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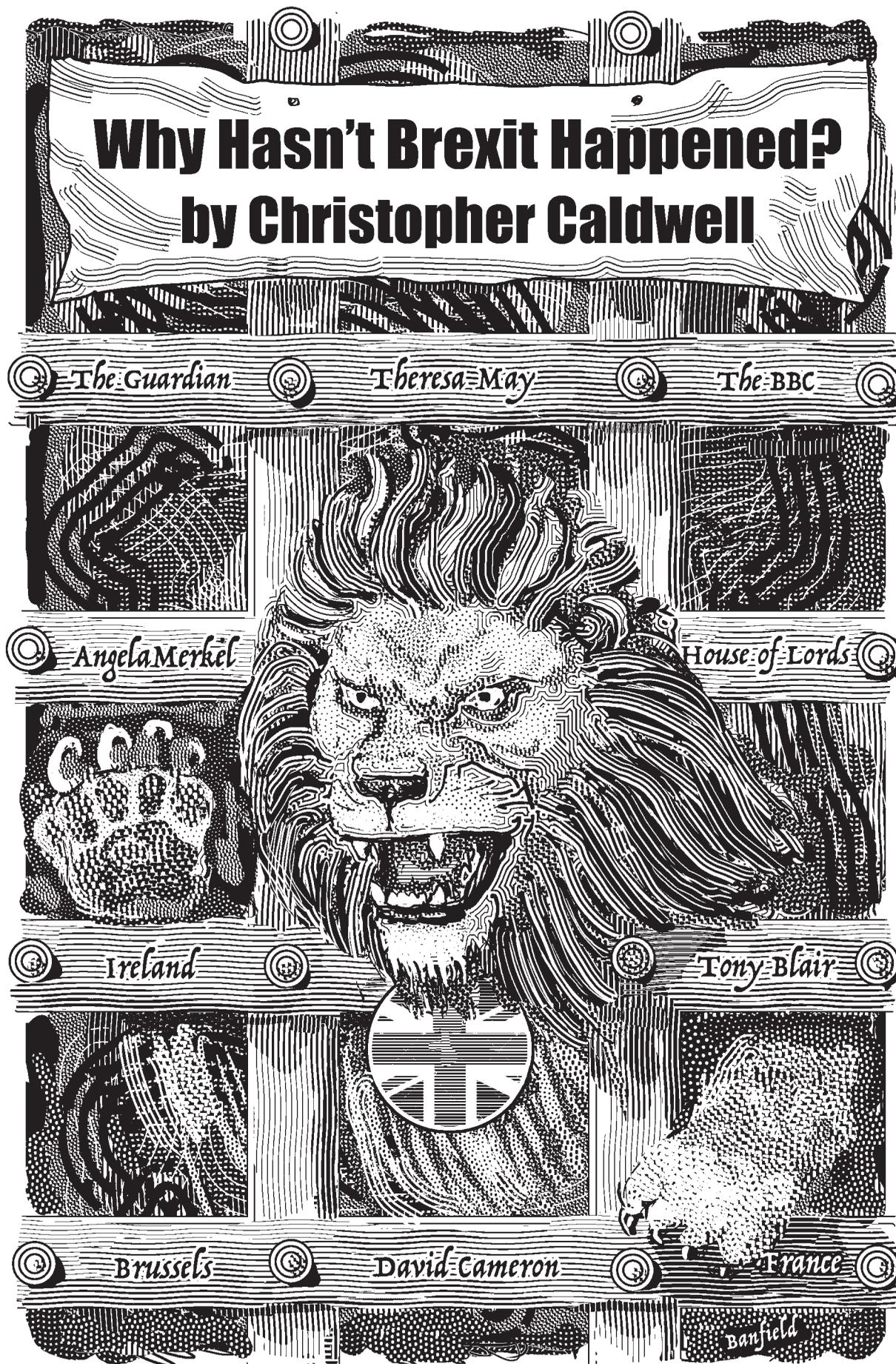
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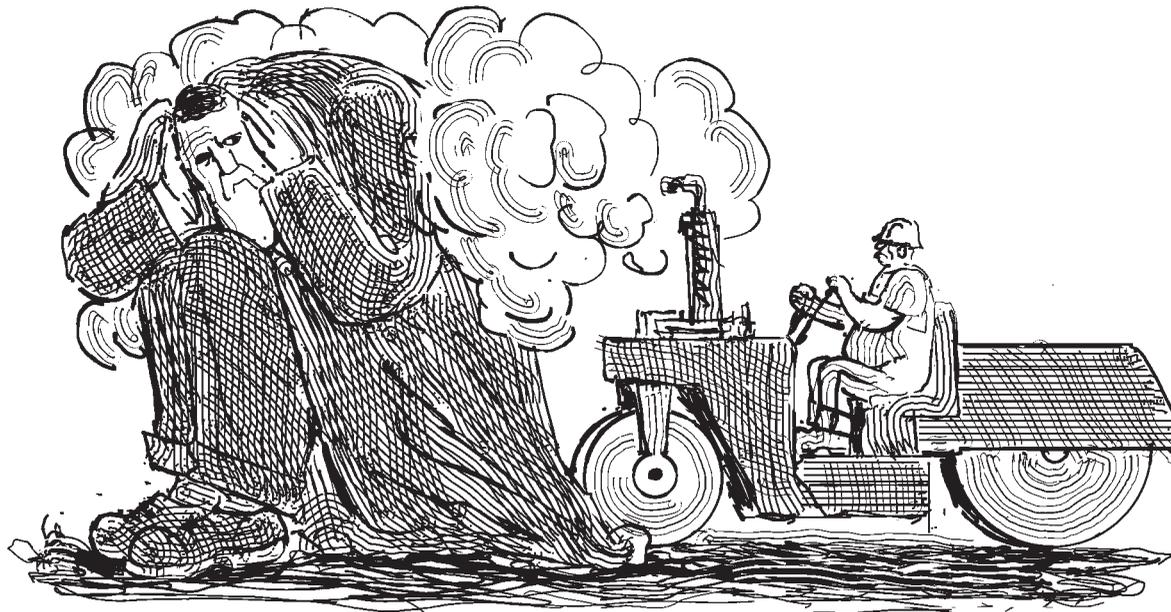
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Essay by William Voegeli

