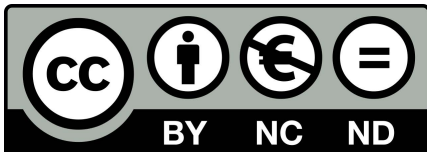


# Journal for the Study of Antisemitism

Special Issue:  
"Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism  
in the Shadow of the Holocaust"

Guest Editors:  
Karin Stoenner, Nicolas Bechter, Lesley Klaff , Philip Spencer

2015



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## Welcome to the Guest Editors

When I first spoke to Lesley Klaff about the possibility of *JSA* hosting ESA conference papers, I was not exactly certain what was involved. For several years, ESA's roster of paper presentations was top notch and often included key conceptualizations not found elsewhere. I wanted to make certain that some of the field's best thinkers were receiving their due.

*JSA* was located in North America, *ESA* was located in Europe and the gap needed to be bridged. My appreciation to Karin Stoegner and her team for their perseverance in making such fine work available to others. The papers have in common a distinct European flavor—they are nuanced and contextual driven. Except for David Patterson, the authors are European offering their perspective from what has become ground zero in displays of the new antisemitism.

Europe is also ground zero for the old antisemitism and the context of the Holocaust affords certain insights that North Americans have yet to fully understand. Perhaps an expanded research network can will afford new insights, new focus and new direction. Unfortunately, contemporary antisemitism is not a separate and distinct phenomenon unrelated to the antisemitism that culminated in the Holocaust.

If we pay attention to the new breed of European antisemitism researchers, no one is doomed to "repeat the past." Countering the resurgent, globalized anti-Jewish animus will return it to its less inciting political past viz., under the rock from which it came.

STEVEN K BAUM, EDITOR  
SHIMON T SAMUELS, BOARD CHAIR

## Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism In the Shadow of the Holocaust

Karin Stoenner, Nicolas Bechter  
Lesley Klaff and Philip Spencer\*

This Special Issue of the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* contains a collection of papers that were presented at the International Conference “Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism in the Shadow of the Holocaust”—the midterm conference of the Research Network on Ethnic Relations, Racism and Antisemitism within the European Sociological Association. The network was set up over a decade ago with the aim of addressing what was felt to be a serious gap in contemporary social theory, the continuing and indeed growing presence of antisemitism and its connection to other racisms.

The conference was particularly important both in terms of venue and timing. In Vienna, as in Austria more generally, responsibility for National Socialism and the Holocaust was acknowledged officially only in the early 1990s. Before that, Austria’s master narrative was that it had been Hitler’s first victim. Those who are familiar with the situation in Austria, with the political as well as with the public discourse know that the past still heavily weighs on the present and that present discourses are in various ways infused by the past, which is commemorated in official events but not actually worked through. In Vienna, the actuality of National Socialism and related forms of antisemitism that are based on defensiveness against guilt can be felt at every turn, which was the reason for us to choose the focus on contemporary antisemitism in the shadow of the Holocaust as the focus for this conference.

Today, the question of the actuality and prevalence of antisemitism has become a contested field within academia as well as in a broader public discourse. Debates are going on as to whether antisemitism today is to be regarded as a genuine structural feature of contemporary society or rather as a relic of an ideology which no longer has any relevance in contemporary Europe. Adherents of the latter position suggest that compared to the antisemitism of the Nazis and compared to the Holocaust, to speak of antisemitism today, at least in Western Europe, is an

exaggeration, a refusal to see how far Europe is no longer trapped in its old delusions and barbarism. As Robert Fine has argued in this narrative,

“antisemitism is tucked away safely in Europe’s past, overcome by the defeat of fascism and the development of the European Union.” In this case, “antisemitism is remembered, but only as a residual trauma or a museum piece.”<sup>1</sup>

The either/or logic that Robert Fine explicates is itself part of the problem: it reproduces the exclusive and unmediated juxtaposition of the past and the present and disregards the dialectical relationship between them.

If antisemitism is exclusively identified with its genocidal form of National Socialism, latent forms of antisemitism simply go unrecognized. The continuity in the discontinuity is thereby disregarded, as is the possibility that latent forms of antisemitism, even if they are not identical to the genocidal kind may nevertheless be connected to it in important respects.

There is a perhaps particularly strong tendency in Germany and Austria, as the post-Nazi countries, to deal with antisemitism only as an historical issue. The task of coming to terms with the Nazi past is narrowed down here to commemorating antisemitism and the Holocaust as mere historic incidents and as questions only of historical responsibility that has to be met by Germany or Austria as successor states of National Socialism. But a consequence of this is that antisemitism is thereby seen as something for museums rather than viewed as a problem of today’s societies. This becomes evident in the vast number of publications and events, both academic and also dedicated to a broader public audience, which deal with antisemitism from a purely historical perspective that lacks any connection to contemporary forms of antisemitism. Antisemitism is analyzed from an external perspective, from the shielding distance of 70 years after the defeat of Nazi terror – the past is seen as self-contained and the Holocaust remembered as an incident that happened “once upon a time.” After 1945 and more particularly antisemitism in our contemporary societies, however, is far less often made a topic for conferences, events and scholarly publications.

This reassuring narrative that remembers antisemitism as a relic of bygone times disregards what Walter Benjamin, the great critic of historiography, called the correspondence between the past and the present: that we never remember the past itself, but that memory is always an

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1. Robert Fine, “Fighting with phantoms: A contribution to the debate of antisemitism in Europe” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43:5 (2009), 463

expression of the past in the present.<sup>2</sup> For Benjamin, memory's central task therefore is to look closely at the marks the past has left in the present. Then we may realize that contemporary antisemitism, far from being a mere relic of bygone times, exhibits some continuity with Nazi ideology in contemporary societies, a "survival of National Socialism within democracy", which Adorno considered "to be potentially more menacing than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy."<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, the Nazi past is not a closed chapter in the history book of civilization but spills over to the present. This can be seen in the prevalence of secondary antisemitism that occurs with explicit as well as latent reference to National Socialism in order to legitimize it and in order to deflect from guilt. So if we take the meaning of working through the past seriously, the way Adorno elaborated on it, we need to stress that antisemitism today is not to be viewed as a remnant of the past but has its very strong roots in contemporary society; we need to think not just about National Socialism, but also about the conditions that made it possible. In as much as these conditions are not overcome, the past still infuses the present. Contemporary antisemitism needs to be analyzed in the shadow of the Holocaust.

This is exactly what the authors of this special issue do: from different perspectives, from different backgrounds, by reference to different cases they analyze how contemporary antisemitism relates to the Holocaust and how this connection can be tackled in theory and praxis.

The papers in the first section explore Holocaust remembrance in different contexts and in different countries. The papers either explore theoretical concepts or are approaches. Julia Edthofer discusses how the postcolonial debates on antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism are shaped by remembrance of the Holocaust and the colonial and how they both refer to an anti-Israel view on the Middle East conflict. Evelyn Goodman-Thau, also in a theoretical paper, describes the role of myth and messianism in discourses of Holocaust remembrance. Elke Rajal embeds her study of Holocaust education in Austria in Adorno's theory of society and remembrance.

The next two papers deal with postwar antisemitism in Germany. Holger Knothe asks, if there has been a qualitative change in antisemitic resentment and considers the extent to which we can justify talk of a "new antisemitism". Ljiljana Radonic describes the antisemitic experiences of a

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2. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" in *Selected Writings Vol. 4* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press 2003).

3. Theodor W. Adorno, "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in *Critical Models. Interventions and Catchwords*, translated and with a preface by Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press 1998), 90.

Jewish woman within the women's movement in the 1980s and antisemitic tropes in a certain string of protestant, feminist theology. Finishing with Judith Butler she explores such continuities in queer theory.

The second section deals with three case studies of current and historic forms of antisemitism in Sweden, Poland and Austria. Anna Sarri Krantz interviews a schoolgirl in the context of Sweden's political antisemitism and laws designed to prevent anti-Jewish incidents. Alina Cala analyses Polish and the Jewish competitive victimhood, anti-Zionism during the communist era, and its reappearance in its contemporary forms of antisemitism and Holocaust denial. Karen Frostig describes the burdens and problems she faced when trying to organize an art project on Holocaust remembrance in Vienna and thus confronted Austrians with their Nazi-past.

The articles in the third section deal with antisemitism and Holocaust remembrance or Holocaust denial in the Middle East. The first two papers concern Iran. Andreas Benl asks what western, leftist thinkers found so appealing in the writings of Ayatollah Khomeini and how this can be explained with the concept of cultural relativism. Stephan Grigat explores the important role of Holocaust denial and hatred against Israel in Iran's state ideology and points out that also under president Rouhani this ideology is central in the formulation of Iran's foreign policy. David Patterson describes current jihadist groups as the most violent and most aggressive antisemitic political groups. In the last paper, Esther Webman analyzes how public discourse on the Holocaust in the Palestinian territories changed in the 1990s, with an acknowledgement of the Holocaust on the one hand, but also a questioning of its uniqueness.

The guest editors of this Special Issue of the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* are grateful to its editor Steven Baum for enabling us to present these papers to a wider audience. Our hope is that, in addition to the light they shine on a set of issues in this particular context, they may also give some indication of the ongoing work done by colleagues in the research network itself, as we seek to fill a serious gap in our collective understanding of a phenomenon whose continued and indeed growing presence in the modern world should alarm us all.

*Karin Stoegner,*  
*Nicolas Bechter,*  
*Lesley Klaff,*  
*Philip Spencer*  
Vienna, December, 2015

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\* Karin Stoenner teaches social theory and topics related to gender, antisemitism and nationalism at the University of Vienna. She has carried out numerous research projects on nationalism, antisemitism and sexism at the Institute of Conflict Research (Vienna), at the Central European University (Budapest), at Lancaster University and Georgetown University (Washington DC). All her work focuses on Critical Theory. Karin is board member of the Research network on Ethnic Relations, Racism and Antisemitism within the European Sociological Association. Her numerous publications include *Sexismus und Antisemitismus Historisch-gesellschaftliche Konstellationen* (Nomos, 2014) and *the Handbook of Prejudice* (Ed., Cambria Press, 2009).

Nicolas Bechter is a PhD student at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna and is currently working in a research project on “Antisemitism as a political strategy and the development of Democracy. The Case of the Austrian Parliament 1945-2008” Nico held a research fellowship at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and focuses his research on political theory, parliamentarianism, antisemitism and critical theory. Nico is also a member of the research group FIPU (<http://www.fipu.at>).

Lesley Klaff is a Senior Lecturer in Law at Sheffield Hallam University and is an affiliate professor of law at Haifa University. She is an associate editor for the *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* and a member of the editorial advisory committee of the *International Journal of the Social Research Foundation*. She serves on the Academic Advisory Board of the *Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights under Law* and the *Berlin International Center for the Study of Antisemitism*. She is also a member of UK Lawyers for Israel (UKLFI).

Philip Spencer is Emeritus Professor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Kingston University and a Visiting Professor in Politics at Birkbeck, where he is also an Associate of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. He is the author of *Genocide since 1945* (Routledge 2102), of *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (Sage 2002), and of *Nations and Nationalism* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006) (both with Howard Wollman).

## Antisemitic Incidents from Around the World July–Dec 2015: A Selected List



—*Antisemitism gone amok.*

### JULY

Zurich 7/4/15 A Jewish man leaving a local synagogue was attacked by a member of the neo-Nazi band Amok.

Paris 7/7/15 A visibly Jewish 13 year-old boy was beaten and robbed outside his school by six young men, who physically assaulted him while one shouted “take that, dirty Jew!”

San Jose, Costa Rica 7/11/15 Jews and non-Jews demonstrated for peace in Israel. At the same time, during this event, a group of Palestinians also demonstrated. The demonstrators supporting the Palestinians began to shout things such as “Jews sons of bitches, murderers Jews, returned the land . . .”

Paris 7/15/15 A Jewish family was assaulted and robbed in their suburban Paris home, injuring two parents and their daughter.

Menton, Fr 7/19/15 Menton’s rabbi was hit in the back and insulted by an Italian-speaking man.

London 7/30/15 A visibly Jewish man was physically and verbally assaulted with antisemitic slurs outside a synagogue.



## AUGUST

Berlin 8/6/15 Antisemitic slogans were sprayed on a mural that depicts an Israeli flag superimposed over a German flag on a section of the former Berlin Wall.

Columa, Ukraine, Uzhgorod, Ukraine, Nyiregyhaza, Hungary 8/8/15 A mausoleum of the Jewish community located in a city park on Chekhov Street was set on fire. Nineteen headstones were vandalized as well in the Ukraine and in Hungary, a Holocaust memorial monument was destroyed.

San Antonio 8/18/15 The city's second largest synagogue Congregation Agudas Achim, was vandalized with anti-Semitic graffiti less than a week after another city synagogue and its neighborhood were similarly attacked. Linda Moad, executive director of the Conservative congregation, said the employee found two grills missing along with the words "Jew Jew" sprayed onto the structure. The previous Wednesday anti-Semitic graffiti was spray-painted with swastikas and references to the Ku Klux Klan at Congregation Rodfei Sholom along with 30 cars and neighborhood buildings.

## SEPTEMBER

Lisbon 9/1/15 The Jewish Community of Porto, Portugal quashed a bill designed to reinstate a Jewish army captain who had been fired and libeled because of his outreach to Sephardic Jews. The lawmakers who submitted the bill to rehabilitate Arthur Carlos Barros Basto withdrew it earlier this month ahead of a vote at the National Assembly after the Jewish community complained that it was discriminatory. The bill failed to bring closure to Barro Basto's case, the community and some of his descendants argued, because it offered none of the financial compensation given to non-Jewish officers who had been reinstated following persecution by the pro-fascist dictatorship of Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. The community wrote recently to parliament members, "Contrary to the general law of the land, applicable to all cases of reinstatement—this special law deplorably and scandalously excludes a Jew and his family."



*Just in Time for the Holidays!  
Norway's DNB issues Antisemitic Credit Cards*

Oslo 9/2/15 A major Norwegian bank that issued a credit card decorated with an anti-Semitic caricature has apologized and canceled the card. The Israeli advocacy group Hallelu published on Facebook Monday a photo of the credit card, issued by DNB to one Alexander Joseph Beckett, showing an ugly, large-nosed Jew wearing a black coat and prayer shawl and smiling at a background of gold coins. “We looked at the case immediately, and found out that this was produced due to a system we have where clients can upload their own pictures and get them printed on their card,” explained Even Westerveld, the bank’s executive vice president for communications.

Manchester 9/5/15 Three males physically assaulted and shouted antisemitic comments at a group of four Jewish males. One victim, a 17-year-old, received serious injuries and was hospitalized.

Brussels 9/6/15 The European Jewish Congress called for the suspension of a Maltese European Union employee who is accused of hitting and attempting to strangle another EU worker while shouting anti-Semitic hate speech. European Commission worker Stefan Grech allegedly assaulted the 50-year-old Italian woman in July, hitting her in the face with a metal plate bearing the portrait of Benito Mussolini, the Italian leader who was a wartime ally of Germany’s Adolf Hitler. During the incident, which occurred at a Brussels café at around midnight, Grech called the woman a “dirty Jew,” asserting that “Hitler should have killed all the Jews,” according to a complaint filed against him with local police by the Belgian League Against Anti-Semitism, or LBCA.

Amsterdam 9/7/15 Dutch police are investigating the brutal beating of an elderly Amsterdam Jewish couple. Diana Blog, 86, and her husband of 56 years Shmuel, 87, are both Holocaust survivors. Diana has scars from being attacked by Auschwitz guard dogs. The August 4 attack left Shmuel blind and with a broken thigh bone, and Diana suffering from “extreme pains,”

Both have been in a rehabilitation center in the month since the attack, and are now confined to wheelchairs.

Eisenach, Germany 9/11/15 A memorial to the synagogue of Eisenach was desecrated with a swastika and antisemitic slogan.

#### OCTOBER

Cordoba 10/11/15 As a gesture to join the BDS movement, the Izquierda Unida de España (United Left) party presented a proposal to city council erasing all Jewish history.

Umeå Sweden 10/11/15 The Jewish community of Sweden was not invited to an annual anti-Nazi event commemorating Kristallnacht due to a perceived security risk, the Swedish newspaper Norrköpings Tidningar reported.



—*Malmo Muslims call for Jewish blood.*

Concepción del Uruguay Argentina, 10/17/15 Jewish cemetery desecrated.

Malmö 10/19/15 A large anti-Israel demonstration last Sunday in Sweden featured calls to “slaughter the Jews” and chants praising the stabbing of innocent Israelis.

Athens 10/21/15 The main Jewish cemetery was spray painted with swastikas and antisemitic graffiti including the phrase “F\*\*\* Jews”

Marseilles 10/24/15 A rabbi and two Jewish worshipers were stabbed outside a synagogue by an attacker shouting antisemitic slurs.

#### NOVEMBER

Rochdale, UK 11/9/15 A trustee of a charity called the Ghulam Mustafa Trust has made a video in which he claims Jews track Samsung smartphones by implanting secret devices in the handsets. . . Peeling off

what appears to be a tracking system, he adds: ‘You should take that off because they are recording every photograph of yours, these ‘Fucking Jews. You should take this off. Look at that, they should not be on your phone battery.’ The Charity Commission demanded that the video be removed from Facebook.

Jerusalem 11/10/15 The Shin Bet security service on Wednesday published the transcript of an interrogation of two cousins aged 11 and 14 from East Jerusalem who went on a stabbing rampage two weeks ago and wounded a light rail security guard. The 11-year-old, a sixth grader from Shuafat, is the youngest assailant arrested to date in the current upsurge of Palestinian terrorism. He is too young to face charges under current Israeli law; the 14-year-old is facing charges of attempted murder.

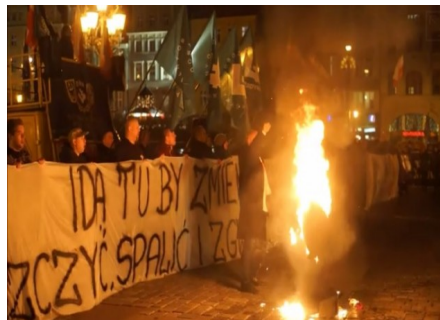
Gdansk, Poland 11/11/14 someone painted the word “thieves” and the David Star with a swastika on vb #veganburgers restaurant in Jesionowa Street. This is second attack during two weeks on this place.

