

WEEKLY PDF DIGEST 16 JUNE 2023

EDITOR'S LETTER

This week in *Mosaic*

Jonathan Silver looks back at the week

RESPONSES



Anti-Modern Anti-Semitism

The cultural chaos of the current era seems to map perfectly onto the anxieties of the 19th century. The same goes for today's flavor of anti-Semitism.

OBSERVATIONS



Podcast: Eric Cohen on the Questions Graduating Jews and Their Parents Must Confront

The Tikvah CEO addresses the practical and ideological challenges facing Jewish daughters and sons—and mothers and fathers—today.

FROM THE ARCHIVE



Missing Charles Krauthammer

A posthumous collection edited by his son Daniel clarifies the great columnist's legacy to American, and to Jewish, discourse.

+ The best of the editors' picks of the week

Dear friends,

Anti-modern anti-Semitism

Our June essay by Tamara Berens on far-right anti-Semitism has generated a tremendous amount of interest and discussion, and first up among Berens's respondents in *Mosaic* is the social critic Tara Isabella Burton. Substantiating the verse from Ecclesiastes that there's nothing new under the sun, Burton offers some cultural and historical perspective to the intellectual tendencies that Berens analyzes by bringing us back to the long 19th century, when the organization of politics against the Jews took remarkably similar forms to the ones that we can see today.

Jewish questions for Jewish graduates

This week, in lieu of our usual podcast conversation, we broadcast instead a speech that was offered up to Jewish high school and college graduates across the United States by *Mosaic*'s publisher Eric Cohen, also Tikvah's CEO.

In the fall of 2021, four Jewish women—Carolyn Rowan, Liz Lange, Nina Davidson, and Rebecca Sugar—came together to create an organization for parents grappling with the challenges of raising committed Jewish children in today's confusing and contentious cultural environment. The Jewish Parents Forum organizes events for parents to get to know one another and to learn how to address the practical challenges facing Jewish mothers and fathers today, from the mainstreaming of anti-Semitism to identity politics to vociferous anti-Zionism to what to do about social media and phones.

This spring, the Jewish Parents Forum invited Cohen to deliver a graduation address on these themes for students in Tikvah's education programs. In that speech, he raises questions that all American Jews are now confronted with—questions that are also those that all Jews at all times must ask and answer.

Remembering Charles Krauthammer

This Wednesday is the fifth anniversary of the passing of Charles Krauthammer, one of the great interpreters of news and public affairs. Reviewing Krauthammer's posthumously published collection of essays, Terry Teachout, the beloved critic who himself passed away in 2022, wrote that "it was [Krauthammer's] genius to recognize what in a saner world would have been obvious, and (just as important) to express it with shining clarity." We revisit Teachout's tribute to Krauthammer in our archive pick this week.

If you enjoy that piece, I also hosted a podcast interview with Krauthammer's son, Daniel, and together we spoke about his father's Jewish legacy.

Preview: a discussion with Douglas Murray, Samuel Goldman, and Tamara Berens

If you're a *Mosaic* subscriber, hold Thursday, June 29 at 12:00 Eastern on your calendar. That's when we'll host a live event, over Zoom, with the writers Douglas Murray and Samuel Goldman to discuss Tamara Berens's essay on anti-Semitism. We'll send out additional information next week. This event is open exclusively for *Mosaic* subscribers; if you're not yet a part of our community, join us by subscribing on our website.

With every good wish,

Jonathan Silver

Editor, *Mosaic*

Warren R. Stern Senior Fellow of Jewish Civilization



A painted figure group of a poor Jew whispering to a wealthy merchant, made in Germany ca 1900. *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, Gift of the Katz Family.*

TARA ISABELLA
BURTON

JUNE 15, 2023

About the author

Tara Isabella Burton is the author of *Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World* and the forthcoming *Self-Made: Creating Our Identities from Da Vinci to the Kardashians*. Her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Granta*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Anti-Modern Anti-Semitism

The cultural chaos of the current era seems to map perfectly onto the anxieties of the 19th century. The same goes for today’s flavor of anti-Semitism.

Back in 2017, when Donald Trump was newly inaugurated to the American presidency, and what was then known as the alt-right was riding its brief Internet-fueled period of chaotic cultural ascendancy, some of the right’s most esoteric and extreme thinkers began to tip their intellectual hand. Most prominent among them—at least in the United States—was Steve Bannon, at one time Trump’s ideological right-hand-man, who in a February 2017 speech to the Vatican made headlines by alluding to one of the 20th century’s most controversial thinkers, the Italian mystic, occultist, and self-proclaimed superfascist Julius Evola. At surface-level, it was an offhand reference—Bannon was describing Alexander Dugin, a similarly occult-minded Russian philosopher whose relationship with Vladimir Putin was sometimes compared to Bannon’s own with Trump. But to those attuned to the history of the mystic 19th-century movement known as Traditionalism, it was a revelatory dog-whistle, perhaps even a key to Bannon’s whole ideology. Like many of the figures central to the movements known as “neo-reactionary,” “alt-right,” and more recently, the “New Right,” including the British philosopher Nick Land, and the pseudonymous, improbably ubiquitous Twitter author known as Bronze Age Pervert, Bannon has a well-documented interest in Western esotericism, and in particular the sort of Traditionalism espoused by Evola.