## THE CHOSEN AND THE WOKE



THE KNESSET, ISRAEL'S PARLIAMENT, passed a law last year declaring Israel "the national home of the Jewish people, in which it fulfills its natural, cultural, religious, and historical right to self-determination." One might suppose that this "Basic Law" (akin to a constitutional amendment) would be as contentious as the Vatican proclaiming itself Catholic.

To the contrary. Although the "nation-state law" changed no policies and affirmed a relationship between Jews and Israel that had been manifest since the country's founding in 1948, the legislation was exceptionally controversial. One of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's main political opponents, opposition leader Tzipi Livni, charged that its passage showed that "this government is racist." The leader of Israel's alliance of Arab political parties called it "a law of Jewish supremacy," while another Arab member of the Knesset described it as "the official beginning of fascism and apartheid."

The reaction in America was more temperate but still critical. The Anti-Defamation League lamented the law's "awkwardness and superfluity," worrying about its potential to "undermine Israel's cherished democratic character." Thirteen left-of-center Jewish organizations issued a letter claiming that the new law would "give constitutional protection to policies that could discriminate against minorities." One of the organizations, J Street

(the "home for pro-Israel, pro-peace Americans"), said that the Basic Law "sends a message to the 20 percent of Israelis who are not Jewish that they are, at best, second-class citizens in the land of their birth."

Netanyahu conceded nothing to these detractors:

We enshrined in law the basic principle of our existence. Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, that respects the individual rights of all its citizens. This is our state—the Jewish state. In recent years there have been some who have attempted to put this in doubt, to undercut the core of our being. Today we made it law: This is our nation, language, and flag.

So, the law was enacted in response to (unnamed) people who have cast doubt on Israel's identity as a Jewish state. How we got to the point where Israel's government felt it necessary to belabor the obvious, officially, is an interesting story—two stories, really, intertwined. The first is about a change in left-of-center thinking, observable around the world but especially significant in America, Israel's closest and most important ally. That change involves discarding a remedial mindset in favor of a prosecutorial one. Instead of solving problems, the Left wants to identify and berate villains. To be more precise, the new dispensation

holds that social problems cannot be understood as bad things that somehow happened, or bad conditions that obtain due to misunderstandings or unavoidable complexities. Rather, specific problems resulting from specific sins of commission and omission cannot be solved unless those sinners are identified, then forced to atone and change their ways.

The second story is about how Israel has, increasingly, become the object of this prosecutorial zeal. Susie Linfield, a journalism professor at New York University, makes it her subject in *The Lion's Den: Zionism and the Left from Hannah Arendt to Noam Chomsky*. (Benjamin Balint reviewed the book this year for *CRB Digital*.) Linfield is "grieved by the contemporary Left's blanket hatred of Israel," in particular its "startling ability to support regimes far more repressive and violent, and far less egalitarian and politically open, than Israel." Linfield's analysis makes clear that this animus cannot be explained as a reaction to particular Israeli policies regarding Palestinians, but makes sense only by realizing that many progressives "are repelled by the existence of Israel itself."

### We the People

WE CAN BEGIN TO TELL AND CONNECT these two stories with the help of *New York Times* columnist Max Fisher, who wrote that the nation-



state law, one small country's largely symbolic enactment, embodied a dilemma that is generating controversy around the world: which takes precedence, national identity or democracy? There is, he said, "a growing backlash to the idea that countries should privilege democracy" in favor of the demand that "identity will come first." Fisher characterized this trend as a reversal of the modern project, which favored both democracy and national self-determination, understood as "one nation for one people." If the two principles clashed, "an informal consensus" had always favored "softening" national identity for the sake of democracy, the more fundamental imperative. Israel's new Basic Law, he argued, was one of several signs that this consensus is unraveling.

Fisher is right to say that the nation-state law raises fundamental questions about how democracy and national identity intersect. We can proceed from the general issues to those specific to Israel by starting with Abraham Lincoln's famous definition of democracy: government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Notwithstanding the reverence in which this formulation is held, scrutiny of it leads directly to the problems Fisher identifies. Political scientist Margaret Canovan's *The People* (2005) showed how this deceptively simple word harbors several distinct concepts while giving rise to sharp disagreements. Arguments about national identity take up the question of *a* people, as when the Declaration of Independence asserts that it has become necessary "for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another."

Unlike the document's ensuing self-evident truths about "all men," this statement was more of a planted axiom. It takes for granted assent to the proposition that mankind is divided into peoples—that is, nations—and further assumes that individual peoples have the right to demand their own nation-states, which will possess "full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do." Benjamin Netanyahu's defense of Israel's nation-state law is a perfect expression of nationalism, as defined in historian Robert Wiebe's *Who We Are* (2001): "the desire among people who believe they share a common ancestry and a common destiny to live under their own government on land sacred to their history."