Melbourne 11/12/15 A Jewish man was injured when he was punched in the neck and called a “fucking Jew” on the corner of Carlisle.

New York 11/12/15 Pro-Palestinian groups participating in a student protest against tuition increases at the City University of New York are blaming the high cost of education on “Zionists.”

Milan 11/13/15 Natan Graff, a 40-year-old Jewish man was stabbed Thursday night near the kosher restaurant “Carmel.”

Krakow 11/13/15 Protesters, during the nationalists far-right march on Polish Independence Day painted nine corpses-like silhouettes upon the pavement close to Krakow’s Ethnographic Museum.



*Jew as Syrian? Wrocław, Poland Nov. 18, 2015*

Wroclaw, 11/18/15 Hundreds of Polish protesters demonstrated against the influx of Syrian migrants in front of city hall in the southwestern city of Wroclaw on Wednesday - by burning an effigy of an Orthodox Jew.

London 11/18/15 University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) displayed pictures of terrorists who murdered innocent Israeli civilians plastered around the entrance to the campus. The event titled "Vigil for Palestinian Martyrs" was attended by around 150 people and held on the main university steps.

Marseilles 11/18/15 A Jewish schoolteacher was wounded in a stabbing attack in the southern French city of Marseilles on Wednesday night. The victim has been named as Tzion Saadon, a follower of Chabad in his 50s.

Tel Aviv 11/22/ 15 The stabbing murder of Hadar Buchris Hy"d brings to twenty-one the total of murders since the start of the current Arab terror surge. The total number of casualties evacuated to hospitals by Magen David Adom during this period is 213.

#### DECEMBER

Paris 12/7/15 A man on a train from Paris was caught on video saying: "If only I had a grenade here, how do you call it, a fragmentation grenade, I would blow up this wagon with the f\*\*\*ing Jewish bastards."

Bonneuil-sur-Marn Fr 12/14/15 Fourteen people attending in a synagogue were poisoned after the synagogue's electronic lock was daubed with poison.

Sochaczew, Pol 12/17/15 The Jewish cemetery was spray painted with graffiti saying "Holocaust never happened," "Allah bless Hitler," "Islamic State was here," "Islam will dominate," and "F\*\*k Jews."

Tehran 12/19/15 The city hall is offering a \$50,000 prize for the best cartoon mocking the Holocaust, as part of the 11th Tehran International Cartoon Biennial to be held next June.

Algiers 12/22/15 In a marching drill of the Algerian National Gendarmerie, soldiers chant: "Turn your guns towards the Jews. . . in order to kill them. . . slaughter them. . . and skin them."

Chigwell, UK 12/27/15 Police are investigating what is believed to be an antisemitic incident after a 91-year-old man received his copy of the Jewish Chronicle covered in feces.

London 12/29/15 Antisemitic attacks in London have increased by 61 per cent over the course of the last year, according to figures from the Metropolitan Police. Between November 2014 and November 2015, a total of 483 such crimes were committed, up from 299 during the same period of the previous year.

## Dedicated To



Robert S. Wistrich  
(1945-2015)

*Eminent historian, eloquent spokesperson and  
founder of antisemitism studies*

# Antisemitism After Auschwitz: Reflections on the Identity Politics of Myth, Memory and Messianism

Eveline Goodman-Thau\*

The following essay offers an interdisciplinary reflection on the power of political myth in the dialectics of history, memory and messianism, inherent in the identity politics of Nazi ideology leading to the destruction of European Jewry during the Holocaust. Starting from the general problem of 'Europe and the Jews' in the secularization process of Western tradition, it proceeds to the question of historiography, in the dialectics of history, memory and morality, and calls for a political hermeneutics of culture. It proceeds to trace the roots of Nazi antisemitism, as part of the notion of *Heilsgeschichte*, with its ideal of self-sacrifice on the "Altar of History", for the sake of a "New Order" and a "New Metaphysics". By asking questions on the roots of modern antisemitism after Auschwitz, the essay deals, in a wider sense, with the human response to tragedy and Bauer's notion of "the future of Europe as a community of interests between people who care for and respect each other's legitimately different traditions.

## EUROPE AND THE JEWISH QUESTION

The political and social upheavals of the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe mark on the one hand the end of the East-West and Cold-War conflict as a last burden of World War II. At the same time they raise some serious and poignant questions regarding the past. It is becoming increasingly clear, that these questions will not be solved by mere social-economic answers, even if they were in the long run to offer positive prospects for the future. The political climate in many Western democracies struggling to meet the demands of a united Europe shows a growing concern with the diversities of opinion in terms of economic, social, and religiously orientated political solutions needed to mould post-war Europe into a place where people can feel at ease and at home in a truly open society.

The search for an ethos of a united and democratic Europe is closely linked with the loss of tradition, and thus of the historical-cultural consciousness in the secularisation process. Various societies have



experienced this in different ways in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, culminating in the atrocities of two World Wars fought in almost every country on the continent and, under the cloak of war, resulting in the virtual destruction of European Jewry.

After the failure of the emancipation of the Jews, and despite the partial integration of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* as an academic discipline in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes, after the Shoah of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly in the light of the presently alarming manifestations of a growing antisemitism in many parts of Europe, more than a mere scholarly mandate to search for a new orientation in Western Humanities and Social Studies.

The question of the Jewish origin and its contribution to Western civilization and thought is part and parcel of 19<sup>th</sup> century historiography. It was then, in the wake of a historicism that tried to free religious canonical texts within the western Christian tradition of their dogmatic content and discover their historical roots, that a fundamental shift took place in modern Jewish consciousness as they struggled for emancipation and integration into Western societies. This shift affects the attitude towards the past, and is evident in terms of a strong desire to respond to the historical, political, social and cultural challenges posed by modernity.

This essay tries to trace the roots of modern antisemitism through the power of political myths inherent in the dialectics of history, memory and messianism in Western tradition, as a response to the intellectual crisis of our time.

#### HISTORY, MEMORY AND MORALITY IN HOLOCAUST NARRATIVE

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as we look back on the end of the Jewish world in Europe, especially in what was the Jewish space called *Ashkenaz* – united by the common use of the German language in all its cultural ramifications – we find we are no longer using the same discourse as before: the reflection on antisemitism after Auschwitz enlarges the horizon of our consciousness in a new way that enables us to confront the Holocaust from a human, that is a *moral point of view*, crossing the boundaries between aesthetics and ethics.<sup>1</sup>

Although one would not deny the extraordinary character of the Holocaust as an *historical* event, there exists a considerable debate

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1. See Robert Eaglestone, "From the Bars of Quotation Marks: Emmanuel Levinas's (Non)-Representation of the Holocaust," in *The Holocaust and the Text: Speaking the Unspeakable*, ed. Andrew Leak and George Paizis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 97-109.

concerning the uses and misuses of memory regarding its moral implications, its “moral space of figurative discourse”<sup>2</sup> with its more radical one: silence.

The problem is however not only inherent in the context of Holocaust *writing*, but even more so in *reading* Holocaust narrative. Thus, when dealing with the relationship between “how narratives are told (their aesthetics) and how they mean (their ‘hermeneutics’)”, Daniel Schwartz notes, “I see telling as a crucial act, all the more crucial because of the trauma of the originating cause. Because we can never trust memory fully, in narrative effects (how a teller presents himself or herself) sometimes *precede cause* (the explanation for why a narrator is the person he or she is).”<sup>3</sup>

The very act of telling the story thus creates a discontinuity with the historical past: the narrator chooses to place him or herself in the situation of those who did not live to tell their story to us, the survivors burdened with the task of creating continuity in time.<sup>4</sup>

The question posed by *Myth, Memory and Messianism* in the context of antisemitism after Auschwitz is therefore: what are the *political, ethical* and, as we shall see, *messianic* implications of breaking the silence of Auschwitz, of speaking, not only the unspeakable, but the language of those whose voices were not heard then and cannot be recaptured to-day. “The disaster always takes place after having taken place” (Maurice Blanchot).

Thus the remarkable fact of the Holocaust representation confronts us in the first place with our own lives, with the way we look, directly and indirectly, through the very blurred vision of our consciousness, trying at all costs to recapture something of the recognition of origin, to try and fill the gap caused by a general feeling of “world-loss”, to avoid falling in the abyss of meaninglessness.

“Perhaps we should say that Holocaust narratives have become a genre with its own archetypes and its own cultural continuity.”<sup>5</sup> It means starting at the very beginning: questioning language and narrative, questioning the way one writes and interprets history.

2. Berel Lang, *Act and Idea in the Nazi Genocide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 160-161.

3. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Imagining the Holocaust* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 35.

4. Compare the biblical injunction to remember the Exodus from Egypt It is because of what God did to me when I went free from Egypt. “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying” (Ex. 13:8).

5. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Imagining*, p. 35.

Here we can encounter the convergence of *political myth and the dialectics of history, memory and messianism* in recognizing the Nazi perversion of values in the name of a 'higher order' which demanded a human 'sacrifice' on the part of the German nation, moving towards its intended destiny as ultimate redemption, its *Heilsgeschichte*, an issue we will deal with in depths later on in this essay.

It means a breaking not only with the historical conventions of western tradition, but also seeking to bridge the gap between ethics and aesthetics, touching upon the *question of concern* versus indifference, when dealing with detachment and objectivity as a scholarly virtue. This search for truth, as the solid ground for knowledge became fractured, revealed the deep fissures caused by the very fact that Auschwitz really happened. Dealing with this *historical fact*, thus poses a *moral burden* which is normally hidden from the eye, when dealing with historical experience from an ethical point of view: "... on the brink of morality without institutions."

Emmanuel Levinas names this the *Conditio Judaica* – the Jewish Destiny:

"When temples are standing, the flags flying atop the palaces, and the magistrates donning their sashes, the tempests raging in individuals' heads do not pose the threat of shipwrecks. They are perhaps but the waves stirred by the winds of the world around well-anchored souls within their harbors. The true inner life is not a pious or revolutionary thought that comes to us in a stable world, but the obligation to lodge the whole of humankind in the shelter - exposed to all the winds - of conscience... But the fact that settled, established humanity can at any moment be exposed to the dangerous situation of its morality residing entirely in its "heart of hearts" its dignity completely at the mercy of a subjective voice, no longer reflected or confirmed by any objective order - that is the risk upon which the honor of humankind depends. *But it may be this risk that is signified by the very fact that the Jewish condition is constituted within humanity.* Judaism is humanity on the brink of morality without institutions."<sup>6</sup>

The dignity of humanity is, as Levinas points out, not lodged in stable institutions, but "at the mercy of a subjective voice no longer reflected or confirmed by any objective order", because "Judaism is humanity on the brink of morality without institutions". He reflects then on the price the Jewish people have paid for this "exposure" and concludes:

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6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*, transl by Michael B. Smith, London 1996, p. 122.

“But that condition, in which human morality returns after so many centuries as to its womb, attests, with a very old testament, its origin on the hither side of civilizations. Civilizations made possible, called for, brought about, hailed and blessed by that morality - which can, however, in its part, only know and justify itself in the fragility of the conscience. . .”<sup>7</sup>

Conscience is, in fact, fragile, because knowledge breaks down in the face of each individual and becomes relevant where the “personal” meets the “general”, the “religious” meets the “profane”. Our debate on “Antisemitism after Auschwitz” therefore cannot avoid the question of the nexus between *power and memory*.<sup>8</sup> Dealing with the Jewish Question after Auschwitz is thus not only a political issue, a form of restitution or reparation, but rather about the intellectual survival of society as a whole, and particularly about the necessary consideration of the renewed role of the humanities in countries experiencing antisemitism as the late consequences of a rupture of civilization, especially in those countries where Jews are no longer a present force to help carry the burden of values. It means addressing the question of the relevance of traditional texts – be they religious or secular – which, to paraphrase William James,<sup>9</sup> reveals the impact of the *varieties of historical experiences and their transformations*, offering an opportunity to study and research the tradition-founding elements in the various traditions that have shaped European identities, and their cultural connection with Judaism. This would be a common task for all, to make a new beginning out of destruction, to confront the historic hour and therefore history. It would allow us to delve into the *Archives of Memory and Morality* rather than *History* to extract the deep layers of amnesia and strategies of denial inherent in human nature, to free the spirit from the burdens of forgetting, as an act of resistance to any form of totalitarianism, because “The struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting”<sup>10</sup>

It means a coming to terms, not merely with the historical fact of the annihilation of European Jewry, the conscious killing of six million innocent men, women and children under the cloak of war, but also with the way we look at life and history, how we judge our actions and those of others, and how we practice political activism and social critique. In short, it poses the question of the *politics of history and memory*, and urges us to

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7. Ibid., p. 123.

8. Jan-Werner Mueller, ed., *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

9. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience. A Study in Human Nature* (London: Longman, 1902).

10. Milan Kundéra, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

reflect on the means and ways to move towards, what I would call, A *Political Hermeneutics of Culture*.

#### THE THIRD REICH AND THE JEWS

When considering the problem of antisemitism in myth, memory, and messianism after Auschwitz, the question of European Jewry after the Enlightenment thus becomes important: Jews were murdered in the ‘Third Reich’, not because they were criminals or deviants – not even solely for their riches in Germany and other parts of Europe – but for the simple reason that they were *Jews*: Europe had to be made “*Judenrein*” for the establishment of the Third Reich – *Das Heilige Roemische Reich Deutscher Nation* – on the threshold of the Third Millennium.

Beyond the question of good and evil, the politics of myth, memory, and messianism do not find their answer in reflecting on the premises of legal and philosophical concepts or pseudo-conventions such as ‘etiquette’ and ‘political correctness,’ nor in an attempt to hide behind learned discussions concerning the correct facts and figures, nor in the use of language borrowed from the lexicon of religious canon, such as ‘martyrdom’, ‘victim’ or ‘suffering’. (It is for this reason that I find the word *Holocaust* – Greek: burnt-offering – so problematic since Jews *were not given a choice* in Auschwitz to die for *Kiddush Haschem*, the Sanctification of God’s name: they were murdered in the name of duty for ‘*Fuehrer und Vaterland*’.)

But representation entails a serious reflection on accepting the onus to rethink, not only the Shoah,<sup>11</sup> *but the very project of the Humanities as a discipline, in the light of history, language and the self*<sup>12</sup>, directed towards finding a cultural paradigm which breaks down our preconceived notions of reason, of reality, and of normality, and critiques our *normative* values and standards. “The universe of dying that was Auschwitz yearns for a language purified of the taint of normality”<sup>13</sup> writes Lawrence Langer. But the question arises: was it a “universe of dying” and can this universe “yearn for a language purified of the taint of normality”? Can a universe yearn at all, when those who were murdered cannot speak, but still move *our* lips? Our mourning and yearning for them is much stronger than any act of memory that can possibly heal the universe by way of language. –

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11. Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

12. Eveline Goodman-Thau, *Aufstand der Wasser. Jüdische Hermeneutik zwischen Tradition und Moderne* (Berlin: Philo Verlagsges, 2002), 9-10 and 15-31.

13. Lawrence Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 93.

“*Manchmal freilich stirbt der Himmel unseren Scherben voraus*” (Paul Celan).<sup>14</sup> – Looking up to Heaven thus makes no sense and is to no avail when we are left to gather the pieces which have rained down on us from the broken sky: the flight into an outdated metaphysics – or theology – is no longer possible.

Documents show, that the murder of the Jews was a political program of Nazi ideology, and cannot be surmised under the rubric of anti-Marxism or anti-Semitism. In the words of Martin Bormann at the end of 1944:

“National Socialist doctrine is totally anti-Jewish, which means anti-Communist and anti-Christian: everything is linked to National Socialism and everything concurs towards the fight against Judaism.”<sup>15</sup>

Although one might argue about the historical, political, and sociological reasons for the extermination of the Jews of Europe, the fact remains that one single group was singled out – the Jews – who would not have a place in the redemptive notion of “the world to come”: the “New Order” of Europe.<sup>16</sup>

The emancipation of the Jews had to a certain degree guaranteed their equal status before law, but not their acceptance as members of European society, sharing a common ethos of justice, framed by the universal values of equality and human rights. The social and cultural implications of this tension became most poignantly evident for Jews in Germany against the

14. “*Surely, Heaven sometimes dies ahead of our shards.*”

15. In: Adolf Hitler, *Libres propos sur la guerre et la paix*, vol. 2, (Paris: Flammarion, 1954); quoted from Saul Friedlaender, *Some Aspects of Historical Significance of the Holocaust*. Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1977), 8.

16. It is in this context interesting to note, that even Claus von Stauffenberg and several of his co-conspirators of the failed attempt to kill Hitler at his headquarters in East-Prussia on July 20, 1944 did not die in the name of democracy. In a document declaring their shared ideals and principles they asserted “. . . that they believed in the ‘future of the Germans’ a people, it claimed, that represented a ‘fusion of Hellenic and Christian origins in its German being’ . . . the Germans, the document read, had a calling ‘to lead the community of the Western peoples to a more beautiful life’. This projected ‘New Order’ would involve all Germans, it continued, and would guarantee ‘rights and justice’. At the same time, it announced that the conspirators ‘despise the lie of equality, however, and bow before the ranks assigned by nature’. It ended, ‘We commit to join an inseparable community that through its attitude and actions serves the New Order and forms the fighters for the future leaders – *Führer* – which they will need’.” Quoted from: Robert. E. Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 745-746.

Jewish demand for a home was soon transformed into the ecstatic illusion of being at home.”<sup>17</sup>

This hope was cruelly shattered as the “symbiosis” between Jews and Germans failed the test of social reality: “Society”, as Hannah Arendt observed correctly, “confronted with political, economic and legal equality for the Jews, made it quite clear that none of its classes were prepared to grant them social equality, and that only exceptions from the Jewish people would be received.”<sup>18</sup>

When considering the destruction of European Jewry, we are indeed probing the limit, not only of representation while witnessing the inversion of human values, but also touching upon the *identity politics inherent in Nazi ideology*.