This Traditionalism was deeply rooted in the tensions of the 19th century. Briefly summarized, it involves a belief in the transmission of a secret spiritual wisdom to chosen initiates—a wisdom underpinning the world’s more seemingly accessible organized religions. As liberal democracy, political equality, and industrial urbanization transformed the European landscape, those most ill-at-ease in the changing social order often sought refuge in an atavistic conception of the imagined past, in visions of biological rootedness inextricable from *Volk* mythology and “national epic,” in visions of (what they saw to be) pre-Christian or pagan mythologies that celebrated natural and spiritual hierarchies. Such visions centered around the person of a heroic (and usual Aryan) warrior whose strength and inborn position in the dominance hierarchy would be a vital counterweight to the faceless throngs of the modern urban crowd, in which everybody and every community is identical, exchangeable, and indistinguishable.

And, as Tamara Berens’s recent *Mosaic* essay, “From Coy to Goy,” makes clear, this ideology had both an implicit and explicit villain: the Jew. The Jew was coded as the “rootless cosmopolitan,” the disloyal outsider who controlled not things-in-themselves—not land, not rivers, not farms, not even, as John Ganz notes in his recent excellent essay on reactionary modernism, machinery—but instead only something magical and disembodied: capital itself. The Jew was in this schema the ultimate modern man, whose trade was not in the earth, or indeed in anything material, but rather in the realm of speculation: in money, in ideals. And so the Jew became the scapegoat for a century’s worth of frustration with Enlightenment modernity, with democracy, and with what was seen as a society uprooted.

For denizens of the long 19th century, the name historians give to the period running from the French revolution to the outbreak of World War I, the “Jewish question” was inextricable from these fomenting problems of both national identity and spiritual alienation. With the 1789 publication of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the French document that encoded the “citizen” as a human being whose rights were founded not in blood or birth but in participation in civil society, the figure of the Jewish person was culturally understood as being the primary beneficiary, if not the outright manufacturer, of this new post-Enlightenment age. To quote a character in the French novelist Honoré de Balzac’s *Treatise on Elegant Living*, “the natural son of a millionaire bath attendant and a man of talent have the same rights as the son of a count.” Still, the Jew was associated with alienation: with the invisible strings of money and capital, with “citizenship” and other intellectualized forms of political belonging, with urbanization and industrialization and life lived, in this new modern age, without the old need for physical or martial strength.

Over the same period, the movement now known as the Counter-Enlightenment had a very different attitude towards Jews; the Romantics and reactionaries and radicals who comprised it used the figure of the Jew as a convenient opponent for their own self-understanding. The idealized

man of the *Volk* lived by his strength, not by his wits. He did not buy what his family might need; he made it. He worked his own land, onto which he had been born, and he belonged to it by something more mystical and primal than the social contract. Though nominally Christian, his self-understanding was rooted in the specific pagan stories of his particular village. (Think Richard Wagner, the Brothers Grimm, and ultimately Nietzsche and then Evola.) Enlightenment anti-Semitism, in other words, was inextricably bound up with a counterweight, a distinctly modern anti-modernity—a fetishization of a pre-capitalist, pre-industrial lost age of belonging and spiritual serenity. Or, as Evola himself titled his 1934 manifesto, a *Revolt Against the Modern World*. At its most extreme, these Counter-Enlightenment movements even turned their ire on Christianity, which they saw as inextricably tainted by the distinctly Jewish obsession with equality and democracy at the expense of natural hierarchy. Thus does Evola, in his 1927 *Pagan Imperialism*, declare that “Christianity is at the root of the evil that has corrupted the West.”

In more than a few regards, the cultural chaos of our own era—its decadence, its spiritual restlessness, its pursuit of transgression for transgression’s sake—seems to map perfectly onto the anxieties of the 19th century. And the anti-Semitism of today’s far right is no less deeply rooted in a neo-pagan obsession with rootedness than that of their Wagnerian forebears. There are of course, as Berens notes, the obvious examples: neo-Nazi groups like the Wolves of Vinland that explicitly celebrated their pagan forebears. But then, she argues, it is with Christian nationalism, rather than modern paganism, that contemporary anti-Enlightenment anti-Semitism finds its natural home.