Populism, an especially assertive and adversarial commitment to democracy, concentrates on *the* people, championing them against those considered powerful or elite. As such, it can

serve the Left's purposes or the Right's. Democrat Bernie Sanders denouncing Wall Street and the One Percent is a populist, but so was Republican Spiro Agnew, Richard Nixon's vice president, who attacked "an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals." Sometimes, the desire to punch upward may be so powerful that it renders the Left-Right distinction inapplicable, as in the ungainly coalition government that emerged from Italy's 2018 elections.

A synthesis of nationalism and populism occurs when the people's central grievance against the powerful is that they are hostile to—or, at best, feckless in defense of—a particular nation-state that a particular people prizes as its manifestation and looks to as its protector. Christopher DeMuth recently discussed "Somewheres" versus "Anywheres" in these pages ("Trumpism, Nationalism, and Conservatism," Winter 2018/19). The former direct their populist anger against the latter, the "nation's political and business leaders," in the belief that they are "part of, and loyal to, an international elite with its own self-serving agenda."

The leaders' aversion to nationalism is not a populist canard. Before serving as deputy secretary in President Clinton's State Department, and then as president of the Brookings Institution for 15 years, Strobe Talbott worked for *Time* magazine. There, in 1992, he applauded the prospect that "all states will recognize a single, global authority" before the end of the 21st century, because "nationhood as we know it will be obsolete." And good riddance. Countries are "all artificial and temporary," he asserted, a form of association descended from, but fundamentally the same as, "a prehistoric band clustered around a fire beside a river in a valley," whose "members had a language, a set of supernatural beliefs and a repertoire of legends about their ancestors." In the same vein, political scientist Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania since 2004, has urged Americans to be loyal to "democratic humanism" rather than to "the United States or some other politically sovereign community."

The Somewheres' desire to assert and preserve their national identity does not, as far as it goes, conflict with democracy. Governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed should be at least as conducive as any other constitutional arrangement to upholding a nation's identity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Max Fisher's framework makes more sense when we allow for his stipulation that democracy means "equal participation for

all, including in defining the nation's character." Democracy, then, is not just one form of government but a fluid, provisional social order and its underlying egalitarian spirit. As Alexis de Tocqueville discerned, the democrat prizes equality above all else and considers inequality the gravest injustice. Progress means progress toward greater equality, yet each step in that direction reveals inequalities previously unnoticed or tolerated, which call out for still more extensive egalitarian reforms. Ever greater equality of rights and opportunity is only part of a never-ending quest for ever greater equality of conditions, participation, acceptance, dignity, and the capacity to define a nation's character.

Thus, it would be a mistake to treat nationalist populism as a new political force confronting a long-settled commitment to democracy. Always seeking and finding new dragons to slay, democratic egalitarianism is inherently protean. The nationalist challenge to democracy cannot be understood except as a response to the democratic challenge to nationalism.

#### Race to the Bottom

THE LONG-STANDING EGALITARIAN misgivings about nationhood have recently become more explicit and strident. As political scientist Joseph Cropsey discerned more than 50 years ago, liberals (in the modern, American, left-of-center sense of the term) have always viewed "the dividedness of men grouped according to their nations" as arbitrary and pernicious. Those committed to equality as the highest political good believe that the groups divided in this way can never be mutually respectful for long. Instead, us-and-them distinctions necessarily become invidious, leading to competition, strife, and conquest. As Strobe Talbott said of the small tribes that were modern nations' predecessors:

Eventually they forged primitive weapons and set off over the mountain, mumbling phrases that could be loosely translated as having something to do with "vital national interests" and "manifest destiny." When they reached the next valley, they massacred and enslaved some weaker band of people they found clustered around some smaller fire and thus became the world's first imperialists.

Egalitarianism's most recent iteration, the "Great Awakening," is "the rapidly changing political ideology of white liberals that is



remaking American politics,” in the words of Zach Goldberg, writing for *Tablet* magazine. A study of America’s white liberals, of course, will find them preoccupied with race relations, especially those between blacks and whites. The Great Awakening antedates Donald Trump’s 2016 election victory. Goldberg, a political science doctoral student at Georgia State University who examines polling data, reports that 25% of whites who self-identified as liberals in 2010 considered racial discrimination against blacks to be a “very serious” problem, virtually the same proportion as over the preceding 15 years. “By 2015, however, this figure had almost doubled to 47%, and then increased further to 58% in 2016.”

Part of this phenomenon’s explanation is the growing use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, which function as what Goldberg calls an “outrage feedback loop.” That is, it became clear that “race-related moral outrage stories”—such as the fatal shooting in 2014 of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri—drove up page-views on news and commentary websites. In turn, exposure to these stories “generated moral outrage among white liberal readers, who then fed that emotional response back into the sites, which catered to their appetites as consumers.”