An illustration of this can be found in Heinrich Himmler’s famous 1943 Posen speech to upper-level SS-officers, revealing the importance and function of the annihilation of the Jews in shaping the German psyche. After announcing to his comrades that he is going to speak of “a really grave matter”, Himmler continues: “Among ourselves, this once, it shall be uttered quite frankly; but in public we will never speak of it.” He reminds them of the beginnings, when almost ten years before, on June 30, 1944, they carried out their duties as ordered “to stand against the wall comrades who had transgressed, and shoot them, also we have never talked about this and never will. It was the tact, which I am glad to say is a matter of course to us that made us never discuss it among ourselves, never talk about it. Each of us shuddered, and yet each one knew that he would do it again if it were ordered and if it were necessary.” And then Himmler comes to the main point: “I am referring to the evacuation of the Jews, the annihilation of the Jewish people. This is one of those things that are easily said. . . Most of you know what it means to see a hundred corpses lie side by side, or five hundred or a thousand. To have stuck this out, and – accepting cases of human weakness – to have kept our integrity, that is what has made us hard. In our history, this is an unwritten, never-to-be-written page of glory. . . All in all, we may say that we have accomplished the most difficult task out of love for our people. And we have not sustained any damage to our inner self, our soul and our character.”<sup>19</sup>

We see here, that Himmler was well aware of the moral burden of the atrocious acts of his officers, but in evoking their memory of the events, he

17. Gershom Scholem, “Jews and Germans,” in *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauer (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 80.

18. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1958), 56.

19. Lucy Dawidowicz, ed., *A Holocaust Reader* (West Orange, NJ: Berman House, 1976), 132-133.

justifies those as a just punishment against those “who had transgressed”. And yet it had to remain secret, not only because later generations would not understand, but because indeed then “each of us shuddered” and even now “he would do it again if it were *ordered* and if it were *necessary*”.<sup>20</sup> It meant a following of orders in the name of necessity, i.e. higher “Order of Things”, which “we” didn’t discuss even “among ourselves”: “In our history, this is an unwritten, never-to-be written page of glory” – a sublime act without memory, never to be written, never to be remembered, but to be repeated again, if necessary. The act of remembering would present a moral burden as an obstacle to what was “the most difficult task *out of love for our people*”:<sup>21</sup> the ultimate sacrifice of memory in the name of love. . .”

The last sentence of our quote is perhaps the most telling and chilling of all: the extermination of the Jews, the singling out of each and every member of this specific group to be wiped from the face of the earth, this task was accomplished without any moral damage “to our inner self, our soul and our character” but “out of love for our people”.

Himmler understood perfectly well that “this glorious page in the history of the German nation” needed to remain secret. The concern he expressed was not whether future generations might bring a moral consciousness to bear on their collective memory of events; rather, he was alluding to the significance of Nazi ideology as a “New Heaven and a New Earth” – albeit not in the sense of a “New Testament”, but through the power of political myth, as an act of “self-sacrifice”. As executioners of the Jews, they sacrificed themselves in a redemptive act on the “altar of history”: they offered themselves up as a burnt-offering of memory itself: *the Jews must die so that we can live*. This freedom from “damage”, to their inner selves, their souls and their character was “proof” – as paradoxical as it may sound – of the “moral character of their acts”, for the Reich to be saved from oblivion by the chosen few until the end of days, as a messianic paradigm.

In his well-known critique of German ideology, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, Theodor W. Adorno exposes the Nazi corruption of the notion of authenticity and its devastating effects:

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20. Italics are mine.

21. Italics are mine; Cf. also among others the treatment of this document by Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory and Trauma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 105-110, as well as *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 25-35 and Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).



“The armored man was so conscious of his unprotected places that he preferred to grasp at the most violent arrangement of arguments, rather than call subjectivity by its name. He plays tactically with the subjective aspect of authenticity: for him authenticity is no longer a logical element mediated by subjectivity but is *something in the subject, in Dasein itself, something objectively discoverable*. The observing subject prescribes whatever is authentic to the subject as observed: it prescribes the attitude towards death. This displacement robs the subject of its moment of freedom and spontaneity: it completely freezes, like the Heideggerian states of mind, into something like an attribute of the substance ‘existence’. . . the category of authenticity, which was at first introduced for a descriptive purpose, and which flowed from the relative innocent question about what is authentic in something, now turns into a mythically imposed fate. . . Jews are punished for being this destiny, both ontologically and naturalistically at the same time.”<sup>22</sup>

The jargon of authenticity functions as an ideology of language, rendering it an aura of *Dignity* and *Death*. “There was a time when the subject thought itself a small divinity, as well as a law- giving authority, sovereign in the consciousness of its own freedom.”<sup>23</sup> This freedom is now sacrificed on the altar of Being, as a kind of messianism of *Dasein* as the core of Heidegger’s New Metaphysics.

“Sacrifice means farewell from the existent on the way to the preservation of the favor of Being. Nevertheless, sacrifice can be prepared in the working and effecting (*Leisten*) within the existent, yet such action can never fulfill the sacrifice. The fulfillment of sacrifice stems from the urgency out of which the action of every historical man rises – by means of which he preserves the achieved Dasein for the preservation of the *dignity of being*.”<sup>24</sup>

Here, historical man is instrumentalized for the purpose of an *eternal and true goal*: “Sacrifice is at home in the essence of the event. In the form of the event being claims man for the truth of Being.” There is no room for human judgement or calculation of any kind since it “*disfigures the nature of sacrifice*”. All considerations and desires for a higher or lower purpose had to be suspended for the sake of the “clarity of the courage for sacrifice,

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22. “Judgement,” Adorno illustrates, “is passed according to the logic of that joke about the coachman who is asked to explain why he beats his horse unmercifully, and who answers that after all the animal has taken on itself to become a horse, and therefore he has to run.” Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (London: Routledge, 1973), 126-127 (italics are mine).

23. Ibid., 160.

24. Ibid., 161 (italics are mine).

which is marked by an awe which really fears; and which has taken upon itself to live in the neighborhood of that which is indestructible.”<sup>25</sup>

The displacement of reality between perpetrator and victim now becomes apparent: the Jew became a substitute for the moral consciousness of the German soul, and the act of killing the Jew a substitute for messianic self-sacrifice, with its devastating consequences not only for the fate of European Jewry but for post-holocaust Germany and other parts of Europe, as witnessed by increasing antisemitism with its specific characteristics in East and West.”<sup>26</sup>

#### MODERN MESSIANISM IN GERMAN ROMANTICISM

The annihilation of European Jewry was thus an act of vindication that would once and for all inscribe the German nation in history. It is from here also, that the struggle against communism becomes evident, as one ideology confronts another, and it can be called the irony or rather the *List der Geschichte* (as variant of “*List der Vernunft*”) that pitched the West against Communism for 40 years after the war. One sees this, especially in retrospect, knowing that Hitler was not much better than Stalin, because both were dictators and tyrants, with perhaps one difference: Stalin persecuted those who were his *political* opponents, Hitler those who were his *moral* and thus *religious*, that is, *messianic* opponents.

Thus, when considering the dialectics of history and memory in the context of the politics of power in myth, memory and messianism, the issue of responsibility and leadership gains an immense importance. It poses the question of *moral responsibility, in particular that of the individual and its impact on the course of history*. Is the excuse of hiding behind ‘rules and regulations’ an avoidance of responsibility, or does it carry, at its very core the surrendering of individuality altogether? The question must thus be formulated as follows: To what degree is the human act – in any given circumstance – an expression of individuality and responsibility, and above all, in which way does it impact human freedom to choose, and exercise the one quality that is given to humans as a birthright: *to express through action the difference between right and wrong, on history*’?

Now, it should be borne in mind that the notion of responsibility was for a long time left out of the discourse of western tradition. Before the Enlightenment, the outcome and impact of human action was discussed in Christian-theological terms, informed by the notion, that our actions

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25. Ibid., 162.

26. Jeffrey Herf, “The Emergence and Legacies of Divided Memory: Germany and the Holocaust after 1945,” in Mueller, *Memory and Power*.

(*Werke*) were redeemed in the light of the death of the Messiah Jesus Christ, a belief that carried western society from Augustine's *Civitas Dei* to Luther's "Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms" (*Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*) with the possibility of redeeming *all* acts of Man in the coming Kingdom of God.<sup>27</sup>

The Enlightenment tried to reinstate the individual – *cogito ergo sum* (Descartes): by way of reason one was to know right from wrong. The backlash came from Romanticism, meant to regain a sense of origin, lost through historicism, with its heritage in the humanities of intrinsic ambivalence in regard to the relevance of traditional texts.<sup>28</sup>

When considering this development in regard to the question of moral responsibility and leadership, we see, that, in contrast to the Enlightenment and Historicism, it was in Romanticism that the question of leadership became important: the leader was declared to be the incarnation of the spirit of the nation, that is, the "*Kingdom of Man*", as the incarnation of the "*Kingdom of God*". Hence the romantic attraction on the part of the Nazis and their misuse of Nietzsche for political purpose; the "*Death of God*" paved the way for the "*Life of Man*". Therefore, Jews – not only the Jew, but Jesus of Nazareth, Messiah of the Christians – had to die, "so that we may live": The notion of leadership thus became extremely important, because the leader incorporated the Law and the Nation, and his orders had to be followed unconditionally.

Seventy years later, as the *Drang* for normalcy and integration in post-war Europe has blotted out personal reflection and civil responsibility, complacency has replaced critical consciousness, resulting in a flight towards deliberate ignorance: the admission of possible collective guilt is sublimated by a desire for vindication. A reflection on antisemitism after Auschwitz in the context of identity politics of myth, memory, and messianism thus touches upon the very foundations of human existence and may open new perspectives for the future. As one of the foremost Holocaust scholars puts it:

"We have much to learn yet about the Holocaust in this, as well as in other inquiry. But as we all know, the question is no less important than the answer. We are asking about the human response to tragedy, about the feeling of community between groups and individuals, about the community of interests between people who care for and respect each other and each other's

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27. One of the fallacies of Christian faith is to my mind, that one is made guilty for an act one has not committed in the beginning in the form of original sin, and one is forgiven for any real action throughout one's life, by the sacrificial death of Christ, which means not only a victory of life over death, but at the same time a vindication of any acts committed. . .

28. Juergen Habermas, "Die verkleidete Tora. Rede zum 80. Geburtstag von Gerschom Scholem," in *Politik, Kunst und Religion* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), 133.

legitimately different traditions. The Holocaust is a touchstone of such inquiry.”<sup>29</sup>

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29. Yehuda Bauer, *The Holocaust in Historical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 92.

# Israel as Neo-Colonial Signifier? Challenging De-Colonial Anti-Zionism

Julia Edthofer\*

This contribution discusses post- and de-colonial academic perspectives on the relation of antisemitism and racism in the light of Holocaust-and colonialism-remembrance and their contentious entanglements with political stances regarding the Middle East conflict. It is illustrated how the discussion of past and current victimizations intermingles with biased views on the conflict and especially the Israeli state. Expanding on the last point, it is demonstrated that the de-colonial framing of Israel as a “Western colonial project” can blur with antisemitic stereotypes—for instance when Israel is depicted as a neo-colonial evil par excellence and “Jewish complicity” with Western (neo)-colonialism is postulated. Adopting societal-theoretical approaches for the analysis of (new) antisemitism to post- and de-colonial perspectives is proposed.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The turn of the last century brought about a wave of anti-Zionist activism within global leftist politics. With the Second Intifada in September 2000 the peace process in the Middle East definitely came to an end and in the following year, the UN World Conference against Racism in Durban showed massive anti-Israeli protest culminating in the claim to define Zionism as special form of contemporary racism. A few days after, the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 heralded the Bush administration’s “War on Terror”. The following attack on Afghanistan and, later, the invasion of Iraq led to growing anti-war organizing among left-wing social movements worldwide, and thus to global protest against the Bush administration and the US, but also against the Israeli reaction to the Intifada. In the same period, post-colonial and de-colonial perspectives gained ground in various academic institutions in the Global North. First established in Anglophonic academia, the theoretical approach travelled to Europe during the 1990’s and led to the emergence of post- and de-colonial perspectives as an academic part of progressive leftist politics.

Since anti-Zionism is widely regarded as the “leftist ticket”, big parts of the post- and de-colonial spectrum take a critical stance towards Israel. Most prominently, such debates occur at the intersection of academic

knowledge production and anti- or post-colonial political activism in the Global North, predominantly in US-American and British academia, but constantly rising within other European academic and artistic contexts. The *Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement* (BDS)<sup>1</sup> plays a decisive role regarding this conjunction. Established mainly by the US-based Palestinian Diaspora in 2005, it soon became active also in the European context. It peaked for the first time in 2009 following the escalation of violence in Gaza at the turn of the year, and again after the Israel-Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014.

The de-colonial perspectives in focus relate to BDS-activism and thus can be seen as exemplary for such academic-political debates. Symptomatic for this political stance is a “correspondence-theoretical”<sup>2</sup> view on contemporary antisemitism that considers “new”, Israel-related antisemitism solely as an outcome of the Middle East conflict. By ignoring the Holocaust as one historical reason for its foundation, the Israeli state rather is presented as US-backed settler colony and is occasionally even framed as an outstanding “perpetrator state” and “spearhead” of the neo-colonial capitalist world system. In this context, biased views on current political events intermingle with narratives on the contentious relation of the Holocaust and colonial genocides: the Holocaust is depicted as a hegemonic “Western” remembrance paradigm that would blank out the latter. Such “competitions of victimhood” form one part of the anti-Israeli narratives that frame Israel as a “Western” colonial project. Following David Hirsh’s illustration of “discursive antisemitism” within anti-Zionist academic-political articulations, I aim to relate such framing to theoretical perspectives on antisemitism that focus on its function as a discursive resource for a false pseudo-explanation of capitalist—or in this special case—colonialist exploitation and injustice. For this purpose, I correlate frame analytical methodology<sup>3</sup> to theoretical perspectives on antisemitism

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1. See: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>; <http://www.pacbi.org/>; <http://www.usacbi.org/>; see for the “One State Declaration” endorsed by the BDS-movement: <http://electronicintifada.net/content/one-state-declaration/793> [accessed 15/02/15].

2. According to Klaus Holz, “correspondence-theoretical” explanations of antisemitism disregard the fact that the resentment has nothing to do with “real” Jews and their actions, but seek to explain it partially by “Jewish behavior”. In doing that, the semantic construction of the resentment is confused with historical facts and social structures, which ultimately perpetuates the resentment. See Klaus Holz. *Nationaler Antisemitismus. Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung* (Hamburg: HIS-Verlag, 2010), op. cit., 72f.

3. Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements. An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-639.

and illustrate how anti-Zionism can blur with age-old antisemitic narratives.

## 2. LINKING ANTI-ZIONIST FRAMES TO SOCIAL THEORETICAL ANALYSES OF ANTISEMITISM

The first to address the specific societal function of antisemitism were Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, who wrote the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the shadow of the Holocaust, and analyzed modern, bourgeois antisemitism as a “socially necessary illusion” to camouflage domination within capitalist production. The exclusive location of exploitation in the sphere of circulation together with the “historical confinement” of Jews in exactly this sphere, turned Jewish communities into the perfect target for pseudo-anticapitalist projections.<sup>4</sup>

Following this insight, Moishe Postone developed the projective dimension of antisemitism further in relating it to Marx’s notion of the *fetish of the commodity* and the abstract dimension of capitalist production, which in his view is attached to Jewish collectives in order to render it (pseudo-)graspable. This “biologization” of the abstract sphere constitutes the core of the antisemitic racialization:

“On the level of the capital fetish, it is not only the concrete side of the antimony which is naturalized and biologized. The manifest abstract dimension is also biologized—as the Jews. The opposition of the concrete material and the abstract becomes the racial opposition of the Arians and the Jews. Modern anti-Semitism involves a biologization of capitalism—which itself is only understood in terms of its manifest abstract dimension as International Jewry.<sup>5</sup>

Since Jews were not only identified with the sphere of money exchange, but rather with the abstract dimension of value *itself*, the antisemitic ideology provides an all-encompassing pseudo-explanatory potential. From such a theoretical perspective, it almost logically serves as a discursive resource for “explaining” the modern capitalist system:

Modern anti-Semitism is characterized [...] by its claim to explain the world—a world which had rapidly become too complex and threatening for many people. [...] The modern antisemitic worldview [...] is a form of thought in which the rapid development of industrial capitalism with all of its social ramifications is personified and identified as the Jew. [...] In other

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4. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer, 2004), op. cit., 182f.

5. Moishe Postone, “Anti-Semitism and National Socialism. Notes on the German Reaction to ‘Holocaust’,” *New German Critique* 19 (1980): 112.

words, the abstract domination of capital, which— particularly with rapid industrialization—caught people up in a web of dynamic forces they could not understand, became perceived as the domination of International Jewry.<sup>6</sup>

Both dimensions of antisemitic thought are related to what Adorno called “rumors about Jews” or in other words to various imaginations or framings of Jews and/or Jewishness. These are constituted by discursive elements like tropes and *topoi*<sup>7</sup> that draw on the attribution of abstractness and artificiality on the one hand, and of power and domination on the other.

Postone’s first quote above very well illustrates one essential discursive element or “frame” of such a “structurally antisemitic” worldview: namely, the false distinction between the sphere of production and the sphere of circulation into “productive” and “parasitic” capital, which basically corresponds to the opposition of abstract and concrete. It articulates in anti-modern resentments such as the distinction between “naturally grown” national cultures and artificial, cosmopolitan and mostly urban “Jewish intruders”. Associated with this is the distinction between “exploited” and “exploiters”, with the latter being projected onto Jews. The notion of the “parasitic” and “disintegrating” Jew can be attached to concrete figures, such as the famous merchant Shylock or Baron Rothschild, or articulated as a vaguer signifier that evokes the imagination of a bigger domination, for instance when the “US East Coast” is addressed. Such tropes eventually relate to a second crucial discursive element of antisemitic thought, which is reflected in Postone’s second quote and is linked to imaginations of being overwhelmed by uncontrollable “colonizing” forces. Alienation and feelings of disempowerment and helplessness in the face of capitalist modernity are (pseudo-) explained by the domination executed by a hardly graspable, abstract super-power, identified in the trope of a “Jewish world domination”.