I’m less sure. Certainly, when it comes to the official stated affiliations of many of today’s most prominent and vocal anti-Semites—from Kanye West to Marjorie Taylor Greene—this is true. And the most explicit pagan white nationalists have since the 2017 Charlottesville attacks largely receded from public view. But, in the realm of today’s “redpilled” Internet culture, religious identification is perhaps a far more slippery proposition than once it was. And what I call Nietzschean pagan atavism—involving an obsession with secret wisdom, with primal and supposedly evolutionary dominance hierarchies, with physical strength and paleo diets as integral to a revived heroic masculinity, and with a shuddering disgust at all things coded as effeminate and, inevitably, as “Jewish” (soy, for instance, or electric rather than gas stovetop burners)—is an integral part of the implicit ideology and metaphysics of today’s far right. Wokeness—the new target for sometimes reasonable anxieties about equality, democracy, and urbanization—is to today’s pagan atavists what Judeo-Christianity and its inherent “slave morality” were to Nietzsche and Evola. And the language of culture-war-as-cosmic-battle can be found in several of today’s most prominent right-wing thinkers, including Jordan Peterson and Peter Thiel, both of whom profess Christian affiliation while hoping that Christianity can be instrumental in the restoration of pre-modern virtues.

Consider, for example, a recent speech delivered by Peter Thiel this spring at a gala dinner for the *New Criterion*: “on a deeper level,” Thiel says, “the multicultural agenda is very entangled with the Judeo-Christian tradition. . . . That tradition is strongly identified with the side of the victim.” He grants that “The so-called woke religion is a perversion of this Judeo-Christian tradition, but nonetheless closely adjacent to it,” but does not elucidate what might constitute the difference. So too does he name as a potential ideological alternative “a kind of Nietzschean, anti-diversity move that I find incredibly tempting in an emotional sense”—Thiel cites Bronze Age Pervert here—before eliding why, or indeed if, he rejects that alternative, pointing instead, without clarification, to what he sees as Nietzsche’s deathbed realization: “that the modern West would be a world ruled by the victim.” This is a realization that seems less philosophical than prophetic. The victim, Thiel suggests, has indeed won in modernity. Whether that is a good thing or not he leaves ambiguous. The dichotomy Thiel sets up for his audience—the decadence of Western weakness as downstream of Judeo-Christian ideas of equality and democracy, set against the Nietzschean paganism of strength-veneration and outright racism—matches closely Evola’s occult battleground. There, the strong and the spiritually secretive transmit to each other true knowledge, knowledge inevitably involving “human biodiversity,” “race realism,” and other such unspeakable so-called truths, knowledge to which the sheeple masses can have little access and instead naively assent to the suspiciously Semitic bromides of human equality.

In an increasingly alienated, secular era, many people of faith—or, indeed, anyone who is drawn to the dictates of moral realism, are ever hungrier for the real, for rootedness and home and, as one Internet idiom would have it, *touching grass*. But the Evolist vision of anti-modern return, which transforms realism into knowledge reserved for initiates—indeed, initiates of certain racial backgrounds—serves as a reminder of the philosophical perils of valorizing uncritically the natural, or of what is, to us another Internet term, “based.” The desire for an enchanted world, when misdirected, can lead politically, into violence and apocalypse. There are spirits too dangerous to summon.

TIKVAH PODCAST AT
MOSAIC AND ERIC
COHEN

JUNE 16 2023

About the authors

A weekly podcast, produced in partnership with the Tikvah Fund, offering up the best thinking on Jewish thought and culture.

Eric Cohen is CEO of Tikvah and the publisher of *Mosaic*. He is also one of the founders of Tikvah's new Lobel Center for Jewish Classical Education.



Two graduates in 1955. *Harold M. Lambert/Lambert/Getty Images..*

Podcast: Eric Cohen on the Questions Graduating Jews and Their Parents Must Confront

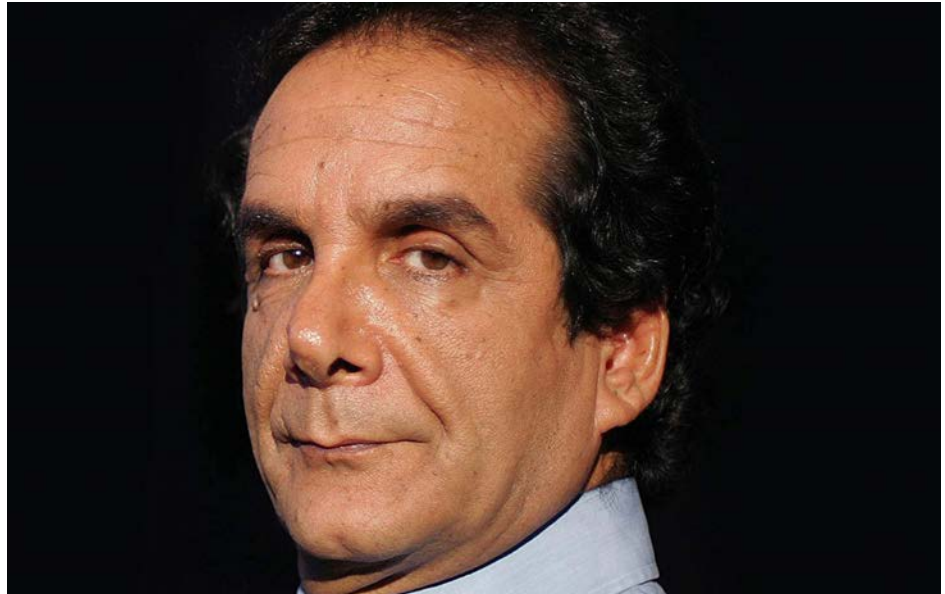
The Tikvah CEO addresses the practical and ideological challenges facing Jewish daughters and sons—and mothers and fathers—today.

