007. pdf.

BBC News

2007   "Israel, Iran Top 'Negative List.'" (March 6) http://news.bbc.co.uk/ 2/hi/middle_east/6421597.stm.

Baum, S. K.

2008   *The Psychology of Genocide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

In Press   *When Fairy Tales Kill?: Origins and Transmission of Anti-Semitic Myths*. Jerusalem: Gefen.

Essed, P.

1991   *Understanding Everyday Racism*. Newbury Park: Sage

EUMC

2006   *Summary Overview of the Situation in the European Union 2001-2005*. http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/AS/Anti-Semitism_Overview_December_2006_en.pdf.

Fleischer, Tzvi

2003   "Beeb Outdoes Itself." *The Review* (September): 8.

Frindte, W., S. Wettig, and D. Wammetsberger, D.

2005   "Old and New Anti-Semitic Attitudes in the Context of Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation – Two Studies in Germany." *Peace and Conflict* 11: 239-66.

Gallup

2002   *The 2002 Gallup Poll of the Islamic World*. Princeton: Gallup.

Gilbert, M.

2003   *The Routledge Atlas of Jewish History*. Sixth Edition. London: Routledge.

Gross, Tom

2005   "Anti-Semitism at 'Le Monde' and Beyond." *HonestReporting* (June 6). http://www.honestreporting.com/articles/45884734/reports/Anti-Semitism_at_Le_Monde_and_Beyond.asp.

Harrison, Bernard

2006   *The Resurgence of Anti-Semitism*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

HonestReporting

2002   "Jenin Lies." *HonestReporting* (April 30). http://www.honestreporting.com/ articles/critiques/Jenin_Lies.asp.

Human Rights First

2007   *Hate Crime Survey: Antisemitism.* http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/ 07601-discrim-hc-antisemitsm-web.pdf.

Kaplan E. H., and C. A. Small

2006   "Anti-Israel Sentiment Predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50: 548-61.

Mayer, N.

2007   "Transformations in French Anti-Semitism." *International Journal of Conflict Violence* 1:51-60.

Pew Global Attitudes

2005   "Islamic Extremism: Common Concern for Muslim and Western Publics." http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=248.

Runnymede Commission

1994   *A Very Light Sleeper.* London: Runnymede Trust.

Saroglou, V., and P. Galand

2004   "Identities, Values, and Religion: A Study among Muslim, Other Immigrant, and Native Belgian Young Adults after the 9/11 Attacks." *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research* 4: 97-132.

Selznick, G. J., and S. Steinberg

1969   *The Tenacity of Prejudice.* New York: Harper Torchbooks.

U.S. Department of State

2005   "Report on Global Anti-Semitism." http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/ 40258.htm.

Wistrich, R. S.

2005   *European Anti-Semitism Reinvents Itself.* New York: American Jewish Committee. Online at: http://www.ajc.org/atf/cf/{42D75369-D582-4380-8395-D25925B85EAF}/wistrich.pdf.