Both discursive figures culminated in the national socialist ideology that constructed Jews not only as subversive internal thread, but as “colonizers” of the German nation and ultimately seeking world

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6. Ibid., 107.

7. Following a discourse-analytical perspective, “trope” is used to indicate metaphors that objectify antisemitic imaginations; e.g. “Shylock”, the “Imperial Jew”, the “US East Coast”, or the “Zionist Lobby”. As tropes are often connected to certain imagery, they can also be traced in concrete images like the examples in the appendix. The term “topos” on the other hand, reflects the Foucauldian insight that no wording happens coincidentally, but rather reflects the logics of thought of a certain statement. Topoi are thus to be understood as vaguely formulated imaginations, which indicate the underlying framing of the object in question. Examples would be the unquestioned linking of Zionism and colonialism and/or colonial racism and Apartheid, or the framing of the Israeli state as “Western” oppressive settler colony.



dominance. Nazi ideology revealed the paranoid and eliminatory potential of antisemitism in the most horrific manner and, after Nazi Germany's defeat, research and re-education should have put an end to this oldest hatred. Although open antisemitic hate-speech gradually declined, its basic frames have been persisting in modified forms until today. The most essential transformation of post-war antisemitism is its blurring with anti-Zionism, that peaked for the first time following the Six-Day-War in 1967.<sup>8</sup>

Since that time, antisemitic frames have formed a part of anti-imperialist anti-Zionist discourse, rising anew in the wake of the Second Intifada.<sup>9</sup> Such frames can also be traced in post- and de-colonial perspectives; for instance, when a criticism of Israeli politics conflates with narratives regarding the colonialist “nature” and imperialist role of the Israeli state. With reference to selected articles in the de-colonial journal *Human Architecture*,<sup>10</sup> I illustrate how such frames re-emerge in academic-political text production as a form of “discursive antisemitism”. Focus is given to debates on the historical and current relations of antisemitism and racism in the light of the Holocaust and colonial genocides and their—anything but coincidental—interconnection with recent developments of the Middle East conflict.

### 3. DE-COLONIAL DEBATES ON NEW ANTISEMITISM AND ISRAEL IN THE SHADOW OF THE HOLOCAUST AND POST SEPTEMBER 11

As a reaction to the Bush administration's proclamation of a “War on Terror” following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001, post- and de-colonial perspectives increasingly focus the question of neo-colonial geopolitics. As from 2006, scholars associated with the collaborative project “*Modernity/Coloniality*”<sup>11</sup> and the de-colonial Journal *Human Architecture*, organized two international conferences—both directly related to “*The post-September 11 New Ethnic/Racial Configurations in Europe and the United States*”. The first took place in 2006 and debated rising anti-Muslim resentment. Its proceedings focus on the “*Othering*” of

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8. e.g. Jean Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus,” In *Werke. Aufsätze zur Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2005 [orig. 1969]); Léon Poliakov, *Vom Antizionismus zum Antisemitismus* (Freiburg: Ça-ira, 1992).

9. e.g. Thomas Haury, “Der neue Antisemitismusstreit in der deutschen Linken,” In *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte*, ed. Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck and Natan Sznaider (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 143-168.

10. See: <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/> [accessed 20/02/15].

11. See: <http://www.pacarinadelsur.com/home/abordajes-y-contiendas/108-modernidad-colonialidad-descolonialidad-aclaraciones-y-replicas-desde-un-proyecto-epistemico-en-el-horizonte-del-bicentenario>; see for Europe: <http://decolonialityeurope.wix.com/decoloniality> [accessed 20/02/15].

Islam as a hegemonic neo-colonial project: enunciating a century-old entanglement of “Islamophobia”<sup>12</sup> and European colonialism, the rise of anti-Muslim racism is interpreted as current signature of neo-imperialism and its critique as a de-colonial necessity.<sup>13</sup> The second conference was organized in 2007 and addressed “new” antisemitism. The proceedings of this conference discuss the transformation of the resentment after Auschwitz and set a main focus on new, Israel-related antisemitism. However, in contrast to the discussion of “Islamophobia”, which is framed as a “Western” ideology directed against a “non-Western subaltern”, new antisemitism is presented as an outcome of the imperialist establishment of the Israeli state and of the entanglements of Israeli anti-terror policies with global counter-terrorism in the wake of the Second Intifada and the War on Terror— with both being framed as neo-colonial, imperialist politics.<sup>14</sup> Selected articles of this special issue form the basis of my critique of de-colonial Israel-criticism and its blurring with antisemitic stereotypes. I focus on four contributions by Marc Ellis, Ramón Grosfoguel, Walter Mignolo and Santiago Slabodsky that explicitly relate the discussion of antisemitism and racism to the Holocaust and colonialism and refer to the Middle East conflict in the light of these past and current victimizations.<sup>15</sup>

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12. Since the British *Runnymede Report* coined the term “Islamophobia” in 1997, there is scholarly and political debate re: anti-Muslim resentment—if denominated in this way or analyzed as racism. Scholars who follow this terminology, such as Chris Allen, Elizabeth Poole or Junaid Rana, refer to Edward Said’s criticism of a clash of cultures between “the West” and the “Islamic world” and thus conceptualize “Islamophobia” from an Orientalist political stance. Conceptual criticism of the term “Islamophobia” regards its lack of clarity and the individualizing and psychologizing consequences of conceptualizing resentment as phobia. “Anti-Muslim racism” is proposed as counter-concept by scholars following Etienne Balibar’s and Immanuel Wallerstein’s thesis of a culturalization and ethnicization of class and “race-thinking” in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; proponents would be Nasar Meer, Tariq Modood or, for the German-speaking context, Yasemin Shooman. Critics of this approach, such as German-Turkish scholar Necla Kelek, argue that “Muslims” would not be race and thus the term “racism” would be an inappropriate terminology but rather impeding a justified and necessary “criticism of Islam”. Such criticism, however, negates the processes of culturalization and racialization described early on by Balibar and Wallerstein and also overlooks its own entanglement with hegemonic anti-Muslim discourse. In my own terminology, I adopt the term anti-Muslim racism to denominate the resentment against Muslims.

13. Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, “Othering Islam,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, no. 1 (2006); Ramón Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants, “The Long-Durée Entanglement between Islamophobia and Racism in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist/Patriarchal World-System. An Introduction,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5, no. 1 (2006): 29-38.

14. Mohammad H. Tamdgidi, “Historicizing Anti-Semitism,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7, no. 2 (2009): VII-X.

15. Mark Ellis, “On Jewish Particularity and Anti-Semitism: Notes from a Jewish Theology of Liberation,”

I discuss the authors' perspectives as specific to de- and post-colonial debates in the context of anti-Zionist boycott activism, mostly related to the BDS movement. Since the Lebanon war in 2006 and more so due to the Gaza war in the winter of 2008/09, such campaigns have received increasing attention within European and American left-wing contexts, whereby the colonial framing of the Middle East conflict is at the heart of the political debates.<sup>16</sup>

It is in this specific political context that the texts of *Human Architecture* are to be understood: as de-/anti-colonial political interventions, they position themselves critical not only to Israeli politics, but also to the state itself. In mixing up theoretical discussions with criticism of Israel, polemics supersedes political analysis and the lines between anti-Zionism and antisemitism can blur. Such blurring is most obvious in the contributions by the Argentinian literary scholar Walter Mignolo and the Puerto Rican sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel. The first discusses historical genealogies of antisemitism and colonial racism(s) within the framework of the Holocaust and colonialism remembrance, and the latter new antisemitism in the light of the so-called "Operation Cast Lead". Starting with Mignolo's contribution, I illustrate crucial omissions and misinterpretations regarding the analysis of antisemitism and their linkage with Mignolo's depiction of the Holocaust as Western, euro-centric remembrance paradigm. Comparing the text with the perspective of de-colonial scholar Santiago Slabodsky, I show how both authors fail to analyze new antisemitism and argue correspondence-theoretically when it comes to the question of Israel, and how Mignolo even reproduces the resentment.

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*Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* VII, no. 2 (2009): 103-122; Ramón Grosfoguel, "Human Rights and Anti-Semitism after Gaza," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7, no. 2 (2009): 89-102; Walter Mignolo, "Dispensable and Bare Lives: Coloniality and the Hidden Political/Economic Agenda of Modernity," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7, no. 2 (2009a): 69-87; Santiago Slabodsky, "But there are no longer any anti-Semites! Vicious Circles, Jewish Destinies, and a Complementary Framework to Read De-colonial Discourses,"

*Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 7, no. 2 (2009): 35-53.

16. Camilla Bassi, " 'The Anti-Imperialism of Fools': A Cautionary Story on the Revolutionary Socialist Vanguard of England's Post-9/11 Anti-War Movement," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 9, no. 2 (2010): 113-137.

### 3.1 GENEALOGIES OF RACIALIZATION, “CONSTANTINIAN JEWS” AND THE LIMITS OF ANALYSIS

In his text *Dispensable and Bare Lives*, Walter Mignolo works on the genealogies of racialization within what he calls the European “colonial matrix”. He analyses the transition from religious *Othering* to biological racialization starting in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and connects this development to the emergence of the imperialist-colonialist world system. His main argument regards the difference between colonial racism(s) and antisemitism, which he discusses in the light of European colonialism and the Holocaust. Whereas the first subjected individuals to commodification and found its culmination point in the slave system, the latter racialized Jews as prototypical others within Europe and culminated in the Holocaust. Drawing on Giorgio Agamben and Hannah Arendt, Mignolo denominates the first type of racialization as “dispensable” and the latter as “bare” lives.<sup>17</sup>

The author’s following discussion of racist genealogies, however, shows problematic omissions and biases when it comes to the specificity of antisemitism and the interrelated analytical perspective on the Holocaust as a “rupture in civilization”.<sup>18</sup> Mignolo draws on Hannah Arendt’s analysis of the connection between colonial “race thinking” and radicalizing antisemitism within late 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, but misinterprets her analysis. Instead of dealing with Arendt’s historical argument, Mignolo claims that she simply dismisses the analysis of colonial racism(s) in privileging the Jewish experience in the light of the Holocaust.<sup>19</sup> He presents Aimé Césaire’s postulate of the Holocaust being nothing more than a “boomerang” of colonialist atrocities and genocides coming back to Europe, as a non-Eurocentric counter-perspective to her view and thus as the more adequate analysis. Thereby, he not only leaves out Arendt’s discourse-analytical approach, but even omits that it was actually *she* who coined the boomerang-term.<sup>20</sup>

17. Mignolo, 2009a, op. cit., 76f.

18. Dan Diner, *Zivilisationsbruch: Denken nach Auschwitz* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1988).

19. Mignolo 2009a, op. cit., 81f.

20. In her book on the *Origins of Totalitarianism* Hannah Arendt analyses the South African Boers as a prototypical society, organized according to the social category of “race”. In the English edition of her book she denominates the influence of this racist organizing principle on European societies as “boomerang effects”. Furthermore, in her view, this “race thinking” would set the ground for the triumph of National Socialism and would later become an essential element of national-socialist ideology. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1966 [orig. 1951]), 158ff, 183, 206.

Besides, Césaire's perspective has two crucial analytical consequences: discussing the Holocaust exclusively as *choc en retour* of colonial atrocities and genocides leaves out Arendt's analysis of the specific nature of antisemitism—in particular, her insight that it is a (distorted) “imperial” or “colonial” framing of Jews that constitutes one main dimension of antisemitic thought. In line with this, Mignolo's argument does not aim at an understanding of the Holocaust as paranoid culmination point of the specific antisemitic racialization in Europe, but rather uses it to underpin his criticism of a dismissal of colonial atrocities and genocides within “Western” remembrance discourse. In this sense the author makes use of the Holocaust for his political argument that the Eurocentric focus on this special genocide would blank out Europe's sanguinary and deadly colonial past.

This dismissal of the very functionality of antisemitic racialization ultimately relates to one core element of de-colonial misconceptions regarding the relation of antisemitism and racism(s)—namely to the discursive “whitening” of Jewish collectives when compared with other racialized groups. Such de-racialization that comes along with the framing of Jewish communities as being part of (Western) dominant societies is a common feature of post- and de-colonial perspectives with consequences on two levels: As illustrated just now, it is linked to a competitive view on past victimizations concerning colonialism and the Holocaust by framing globalized remembrance as a zero-sum game, in which the Holocaust would monopolize colonialism remembrance. Second, it relates to current victimizations in discussing the relation of contemporary antisemitism and racism(s) incorrectly, especially with regard to anti-Muslim racism. Beginning with the first level, such “competitions of victimhood”<sup>21</sup> run like a common thread through Mignolo's account and the author uses the Holocaust in order to make the argument of an omission regarding colonial victimizations. The interconnection with an ascription of “whiteness” can be illustrated best with reference to the author's reception of Césaire's famous quote, claiming that what Europe could not forgive Hitler were not his crimes against man as such, but his crimes against “the *white man*, and the fact that he applied to Europe *colonialist procedures* which until then had been reserved only for the Arabs of Algeria, the c\*<sup>22</sup> of India and the

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21. Ronald J. Berger, *Fathoming the Holocaust. A Social Problems Approach* (New York: de Gruyter, 2002).

22. Following Araba Johnston-Arthurs interventionist approach, I do not write out in full the pejorative denomination in order not to re-inscribe the racist violence of the wording by repeating it. See Araba Evelyn Johnston-Arthur, ‘Es ist Zeit, der Geschichte selbst eine Gestalt zu geben . . . Strategien der Entkolonisierung und Ermächtigung im Kontext der modernen afrikanischen Diaspora in Österreich’, In *re/visionen. Postkoloniale Perspektiven*

n\* of Africa”.<sup>23</sup> The second level regards the discussion of modern and “new” antisemitism. In proclaiming that Jewish emancipation in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century would have led to a secularization that is to be analyzed as a historical turning point and as the end of Jewish racialization and exclusion, he again fails to analyze the specificity as well as the variability of antisemitism. Regarding modern antisemitism, such a view blinds out the coercion to “assimilate”, the fact that only a very small percentage of Jews were partly integrated and—above all—that this differential inclusion furthermore fed into the transformation of antisemitism to a “cultural code” that ultimately culminated in the Holocaust.<sup>24</sup> Regarding new, Israel-related antisemitism after Auschwitz, however, Mignolo does not stop at the level of misconception. In addition to his analysis of a “whitening” of European Jews, he also claims “complicity” between secular Jews and Western imperialism and concludes that current antisemitism would be a consequence of a “collaboration” between “Western (neo) liberalism”, “secular capitalism” and (secular) Jewish communities:

Secular Jewness [*sic*]<sup>25</sup> joined secular Euro-American economic practices (e.g., imperial capitalism). The major consequence of the complicity between secular Jews and Euro-American economic and political practice ended up in the construction of the State of Israel—what Marc Ellis describes as “Constantine Jews.” Anti-Semitism today is clearly a consequence of the historical collusion between Western (neo) liberalism and secular capitalism, backed up by Christianity, on the one hand, and “Constantine Jews,” on the other.<sup>26</sup>

Such a view not only disregards post-Holocaust changes in antisemitism, from an openly expressed and group-related stereotyping to state-related anti-Zionism; moreover, it also reproduces the resentment.

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*von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland*, ed. Kien Nghi Ha, Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, and Sheila Mysorekar (Münster: Unrast, 2007), 423-445.

23. Césaire quoted in Mignolo 2009a, 77, my emphasis.

24. Shulamit Volkov, “Antisemitism as a Cultural Code. Reflections on the History and historiography of Antisemitism in Imperial Germany,” In *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute*, XXIII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 25-45.

25. Mignolo adopts the term “Constantinian Judaism/Jewishness” coined by US-American liberation theologian Marc H. Ellis, who differentiates between what he calls a “Constantinian Jewish establishment”, “Progressive Jews” and “Jews of Conscience” with regard to inner-Jewish political debates about Israel and Anti-/Zionism. Mignolo, however, receives Ellis’ terminology in a distorted way in reproducing it as “Constantine Jewness”. “Jewness”, though, is a pejorative expression. Relating to Hannah Arendt it could be translated as “*Jüdischkeit*”; a term, by which she denominated the partial incorporation of anti-Jewish ascriptions as one possible psychological reaction to the constant exposure to antisemitism (Arendt 1986, 165, 169).

26. Mignolo 2009a, 87.

Alleged “Jewish complicity” with the European imperial project, especially, culminating in the establishment of the Israeli state, clearly relates to the above-described antisemitic *topoi*—and in line with this, also, Mignolo’s misconception of Mark Ellis’ figure of “Constantinian Jews.” Relating to inner-Jewish dissent about Israel and Anti/Zionism, Ellis proposes the three empirical categories: “Progressive Jews”, “Jews of Conscience”, and “Constantinian Jews”, with the latter corresponding to right-of-center and conservative political positions.<sup>27</sup> Ironically, the authors’ own hint to the risk “Jews of Conscience” face, namely that their criticism of Israeli politics gets twisted to fuel antisemitic prejudices, can be illustrated with regard to Mignolo’s reading of the categories: the author only refers to the subject position of “Constantinian Jews” and does this in such an essentialist and ontological way, that he presents them as a general “Jewish” category that would provoke new antisemitism.<sup>28</sup> In that way he re-evokes the modern antisemitic stereotype of rich and well-established Jews collaborating with the capitalist and colonial world order. A frame-analytical look on Mignolo’s account thus shows how biased de-colonial perspectives not only fail to grasp antisemitism, but rather reproduce it. Comparing Mignolo’s view with the contribution of the Argentinian de-colonial philosopher Santiago Slabodsky can substantiate this critique further.