Podcast: Eric Cohen

This week, the Tikvah Podcast offers up not a conversation but a speech. It's a speech that was given to American Jewish high-school and college graduates by Tikvah's CEO, Eric Cohen.

In the fall of 2021, four Jewish women—Carolyn Rowan, Liz Lange, Nina Davidson, and Rebecca Sugar—came together to create an organization for parents grappling with the challenges of raising committed Jewish children in today's confusing and contentious cultural environment. The Jewish Parents Forum organizes events for parents to get to know one another and to learn how to address the practical challenges facing Jewish mothers and fathers today, from the mainstreaming of anti-Semitism to identity politics to vociferous anti-Zionism to what to do about social media and phones.

This spring, the Jewish Parents Forum invited Cohen to deliver a graduation address on these themes for students in Tikvah's education programs. In that speech, he raises questions that all American Jews are now confronted with—questions that are also those that all Jews at all times must ask and answer.



TERRY TEACHOUT

APRIL 17 2019

About the author

Terry Teachout is the drama critic of the *Wall Street Journal* and the critic-at-large of *Commentary*.

Missing Charles Krauthammer

A posthumous collection edited by his son Daniel clarifies the great columnist's legacy to American, and to Jewish, discourse.

When Charles Krauthammer died in June of last year, a great many people who'd never met him felt that they'd lost . . . well, perhaps not quite a friend, since his public manner (I didn't have the good fortune to know him) was precise and a bit formal. It might be closer to the mark to say that Krauthammer was more like a trusted counselor, the man to whom you went in the hope of making sense of an increasingly crazy world.

For me as a working journalist, Krauthammer was a newspaper columnist first and foremost, one of the last, if providentially also the best, of a dying breed—newspapers themselves having by now long since embarked on a downhill slide. For 32 years, he wrote a column about public affairs that appeared each week on the op-ed page of the *Washington Post*, was syndicated to more than 400 newspapers and other publications, and was closely read in Washington and throughout America, not only for the sake of its unfailing acuity but as a trusty barometer of conservative opinion. Not since the salad days of William F. Buckley, Jr., has any other columnist been so generally regarded as *the* voice of the right—a voice all the more persuasive coming from one who in his (much) younger days at the *New Republic* had identified himself as a liberal Democrat in the Harry Truman and Scoop Jackson mold.

By 2005, Krauthammer had also started appearing as a panelist on Fox News Channel's *Special Report*. It was in this latter capacity that he would come to be even better known, especially to millennials, few of whom look

to op-ed pages for perspective on the events of the day. It was a sign of the times when *National Review Online* started releasing a daily transcript of what “Dr. Krauthammer” (as *NRO* scrupulously referred to him) had said on TV the night before. By the time his final illness forced him into an untimely retirement, that was how most people found out what he thought—and what he thought obviously mattered to countless readers and viewers, myself among them.

Not that, in general, the opinions of this master of common sense were likely to be startling. We read him, rather, because it was his genius to recognize what in a saner world would have been obvious, and (just as important) to express it with shining clarity. If, conversely, there was any lack of clarity in your own thinking, he made the rough places plain. Take, for example, the opening of a 1985 column about the American civil religion:

Let us begin, on Thanksgiving, by giving thanks that we are not French. I say this with no malice. I mean it this way: we both had glorious, liberating revolutions, but ours was not cursed by excessive rationalism, nor by its twin, hatred of religion.

What could be more lucid, or more to the point?

As this same passage also shows, Krauthammer was a consummate summarizer, and it is always a joy to see how crisply he makes his points. “Apart from the Founders, the only great president we have had in good times is Theodore Roosevelt,” he wrote in an obituary tribute to Ronald Reagan—to which the only possible response was to smile and say to oneself, *I wish I’d thought of that*.