The Woke’s righteous indignation is too gratifying for them to relinquish it out of deference to mere facts. Goldberg points out that an unarmed African-American male is about as likely to be killed by a police officer as to be struck by lightning. The *New York Times* devoted flood-the-zone coverage to the murder of seven-year-old Jazmine Barnes in December 2018, despite the fact that the shooting took place in Houston, 1,400 miles from Manhattan. Television networks and other national media also treated it as a matter of high urgency. Jazmine was black, and her mother told the police that she had been shot by a white man in a pickup truck. One week after the shooting, however, police arrested two black suspects, offering the theory that they mistook the car Jazmine was riding in for one occupied by rival gang members. The arrests immediately halted the gathering national crisis over a white-on-black hate-crime, rendering Jazmine’s murder another very sad local story, all the sadder for being unexceptional, and of little further interest to the *Times*. The newspaper’s ensuing cover-your-ass article on how trauma can impair eyewitnesses’ recollections did not examine the ways confirmation bias distorts journalists’ judgment.

Extrapolating from race relations, the Great Awakening is so strongly opposed to invidious distinctions in general as to have turned “other” into a verb, one that denotes and condemns a moral transgression. In 2016, for example, the *Huffington Post* castigated vice presidential candidate Mike Pence for “his long record of othering the [gay] community.” According to sociologist Yiannis Gabriel, “Othering is the process of casting a group, an individual or an object into the role of the ‘other’ and establishing one’s own identity through opposition to and, frequently, vilification of this Other.” Goldberg finds that white liberals are twice as enthused as white non-liberals (87% to 42%) about diversity, formulated in American National Election Studies surveys as the question of whether “having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in the United States makes this country a better place to live.” On this issue, blacks (54%) and Hispanics (46%) score much closer to non-lib-

A human grouping  
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makes sense.

eral whites, though we can be confident that liberals won’t hold such retrograde attitudes against them.

**Breeding Contempt**

ULTIMATELY, OF COURSE, A WORLD cleansed of other-ing must also renounce *us-ing*. Whether it’s a softball team or a nation, a human grouping to which everyone does or can belong is one to which nobody belongs in any way that matters or makes sense. No group can have an inside unless it also has an outside. The meaning and importance of being inside will, inevitably, turn on how those who *are* inside define and defend the boundaries that distinguish them from others.

The response to these conflicting imperatives is, unsurprisingly, incoherent. Goldberg finds that white liberals are the only group in the history of public opinion surveys to exhibit a “pro-outgroup bias,” a clear preference for non-whites over whites. He describes it as

a “very recent, and unprecedented, phenomenon.” This sounds like a confirmed sighting of “oikophobia,” philosopher Roger Scruton’s term to describe xenophobia’s opposite: fear and loathing of the close and familiar in favor of that which is unlike oneself.

Perhaps, however, white liberals’ aversion to whites is really just an aversion to whites who aren’t liberal. In that case, the pro-outgroup bias against whites in general would really be a pro-ingroup bias in favor of white liberals. A recent study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* found that after reading about white privilege, white liberals did not become more sympathetic to impoverished blacks, but did become notably *less* sympathetic to impoverished whites. Journalist Zaid Jilani speculates that “social liberals are internalizing white-privilege lessons in a way that flattens the image of whites, portraying all of them as inherently privileged. So if a white person is poor, it must be his or her own fault.” Of course, after November 2016 many oikophobic tirades held that lower-class whites were not merely losers but menaces. Essayist and editorial cartoonist Tim Kreider, for example, wrote that most Trump voters are “just evil” by virtue of “not much caring about other people’s suffering.”

Bear in mind that the Great Awakening demands diversity *and* inclusion. The two are reconcilable and even inseparable if we accept the premises spelled out by Cropsey: liberals are committed to the simultaneous cultivation of “idiosyncratic freedom” and the coalescence of social communities based on humans’ posited affinity for one another. Thus enlightened, “men would wish to benefit themselves only in ways that are beneficial or at least not harmful to others. In that state, men’s perfect integration into the community would be indistinguishable from their perfect freedom to do as they please.” The Woke, then, are not just Anywheres but also Everyones. The nurturing subdivisions of the human family that promote individual fulfillment and interpersonal harmony must be cultivated, while the divisive ones that result in othering, opposition, and even vilification must be eradicated.

The only legitimate othering takes place when, in pursuit of social justice, the Woke call out somebody on the wrong side of what they regard as the one truly valid division among humans, that between the Privileged and the Oppressed. The former need not have *personally* victimized or exploited the latter, or even said bad things or harbored bad thoughts about them. The wickedness of the Privileged encompasses benefiting from past oppressions, even those in the distant past, and complicity tolerating today’s unfair sys-