In the same issue of *Human Architecture*, Slabodsky illustrates the historical legacies and post-1948 transformation of antisemitism from a de-colonial perspective. Like Mignolo, he analyzes the biological racialization of Jewish collectives as associated with modernity and colonialism, but without missing the specificity of antisemitic racialization. Slabodsky elaborates the changing role of what he calls the “figure of the (imperial) Jew” within the colonial context. He illustrates that it shifted from representing prototypical otherness *within* Europe towards the role of being a “pseudo-European” (and white) proxy for colonization. Drawing on Albert Memmi,<sup>29</sup> he points out that the discursive shift came along with the—not least very material—placing of Jewish communities in an intermediate position between colonizer and colonized, which ultimately turned them into perfect scapegoats for colonialism: “Rephrasing this phenomenon [the “use” of “Jewishness”, J.E.] from the 16th to the 20th centuries, the *use of the Jew within colonial discourses* takes the following path: first, Jews are being projected as the paradigm of *universal otherness* to comprehend the foreign; second, certain groups are separated from

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27. Ellis 2009, op. cit., 108f.

28. Mignolo 2009a, 87.

29. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991 [orig. 1957]).

others in virtue of their “Judaism” in order to reflect an *intermediary and advanced force of imperialism*.<sup>30</sup> In explicating the discursive function of Jewish racialization within the colonial and imperialist world system, Slabodsky indicates the crucial difference between colonial racism(s) and anti-Semitism: namely the attribution of abstract power and domination, in this special case relating to the *topos* of an advanced force of imperialism. Albeit also arguing from an Israel-critical stance, Slabodsky’s argument thus critically engages with the antisemitic trope of the “Imperial Jew”. Such analysis is of urgent need within post- and de-colonial perspectives, as they tend to negate the resentment by advocating its supersession by “Islamophobia”<sup>31</sup>, or even to perpetuate it.

Slabodsky is well aware of that there is a lack of theoretical understanding of antisemitism within anti-Zionist post- and de-colonial perspectives. In his view, “the critique of [...] the ticket of the colonial knowledge engages only partially with the problem. It does trace Jewish responsibility, but does not include a full analysis of the function of its figure [i.e., the discursive figure of the “Imperial Jew” - J.E.] in colonial discourses, which might reveal new hints regarding racialization”.<sup>32</sup> Slabodsky proposes to extend the analysis of antisemitism to include its specificity, but he does not address the Israel-related reproduction of the resentment. He analyses the trope of the “Imperial Jew” as antisemitic, but fails to transfer this insight onto the colonial framing of the Israeli state and does not address biased narratives regarding Israel as symbol for neo-colonial oppression. In order to fill this gap, I illustrate intersections between such imperial narratives and de-colonial anti-Zionist stances.

### 3.2 ISRAEL AS A NEO-COLONIAL SIGNIFIER

As mentioned in the introduction, de-colonial perspectives on the Middle East conflict regard the Israeli state as an oppressive settler colonial project, and thus, as the *cause* for antisemitism after Auschwitz. Only Mark Ellis critically points to the shortcomings of this perspective, but does not go further in his analysis—all other authors regard Israel as (more or less) oppressive settler colony. In this argument, Zionism is disentangled from the background of its historic evolution as the idea of Jewish national liberation facing radicalizing European antisemitism, and is regarded as a veritable anti-thesis to a “national liberation movement”. This framing relates to the crux of the matter: to the interconnection of the discursive

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30. Slabodsky 2009, 45, my emphasis.

31. e.g. Ramón Grosfoguel, “Epistemic Islamophobia and Colonial Social Sciences,” *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* VIII, no. 2 (2010): 29-38.

32. Slabodsky 2009, 40.



whitening of Jewish communities and the colonial framing of the Jewish state.

Mignolo's direct line from (white) secular—or Constantinian—Jews to the foundation of the Israeli state clearly illustrates the framing of Israel as an installed settler colony, backed up by “the West” with the US on its forefront, and constituting a “foreign body” within the ‘naturally’ evolved Arab nations surrounding it. This narrative corresponds to the first discursive feature of antisemitism—namely, to the anti-modern imagination of a Jewish subversion of ethno-national entities, tied together by blood, culture and shared soil. Furthermore, de-colonial perspectives ignore the fact that the majority of the Jews arriving in the 1930s in the British Mandate for Palestine fled Europe, and thus again dismiss the Holocaust. Lastly, the ahistorical perspective blanks out the much more complex, and also *anti*-colonial elements of the Israeli nation building process, as well as civil alliances between Jewish and Arab communities prior to the establishment of the Israeli state.<sup>33</sup>

Such omissions are meaningful, as they contribute to the transfer of the discursive whitening of Jews and Jewish communities onto the Israeli nation state. This narrative is not restricted to the historical nation-building process, but also reflected in de-colonial views on the current state that do not take into account its diverse population. In leaving out of the picture Arab and Sephardic Jews, Yemenite and Ethiopian communities, or Palestinian Israelis, which actually represent one fifth of the population, again the state is presented as a “white” European colonial project. Hence, the whole (Jewish) Israeli population is equated with colonialists and the huge tensions that the question of the settlements causes *within* Israeli society is ignored. Israeli geographer Oren Yiftachel criticizes such “Sa'idian inspired accounts” for their biased views, their “diminution of local agency, and the subsequent overlooking of the dialectics of violence, which come to their sharpest contrast in the deadly dance of state and local terror”.<sup>34</sup> Here again the omission is not coincidental, but a systematic feature of de-colonial accounts: Israel is portrayed as colonial apartheid-state and the Palestinians as subaltern victims. The open antisemitism of actors like Hamas and Hezbollah, or Palestinian terrorism, are either ignored or exclusively discussed as legitimate anti-colonial violence. Yiftachel concludes that such narratives ironically perpetuate exactly what the critique of Orientalism pointed out with regard to imageries of the Arab

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33. e.g. Ariella Azoulay, “Civil Alliances – Palestine, 1947–1948,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 4 (2014): 413–433; Tom Segev, *One Palestine, complete. Jews and Arabs under the British mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000).

34. Oren Yiftachel, “(Un)settling colonial presents,” *Political Geography* 27, no. 3 (2008): 368.

world: framing the (Israeli) “Other” as monolithic, undifferentiated and threatening.<sup>35</sup> In extreme cases the colonial framing intermingles with a demonizing political discourse that compares Israeli politics with National Socialism. The interrelatedness of the colonial frame with such demonizing narratives and with the *topos* of Jewish power is illustrated in the following paragraph with regard to the contribution of Ramón Grosfoguel.<sup>36</sup>

In his text *Human Rights and Anti-Semitism after Gaza* Grosfoguel discusses “global consequences” of the “latest Israeli massacre in Gaza” with regard to “human rights and global antisemitism”. His principal argument is that the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2008/09 would have put a symbolic end to the hegemonic—Western global/colonial— human rights’ regime by unmasking its imperialist function.<sup>37</sup> First, the military intervention in Gaza was “the most visible example of the colonial consequences of the ‘War against Terrorism’ used today as the *main mechanism of state terrorism around the world to fight liberation movements*”.<sup>38</sup> Second, the author claims that the United Nations’ (non-)reaction to the escalation revealed their role as tool of imperialist and colonial oppression, and the notion of “universal human rights” thus would have to be challenged by progressives around the globe.<sup>39</sup> In both conclusions the Middle East conflict is presented as a focal point of a global conflict between the “Western” neo-colonial world order and the

35. *Ibid.*, op. cit., 367.

36. It should be noted here that non-academic political symbolism linked to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement employs far more explicit antisemitic images and demonizing tropes regarding the Israeli state, “Zionism”, or concrete political actors. Images of the Brazilian cartoonist Carlos Latuff for instance get regularly used in BDS-campaigns or by other anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist groups around the globe; another source of antisemitic imagery is the internet platform DeviantArt (<http://www.deviantart.com/browse/all/>), where numerous anti-Zionist political cartoons and images are uploaded. Such imagery for instance includes the portrayal of a somehow personified imagination of “Zionism” that would kill Palestinians in an excessively cruel way and in this context an emblematic equation of Zionism with National Socialism is frequently drawn. The first annexed figure below is such an image of personified “Zionism” depicted as a hand holding a gas can, and pouring gas on an already burning Palestinian child (fig. 1); another example illustrates the equation of National Socialism and Zionism (fig. 2). Regarding political actors, examples predominantly relate to world domination tropes, such as portraying late Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as a “puppet master” influencing US-politics (fig. 3), or his successor Binyamin Netanyahu as a butcher slaughtering the Palestinian people, while silencing the rest of the world in order not to awake the Arab League (fig. 4). Extreme examples also include direct NS-linkages such as a portrayal of Ariel Sharon as member of the SS (fig 5). For all caricatures see the appendix. [accessed 24/02/15].

37. Grosfoguel 2009, 89.

38. *Ibid.*, 91, my emphasis.

39. *Ibid.*

subaltern resistance of “the Rest”. In putting Israel at the center of worldwide injustices, Grosfoguel relates to the antisemitic framing of an omnipotent Jewish power with the potential to influence events on a global scale. Such a view is not restricted to this text, but also advocated by Mignolo who likewise presents Israel and the Middle East conflict as a symbolic forefront of the (neo-) colonial global split into the “West” and the “Rest,”<sup>40</sup> or as a paradigmatic example for (cultural) genocidal colonialism.<sup>41</sup> To sum up this framing, it can be concluded that the Israeli state functions as a signifier for colonial oppression and genocide.

In this respect, the Holocaust is used again—namely, when Grosfoguel compares Israeli policies with National Socialism. First, he proclaims that Zionism after Gaza definitely would be demasked as a “racist, apartheid, settler colonialist project resorting to ethnic cleansing and *Nazi-like atrocities*”.<sup>42</sup> Following his biased view on Zionism as a racist ideology, Grosfoguel poses the question to what extent the term “Hitlerism” could be adequately used for Israeli politics towards the Palestinians. In this respect he concludes, that “Gaza is today the *equivalent continuity of the Warsaw ghetto*.”<sup>43</sup> Such statements are not only historically wrong and highly problematic; they also delegitimize the Israeli state on a symbolic level. In this way the author supports the general claims of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement, which basically call for the dissolution of Israel’s existence as a Jewish state due to its racist foundation. The depiction of Zionism as inherently racist and colonialist again illustrates the “whiteness” frame and the biased view very well—it only makes sense if Israel gets constructed as a “natural” anti-thesis to subaltern national liberation, which once more is related to the trope of the “Imperial Jew”. In the words of conflict researcher Herbert Kelman, such a framing is thus not only illegitimate, but also antisemitic.<sup>44</sup>

The last discursive feature of the colonial frame regards the ascription of power and influence embodied in the trope of “the Israel Lobby”. Albeit there is no doubt that pro-Israeli lobbying exists, it is depicted as far more

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40. Walter Mignolo, “The Enduring Enchantment: (Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here),” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (2002): 934.

41. Walter Mignolo “Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity,” *In Modernologies. Contemporary Artists Researching Modernity and Modernism*, 2009b, 40, [http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/walter\\_mignolo\\_modernologies\\_eng.pdf](http://www.macba.cat/PDFs/walter_mignolo_modernologies_eng.pdf) [accessed 14/03/15].

42. Grosfoguel 2009, 92, my emphasis.

43. *Ibid.*, 93, my emphasis.

44. Herbert C. Kelman, “Antisemitismus und Zionismus in der Debatte der Palästinafrage,” *In Zwischen Antisemitismus und Islamophobie. Vorurteile und Projektionen in Europa und Nahost*, eds. John Bunzl and Alexandra Senfft (Hamburg: VSA, 2008), 238-25, 247.

influential and intimidating than the rapidly increasing anti-Israeli activism, especially in US-academia, would actually suggest. Nevertheless, a recurring motive regarding the public reception of BDS-activism is the hint to a politics of “censorship” that presents substantial Israel-criticism as a precarious and suppressed endeavor, and the “accusation of antisemitism” as part of imperialist politics.<sup>45</sup> In an open letter signed, among others, by Walter Mignolo, this perspective is explicitly related to the powerful lobby proclaiming that “a factor that dissuades many from refusing complicity with apartheid and occupation is the might of the Israel lobby in the U.S.”<sup>46</sup> Along with the colonial framing, Israel-criticism thus develops into a matter for brave and truly insurgent and somehow “subaltern” activists; whereas, the other camp cowardly abstains, and thus acts in complicity with the neo-colonial world order.

Such “Orientalist” narratives can be taken as exemplary for de- and post-colonial Israel-criticism, as the biased (pseudo-)anti-colonial political stance and the monolithic caricature of the Israeli state is traceable in numerous anti-Zionist calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions. Almost every call functions according to such patterns: Artists, scholars and activists are called on to stand on “the right side of history”, end “Israeli Apartheid” and fight the “ongoing genocide” of the Palestinian people.<sup>47</sup> In this somewhat simple equation, Islamist political groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are correspondingly portrayed as anti-imperialist national liberation movements.<sup>48</sup> In this way, Israel functions as a symbol for neo-colonialism, and the willingness to support boycotts turns into a

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45. e.g. Judith Butler, “The Charge of Anti-Semitism. Jews, Israel, and the Risks of Public Critique,” In *Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006), 101-128; Jasbir Puar, “Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking about the Sexual Politics of Israel,” *Feminist Legal Studies* 19, no. 2 (2011): 133-142.

46. <http://pulsemedia.org/2010/05/09/boycott-israel-amitav-ghosh-the-dan-david-prize/> [accessed 16/03/15].

47. For exemplary calls see: <http://boycottisrael.info/>; <http://www.pacbi.org/> on the PACBI website see for instance: “PACBI Salutes All People of Conscience who have Recently Adopted BDS: Accelerate the Boycott! End Israeli Colonialism and Genocidal Aggression” August 2014 [accessed 16/03/15].

48. Most prominent in this context is a statement by queer theorist and BDS-activist Judith Butler made at Berkeley University during a “Teach in against the War” in March 2008. The teach in was organized as a reaction to the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War and discussed BDS’ political strategies. Asked about the role of Hezbollah and Hamas in the global struggle for a “free Palestine”, Prof. Butler answered that it would be important to consider both movements as progressive and part of a global left that should be entered into a conversation with other left-wing actors:

[http://www.shiatv.net/view\\_video.php?viewkey=a7d8c2c43d504b2babb8](http://www.shiatv.net/view_video.php?viewkey=a7d8c2c43d504b2babb8) [accessed 16/03/15].

precondition, or a “ticket”, for being part of a global, progressive left. This logic of either/or—*either* being on the right side of history, *or* backing up neo-colonialism—is ultimately connected to the “Orientalist” monolithic colonial framing that substitutes analyses with narratives. In the concluding section, I ask why Israel lies at the heart of such narratives.

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS: WHY ISRAEL?

Summing up this criticism, it can be concluded that de-colonial accounts produce certain narratives of the Israeli state, portraying it as colonial endeavor with genocidal potential. Thereby the Holocaust is used for two interrelated arguments: on the one hand it is portrayed to lead to the dismissal of colonial racism(s) and their post-colonial continuities; on the other hand, comparisons with National Socialism serve as demonization of Israel as genocidal settler colony. The colonial framing of Israel not only lacks empirical grounding, but also reveals the *discursive function* of the discussion about the Middle East conflict and Israel. The key question in this regard is: *why* does the Israeli nation-building process and the state get framed in such a different way to any other nation? Why, as David Hirsh remarks, is only the analysis of one kind of racism excluded from anti-racist discourse, namely antisemitism that takes the form of Israel-criticism?<sup>49</sup> One answer would relate this to Israel’s function as a (sub-) cultural code or signifier of (neo-)colonialism, a framing that is ultimately connected to the blurring of anti-Zionism and antisemitism.

A frame-analytical investigation shows how “old” and “new” antisemitism refer to the same *topoi* and tropes—differences regard the projection surface rather than the frames. Mignolo reproduces classical modern antisemitism with group-related stereotypes, main discursive features of which are alleged “complicity” with the capitalist and colonialist world order, which basically correspond to the notion of (parasitic) exploitation, and the attribution of power and artificiality or abstractness. One specific post- or de-colonial feature is the attribution of “whiteness” to Jewish communities, usually contrasted with the “Islamophobic” racialization of Muslim communities that are framed as subaltern. In such a view, the currently observable Islamization of antisemitism is also explained correspondence-theoretically as an outcome of the Middle East conflict or—more explicitly—as “anti-colonial resistance”. The whiteness-frame thus shifts the traditional opposition between the (exploiting) ruling class and the (exploited) subaltern to an ethnicized and racialized level.

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49. David Hirsh, “Hostility to Israel and Antisemitism,” *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 5, no. 1 (2013): 23-45.

Pertaining to the attribution of whiteness is the colonial framing of the Israeli state. Main discursive features are the depiction of Israel as a racist, colonial apartheid-state, whereby extreme articulations compare the Israeli “perpetrator state” with National Socialism. Part of such inappropriate comparisons is the challenge to the idea of the Holocaust as a rupture in civilization, and the use of that challenge to make political claims about the dismissal of colonial atrocities. A look at European remembrance culture shows that such competitions are indeed connected to the ongoing suppression of the remembrance of colonialism, while the Holocaust in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century gradually turned into a signifier for a unified Europe that has come to terms with its genocidal past. Victorious colonial powers especially, such as France, framed themselves as liberators from fascism and National Socialism while contemporaneously suppressing Maghrebian anticolonial movements after World War II.<sup>50</sup> Such a silencing, however, is due to political decisions on the level of ideological state apparatuses and their influence on the hegemonic discourse, and surely *not* an outcome of the alleged privileging of Jewish suffering as it is presented in biased post- and de-colonial accounts. Furthermore, the depiction of a privileged suffering of Jewish communities due to their “whiteness” is intrinsically linked to de-colonial narratives of the establishment of the Israeli state as colonial endeavor—and, as shown above, this framing can blur with antisemitic tropes and *topoi*. Most decisive in this context is the portrayal of Israel as the spearhead of the “War against Terror” and thus as forefront of the neo-colonial world order. In this way, the Middle East conflict—and especially the Israeli state—function as an anti-colonial symbol for *the* neo-Colonial evil. Such focus on Israel as a symbol for neo-colonialism feeds into the antisemitic trope of the “Imperial Jew”, and relates to imaginations of a Jewish super-power and thus ultimately to fantasies of world domination.