These, needless to repeat, are the gifts of a natural-born newspaper columnist, which may be why, when I learned of Krauthammer’s death last June, it occurred to me that, *mutatis* very much *mutandis*, he had been the Walter Lippmann of our time: a comparison, to be sure, that may say more about the fast-changing world of journalism than it does about his own writings. Still, Lippmann’s columns were at one time read no less widely than Krauthammer’s in the corridors of power—possibly even more so, since he had less competition—although he had long since ceased to wield any influence by the time he finally retired in 1967. Today he is all but forgotten, a journalistic dinosaur whose breed is extinct.

Not so Krauthammer. He was part of the conversation up to the day that he filed his last column, and neither his influence nor his popularity had diminished in the slightest. *Things That Matter: Three Decades of Passions, Pastimes, and Politics*, a 400-page volume of columns drawn from the whole of his career, rocketed to the top of the best-seller lists when it came out in late 2013 and stayed there long enough to sell over a million copies in hardcover alone.

Now Daniel Krauthammer, Charles's son, has edited *The Point of It All: A Lifetime of Great Loves and Endeavors*, a posthumous anthology of his father's writings that serves as a pendant to *Things That Matter*. As Daniel explains in his introduction:

There were many more columns and essays of his that he wanted the world to see. Pieces that had not fit with the thematic organization of *Things That Matter*, pieces he had written in the time since, and pieces that, frankly, he had felt were too personal to include the first time around. These columns and essays needed a home.

While Krauthammer père drew up the initial plan for *The Point of It All* and chose many of the pieces that went into it, it is Daniel who has given shape to the book, and who is substantially responsible for the fact that it is more personal in tone than *Things That Matter*. Krauthammer was not given to self-revelation in print—it is remarkable how many people, before they encountered him in person, did not know that he was confined to a wheelchair—and Daniel admits that the final, shortest chapter of *The Point of It All*, “Speaking in the First Person,” is “the one section that I know my father would not have included if he were still alive.”

He was, however, wise to go his own way, for these latter pieces help to give the new collection its distinctive flavor, as does the poignant memoir by Daniel himself that brings *The Point of It All* to a close, a eulogy of his father that is redolent with filial love. “People just wanted to be around him,” he writes. What Daniel says about his father makes me long to have been one of the many people who had that privilege.

To read *The Point of It All* is to be forcibly reminded as well of another, especially salient difference between Krauthammer and Walter Lippmann: Lippmann was all too clearly ashamed of his Jewish heritage and never wrote or spoke of it, going so far as to remain completely silent about the Holocaust in his postwar columns and to have described Hitler in 1933 as “the authentic voice of a genuinely civilized people,” a statement that has yet to lose its power to shock.

Krauthammer, on the other hand, was proudly Jewish, and *Things That Matter* included a generous selection of his many columns on the Jewish condition and on the meaning of Israel and Zionism for the historical consciousness, and the destiny, of the Jewish people. Likewise *The Point of It All*, in which he writes about Judaism itself with a sense of deep personal identification that would have sent Lippmann running for cover:

I grew up in a home much like [Joseph] Lieberman's. We too did not use electrical devices on the Sabbath. As a result, when we sat down to the last Sabbath meal toward the end of the day, we relied for illumination on light from the windows. As the day waned, the light began to die. When it came time for the Hebrew recitation (three times) of the 23rd Psalm, there was so little light that I could no longer

read. I had to follow the words of my father as he chanted the Psalm softly with eyes closed. Thus did its every phrase and cadence become forever inscribed in my memory. To this day, whenever I hear the 23rd Psalm, I am filled with the most profound memories of father and family, of tranquility and grace in gentle gathering darkness.

It was undoubtedly this same twinned Jewish spirit, of belongingness and of stewardship, that motivated his founding and championship, together with his wife Robyn, of Pro Musica Hebraica. Devoted to the recovery and performance of lost, neglected, or extinguished works of art music by 20th-century Jewish composers, the organization for years produced two concerts annually at the Kennedy Center in Washington and other venues, in the process making a significant contribution to public awareness of the Jewish gift to modern music.

To be sure, it was not Krauthammer's custom to write so intimately (and beautifully) about himself as in his reminiscence of childhood Sabbaths. Most of the pieces included in the new volume are, like Lippmann's "Today and Tomorrow" columns, reflections on the passing political scene that simultaneously endeavor to take a long view of current events. Which is not to say that he couldn't write at greater length—a 2005 *Commentary* essay on "The Neoconservative Convergence" is a particularly notable case in point, as is a brooding 1998 essay for the *Weekly Standard* reprinted in *Things That Matter* under the title of "Zionism and the Fate of the Jews." But, with occasional exceptions, he was less and less inclined to do so as he grew older, just as he never got around to giving us any of the full-length books that he might have written (among which a memoir of his youth was surely *the* great missed opportunity).

