

DRAFT: XIII (Final)

7/17/24

Introduction, or Why I Wrote This Book

What compels me, today, to share my writings of the past 22 years with readers troubled by the madness of 2024? The simple answer is that the madness did not start today, but at least 22 years ago. More specifically, as we are grappling with the worldwide surge in anti-Westernism, antisemitism, and anti-Zionism in the wake of October 7, we must understand the latent forces that had been fueling these convulsions for decades before they exploded into our view.

Most people know me as the father of Daniel Pearl, the *Wall Street Journal* reporter who was kidnapped and murdered by al-Qaeda terrorists in Karachi, Pakistan, in 2002. Danny's horrific death, along with the last words he spoke in front of his abductors' camera, captured the headlines and turned him into a symbol: millions of people worldwide came to see him as a true citizen of the world, an embodiment of Western values, and an icon of Jewish pride. As people became hungry to hear from Danny's family about who he was and what we can learn from his tragedy, I, too, was thrust into the public eye as a speaker and writer for audiences outside of my usual scientific activities.

In scientific circles, I am known as a computer scientist specializing in artificial intelligence (AI), human cognition, and the philosophy of science—three fields in which I have solved some longstanding problems, especially in reasoning about cause and effect. The tragedy of Danny's death spurred me to step beyond algorithms and equations and directly examine the social and political forces that are shaping our troubled world. This pursuit has led me to produce hundreds of op-eds, essays, and talks covering a wide range of topics, including Jewish identity, the history of Israel, the war on terrorism, the intricate dynamics of East-West confrontations and dialogues, and the puzzling Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this book, I present an edited selection of 45 of these writings, showcasing my principal thoughts on these subjects.

The decision to compile these writings into a single volume was inspired by numerous requests from colleagues and friends, who observed that the language, perspective, and logic in my analyses deserved wider exposure to the many people who are trying to understand the complex and pressing challenges of our era. These challenges include the escalating menace of terrorism and extremism; the fundamental aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict; and the barbaric attack and aftermath of October 7.

The book opens with “Hope from the Horror of My Son’s Murder” (2002), a personal article I wrote just six months after Danny’s murder. This piece echoes the camaraderie, humanity, and pursuit of truth that Danny embodied throughout his life, as well as the message his killing conveys to us globally. Ultimately, the selection culminates with “Oslo Failed Because It Never Started” (2023), wherein I identify Zionophobia—my preferred term for the obsessive rejection of a Jewish homeland—as the primary catalyst inflaming and prolonging the century-long Arab-Israeli conflict. I explore Zionophobia, its origins, logic, and consequences, in several chapters throughout my journey, because it is universally and unforgivably ignored—it’s the elephant in the room. We see this clearly today. Since October 7, many people have been shocked by the sharp rise of antisemitic incidents in America and Europe, failing to see the root cause: Zionophobia. The rejection of Israel’s right to exist has been gradually and clandestinely intensified in academia and other institutions of the West, and Zionism, the ideological expression of that right, has become synonymous with the most hateful legacies of colonialism.

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Naturally, Jews, as the organic carriers of Zionism, have become the direct target of this rising hate.

Has my scientific background influenced my analysis of social and political issues? In many ways, yes. In the field of AI, we are trained to imbue brainless robots with human knowledge. This requires a precise language for representing knowledge and a rigorous understanding of its various components: how it is substantiated by evidence and how it should be used to guide actions and policies. This rigor extends to issues of evidence, knowledge, actions, and policies in social and political arenas. It enables AI researchers to precisely distinguish facts from theories, data from models, definitions from assumptions, and, crucially, causes from effects. This principled methodology helps avoid pitfalls and fallacies that often undermine social and political analysis. The logic of cause and effect is often the first victim in the absence of this methodology.

My family experience, as well, has shaped these writings. Born to a family that escaped the Holocaust from Europe, and married into a family that fled a major pogrom in Iraq, I have been influenced by a generation of nation-building pioneers, driven by dreams and self-reliance. I witnessed the creation of the modern State of Israel, the Israeli War of Independence and its consequences, as well as Israel's struggle for survival a decade later while serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). My efforts to foster peace and mutual understanding have led me to participate in dozens of dialogues with Muslim scholars and activists. Similarly, I have engaged with hundreds of Jewish communities across the U.S. and Europe, sharing insights and helping them fight rising antisemitism and Zionophobia in higher education. Most importantly, despite leaving Israel in 1960, I have remained intimately connected to the pulse of its people, the dynamism of its culture, and the ups and downs of its politics. Through my family, friends, teachers, and students in Israel, I have sustained a firsthand understanding of both their deep-seated existential anxieties and their profound yearning for peace with their neighbors.

So, to return to my opening question: what compels me to share my writings with readers now? To be honest, it is my confidence that these writings reflect a coherent, evidence-based, and compelling worldview that could guide fellow travelers, so many of whom are perplexed by our era's slogans, doubts, conflicts, misinformation, and moral relativism. In particular, I find great joy in conveying the miracle of the Jewish people, the heroic narrative of Israel's establishment, and my certitude in the rightness of her struggle for peaceful coexistence. I hope to make this joy contagious.

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