In conclusion, one can say that the colonial framing of the Middle East conflict and Israel is fundamentally an anti-political one; it relates to dichotomous narratives of politics rather than to its analysis. As shown above, the formula is quite easy: Neither can Jewish communities be subaltern, nor can the Jewish state be other than a colonial construction imposed on “naturally” grown ethno-national collectives—a framing that has to be analyzed as part of an antisemitic pseudo-analysis of the current neo-colonial world system. In this sense, biased post- and de-colonial perspectives can be theoretically linked to Moishe Postone’s concept of “structural antisemitism”. Instead of providing a distorted and false explanation for capitalism, however, they produce an abridged and false

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50. See for instance Dan Diner, *Gegenläufige Gedächtnisse. Über Geltung und Wirkung des Holocaust* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007).

explanation of colonialism. As this critique indicates, such theoretical analysis is urgently needed within post- and de-colonial perspectives. Antisemitism has to be analyzed as a negative leitmotif of modernity that follows certain patterns and frames.<sup>51</sup> Such a frame-analytical view clearly shows that both the discursive “whitening” of Jewish communities and the imperial role of the Israeli state are (relatively) new, post-Holocaust features of structural antisemitism.

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51. Samuel Salzborn, *Antisemitismus als negative Leitidee der Moderne. Sozialwissenschaftliche Theorien im Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2010).

## APPENDIX

FIGURE 1: [HTTPS://COMMENTISFREEWATCH.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM/2011/01/LATUFF-LINKED-BY-ENGAGE-1.JPG](https://commentisfreewatch.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/LATUFF-LINKED-BY-ENGAGE-1.JPG)



FIGURE 2: [HTTP://WWW.DEVIANTART.COM/ART/HITSLEAR-443154119](http://www.deviantart.com/art/HITSLEAR-443154119)



FIGURE 3: [HTTP://LATUFF.DEVIANTART.COM/ART/THE-GODFATHER-1809410](http://latuff.deviantart.com/art/The-Godfather-1809410)

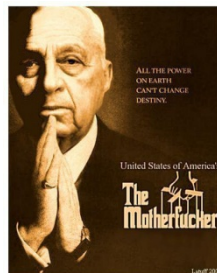




FIGURE 4: [HTTPS://LATUFFCARTOONS.FILES.WORDPRESS.COM/2014/07/NAO-PERTURBE-CRIMINOSOS-DE-GUERRA-TRABALHANDO.GIF](https://latuffcartoons.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/nao-perturbe-criminosos-de-guerra-trabalhando.gif)



FIGURE 5: [HTTP://LATUFF.DEVIANTART.COM/ART/ARIEL-SSHARON-1781122](http://latuff.deviantart.com/art/Ariel-SSharon-1781122)



# Holocaust Education in Austria in the Light of the Frankfurt School

Elke Rajal\*

This article examines Holocaust Education in Austria, employing a Frankfurt School approach. It raises the question of what Holocaust Education can learn from Critical Theory as presented by Theodor W. Adorno. First, I outline the research design of a qualitative interview-study of Holocaust Education in Austria. Second, I explain the theoretical underpinnings, above all the ideals and goals of education and some concrete suggestions for education about the past from a Frankfurt School perspective. Then, I give a brief overview of the history and development of Holocaust Education in Austria. Finally, the findings of the qualitative interview-study are presented.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

In 2010 I conducted a study into how the subjects of National Socialism and the Shoah are presented to school pupils in Austria<sup>1</sup> My central objective was to determine the nature – the self-conception, content and pedagogical approaches – of what is known as “Holocaust Education” in Austria. I asked whether it made a contribution to the development of critical and mature subjects as defined by Critical Theory<sup>2</sup>, as described by Adorno<sup>3</sup> To this end, I outlined the principles of education after Auschwitz

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1. Elke Rajal. 2010. “Erziehung nach/über Auschwitz. Holocaust Education in Österreich vor dem Hintergrund Kritischer Theorie”, *University of Vienna*. Accessed July 13th, 2015. [http://othes.univie.ac.at/9158/1/2010-04-05\\_0307509.pdf](http://othes.univie.ac.at/9158/1/2010-04-05_0307509.pdf).

2. I use the terms “Critical Theory” (in German “Kritische Theorie”) and “Frankfurt School” synonymously to mean a specific tradition of understanding society following Adorno, Horkheimer and other scholars of the Institute for Social Research. In this paper I mostly refer to Theodor W. Adorno.

3. E.g. <sup>Theodor W.</sup> Adorno. *Minima Moralia. Reflexionen aus dem Beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1951); *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit. Vorträge und Gespräche mit Hellmut Becker 1959-1969* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970); *Studien zum autoritären Charakter* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973); “Schuld und Abwehr. Eine qualitative Analyse zum Gruppenexperiment”, in *Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 9*, ed. <sup>Theodor W.</sup> Adorno (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986a), 122-324; “Zur Bekämpfung des Antisemitismus heute”, in *Vermischte Schriften II. Gesellschaft*,

as defined within the framework of Critical Theory and, on this basis, conducted ten qualitative, problem-centered interviews<sup>4</sup> with a variety of stakeholders in Holocaust Education in Austria: representatives of the Austrian Ministry of Education, personnel of the Austrian Interior Ministry (which is responsible for the Mauthausen Memorial) and members of several NGOs that organize educational activities related to National Socialism and the Shoah for students. Furthermore the findings of the qualitative content analysis of these interviews were contextualized by a document analysis of school curricula, programmatic texts and scholarly literature.<sup>5</sup>

#### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical foundations of my study were as follows. In the first place, I examined the position of education within the thought of the Frankfurt School (in particular in the work of Adorno). I analyzed and argued why and how education after Auschwitz should be pursued. I also investigated how education could contribute to combatting anti-Semitism. Then I compared and contrasted these findings with the term and concept of “Holocaust Education”.

Adorno does not offer a specific theory of education. Nonetheless, a variety of pedagogical considerations play a role in his work. Moreover, much of relevance to the subject of education can be found in his non-explicitly educational writings – above all, as regards the social, political and economic conditions for education. Education is the central topic of a number of lectures and discussions from the 1950’s and 60’s, including “Education to maturity” (1970), “Education after Auschwitz” (ibid.), “Education for debarbarization” (ibid.), “Education - what for?” (ibid.), “Taboos about the teaching profession” (ibid.) etc.

In these writings, Adorno links education to the effort to shape mature and more or less autonomous subjects in order to prevent a relapse into barbarism. But, in his view, education cannot be understood in a social vacuum or as a cure-all for social and economic inequality. The potential of education is therefore seen as limited. However, Adorno also noted that: “Since the possibility of changing the objective – namely societal and political – conditions is extremely limited today, attempts to work against

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*Unterricht, Politik, Gesammelte Schriften Bd. 20*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986b), 360-384.

4. Jochen Gläser and Grit Laudel. *Experteninterviews und Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse als Instrumente Rekonstruierender Untersuchungen* (Wiesbaden: Vs Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

5. For this paper I have updated my research findings to include more recent documents and texts.

the repetition of Auschwitz are necessarily restricted to the subjective dimension.”<sup>6</sup> He concluded from this that education and the turn to the subject (defined below) were destined to play an important role in preventing attempts to repeat Auschwitz. So Adorno’s categorical imperative is: “The premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again.”<sup>7</sup> In the light of this imperative, the goals of education are seen as the following<sup>8</sup>:

- Education for maturity (understood as independent and conscious decision-making);
- Education towards critical self-reflection;
- Education towards a strengthening of the ego (in the Freudian sense);
- Strengthening of resistance rather than strengthening of adaptation;
- Autonomy, understood as the power of reflection, self-determination and non-conformity;
- Encouragement of individuality and prevention of blind identification with the collective;
- Education for the ability to experience;
- Education for imagination;
- Education for disgust or shame about violence (without denying the necessity of violence for the purposes of anti-barbarism);
- Education for the ability to recognize ideology as such.

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6. Theodor W. Adorno. “Education after Auschwitz”, in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 20.

7. Ibid., 19. The essay “Erziehung nach Auschwitz” was only translated into English in 1997. For further information see: Matthias Heyl. 1999. “ ‘Holocaust Education’: Internationale Tendenzen im pädagogischen Umgang mit der Geschichte des Holocaust”, *Forschungs- und Arbeitsstelle “Erziehung nach/über Auschwitz.”* Accessed July 10, 2015. [http://www.fasena.de/download/hey/Heyl%20\(1999\).pdf](http://www.fasena.de/download/hey/Heyl%20(1999).pdf).

8. For a more detailed treatment of the goals of education about the past see: Andreas Peham and Elke Rajal. “Erziehung wozu? Holocaust und Rechtsextremismus in der Schule”, in *Jahrbuch 2010. Schwerpunkt: Vermittlungsarbeit mit Jugendlichen und Erwachsenen*, ed. Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (Vienna: DÖW, 2010), 38-65.

These goals also include the rejection of educational ideas which promote order, authority, collectives, adaptation and toughness – represented above all by notions of masculinity.

Adorno also provides some suggestions about how to achieve these goals:

- Education means a turn to the subject, but, besides the concentration on individual education, great importance is given to the enlightenment of society as a whole in order to create an intellectual, cultural and social climate in which a recurrence of Auschwitz would no longer be possible.
- The turn to the subject means seeking to understand the mechanisms that render people capable of atrocities, explaining these mechanisms to people and awakening a general awareness of them.
- One has to start with education in early childhood since this is when the foundations are laid for the development either of autonomous and reflective characters able to experience or, on the other hand, of authoritarian characters. This means minimizing the role of authority which is not understandable to the child and minimizing coldness and hardness. Adorno knew that you cannot preach love, but you can gain an insight into the conditions that determine coldness and attempt to combat them.
- Adorno highlights the importance of pre-school education in order to respond to signs of ethnocentric reactions from the children.
- The second focus is on political education. This is understood as sociology, meaning education about social dynamics (the relationship between the state - or society as a whole - and the individual).
- Moreover, Adorno calls for an education in an ability to be critical towards the culture industry.

These are Adorno's ideals and suggestions as regards education at a general level. He also provides some further suggestions which can be very useful for education about the past (or in more specific terms, about National Socialism and the Shoah). Let me mention just some of them:

- According to Adorno, you should not appeal to values (over which those who are capable of atrocities merely shrug their shoulders).
- He says that you should not stop at the accusation, but confront the horror.

- He problematizes the approach of personalized Holocaust Education.<sup>9</sup>
- He also indicates the risk of personal encounters in situations where participants are unable to put aside their prejudices and allow human experiences. He notes that the idea that personal encounters with Jews could prevent antisemitism is bound up with the assumption that antisemitism has something to do with the Jews. For the same reason, you should also not refer to the assumed positive attributes of the victims. Adorno does not believe that enlightenment about positive qualities possessed by persecuted minorities would be of much use.
- So one of his most important ideas is that the roots must be sought in the persecutors and not the victims.
- Therefore, as previously mentioned, Adorno emphasizes the importance of awareness of the subjective mechanisms that enabled Auschwitz and education about them.
- According to him, the first requirement is the education of the educators and also reflection by them about their profession and their role – and I would add, the institution they are working in too.

To summarize: Education happens under definite social, political and economic conditions. Therefore its possibilities are limited. The Frankfurt School does not believe in education as a cure-all for social injustice, but that it can play an important role in the process of debarbarization. The categorical imperative for all education is to work against the recurrence of Auschwitz. The general goals of education are maturity, individuality, critical self-reflection, strengthening of the ego and so on. Adorno highlights not only early-childhood education, but also political education understood as sociology. In addition, he gives a lot of thought to antisemitism, offers proposals for combating it, and identifies some of the risks of the different approaches.

Now, let's look at what is known today as Holocaust Education. What similarities and differences can we find between the conception of Education after and also about Auschwitz as indicated by Adorno and contemporary theories of Holocaust Education?

Holocaust Education is the contemporary term for teaching and learning about National Socialism and the Shoah. It is not only a practice,

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9. Adorno cites the example of a woman who, after having seen a play about Anne Frank, said that they should have spared this one. See: Theodor W. Adorno, *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 26.

but also a pedagogical discourse about the conveyance not only of knowledge about the Shoah, but also of values<sup>10</sup>

Education *after* Auschwitz, in Adorno's eyes, is more than education *about* Auschwitz or Holocaust Education. Nonetheless both conceptions share the concern to enlighten people about Auschwitz and both share an ethically based imperative. Holocaust Education (in most conceptions) does not only embrace the transfer of knowledge but also of certain values. These include the promotion of democratic behaviors, and the reduction of prejudice, aggression, and so on. So, we can already see that the conceptions of "Education after Auschwitz" and of "Holocaust Education" have quite a bit in common (especially as regards the goals), but later we will see that there are also a lot of differences and that there are some things Holocaust Education could learn from the Frankfurt School.

#### HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IN AUSTRIA

Immediately after the war the Austrian educational system was in a very bad way. Most school buildings had been damaged and, most significantly, there was a lack of non-Nazi teachers. National Socialism had been well-established in public education: overall, around 80% of grade school teachers were members of the NSDAP. So, while after the liberation of Austria many teachers were suspended, most were soon re-engaged.<sup>11</sup> Re-education did not really work in Austria.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Angela Kühner, Phil C. Langer and Robert Sigel. "Ausgewählte Studienergebnisse im Überblick", in *Einsichten und Perspektiven. Bayrische Zeitschrift für Politik und Geschichte, Themenheft 01/2008, Holocaust Education. Wie Schüler und Lehrer den Unterricht zum Thema Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust Erleben*, ed. Bayerische Landeszentrale für Politische Bildungsarbeit (Würzburg: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit, 2008), 76.

11. Dieter Stiefel. *Entnazifizierung in Österreich* (Wien/München/Zürich: Europaverlag, 1981), 161f.

12. The term 're-education' refers to the educational activities of the Allies in post-war Germany and Austria aimed at building democratic societies. In Austria these attempts were soon dropped in the course of the establishment of the victim myth. For the differences between Austria and Germany see: Werner Bergmann, Rainer Erb and Albert Lichtblau, *Schwieriges Erbe. Der Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Antisemitismus in Österreich und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1995). For postwar education in Austria see: Peter Utgaard, *Remembering and Forgetting Nazism. Education, National Identity, and the Victim Myth in Postwar Austria* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2003).

Moreover, the myth of Austria as the first victim of the German aggressor was soon established and as a result Austrians were not held responsible for all the atrocities.<sup>13</sup>

From the 1960's onwards, National Socialism was mentioned in the official curriculum for Austrian schools. However, in practice, National Socialism and the Shoah were often not taught in the classroom – and when they were, it was from the point of view of the victim-myth with a focus on conservative or social-democratic resistance movements and fighters.

The 1970's saw a couple of changes. The Mauthausen Memorial Museum was opened, the Ministry of Education established a service that provided contemporary witnesses for schools and Political Education became a so-called 'teaching principle'<sup>14</sup>

Starting in the 1980's, Hermann Langbein, a Holocaust survivor, organized seminars about National Socialism for teachers. In the same decade, because of the Waldheim affair, the victim-myth also began to crack and Austria began to take some responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

As a consequence, in the 1990's, several initiatives and NGOs were founded and a number of museums opened or reopened their doors (the "Jüdische Museum Hohenems", the "Mauthausen Komitee Österreich", the "Verein Gedenkdienst", and others). At the end of the 1990's "erinnern.at" was founded. This is a platform financed by the Austrian Ministry of Education that offers teachers further training in the field of National Socialism.<sup>16</sup>

Since 2000, one or two groups of teachers have been sent each year to Yad Vashem for further training. In 2001, Austria joined the "Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research" (ITF) (now called the "International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance"). In 2007, the Mauthausen Memorial established an educational department. And more and more NGOs working with school classes were also founded.

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13. Heidmarie Uhl. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period", in *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*, ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 64-94. Or: Judith Beniston, "'Hitler's First Victim?' Memory and Representation in Post-War Austria: Introduction," *Austrian Studies* 11, (2003): 1-13.

14. This means that it is not a teaching subject in itself but appears within several different subjects.

15. Regarding the Waldheim debate and its consequences also see Uhl, H. "The Politics of Memory: Austria's Perception of the Second World War and the National Socialist Period", in *Austrian Historical Memory & National Identity*, ed. Günter Bischof and Anton Pelinka (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1997), 64-94. 80ff.

16. Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture. 2015. *erinnern.at Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust: Gedächtnis und Gegenwart*. Accessed July 10, 2015. <http://www.erinnern.at>.



What really happened in schools during all these years, of course, we don't know. One of my interviewees even called it a "black hole".

#### CONTEMPORARY HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Today Holocaust Education mostly takes place during history classes or in school projects in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, at the age of about 14. The curriculum suggests 5 to 10 class hours of teaching on this subject. If young people continue general education they will learn about National Socialism and the Shoah again at the age of about 17. This does not, however, apply to those young people who start to work right after compulsory school or who attend vocational school.

Teachers learn how to teach about National Socialism and the Shoah at a teacher training college or university. The Ministry of Education has a big influence on the colleges where grade school and secondary modern school teachers are educated and is currently trying to expand training in teaching about National Socialism. The university courses allow students to choose whether they want to learn about Auschwitz: future teachers have to take two classes in contemporary history, but none of them has to be about National Socialism or the Shoah<sup>17</sup> If teachers want to learn more about teaching these topics they can attend workshops, for instance those offered by the platform *erinnern.at*, but this is not compulsory either.

So, we have a very patchy situation: There are some very well trained and motivated teachers involved in teaching about National Socialism. There are others who have not even learnt about teaching National Socialism at university and who don't want to attend voluntary advanced training. Some schools organize time-intensive projects and others provide some hours of not very well informed teacher-centered teaching about the Shoah. Many of them send their pupils quite unprepared to a former concentration camp<sup>18</sup> and believe that this will provide effective immunization against racism, antisemitism, right wing extremism, or

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17. Linda Erker, "Holocaust und Öffentlichkeit: Zur Wissensvermittlung in Österreich", in *Der Holocaust in der Deutschsprachigen Geschichtswissenschaft. Bilanz und Perspektiven*, ed. Michael Brenner and Maximilian Strnad (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2012), 145-161.