Read in bulk and in book form instead of week by week in the *Washington Post* (or in later years also in *Time*), Krauthammer's columns, each a perfect three-page morsel, reveal him to have been a short hitter *par excellence*. Such pieces, composed to seize the passing moment, must of necessity have a fleeting shelf life. Nevertheless, might it be possible that the best of both his columns and his longer pieces will someday be read by smartphone-wielding youngsters who have never held a newspaper in their hands, in the same way that we continue to marvel, for example, at the full-length essays that H.L. Mencken wrought out of his own newspaper columns (the latter of which he dismissed as "journalism pure and simple—dead almost before the ink which printed it was dry")?

Time alone will tell, though I certainly hope so.

Krauthammer's first book, published in 1985, was also a collection of columns and magazine pieces, this one called *Cutting Edges: Making Sense of the Eighties*. In reviewing it at the time for the conservative

magazine the *American Spectator*, I described him as “the kind of liberal you can do business with, the kind who is still well within the consensus and not lost in the lunatic fringe, the kind who agrees with you on most of the eternal verities.”

He didn’t change much in the years that followed. Rather, it was liberalism that came unglued, so much so that by the time of his death, no one would have thought to call Krauthammer anything other than a conservative (save for anti-Semites, who go out of their way to affix “neo-“ to “conservative” whenever they use that perfectly good word to describe a Jew). In a better-regulated world, he would have been pigeonholed as a centrist.

But that the center itself has not held is today the grossest of understatements. And as for conservatism, it, too, has been transformed almost beyond recognition, in this case by the rise of Donald Trump, whose political triumph definitively smashed up the postwar conservative consensus forged by Buckley and his colleagues at *National Review*, reinforced, updated, and propelled forward in the 1970s by the neoconservative intellectuals around *Commentary*, and solidified by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s.

Illness forced Krauthammer to quit the scene just as all this was starting to become evident, but he was certainly able to attend to the changing climate of political opinion long enough to know that he didn’t like what he saw. That recognition was partly what inspired the single previously unpublished piece of his included in *The Point of It All*, an uncharacteristically discursive essay (fourteen pages) titled “The Authoritarian Temptation” that was one of the last things he wrote. A quarter-century after the end of the cold war, which he had welcomed as “an event of biblical proportions,” everything had changed for the worse:

The great dawn turns out to have been a mirage; the great hope, an act of self-delusion. The slide back away from liberal democracy is well under way. . . . It’s not just that we have failed to achieve the messianic future. It’s that even the democratic present is under widespread assault.

While Krauthammer does all that he can in this essay to muster hope, “The Authoritarian Temptation” ends not with a call to arms but with a grim question: “We have traveled far in the last 25 years. In precisely the wrong direction. . . . How does the End of History end?”

It’s an apt question, and particularly apt for Krauthammer, who like Buckley before him had a special knack for viewing the present moment through the clarifying lens of the work of other, older minds. In Krauthammer’s case, the predecessor whose perspective may lie chiefly behind his question “How does the End of History end?” is the British philosopher Isaiah Berlin, to whom he paid tribute in a 1997 *Washington Post* column that can be found in the first chapter of *The Point of It All*.

“Not too many people,” he wrote there, “can point to a specific day when they sat down with a book and got up cured of the stupidities of youth.” For the nineteen-year-old Charles Krauthammer, that book was Berlin’s *Four Essays on Liberty*, which taught him that “single issues, fixed ideas, single-minded ideologies are dangerous, the royal road to arrogance and inhumanity.” Instead, he embraced Berlin’s distinctive brand of political pluralism, which he saw as an antidote to the “romantic neo-Marxism” that remains the deadliest intellectual disease of youth.

Therein, I think, lay one of Krauthammer’s chief contributions to conservative discourse—and, if I may make bold to suggest, to Jewish discourse as well—at the turn of the 21st century: he imported Berlin’s academic vision of pluralism into the hectic arena of daily journalism. Moreover, he did so in a way that made sense to his contemporaries, more than a few of whom might otherwise have found that vision suspiciously squishy.

And therein, too, lies the tragedy of his death, for he left us just as we stand in greatest need of commentators like him—and of a medium through which their thoughts on the passing scene can be disseminated on a regular basis to the largest possible audience. I wouldn’t care to bet that we’ll be lucky enough to get either one of those irreplaceable commodities. At the very least, however, those of us who remember the ones we used to have will never need to be reminded of just how very much they mattered.

Why Israel Must Be Cautious of China's Imperial Designs, Even When They Come in Benign Garb

JUNE 12 2023

From Tuvia Gering
at *Institute for National
Security Studies*

In 2021, the Chinese president Xi Jinping announced a “Global Development Initiative” (GDI), an investment plan ostensibly aimed to help countries meet sustainability goals laid out by the UN. A year later, Beijing announced its “Global Security Initiative” (GSI), a parallel diplomatic plan whose signature achievement (thus far) is the Saudi-Iranian deal concluded in March. The Communist country then added its “Global Civilizational Initiative” (GCI), meant to spread its values through soft power. **Tuvia Gering**, assesses these grand plans, and what they mean for the Jewish state:

Xi Jinping invited Israel to “take an active part in the GDI” in a conversation with President Isaac Herzog in November 2021. Jerusalem has yet to respond or to take an official stance on the three initiatives. But if it does—or if senior Israeli officials publicly support it—they will join the company of anti-liberal nations who have embraced it, giving China a propaganda win. If Israel joins and is later forced to withdraw, its relations with Beijing will suffer.

