

## **The Threat**

Israel's moral, legal and political legitimacy have been challenged (often by arms) by the country's neighbors since the birth of the Jewish state. But never before have these challenges been heard with such vigor in the West or given so much credence. And never before has this propaganda represented such an existential threat to Israel's very existence.

The Threat has been metastasizing over the last decade as demonstrated by:

- The growth of boycott, divestment and sanctions activity that has found traction in both the US and Europe
- Israeli acts of self defense being declared war crimes by international governments and NGOs
- Language that pre-supposes Israeli guilt of repression or "Apartheid" seeping into mainstream political and media discourse
- The transformation of the university into a war zone where frenzied anti-Israel activity is given a welcome home and protest against it met with violence
- The mainstreaming of "one-state solutions," "right-of-return" and other options that would spell the end of Israel as a Jewish state

Given Israel's increasing isolation, the corruption of organizations like the UN and the weakening of Western resolve in the face of increasingly threatening militant Islam (especially in Europe), the Threat has now hit landmass in the United States, Israel's most important ally.

In a world that has already demonstrated a willingness to leave the Jewish nation and the Jewish people to an uncertain fate, the US-Israel alliance has become more critical than at any time in history. Which is why so much effort, energy and resources are being spent to break this alliance apart by "branding" Israel a pariah, unworthy of the friendship Israel needs to ensure its survival.

The Threat is no accident, but is rather part of a conscious militant strategy to use the techniques of propaganda to weaken Israel's resolve and reduce or eliminate support from her friends and allies. The Threat has an origin. It is supported by large numbers of individuals and organizations united in a common goal. It is well funded, well manned and vigorous, with each new success leading to increased boldness. And most challenging of all, many of those needed to fight The Threat are still unable or unwilling to even acknowledge its existence.

### **Origins of The Threat**

From the birth of Israel in 1948 until the end of the 1973 war, the biggest threat to Israel was military in the form of conventional armies from neighboring Arab states who fought against Israel in four major wars. The language of Israel's foes during that time was equally militant, with Arab leaders frequently threatening to "throw the Jews into the sea" or promising "a slaughter on the scale of the Mongols."

Needless to say, this militant language did not endear Israel's foes to those in the West who identified with human rights or the quest for peace. But with the onrush of wealth that gushed into the Arab world after the 1973 oil embargo, and a realignment of Cold War forces against the Jewish state, the language of the conflict underwent a major change.

Gone were references to slaughter and revenge, replaced by talk of the suffering of Palestinian Arabs under Israeli rule (especially in territories captured in the 1967 Six Day War). Starting in 1973, a masterful inversion took place, whereby a conflict created by the Arab world refusing to accept a Jewish presence anywhere in the Middle East was replaced by a narrative placing blame for the conflict on the Jewish state's refusal to accept an Arab (Palestinian) presence in their midst.

This storyline formed the basis of a massive propaganda effort, funded by oil wealth, supported by the Soviet Union and its allies, and built into the machinery of organizations like the United Nations. Even today, nearly two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the narrative of Israel as the worst human rights abuser on the planet, a country so bad that it alone deserves the type of punishment meted out to Apartheid South Africa, continues to form the basis of most of the discussion of the Middle East.

### **The Threat Continues**

The Soviet Union is no more and the Arab world remains rife with internal conflict, limiting the impact state actors have on the current conflict. Yet somehow The Threat has only grown to even more dangerous levels in the post-Cold-War world.

How did an era that promised to usher in peace in the Middle East instead led to so much misery, with potentially even more devastating results in the future? To answer this question, remember that:

- The propaganda seeds planted by this Soviet-Arab alliance continue to bear fruit today with a new alliance between militant Islam and the far Left picking up on the themes of Israeli villainy and Palestinian victimization
- New technologies (notably the Internet) provide ways for anti-Israel propagandists to transmit their message and coordinate strategy. Where once the apparatus of the state was needed to mount a global mis-information/propaganda campaign, today such a campaign can be waged by non-state actors working together in common cause
- Oil wealth continues to fuel the global propaganda campaign against Israel, marrying money and state resources to distributed and increasingly sophisticated ground-level infiltration and propagandizing
- Forty years of such infiltration and propaganda directed at global institutions like the United Nations, human rights NGOs like Amnesty International and institutions like the Mainline Protestant churches and universities have left these organizations unable to resist or counter a storyline that places Israel first and foremost in the pantheon of international villainy
- The message and goal of anti-Israel activists is as simple as it is clear: brand Israel as the worst human rights abuser on the planet, an "Apartheid State" unworthy of US support and admiration, and targeted for sanction and (eventually) destruction

One need only look around to see evidence of the mainstreaming of The Threat, including:

- Inroads made by this language of propaganda into human rights institutions, the media and mainstream political parties in the US and abroad

- The proliferation of organizations dedicated to defaming the Jewish state in every church and university in the nation
- The growth and expansion of Saudi-funded Middle East studies departments at places like Harvard and Georgetown, and their increasing effectiveness in propagating a propaganda vs. a scholarly message
- The language of The Threat wielded like a club every time there is a new explosion of violence in the Middle East.

Words precede action. And if false words can create the impression that Israel is no longer worthy of friendship (or is rather worthy of destruction) then action will follow that could include betrayal, attack or one following the other.

### **Can The Threat Be Defeated?**

Before The Threat can be defeated, it must first be engaged. And before it can be engaged, it must first be recognized as real.

Unfortunately, too many friends of Israel (Jews and non-Jews) are unwilling to face up to a threat that challenges all of their hopes and dreams of a peaceful Middle East, a Threat which demonstrates that the “law of the jungle” still reigns in international affairs.

Even those organizations founded to defend the Jewish state find The Threat difficult to fight against. Israel’s own public relations efforts have been lack-luster. US organizations founded before the 1973 Middle East war triggered a global propaganda campaign still see this new battle in the old terms of state-to-state conflict with few strategies in place regarding how to deal with a domestic propaganda war. Jews who came to consciousness after 1967 increasingly take the Jewish state’s continued existence for granted, with a younger generation getting more and more dis-interested in taking up the struggles their parents, grandparents (and in some cases) great grandparents fought.

We face the worst combination possible: a powerful enemy with simple goals and an easy-to-understand message that is willing to use any tactic, go to any length, to achieve its goal of breaking Israel off from crucial US support. And as a community, Diaspora Zionists have yet to engage in this new and highly dangerous battle.

An honest recognition of this reality is a good first step (but only a first step) to reversing a trend that, if not met, could lead to disaster.