18. According to a study of school field trips by students of Vienna University's Institute for Communication Science from 2009, 57% of pupils involved were totally or almost unprepared when they came to Mauthausen. See: Gundula Säckl. 2008. "Projektbericht. Mauthausen Memorial – Auswertung der BesucherInnenbefragung Dezember 2008 – Jänner 2009", *Mauthausen Memorial*. Accessed July 10, 2015. [http://www.mauthausen-memorial.at/db/admin/de/Bericht\\_Mauthausen\\_Memorial\\_Evaluation7567.pdf?id=137](http://www.mauthausen-memorial.at/db/admin/de/Bericht_Mauthausen_Memorial_Evaluation7567.pdf?id=137).

whatever. So, it is very hard to describe the reality of Holocaust Education in Austria, as it is extremely diverse.

For my study<sup>19</sup>, I conducted interviews with leading or highly motivated people active in the field of Holocaust Education in Austria. I asked them about:

- their own definition of Holocaust Education;
- why and to what ends they promote Holocaust Education;
- the relevance of societal, political and economic conditions for the teaching of the Shoah in Austria;
- the content they consider important within Holocaust Education, as regards perpetrators and victims; antisemitism; and National Socialism as a political, economic and social system, and, finally;
- how teaching and learning about National Socialism and the Shoah should be conducted.

The answers from my interview partners were as diverse as the general situation.

#### *Concerning the Definition of Holocaust Education*

Their definitions differed, but nearly all of them said that it meant not only learning *about* but also learning *from* the Holocaust. Some of them rejected the term Holocaust Education to describe their work, preferring the term “historical-political education”. None of them referred to “Education after Auschwitz” as described by Adorno.

#### *Concerning the Goals of Holocaust Education*

Here, there were three different fields: First, the transfer of knowledge about National Socialism and the Shoah. Second, the formation of character attributes to enhance the capacity for empathy and third, democracy and human rights education. Most, but not all, mentioned all three fields. All in all, it became apparent that in most cases the goals for Holocaust Education are as ambitious as the goals for education after Auschwitz described by Adorno.

#### *Concerning the Relationship between*

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19. Rajal, *Erziehung nach/über Auschwitz*.

*Holocaust Education and Social Structures*

I asked my interview partners about the effect of social structures on the opportunities for and effectiveness of Holocaust Education and about the specifics of Holocaust Education within a post-National-Socialist society. Most interview partners said that Holocaust Education is seen by society as something like a fire brigade to be called after antisemitic or racist incidents. They themselves see Holocaust Education more as a learning opportunity than as a magic bullet even though their goals are very ambitious. One interview partner (representing the NGO *Gedenkdienst*) said that a critique of society ought to be an explicit requirement of Holocaust Education. On the other hand, two interview partners (representing the NGOs “March of Remembrance and Hope” and “A Letter to the Stars”) were very optimistic about reaching their goals. One even said that pupils would extract a lot of humanity from the big Holocaust Education events that his NGO organizes. Most did not mention the need for a critique of society.

The same line of divide was also apparent in relation to the specifics of Holocaust Education in a post-National-Socialist-society: Some of the interview partners adopt a universalistic approach, seeing Holocaust Education as a matter of humanity, tolerance and civil courage, while others emphasized the importance of regional history and the specifics of Holocaust Education in Austria. One interview partner (the representative of “erinnern.at”) criticized the dehistoricization of the Shoah and claimed to follow a “history & presence-principle” that maintained a constant focus on the history of National Socialism and its contemporary relevance.

*Concerning the Content of Holocaust Education*

Most of my interview partners said that, especially in the 1990’s, educators had become aware of the importance of making greater use of the stories of the victims. Perpetrator issues, they said, ought to play a subordinate role, but school books still often show things from the perpetrators’ point of view. Some of my interviewees insisted on the importance of incorporating the findings of perpetrator research. Others said that it was more important to present the biographies and positive qualities of the victims.

A very interesting finding of my interview-study is that the theme of antisemitism does not play an important role in Austrian Holocaust Education. Even though all my interviewees emphasized the contemporary relevance of Holocaust Education, contemporary antisemitism was not mentioned. This is also a finding of the document analysis: in school books, antisemitism is mentioned in connection with the crusades and then

there is nothing until the 19<sup>th</sup> century or even the NS era. You cannot find anything about antisemitism in connection with conservative parties, Catholicism or anti-capitalism and so on. Moreover, antisemitism is not mentioned in the curricula of Austrian schools although Jewish life has been included since 2008. However, in 2012 “erinnern.at” published teaching materials with the title “A human being is a human being. Racism, antisemitism and you name it” which are an adaptation of teaching materials from the “Anne Frank Center Amsterdam” and the “Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights” of the OSCE.<sup>20</sup> But all in all, the history, presence and functions of antisemitism seem to be neglected. Likewise National Socialism as a social system seems to be subordinated to personal stories.

*Concerning how to teach and learn about National Socialism and the Shoah:* Holocaust Education in Austria takes place at school, in projects and on field trips. But we can also find mass events based on the idea that collective experiences are of special value. Moreover, in addition to a lot of teacher-centered learning, there are also some projects that adopt a peer-to-peer-approach or use external trainers.

#### CONCLUSION

As regards the goals, we can find many similarities between “Education after Auschwitz” as it is described by Adorno and “Holocaust Education” in Austria. It is striking that almost all actors refer to the categorical imperative of Adorno but hardly at all to the Frankfurt School’s other assumptions and findings.

While Adorno views “Education after Auschwitz” as a project beginning with early-childhood education and in terms of the enlightenment of society as a whole, Holocaust Education lasts for periods ranging from a few hours to a semester. Nevertheless, Adorno sees more limits at the level of goals than many actors in the field of Holocaust Education.

All but two of the interviewees affirmed the effectiveness of Holocaust Education as a tool for human rights and democracy education. They believed that democratic values could be learned through studying National Socialism and the Shoah. In the light of the Frankfurt School’s ideas, I would be very skeptical that Holocaust Education is really the right

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20. Werner Dreier, Maria Ecker and Albert Lichtblau. “A human being is a human being. Racism, anti-Semitism and you name it”, *erinnern.at*. Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture. 2012. Accessed July 10, 2015, [http://www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/e\\_bibliothek/methodik-didaktik-fremdsprachenunterricht/a-human-being-is-a-human-being-racism-anti-semitism-and-you-name-it./13\\_layout\\_erinnern\\_endkorrektur\\_englisch\\_screen.pdf](http://www.erinnern.at/bundeslaender/oesterreich/e_bibliothek/methodik-didaktik-fremdsprachenunterricht/a-human-being-is-a-human-being-racism-anti-semitism-and-you-name-it./13_layout_erinnern_endkorrektur_englisch_screen.pdf).

tool for this. In my opinion, you cannot learn much about democracy from studying National Socialism. Human rights and civil courage are better learned in early childhood, when the foundations of prejudices are laid, and perhaps through Civic Education. These issues need to be addressed independently and cannot be replaced by Holocaust Education.

What is clearly discussed too little in Holocaust Education is antisemitism, especially its mechanisms and functions. Antisemitism is often addressed as a subform of racism, rather than seen in its uniqueness, and is often taught as if of solely historical interest. Taking historical as well as contemporary antisemitism seriously, sensitizing the youth to it so that they can identify it within themselves, political debates and the media would be an important lesson from the Shoah and a goal which could be realistically achieved.

The same applies to National Socialism as a social system and notably the school system under National Socialism. These topics are clearly underrepresented although they would provide plenty of connecting factors with the present and the student's everyday life. It would also sensitize students to long-term effects and continuities and therefore promote a more critical perspective on Austrian society, politics, and institutions.

*Concerning the education of the educators:* There is education of the educators concerning the Shoah, but at university level it is voluntary. Further training is offered but that too is voluntary. Education of the educators should be intensified in the two above-mentioned areas — antisemitism and National Socialism as a social system.

What the comparison of “Education after Auschwitz” and “Holocaust Education” shows is that the Shoah should not be taught in order to make young people better democrats but because it happened. In view of what happened, there should be no need for further reasons or justifications. Some of the goals connected with Holocaust Education are simply not within reach, so it should not be overloaded or played off against other, also necessary approaches and topics (such as human rights education). Also the environment of Holocaust Education should be considered more seriously. It is paradoxical to teach disobedience within a strongly hierarchical school system. In order to reach at least some of the ambitious goals it is necessary to reflect on the education system and the social climate as a whole. In the light of the Frankfurt School's insights, Holocaust Education appears as a useful but limited effort. It is just one part of what Adorno called “Education after Auschwitz”.

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## Blurring the Boundaries: What's New in the New Antisemitism?

Holger Knothe\*

This article addresses whether there has been a qualitative change in the nature of antisemitic resentment in Germany and of the interpretation of this change. Overshadowing this debate is the potential for secondary antisemitic reactions in post-Holocaust Germany. The article also reflects on the term “new antisemitism” which suggests qualitative differences between an old European antisemitism, and a so-called “new antisemitism.” Yet there is little clarity about the characteristics of this alleged qualitative change or whether they justify talk of a “new antisemitism.” The article examines whether the changes amount to a change in the structural characteristics of antisemitic resentment and the main features of the changes themselves and goes on to discuss the “newness” in the light of antisemitism’s protean, manifold and flexible nature.

The question whether current manifestations of antisemitism exhibit different characteristics from those of older manifestations is not only a scholarly, but also a political one since it bears on the adequacy of both scholarly and political efforts to combat contemporary antisemitism. The link between scholarship and politics can be seen in the results of a representative survey conducted in 2009 which registered the change in the nature of antisemitic resentment. The survey revealed that 13% of Germany’s population question Israel’s right to exist. The challenge to Israel’s very right to exist goes far beyond any so-called “acceptable criticism of Israel”; it indicates antisemitic resentment. So far so bad, one might say. Even more interesting is another number from the same survey: Among supporters of the German Left Party (*Die Linke*) 28% or over a quarter denied Israel’s right to exist.<sup>1</sup> This suggests an erosion of the once commonplace equation of terms and attitudes like “left” and “progressive” on the one hand, and “non-antisemitic” on the other. It can of course be argued that the history of the political left does not in any case support the assumption of such an equation, especially in the German context since 1967. Yet within the self-perception of the political left the equation does

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1. Stern, *Jeder zweite nennt Israel aggressive*, 2009; <http://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/stern-umfrage-jeder-zweite-nennt-israel-aggressiv-651466.html> [accessed 27/08/2014].

exist and is still meaningful. This small example does not offer any hints about the driving forces of this erosion but it does indicate a mingling of what we might have expected to be incompatible attitudes. Things seem to be in flux. This is reflected somewhat in the term “new antisemitism,”<sup>2</sup> which suggests qualitative differences between an old antisemitism, and a so-called “new antisemitism”.

Yet the distinction between old and new antisemitism is the subject of manifold and often confusing debates, in which the positions range from an ardent conviction of the existence of a qualitative change<sup>3</sup> to total rejection not only of the change itself but even of its antisemitic character,<sup>4</sup> with some describing the accepted newness not as antisemitism but as Judeophobia.<sup>5</sup> In short there is confusion not only as regards the observed phenomena but also at the level of scholarly debates. Moreover, the scholarly controversy in all its sharpness is clearly related to distinct political positions. So not only for scholarly, but also for political reasons, it would be helpful to establish what is “new” in “new antisemitism” and what the characteristics of the qualitative change in fact are. Do these characteristics justify the talk of a “new antisemitism”? Or is the distinction “much too rigid”<sup>6</sup> on the scholarly level, and a “dangerous and potentially misleading exercise”<sup>7</sup> on the political level? In other words: Is there anything “new” here at all? To answer these questions we need briefly to recall what the so-called “old antisemitism” is all about.

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2. Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck, and Natan Sznaider, eds., (2004). *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte*. (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004).

3. Alain Finkielkraut, “Im Namen des Anderen. Reflexionen über den kommenden Antisemitismus.” in Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck, and Natan Sznaider, eds., *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 119-132; Robert S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession. From Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010).

4. Brian Klug, “The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 37, no. 2 (2003): 117-138; Brian Klug, “Is Europe a Lost Cause? The European Debate on Antisemitism and the Middle East Conflict,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 39, no. 1 (2005): 46-59; Brian Klug, “Interrogating ‘New Anti-Semitism,’” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36, no. 3 (2013): 468-482; Steven Beller, “In Zion’s Hall of Mirrors: A Comment on Neuer Antisemitismus?,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 41, no. 2, (2007): 215-238. For an instructive case study of the French “antisémitisme nouveau” see Timothy Peace, “Un Antisémitisme Nouveau? The Debate about a ‘New Antisemitism’ in France,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43, no. 2, (2009): 103-121.

5. Pierre-André Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004).

6. Yehuda Bauer, Antisemitism and Antizionism—new and old. In Robert Wistrich, ed., *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990), 198.

7. Ibid.

## STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ANTISEMITISM

Antisemitism as a generic term for all common and known types of enmity against Jewry includes very different resentments, prejudices and attitudes. From an antisemitic perspective, for example, Jews have been held responsible for the murder of Jesus Christ, the excesses of capitalism, and for plotting the communist world revolution. The wide range of different and even contradictory resentments comprised by antisemitism is a crucial and basic characteristic of an antisemitic mindset. At the same time, it is also a major reason for the attraction of antisemitism. The logically incoherent mixing up of prejudices with different historical roots points to an ideological formation capable of interpreting the world without regard for real societal developments. Thus antisemitism can be seen as an explanatory model “for the not understood development trends in civil society.”<sup>8</sup>

Over and above the historical taxonomies which refer mostly to visible manifestations of antisemitic resentment such as, e.g., “religious antisemitism”, “racist antisemitism”, “secondary antisemitism”, “anti-Zionist antisemitism”, and “Islamist antisemitism,”<sup>9</sup> it would be useful to analyze the structural characteristics of antisemitism. According to Haury,<sup>10</sup> three structuring principles characterize the ideology of antisemitism: First there is a Manichean separation, in both the perceptible and the imaginary worlds, into two parts: good and evil. This duality continuously encodes all experience. Only good and evil exist and both sides are connected only by struggle, not negotiations. Typical examples of this dichotomy are such common antisemitic contrasts and contradictions as the one described by the German terms *Schaffen vs. Raffen* - which basically means work vs. greed, physical labor vs. intellect, or naturalness vs. artificiality or the contrast between so-called “organic” industrial capital and “parasitic” financial capital. The confrontation between the concrete world, which is celebrated, and the abstract world, which is denigrated, becomes fundamental. The solution to this conflict can only be reached by erasing one side, in this case the evil (Jewish) side.<sup>11</sup>

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8. Reinhard Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus. Studien zur „Judenfrage“ der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 91.

9. Samuel Salzborn, “Die Genese des Antisemitismus in Europa,” in Samuel Salzborn, *Antisemitismus. Geschichte, Theorie, Empirie* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014), 11-23.

10. Thomas Haury, *Antisemitismus von Links. Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der früheren DDR* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002), 105.

11. In coining the phrase „Erlösungsantisemitismus” (redemptive antisemitism), Saul Friedländer [“Erlösungsantisemitismus. Zur Ideologie der ‘Endlösung,’” in: Saul

Personification, as the second structuring principle of antisemitic ideology, is connected with the first one, the Manichean dichotomy, since complex societal processes are not only resolved into a dichotomy of good and evil, but also attributed personally. In this way, these complex societal processes can be made graspable and manageable. Reducing complexity by personification is of course not exclusive to an antisemitic world view and is frequently encountered in daily interactions, for instance in the common practice of blaming “the politicians” for the complex problems of modern society. This does not, however, affect the essential role personification plays as a basic structuring principle of antisemitic ideology, especially when it comes to collective affiliations. So, according to a conspiracy theory-minded perception, Jewry is directly responsible for the disturbing consequences of modernization.

Thirdly, this homogenizing ascription of the “other,” produces an imaginary homogeneous collective and for the antisemite it is a social entity that is naturally harmonious. Particularly in times of social uncertainty, the importance of the identity-forming function of the homogenizing process cannot be overstated. The irony in this procedure lies in the inversion of cause and effect: It is the alleged threat to the community by the enemy construction of “Jewry” that enables the community to exist in the first place.

#### MAIN FEATURES OF THE QUALITATIVE CHANGE

Awareness of the structuring principles is a *sine qua non* for a discussion of a possible qualitative shift towards a new antisemitic resentment. Different authors identify varying numbers of developments expressing the qualitative change. Judaken,<sup>12</sup> for example, mentions five vectors of transmission: 1) Holocaust denial; 2) Judeophobia in the Islamic World; 3) the anti-Israel bias of the radical left; 4) anti-Israel anti-racism; and 5) antizionism as antisemitism. Within this multi-level perspective on the process of qualitative transformation, one could say that the qualitative change in antisemitic resentment itself can be discussed in relation to three developments:

Firstly, many antisemitic narratives refer to the State of Israel, which is claimed to be responsible for all sorts of crises in the globalized world. So in the year 2003, for instance, 65% of Germany’s population believed that the state of Israel was the biggest threat to world peace. According to

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Friedländer, *den Holocaust beschreiben* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2007), 28-53] highlighted the metaphysical and religious dimensions of this structural element.

12. Jonathan Judaken, “So What’s New? Rethinking the ‘New Anti-Semitism’ in a Global Age,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 42, no. 4-5 (2008): 538.

this perception Israel ranked equal with North Korea and ahead of Iran.<sup>13</sup> In other words, as Irvin Cotler<sup>14</sup> pointed out, Israel has become the “collective Jew among the Nations”. The focus on and overestimation of the relative importance of this Middle Eastern hot spot results in a “double standard” in the judgement of Israeli politics, and offers a major discursive opportunity for antisemitic narratives. The location of the first development on the permeable boundary between anti-Zionism and antisemitism is by no means surprising. It is, on the contrary, integral to the discussion on the “newness” of the “new antisemitism”. According to Laqueur the whole discussion on “new antisemitism” can be reduced “to the question of whether antisemitism and anti-Zionism are two entirely distinct phenomena or whether anti-Zionism can turn into, in certain circumstances, antisemitism.”<sup>15</sup> However, while the anti-Zionist perception of Israel is indeed a key element in contemporary antisemitic resentment, it is not the only one.