At the same time, outright opposition to the initiatives will be perceived as too confrontational. Therefore, Israel’s interest is not to join the GDI or express blanket support for it, but rather to continue project-by-project cooperation with China on development while balancing economic, foreign policy, and security considerations.

The GSI, in contrast, is intended to undermine U.S.-led security frameworks. In the Middle East, it may jeopardize the progress of the Abraham Accords and the I2U2 (a grouping launched in 2022 comprising Israel, the U.S., India, and the United Arab Emirates). Furthermore, given that Beijing is dogmatically biased in favor of the Palestinians and provides Iran with an economic lifeline, international legitimacy, and technological solutions to ensure the regime’s survival, support for the GSI goes against Israel’s strategic interests.

The GSI’s stated support for the UN Charter is a smokescreen for China’s refusal to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the most egregious violation of the charter, which Beijing and Moscow justify as a response to “NATO expansionism.” Similarly, the good intentions that pave China’s road to “inter-civilizational dialogue and cooperation” under the GCI erode [the] values that underpin human rights, dignity, and freedom from oppression.

Islamist Anti-Semitism Isn't Based in Islam or Anti-Zionism, but in Hating Jews

JUNE 13 2023

From Daniel Ben-Ami
at *Fathom*

According to one interpretation, anti-Semitism in the Muslim world is something intrinsic to Islam itself, rooted in Mohammad's interactions with Arabian Jewry and a constant feature of Middle Eastern history. Others would argue that it is merely a reaction to Israel's existence or behavior (perhaps even a justified one). In *The Anti-Semitic Origins of Islamist Violence*, Evin Ismail presents a sophisticated alternative to these painfully simplistic explanations. **Daniel Ben-Ami** writes in his review:

Ismail argues that anti-Semitism has played a central part in the Islamist outlook since its inception with the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. That is, it should be noted, twenty years before the founding of the state of Israel. So, seeing Islamist anti-Semitism as simply a reaction to Israel's actions is not tenable.

Several factors contributed to the rise of Islamism and its anti-Semitism in particular. In the 1930s and early 1940s the Nazis promoted the Muslim Brotherhood as a counterweight to Britain—which then dominated Egypt—and France. Naturally the Nazis brought their poisonous anti-Semitic baggage with them. But even before the rise of the Nazis other pernicious European influences, most notably the *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, were having an influence on sections of Egyptian society.

Later these ideas would blend with other extremist Islamic tendencies, including a hostility toward Shiite Muslims, giving rise to the ideologies of al-Qaeda and then Islamic State (IS):

Islamic State took this anti-Shiism a step further by linking it to their anti-Semitism. It developed the idea that Shiites were not really Muslims at all but—astonishingly—undercover Jews, as they reject the true teaching of Islam. This in turn, in the view of IS, justified its systematic killing of Shiites in Iraq.

This is perhaps the most surprising example of the paranoid conspiratorial anti-Semitism that is central to the Islamist worldview. For example, IS—like most other Islamists—believes that America is controlled by Jews and Israel. It has also referred to Kurdish troops as representing “Peshmergan Zionism.” In addition, IS has claimed that Sunni leaders, especially monarchs, are “apostate rulers” who act as “the slaves of the Jews and the Christians.” . . . Jews are, from this warped perspective, engaged in an evil conspiracy against the entire global Muslim community.

Pius XII Prioritized Ties with Hitler over Helping the Jews

JUNE 13 2023

From Abraham Foxman and Ben Cohen at *Times of Israel*

Since 1965, there has been discussion in Catholic circles about the possibility of conferring sainthood on Eugenio Pacelli, who held the title of Pope Pius XII from 1939 until 1958. Besides the lack, thus far, of verifiable miracles ascribed to Pius—a prerequisite for sainthood—there is the matter of his checkered, and highly controversial, wartime record.

Abraham Foxman and **Ben Cohen** write:

The foremost problem with the historical debate up until recently has been the absence from public view of definitive documentation about the Vatican’s wartime role; locked out of its archives for decades, the many reputable historians and scholars who took one side or the other had no access to the critical records concerning Pius that were finally unveiled by Pope Francis in 2019, who declared as he did so that the Church should “not be afraid of history.”

Thanks to the opening of the archives, the authoritative account of Pius’s actions (or lack of them) with regard to the Nazi extermination program was finally published last year. The Brown University historian David Kertzer’s book *The Pope at War . . .* astonishingly has made no impact on the deliberations of the two main parties to the dispute. [Pius], Kertzer writes, manifestly failed ever to “denounce the Nazis clearly for their ongoing campaign to exterminate Europe’s Jews, or even allow the word ‘Jew’ to escape from his lips as they were being systematically murdered.”