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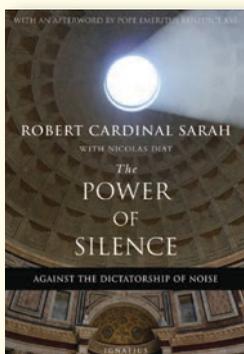
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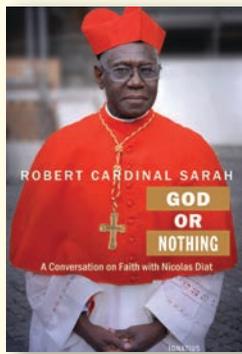
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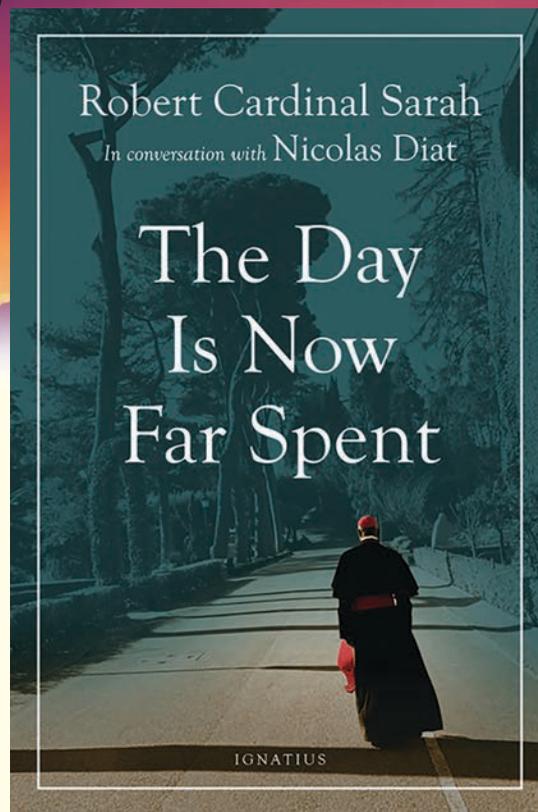
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tems that mock and thwart the aspirations of the Oppressed. So, for example, there is “Racism without Racists,” which sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva used as the title for a book of his in 2003. Such racism transpires when America’s whites engage in the “color-blind racism” that leads them to accept and perpetuate, rather than work to dismantle, the “structural” or “systemic” racism that oppresses blacks and other minority groups.

There could, conceivably, be a moral and political philosophy that subsumed every controversy into the relationship between the Privileged and the Oppressed, and yet also emphasized the importance of empirical rigor and intellectual humility when making sense of a complex world. Determining who is and isn’t oppressed, it would caution, is more often difficult than simple. It would further observe that inter-group differences in wealth, power, status, and education—a feature of every social order known to history and anthropology—are too numerous and varied for all of them to be reduced to a single, neat causal relationship.

The Great Awakening that we might have, however, is very different from the one that we do have. The Manichean one we do have stresses certitude and zeal while disdaining nuance and caution. People are either privileged or they’re victims. To suggest that not all victims are simply victims, or that not all their difficulties derive from being victimized, is to “blame the victim,” which is not just an intellectual error but a moral offense. Those who blame the victim further victimize that victim by reinforcing the structural oppression afflicting him.

The prominent writer Ta-Nehisi Coates denies, for example, that such dysfunctional behaviors as teenage pregnancy, drug use, dropping out of school, or declining to find and hold a job have any relationship to high poverty and crime rates in predominantly black areas. Rather, he insists, the root cause of all these behaviors and problems is white supremacy, and we have no reason or right to expect that any of them will change until we eradicate every aspect of white supremacy. To economist Glenn Loury, this framing of the issue is “an absurdity.” (Both Coates and Loury are black.) “You’re telling me that people have to run up and down the street, firing guns out of windows and killing their brethren because we didn’t get reparations for slavery handed over to you yet?” More generally, Loury rejects the idea that past, present, or structural discrimination “explains or somehow excuses or cancels out the moral judgment that I would otherwise bring to bear against any other community.”

As Loury makes clear, the last full measure of oppression consists in having the Woke absolve you of moral responsibility, culminating in their determination that you are incapable of moral agency. Whatever the Oppressed do or don’t do is a function of what has been done to them by their oppressors. Such solicitude is indistinguishable from condescension and ultimately contempt, a fact not lost on some objects of that solicitude. Since 1994 the National Opinion Research Center’s General Social Survey has asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement: “Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.” Dissecting the results, Goldberg shows that white liberals were only half as likely as blacks to reject that proposition in 1994. By 2016, after white liberals’ opposition to that statement had increased and blacks’ opposition to it had declined, the former were half-again as likely as the latter to disagree with it. That is, white liberals have come to believe that blacks don’t fully appreciate how burdened they are by white racism.

#### Zionism and Racism

**T**HE GREAT AWOKENING’S DEFINING features, then, include: its roots in the logic of left-liberalism; its reduction of any and every complex sociopolitical reality to designated oppressors’ abuse of designated victims; its preoccupation, in particular, with the plight of American blacks; and its use of that plight as a template for all kinds of oppression, which effectively means for all clashes of political interest or opinion. These qualities explain how some can denounce as racist and fascist a law affirming that the world’s only Jewish nation-state is a Jewish nation-state. In the Great Awakening, to quote Goldberg again:

the same empathic outrage over the bigoted persecution by the “privileged” against the vulnerable...is extended out to the international arena where Israel is a fixture of every moral drama. A white supremacist America holds people of color down and keeps the door shut for others, while a “Zionist supremacist” Israel behaves in much the same way toward its minorities of color.

Goldberg points out that, from the time when public opinion surveys started asking the question in 1978, white liberals were more sympathetic to Israel than to the Pal-

estinians...until 2016, after which they have consistently regarded Palestinians as the aggrieved party in this dispute.

These trends started long before the polling question’s first appearance. Zionism was just one of 19th-century Europe’s nationalist movements. Some of them, as in Italy and Germany, resulted in new nation-states being formed by aggregating many smaller, previously independent political entities. Others worked by disaggregation, as when the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I begat some central European states and augmented the territory of others. The Zionist movement was realized, still later, under extraordinary circumstances. Founded three years after the end of World War II, Israel was an object of profound sympathy due to widespread horror and shame about the Holocaust. With images of Auschwitz in the world’s mind, it would have been grotesque to admonish Jews, in or out of Palestine, to check their privilege.

It turned out, however, that even the Holocaust established Jewish victimhood only temporarily. Among the Woke, writes Goldberg, “Jews are perceived to be privileged—at least in comparison to other historically victimized groups.”

