

Anti-Semitism is not the same as Islamophobia

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The Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) of the Technical University in Berlin has scheduled a conference on December 8 titled “The concept of the enemy Muslim – concept of the enemy Jew.” In publicity for this conference the ZfA writes that the “paradigm” of accusations against Muslims is known from “the history of anti-Semitism.”

It seems that the organizers feel there is a moral equivalence between garden-variety prejudice (portrayed as “Islamophobia”) and anti-Semitism. This is a dangerous course, particularly in Germany, which saw the quintessential manifestation of anti-Semitism in modern times.

Quite aside from the fact that Judaism embraces both a race and a religion, whereas Islam is strictly a religion, anti-Semitism is different than other forms of prejudice or racism. Whereas the racist view of blacks, for example, holds that they are “below” whites, anti-Semites think Jews are planning to rule the world. The Israel Lobby by American academics John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt is just one example of this viewpoint. Anti-Semitism was the motif for the Holocaust.

Those unprecedented crimes combined religious Jew-hatred, quasi-scientific racial theories, and modern anti-Semitism in all its forms, including a comprehensive worldview. It is the anti-Semitic worldview that distinguishes anti-Semitism from racism. This irrationality on a global scale is hardly new. As early as 1543, Martin Luther blamed the Jews for almost every evil on earth. Later, during the early 20th century, The Protocols of the Elders of Zion appeared. This poor Russian

forgery had a significant impact on German and European thought, and is now a hot item in the Muslim world. In it, Jews are not portrayed as second-class human beings, as in other racist thinking. On the contrary, they are seen as would-be lords of the world – an evil, unseen power behind everything.

The Protocols contend that Jews run the media, organize wars and establish or control national financial systems. One of its more overtly bizarre claims is that Jews organize the construction of subways (which were novelties in New York or London at that time) in order to literally undermine societies. No other group of people has ever been blamed for such a welter of “evils” – capitalism, communism, liberalism and humanism. None of these anti-Semitic accusations are used against Muslims today. In fact, Islamic terrorists use these very canards in an attempt to justify their anti-Jewish actions.

RACISM HAS a rational dimension; its use to justify exploitation is one central purpose. Anti-Semitism, with its irrational, implacably genocidal dimension, is totally different. Furthermore, there are some Islamicists who openly advocate the takeover of Europe, the West and the world. The nonsense in the Protocols notwithstanding, the Jews have never had or claimed such a goal.

To equate anti-Semitism with racism, let alone to try and draw a parallel with the term Islamophobia (a word invented by the Islamic Republic of Iran), is therefore dangerous. It has nothing to do with scholarly research, nor with an accurate examination of the real and significant threats posed by Islamic Jihad. A center for the study of anti-Semitism should be aware of these facts, and not equate anti-Semitism with Islamophobia or other forms of prejudice.

That kind of postmodern relativist philosophy is just another way of refusing to research anti-Semitism as a phenomenon sui

generis. The Center for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) and its director Prof. Wolfgang Benz, if they really believe Muslims in contemporary Germany are threatened like the Jews were, are badly misinformed. If the ZfA equates anti-Semitism with criticism of Islamic Jihad, this would signal the end of serious research on either subject at that center.

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