That does not mean that Pius did not privately disapprove of the Nazi persecution nor make his objections discreetly clear in personal encounters. What Kertzer shows us, though, is that Pius’s direct back channel to Hitler—opened early on during the war—made him even more wary of displeasing the Nazi dictator. For example, he relates how, when the Nazis began rounding up Rome’s Jews under Pius’s very nose in October 1943, the pope sent an emissary to the German ambassador at the Vatican to inquire whether the operation was strictly necessary at that moment. When the ambassador explained that the round-up had been ordered by Hitler himself and asked whether the Vatican still wanted to protest, Pius’s emissary demurred.

Ultimately, Pius made a conscious decision from the beginning of his papacy to prioritize the retention of good relations with Mussolini and avoid offending Hitler, in order to “plan for a future in which Germany would dominate continental Europe,” as Kertzer writes.

Chinese Diplomacy Hands a Victory to Iran, but Does Little to Advance Peace

JUNE 14 2023

From Steven A. Cook
at *Foreign Policy*

On March 10, Riyadh and Tehran announced that, with Beijing's mediation, they had agreed to restore diplomatic relations—raising expectations of a détente in their heated rivalry for influence in the region. But no such calming of tensions has occurred, observes **Steven A. Cook**. Instead, Iran has stepped up attacks against Israel, U.S. forces in Syria, and shipping in the Persian Gulf. And then there is the proxy war in Yemen, from which the Saudis are seeking to extract themselves:

There is a cease-fire, ships can offload aid and goods at ports that were previously blocked, and the airport in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, is open. That is all good news, but these developments predate the Saudi-Iranian-Chinese agreement. There are peace talks, but an end to the conflict in Yemen remains elusive largely because the [Iran-backed] Houthis have been intransigent. Perhaps that will change, and perhaps it will be the result of the new dialogue between the Saudi and Iranian governments, but so far it is hard to argue that Yemen's trajectory has improved markedly as a result of the agreement.

The situation elsewhere in the Middle East hardly seems better. Just three weeks after the Saudis and Iranians came to terms, Iranian proxies attacked U.S. forces in Syria, killing a U.S. contractor and injuring several U.S. soldiers.

The big story about the Iran-Saudi-China deal is not the development of a more stable, pacific Middle East in which regional actors take matters into their own hands to forge a better future. It is actually more straightforward than that: the Saudis lost, and normalization of diplomatic relations with Iran is just cover for that setback. . . . Now, having taken Riyadh off the table, Tehran is working to undermine what is left of the region's anti-Iran regional coalition—a policy that includes going on the offensive against Israel and the United States.

Lessons in Peacemaking from Israel's Relations with the Shah's Iran

JUNE 13 2023

From **Jason Brodsky**
at *Middle East Institute*

Until the 1979 Islamic revolution, Tehran maintained cordial ties with Jerusalem—cultivated as part of David Ben-Gurion's “periphery strategy” that emphasized diplomacy with countries further afield than Israel's then-hostile neighbors. **Jason Brodsky** sees in this relationship a model for the Jewish state to follow as it aims to expand the Abraham Accords to include Saudi Arabia and other Arab states:

Israel aspired to establish formal diplomatic relations with Iran, yet according to a declassified 1959 U.S. intelligence report, Tehran was hesitant to do so because it did not want to offend Arab countries or elements in Iran that would react adversely to overt moves. These sensitivities are reminiscent of Saudi Arabia's concerns over normalizing ties with Israel today, weighing its own unique equities given King Salman's role as the custodian of the two holy mosques and the [possible] reaction from the broader Islamic world.

[Yet] the shah of Iran was able to maintain these close ties with Israel while holding diplomatic relations with the Arab world, which remained hostile to the Jewish state, although Egypt severed ties [with the shah] in 1960 in protest over his affirmation of de-facto recognition of Israel. The shah once told a Lebanese publication that there was “no contradiction” between Iran's support for Arab countries and economic ties with Israel. Likewise, leaders of the Abraham Accords countries, namely the United Arab Emirates, have been able to maintain full diplomatic relations with both Israel and the Islamic Republic. This is especially relevant after Saudi Arabia agreed to restore ties with Iran in March 2023 while at the same time continuing to eye a normalization deal with Israel.

In the end, Ben-Gurion's description of ties with Iran in the 1950s—“friendly, informal but not hidden, and based on mutual benefit”—offered a template for Israel's development of relations with Arab countries years later. Currently, Israel's relationship with the Abraham Accords countries can be characterized as more advanced than they were under the shah of Iran, namely because what was more informal and partial then is formal and complete today with regional players like Bahrain and the UAE.