Having made a full recovery from the Holocaust, Jews are no longer the downtrodden collective that white liberals can readily sympathize with. Other groups lower on the privilege hierarchy and less tainted by association with whiteness now have priority.

In particular, these victimier victims have come to include the Palestinians. In the belief that Palestinians have, as a rule, darker complexions than Israel’s Ashkenazim (Jews whose ancestors lived in Europe for centuries), the Woke apply the implicit rule of their privilege hierarchy, which holds that melanin is the most reliable proxy for moral worth.

The New Left and Third World liberation movements, interconnected ideologically and operationally, began to denounce Israel’s treatment of Palestine’s Arabs in the 1960s. In 1967 the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), originator of the Black Power movement, published a section on “The Palestine Problem” in its newsletter, with a cartoon implying Israel or perhaps Jews in general oppressed both blacks and Arabs. When Jewish groups withdrew support from the SNCC in response, the SNCC’s next newsletter warned, “Don’t get caught on the wrong side of the revolution.”



In 1975 a coalition of Communist and Third World countries passed a United Nations resolution declaring Zionism to be “a form of racism and racial discrimination.” In a speech to the General Assembly, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, denounced “this obscenity.” The U.N. repealed the resolution in 1991, but the seeds it planted are still bearing poisonous fruit. To demonstrate the absurdity of the 1975 resolution Moynihan argued that its true import was that “Zionism is a form of Nazism.” This exact formulation, however, has since become a staple of anti-Israel rhetoric. Earlier this year, Al Jazeera aired a documentary that claimed, “Israel is the biggest winner from the Holocaust, and it uses the same Nazi justifications as a launching pad for the racial cleansing and annihilation of the Palestinians.” After the program elicited outrage, Al Jazeera pulled it, saying it violated the network’s editorial standards.

Equally venomous and unhinged arguments, however, can lead to a long, comfortable career in American higher education. Judith Butler, an academic superstar, told an interviewer in 2010 that Israelis carried out military actions with the mindset that “any and all Palestinian lives that are killed or injured are understood no longer to be lives,

no longer understood to be living, no longer understood even to be human in a recognizable sense.” Instead, Palestinians’ deaths in military confrontations leave Israelis “thrilled, because they think their safety and well-being and happiness are being purchased, are being achieved through this destruction.” In *Visual Occupations* (2015), UCLA literature and gender studies professor Gil Hochberg described posters in Gaza and the West Bank honoring those Palestinians who had died carrying out suicide bombings against Israelis as “a defiant practice of anticolonial national remembering.” Jasbir Puar, a women’s studies professor at Rutgers University, gave a talk at Vassar College in 2016 in which she claimed that Israel killed Palestinians to harvest their organs, conducted medical experiments on Palestinian children, and intentionally bombed hospitals and nursing homes. When her accusations were subsequently challenged, she threatened to sue anyone who made an audio recording of her lecture available to the public.

Granted, these are the words of extremists...but when extremists become more extreme, moderates often respond by becoming less moderate, not more. The academy’s multiculturalist vanguard, in particular, has helped shape mainstream liberal rhetoric and shifted its “Overton window,” the boundary

dividing thinkable from unthinkable policy options. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, a candidate for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, proclaims that the future is intersectional (that is, one in which prejudices against the oppressed overlap and compound one another).

If reparations for slavery and the abolition of private health insurance are now on the list of things we need to discuss, there’s no reason to assume that terminating America’s special relationship with Israel is off it. Another Democratic presidential candidate, former U.S. Representative Beto O’Rourke of Texas, has called Benjamin Netanyahu a “racist” who does not represent “the true will of the Israeli people,” a doubtful assessment of a politician who recently became the longest-serving prime minister in his country’s 71-year history. Peter Beinart—*Atlantic* columnist, former *New Republic* editor, and a self-described proponent of “liberal Zionism” who faults Israel’s dealings with Palestinians for failing to live up to the ideals of “human rights, equal citizenship, and territorial compromise”—also considers Netanyahu a racist, but one who reflects Israelis’ true will quite accurately. In a column for the *Forward*, Beinart deplored the results of Israel’s April 2019 elections, which were inconclusive in the crucial respects (there

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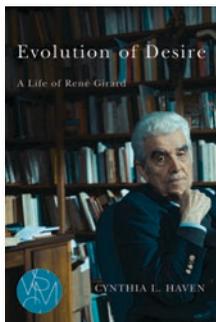
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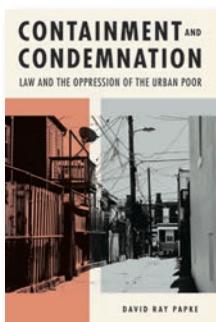


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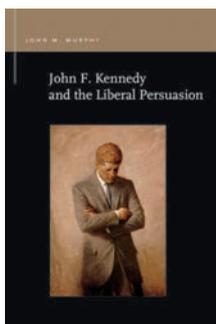
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will be new elections in September) but did mark a clear defeat for what remains of that country's Left. The Labor Party, in particular, which was dominant during Israel's first decades, received 4.4% of the popular vote, its contingent in the 120-member Knesset falling from 19 to six.

