Is anti-Semitism a serious threat to European stability?*

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Introduction

Jews will readily understand what is meant by anti-Semitism, but for the benefit of a general readership it may be useful to quote a few definitions.

The term was coined by Wilhelm Marr in 1879 to designate the then-current anti-Jewish campaigns in Europe, and came into general use to denote all forms of hostility manifested toward Jews throughout history. It is often qualified by an adjective denoting the specific cause, nature or rationale of a manifestation of anti-Jewish passion or action, e.g. economic anti-Semitism, social anti-Semitism.

In 1882, the Great Bruckhaus Lexikon published in Germany, defined an anti-Semite as 'someone who hates Jews, or objects to Judaism in general'. Later definitions broadened the view. For example, Jean Paul Sartre in 'Reflexions sur la question Juive', stated that:

anti-Semitism is not an opinion; it is a fulfilment of a psychological need, to emphasise one's superiority. The anti-Semite is a man, scared not of Jews, but of himself, his self-awareness, his freedom, the changes he might face, the world at large. He is a coward that would not admit his being one ... the Jew is only a pretext.¹

Professor Jacob Tour of Tel Aviv University defines it as:

a manipulation of traditional emotions against an unreal image, for political needs. Therefore it is not a genuine ideology, but a multi-faceted erzatz ideology, that may thus serve various political ideas and circles.

Anti-Semitic themes

Anti-Jewish propaganda contains a number of main themes, among them:
1. Defining Jews as belonging to an inferior race.
2. Denying the existence of a Jewish nation and its right to self determination.
3. Defining Jews as being either racist, anti-revolutionary, capitalist, imperialist or the prime source of subversion in the world.
4. Calling for armed struggle, Jihad or pogrom against the Jews as the answer to the problem raised by their existence.
5. Expressing support for anti-Jewish violence carried out by others.

Anti-Semitic activity may manifest itself in one or more of the following ways:
1. Political activity:
   - the dissemination of anti-Jewish propaganda in the form of pamphlets, leaflets and articles.
   - public meetings, promoting an anti-Jewish message.
   - rallies and demonstrations at which anti-Jewish slogans are carried or voiced.
2. Violent activity:
   - attacks on Jewish property and members of the Community,
   - assistance to others in carrying out such attacks.
3. Contacts:
   contacts with organisations holding similar views, or engaging in similar anti-Jewish activity in their home country, on an international level and/or in the Middle East.

The measurement of anti-Semitism

We categorise manifestations of all the above as 'incidents', and can analyse them according to the level and nature of the violence, or mode of distribution (if it is propaganda).

We need to have common criteria for describing the incident as anti-Semitic, and Jewish communities of the world recently settled on the following:

an anti-Semitic incident must by definition be politically rather than criminally orientated. The object of the incident must be to cause physical or psychological damage to the Jewish community and its members.2

2 The Project for the Study of Anti-Semitism, Tel Aviv University, November 1992.