### Wokeness Distilled

**I**N A NATION THAT HAS BEEN AT WAR, HOT or cold, for its entire history, every other political issue is subordinate to national security. Israeli leftists, then, are doves who favor taking greater "risks for peace." In Beinart's words, they want a government that will end the growth of Israeli settlements in West Bank territories under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction, "disband the system of institutionalized racism it has established in the West Bank," and make "a public...commitment to negotiate a viable Palestinian state." The most recent elections made clear, however, that Israel's electorate is decidedly opposed to that agenda and its premises.

Because most Israelis are comfortable with the status quo, Beinart argues, they will elect doves over hawks only if Americans and Palestinians take steps to "make them uncomfortable." "I hope that demand is made non-violently and with love," he writes, a formulation that implicitly encourages a third intifada. The second, from 2000 to 2005, "traumatized and embittered Israeli Jews," according to Beinart, a result we might have expected after Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine carried out 141 car and suicide bombings, the most lethal of them on city buses, in discos and restaurants, and during a Passover seder in a hotel.

Conversely, the first intifada, which lasted from 1987 to 1993, encourages Beinart, since he believes it led to Israel's engagement in the Oslo peace process. "When Palestinians rise up again—hopefully non-violently, as they mostly did in the first intifada—and raise the cost of occupation again, Israeli politics will change again." Apart from the Palestinians' 3,600 Molotov cocktail attacks, 100 hand grenade attacks, and 600 assaults with guns or explosives, which killed 27 Israeli soldiers and civilians and injured 3,100 more; the death of 1,100 Palestinians in clashes with the Israeli Defense Forces; and the death of a larger number of Palestinians who were killed by other Palestinians on the suspicion (or pretext) of collaborating with Israel, Beinart's characterization of the loving first intifada is, hopefully, mostly accurate.

Johns Hopkins University political scientist Michael Mandelbaum has an account

of the persistent strife between Israel and the Palestinians that is plausible rather than tortured. Responsibility for failing to secure peace, 25 years after the Oslo peace process began, "belongs to the Palestinians," he writes. Hamas, which has controlled Gaza since 2005, "says explicitly that it will never accept Jewish sovereignty in the Middle East and devotes its resources not to promoting the welfare of those it governs but to terrorism against Israel." The Palestinian Authority, in control of the West Bank, is "putatively moderate" by comparison, yet has "refused all offers to settle the conflict, which have included substantial territorial concessions, that Israeli governments have made."

It has never put forward a counteroffer of its own or indicated the kind of settlement it envisions. It has done nothing to build the institutions of statehood other than deploying multiple police forces that repress political opposition. It has generated vile anti-Jewish propaganda that harks back to Europe in the 1930s and has sponsored the murder of Jews by publicly praising and paying the murderers.

"I wish my brethren in the Jewish state were angelic creatures whose consciences alone could move them to stop oppressing millions of their fellow human beings," Beinart writes. The idea that those designated as oppressors commit their oppressions because they are morally deficient, rather than in response to complex and often harrowing political dilemmas, is wokeness distilled. In this respect, too, the Great Awakening radicalizes notions that have long been integral to left-liberalism, in particular "the dictum that trust edifies and absolute trust edifies absolutely," to quote Cropsey again.

The Woke interpretation, then, is the opposite of Mandelbaum's: responsibility for the hostile relations between Israel and the Palestinians belongs to Israel. Period. Palestinian acts of violence go unmentioned or, if acknowledged, are treated as responses to Israeli actions. *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age* (2015), coauthored by an anthropologist and a communications scholar, describes the second intifada as "a period characterized by a heavily militarized Israeli response to mass demonstrations across the occupied territories, backed by an Israeli public disenchanted by the collapse of the Oslo process."

Israel's location on the privilege hierarchy is so determinative that even its victories on the Great Awakening scorecard register as defeats. Israel is notably tolerant regarding sexu-

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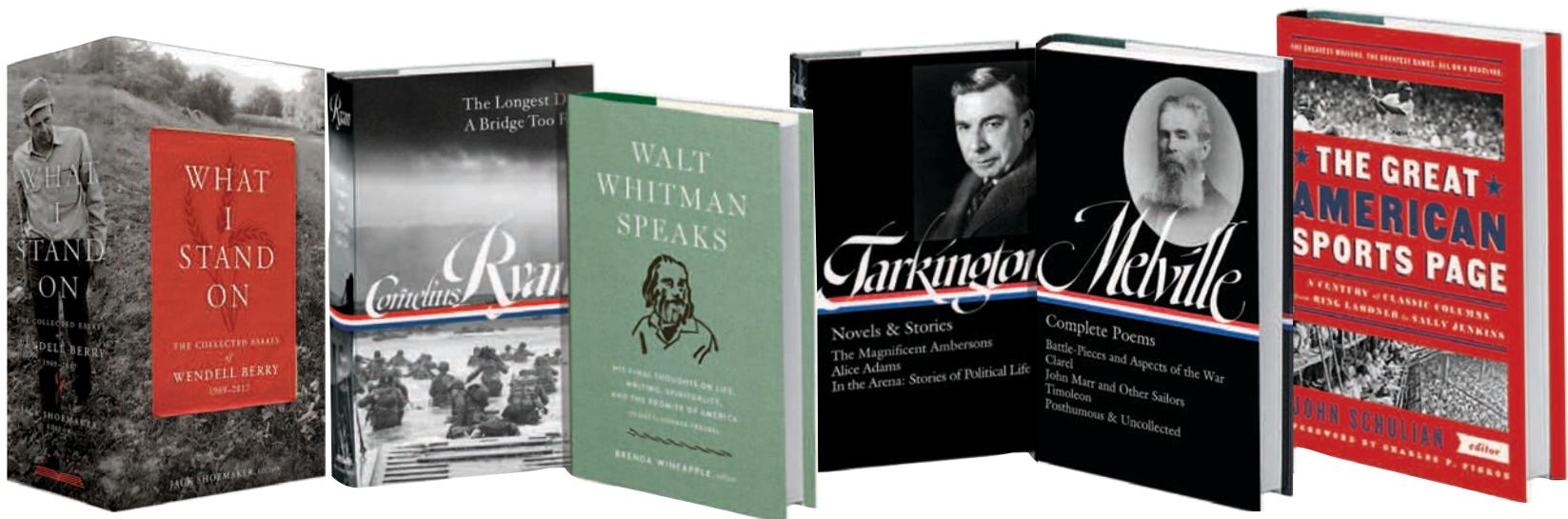
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al orientation, especially in comparison to the rest of the Middle East, where the treatment of gays ranges from disapproving to barbaric. Benjamin Netanyahu has had the effrontery to point this out, telling the U.S. Congress in 2011 that the Middle East is “a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted.” Sarah Schulman, a City University of New York humanities professor, dismisses such rhetoric as “pinkwashing”—a “public relations tool” and “deliberate strategy to conceal the continuing violations of Palestinians’ human rights behind an image of modernity signified by Israeli gay life.”

### No Place Like Home

**B**ILLIONS OF PIXELS HAVE GIVEN THEIR lives to prolong the debate over whether Israeli-Palestinian hostilities should conclude with a “two-state solution” or a “one-state solution.” That is, will there be a newly created Palestinian state sharing a negotiated border with Israel, or a binational state wherein Jews and Palestinians are fellow citizens? Less attention has been paid to the question of whether, and under what circumstances, either of these options amounts to a *solution*, as opposed to an arrangement that recasts but does not settle the tensions between the two peoples.

In the Woke framework, Israel is the independent variable and the Palestinians the dependent one, which places the burden on Israel to determine both its own policies and the course to be taken by the Palestinians, who are assumed able to react but not initiate. But Israel’s security depends on its leaders making the opposite assumption: that Palestinians can choose, and the choices they’ve made reflect their true intentions. It is often said that the Palestinians have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity, which treats the failure to get a state of their own as the result of inept political leadership. But if Palestinians are more determined to drive Jews out of Israel than to achieve statehood, then the opportunities—as early as the recommendation by Great Britain’s Peel Commission in 1937 for an Arab state occupying 80% of the

Palestine Mandate territory, and as recent as the 2008 offer by then-Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak of a detailed map that met every condition Palestinian negotiators had identified as vital to establishing their own new state—haven’t been “missed.” They’ve been rejected by people aiming at a fundamentally different resolution.

Absent an unmistakable, binding Palestinian commitment to share peaceably with Jews the land they have fought over for nearly a century, no “solution” will actually solve anything. For Israel to submit to a two-state solution, in the face of the Palestinian and American pressure Peter Beinart calls for, would amount to a choice of protracted national suicide. Israel would acquiesce in the creation of an adjacent sovereign state whose

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animating principle was Israel’s destruction. The one-state solution, where Israel would be absorbed into a new nation-state where Jews are a minority and their implacable enemies a majority, differs only by accelerating the suicide timetable.

The unyielding policy pursued by Benjamin Netanyahu since he returned to power in 2009 reflects the chastened, unsentimental view that unless and until it has a negotiating adversary that will take “yes” for an answer, Israel is wasting its time offering concessions and probing for possible areas of agreement. Golda Meir, prime minister from 1969 to 1974, took the position that Israel will not die so that the world will speak well of it. Netanyahu is prepared for many to speak ill of him and his country while he embraces what he considers the least bad option when two adversaries are besieging each oth-

er: be the side that continues the siege one day longer than its enemy. Though it cannot be known whether or how Netanyahu’s approach will ultimately fare, astute Palestinians have little reason to think that time is on their side as it becomes clear that a growing part of the Arab world is not. Over the past decade, Israel has strengthened its ties to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among other countries, while the Palestinians have strengthened theirs to the Modern Language Association. The resulting correlation of forces has been to Israel’s advantage.

But the success of Netanyahu’s approach is not assured. If: a) the Democratic Party’s Woke wing becomes dominant and b) succeeds in electing a Woke Democratic president and Congress, which c) uses American economic, military, and diplomatic leverage to d) force Israel to bet its survival on the proposition that high-minded, generous, and unilateral concessions will secure a just and lasting peace by summoning the better angels of Palestinians’ nature; then e) Israel may yet die so that Peter Beinart and J Street can speak well of it.

Americans have more pressing reasons to reject the Great Awakening than Israel’s national security, but none more clarifying. The case of Israel demonstrates that national identity is less a threat to democracy than a prerequisite for it. As the Hoover Institution’s Peter Berkowitz wrote after the passage of the nation-state law, “Since the largest viable political unit to which citizens can plausibly consent—even tacitly—is a state characterized by shared traditions, language, and political hopes, the modern tradition of freedom reinforces the case for nationalism.” The future of Israel, America, and other nations will be shaped by the contest between the Great Awakening and Somewhereism. If the latter prevails, it will be because national majorities around the world come to feel that “[t]his is our nation, language, and flag,” is not just a legitimate thing for an Israeli prime minister to say, but also for patriotic citizens of any decent country to believe.

*William Voegeli is senior editor of the Claremont Review of Books.*

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