Secondly, the integrative function of antisemitism is again increasingly coming to the fore compared to previous decades. Antisemitism can be seen as a unifying bond between political parties and positions like those of the extreme right, political Islam, parts of the radical left, and the middle-class centre that otherwise might seem irreconcilable.<sup>16</sup> Thus antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and anticapitalism can merge into one discursive formation. This attribute of antisemitic ideology cannot be considered as new. On the contrary, it is an essential as well as structural component, since a substantial characteristic of antisemitism’s paranoid structure lies in the simultaneous presentation of completely contradictory stereotypes and assumptions. From a historical point of view this structural element has always played an essential part in antisemitism’s success. So, for example, from the antisemitic perspective, Jewry as such was held responsible both for the excesses of capitalism and for plotting communist world revolution.

Thirdly, there is the intermingling of anti-racist, human-rights-based, and emancipatory claims on the one side, and antisemitic and anti-Zionist narratives on the other. This was clearly apparent at the 2001 UN

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13. European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 151. Iraq and Peace in the World. Full Report*, 2003; 73; [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/flash/fl151\\_iraq\\_full\\_report.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl151_iraq_full_report.pdf) [accessed 22/05/2015].

14. Irvin Cotler, (2009). *Global Antisemitism. Assault on Human Rights*. ISGAP Working Paper Series, 2009; <http://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ISGAP-Working-Papers-Booklet-Cotler-09-copy.pdf> [accessed 03/07/2015].

15. Walter Laqueur, *The Changing Face of Antisemitism. From Ancient Times to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 7.

16. Monica Schwarz-Friesel, and Jehuda Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft im 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013).

sponsored Antiracism Conference held at Durban, South Africa. At the initiative of anti-racist NGOs, a final declaration of this “World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance” was charging Israel with genocide—the only nation to be cited.<sup>17</sup>

The confusion between genuine anti-racist arguments and antisemitic narratives that became apparent during this and the follow-up conference in 2009 (Durban II) does indeed suggest a different quality of antisemitic resentment.<sup>18</sup> This assumption of a different quality unfolds against the background of the quantitative strength of antisemitic resentment within Germany’s population. According to one representative survey from 2011, nearly half (49%) of all Germans agreed with the statement “Jews try to take advantage of having been victims during the Nazi era.”<sup>19</sup> Concurrently, anti-Zionism is still strong within Germany’s population. According to the same survey 48% of Germany’s population agree with the statement “Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians”. Surveys repeatedly reveal the same picture, and it is hardly likely that the constant level of approval of secondary and anti-Zionist coded antisemitic narratives within the German population will change significantly.

#### WHAT’S NEW IN THE NEW ANTISEMITISM?

Do these features and characteristics justify the talk of a “new antisemitism”? Or, to put it another way, “Is there anything new in new antisemitism? Following every crisis in the Arab-Israeli conflict since the Six-Day War, books or articles by activists or scholars<sup>20</sup> have appeared

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17. J. Wetzel, “Der Schwierige Umgang mit Einem Phänomen - Die EU und der Antisemitismus,” in Moshe Zuckermann, ed., *Antisemitismus - Antizionismus - Israelkritik. Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte XXXIII* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 90.

18. Elisabeth Kuebler and Matthias Falter, “Durban Reviewed: The Transformation of Antisemitism in a Cosmopolitanizing Environment,” in Charles Asher Small, ed., *Global Antisemitism. A Crisis of Modernity, Volume II: The Intellectual Environment* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 203-213.

19. Andreas Zick, Beate Küpper, Andreas Hövermann, *Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination. A European Report*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin, ed., 2011, 57; <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf> [accessed 27/8/2014].

20. For instance Abraham Foxman, *Never Again? The Threat of the New Anti-Semitism* (San Francisco: Harper, 2003) and Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974). Keith Kahn-Harris and Ben Gidley, *Turbulent Times. The British Jewish Community Today* (London: Continuum, 2010), 138 indicate a first use of the phrase in the 1920s by the Board of Deputies of British Jews in order to “describe the twin threat of Nazism in Germany and Mosley’s Fascism at home.”

with titles referring to the “newness” of “new antisemitism.”<sup>21</sup> This does not in itself prove an absence of newness but rather reflects scholars’ efforts to characterize, and the difficulties in characterizing, the differences between contemporary antisemitism and its classical European form.

So when we address the issue of the “new” in “new antisemitism”, we should consider the breaks and continuities within antisemitic resentment, since a focus on these breaks and continuities enables us to make temporal distinctions, to separate those elements that persist from those that change, and to distinguish those that have vanished from those newly arisen. In this perspective, viewed from the present, the breaks relate primarily to the forms of appearance and the political actors. A hundred years ago, for instance, the likelihood of antisemitic resentment being expressed in the terms of a human rights discourse was very small, because at that time it was first and foremost expressed in racial terms. The structuring principles of antisemitic ideology - Manichean separation, personification and homogenization - however remain basically the same while being refreshed, updated and extended by this new constellation of forms of appearance and political actors.

There is indeed a different antisemitism at the level of forms of appearance, discursive opportunities, and political actors that blurs the boundaries, but in the end it is old wine in new bottles. Even so, new approaches are needed to tackle these new contemporary forms of antisemitism at both the theoretical and political levels.

At the theoretical level the qualitative change has implications for the term antisemitism itself: It has become increasingly clear that a narrow definition of the phenomenon is unable adequately to explain its dynamics. For example, it is of little analytical value to apply the label of antisemitism to those who demonize the state of Israel, using anti-Zionist or antisemitic narratives. In analogy to other forms of resentment like racism, one can unintentionally utter antisemitic narratives and terms. A sociologist should not focus on intention or motive, but on analysing the antisemitic effect of such demonization in view of its societal resonance.<sup>22</sup> This means a reconstructive focus on the issue of if and how anti-Zionist and antisemitic narratives are becoming socially acceptable. In the words of David Hirsh: “Antisemitism should be understood as a social phenomenon that is not reducible to the intent or the self-consciousness of the social actors

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21. Jonathan Judaken, “So What’s New? Rethinking the ‘New Anti-Semitism’ in a Global Age,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 42, no. 4-5 (2008): 531-560.

22. David Hirsh, “Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: Cosmopolitan Reflections,” in *The Yale Initiative for the Interdisciplinary Study of Antisemitism Working Paper Series. Working Paper Nr. 1* (2007).

involved. Antisemitism is a social fact that is produced through shared meanings and exclusions; it is not an individual moral failing.”<sup>23</sup>

So the question must be: Which factors promote and which factors prevent the development of an anti-Zionist and antisemitic hegemony in public discourse, bearing in mind that a general acceptance of anti-Zionist narratives will increase the likelihood of openly antisemitic movements?

Another problem is that we are confronted with a blurring of the boundaries between classical and modern antisemitism. I follow here the approach and ideas of Dan Diner, who stated some years ago that the once clear-cut ideology of antisemitism is splintering into manifold und plural forms,<sup>24</sup> with various side effects:

The Holocaust led to the destruction of the classic (. . .) faith driven form of antisemitism. Morally broken, it cannot be reconstituted in conceptually similar terms. Without the appropriate conceptual density however it is hard to describe the negative sentiments extended towards Jews qua Jews. All that remains are particles of resentment emerging from the disintegrating mass, which are covered by what is imagined to be antisemitism. Like mildew these then cover the various incriminated phenomena which have somehow to be associated with the Jews. When seen against the earlier, historic density the nature of these particles of resentment should perhaps be described not as being antisemitic but rather as antisemitising. This characteristic however does seem to be quite ubiquitous.<sup>25</sup>

Discrete elements of the classic antisemitic ideology therefore diffuse and combine with other narratives. The blurring of the boundaries between antisemitic narratives suggests an increase in the opportunities for political actors to articulate a somewhat encoded antisemitic resentment within the public sphere,<sup>26</sup> especially given the latent antisemitic resentment within the German population. For instance, antisemitic stereotypes presented in the guise of criticism of Israel carry no or less stigma in Germany and thus can be expressed publicly.<sup>27</sup>

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23. David Hirsh, “Hostility to Israel and Antisemitism: Toward a Sociological Approach,” *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism*, 5, (2013): 1401-1422.

24. Dan Diner, “Der Sarkophag zeigt Risse. Über Israel, Palästina und die Frage eines „neuen Antisemitismus,” in Doron Rabinovici, Ulrich Speck, and Natan Sznajder, eds, *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 310-328.

25. Diner, “Der Sarkophag zeigt Risse,” 310.

26. Lars Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild. Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Opladen: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

27. Werner Bergmann and Wilhelm Heitmeyer, “Communicating Antisemitism. are the ‘Boundaries of the Speakable’ Shifting?,” in Moshe Zuckermann, ed., *Antisemitismus - Antizionismus - Israelkritik. Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte XXXIII* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2005), 70-89.



In the year 2002, for instance, the German politician Möllemann from the German Liberal party (FPD), at that time a key player in German politics, tried this during an election campaign by blaming Ariel Sharon for everything that had gone wrong in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Rather than making openly antisemitic remarks, he employed anti-Zionist narratives and secondary antisemitic ones in order to mobilize and gain more votes.<sup>28</sup> The outcome of this story can be seen in two ways: firstly, the strategy was not successful at short notice. The German Liberal Party did not win the following election. In fact, their result was disappointing in relation to their expectations and the polls. Secondly, it took the rest of Germany's political and cultural elite a very long time to recognize Möllemann's behaviour as antisemitic and scandalous. Both results do not mean that there will be no testing of the boundaries in the future by a mainstream politician in Germany, especially given the latent antisemitic resentment referred to above.

Thus clarification is needed regarding the scope for gaining political influence offered by the use of structural antisemitic codes in the political arena. On the other hand, in response to the blurring of the boundaries of antisemitic ideology, institutional efforts have been made to take the blurring into account. The so-called "Working Definition on Antisemitism" proposed by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights<sup>29</sup> is a good example of these efforts. In this "Working Definition" the following criteria for distinguishing between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism are offered: firstly, the direct equation of the democratic state of Israel with the Nazi Regime; secondly, the use of classical antisemitic stereotypes such as "Old Testament-based hardness" or "vengeful Israel"; thirdly, the delegitimization of Israel; and fourthly the use of double standards such as talking about "Israeli State Terrorism" while simultaneously denying the "terrorist character of Hamas."<sup>30</sup>

Despite these institutional efforts to redraw the boundaries between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism a dynamic grey area with

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28. Samuel Salzborn and Marc Schwietring, "Antizivilisatorische Affektmobilisierung. Zur Normalisierung des sekundären Antisemitismus," in Michael Klundt, Samuel Salzborn, Marc Schwietring, and Gerd Wiegel, eds., *Erinnern, verdrängen, vergessen. Geschichtspolitische Wege ins 21. Jahrhundert* (Gießen: NBKK, 2003), 43-76.

29. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Working Definition of Antisemitism*, 2005; <http://fra.europa.eu/fra/material/pub/AS/AS-WorkingDefinition-draft.pdf> [accessed 24/12/2007].

30. Lars Rensmann, "Zwischen Kosmopolitanismus und Ressentiment. Zum Problem des sekundären Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken," in Matthias Brosch, Michael Elm, Norman Geißler, Brigitta E. Simbürger & Oliver von Wrochem, eds., *Exklusive Solidarität. Linker Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Vom Idealismus zur Antiglobalisierungsbewegung* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007), 172.

nuances and ambiguities between latent and manifest antisemitism and between anti-Zionism and antisemitism still exists. In 2013 the Working Definition was dropped by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, a decision that seems to mirror the dynamic and contested character of the grey area between legitimate criticism of Israel and antisemitism on an institutional level.

Structurally the qualitative change is related to the fact that not only in Germany, but also in Western Europe as a whole, the use of openly antisemitic resentment expressed in traditional ethnic terms in the public sphere is widely tabooed.<sup>31</sup> Antisemitic resentment must, if it wants to be heard and recognized, take on different forms which are not discredited by the Shoah.

As a result the resentment splinters into manifold different forms that are legitimate in public discourse. Does this justify the talk of a "new antisemitism"?

Given the fact that antisemitism is an integral part of Western civilization and German society, whenever a "new antisemitism" or –even better –an "imported antisemitism" is discovered, one needs to ask about the function of this discovery especially in the German context. The talk about newness and especially about new antisemitic actors like Muslim youth all too often serves a discursive function of exculpation and externalization for a latently antisemitic society like the German one.<sup>32</sup> From this perspective, antisemitism does not only come from abroad via, e.g., Islamist cable TV-stations, but is also always the 'antisemitism of the other' regardless of whether it is considered "old" or "new".

Yet the splintering of antisemitism's once coherent ideology into multiple antisemitisms and the mingling with the human rights discourse is only one side of the coin. On the other side more political and practical matters are to be found. And here the question of the consequences is important.

#### HOW TO DEAL WITH IT POLITICALLY?

So what are the implications for action? In my opinion, taking the blurring boundaries thesis seriously implies that the simple rejection of "classical" "old" antisemitism does not logically lead to immunity from

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31. Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, "Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung: Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 38, (1986): 223-246.

32. According to a recent report 90% of all antisemitic criminal acts in Germany 2014 were committed by right-wing extremists Amadeo-Antonio-Stiftung, *Lagebild Antisemitismus der Amadeo-Antonio-Stiftung*, 2015; <http://www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/w/files/videos/aas-lagebild-antisemitismus-2015.pdf> [accessed 10/03/2015]: 8.

involvement in other of its multifarious and contemporary forms. Rather, the resulting manifoldness and ambiguity demand an effort of reflection.

What would such a reflexive and sensible position look like? I want to illustrate this briefly with an example: In 2003, 20 Neo-Nazis attended a rally in Munich, organized by an anti-globalization network called "Attac"<sup>33</sup> against the then forthcoming war against Iraq. Attac of course regards itself as anti-fascist and anti-racist and therefore anti-antisemitic. The question then is how this anti-globalization network reacted to the presence of openly antisemitic neo-Nazis in their demonstration. A qualitative content analysis of Attac's own publications, comments, statements, etc. reveals the emergence of two main positions within the network over how to deal with this issue.<sup>34</sup> One side, which was by far the stronger one, the so-called majority position, stressed the argument that you cannot prevent applause from the wrong quarter. They put it even more elaborately and in post-modern terms, "that there are no definite signs anymore and thus these can adopt a variety of meanings."<sup>35</sup>

In other words, the communication process itself is to blame. But Attac as a political actor is helpless against takeovers in general. The question of the reasons for the wrong quarter's applause is suppressed, although neo-Nazis do not tend to join any and every rally or demonstration. This was exactly the question raised by the other, the so-called minority position: the sometimes hard necessity to examine and revise one's own agenda, when it has proved to be in some way attractive to neo-Nazis.<sup>36</sup>

As one can see from this small example of political actors and movements, a protean, manifold, flexible resentment like antisemitism needs a reflexive approach if it is to be effectively addressed politically. This is of course even more vital if one wants to achieve a scientific

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33. The "Association pour la taxation des transactions pour l'aide aux citoyens" (Attac) was founded in 1998 with the aim of introducing the so-called Tobin tax on currency speculation. Starting as a single-issue movement Attac now devotes itself to a wide range of issues related to anti-globalization. While it was founded in France it now exists in over forty countries around the world. It has been active in Germany since 2001.

34. Holger Knothe, *Eine andere Welt ist möglich – ohne Antisemitismus? Antisemitismus und Globalisierungskritik bei Attac* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009).

35. Thomas Sablowski, (2004). "Fallstricke der Globalisierungskritik. Zur Diskussion über Antisemitismus bei Attac," in Wissenschaftlicher Beirat von Attac Deutschland, eds., *Globalisierungskritik und Antisemitismus. Zur Antisemitismuskritik in Attac* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004), 12.

36. Holger Knothe, *Eine andere Welt ist möglich – ohne Antisemitismus? Antisemitismus und Globalisierungskritik bei Attac* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009), 189.

approach to the subject in order to identify changing forms of antisemitism and to “. . . marshal active resistance to it.”<sup>37</sup>

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37. Robert Fine, “Fighting with Phantoms: A Contribution to the Debate on Antisemitism in Europe,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43, no. 5, (2009): 476.

# “You Cannot Be Jewish and Feminist” From Feminist Antisemitism to Post-Feminist ‘Post-Zionism’

Ljiljana Radonić\*

For decades, dominant parts of Germany and Austria’s New Women’s Movement’ dismissed female perpetrators of the Third Reich viz., concentration camps overseers, welfare workers and denounciators enthusiastically participated in the antisemitic outlawing and extermination of Jews. By the 1980s feminist publications finally addressed the topic depicting Nazi women as “birthing” and “surveillance” machines who had suffered “just like the Jews.” Few questioned the ‘perpetrator-victim reversal’ at that time. Matriarchal researchers blame Judaism for the destruction of matriarchy, the dominance of violence and the Shoah. While those theoreticians of the matriarchy were not representative for the feminist movement, the idea of Judaism as a patriarchal religion was put forth. This idea, paired with the secondary antisemitism of German and Austrian women blamed Jewish feminists saying Jewish and feminism were incompatible. As a result, many left for less hostile nations. From the early 1990s numerous studies on female Nazi perpetrators have been published, but female antisemitism still avoids scrutiny. Judith Butler reiterates that being Jewish and post-feminist is impossible—even today.

It’s been over a decade since I published my analysis of how the ‘New Women’s Movement’ dealt with the question of female perpetrators in the Nazi era.<sup>1</sup> I argue that, after decades of silence about this topic, the prevailing narrative in the 1980s was that of female victimhood; a perpetrator-victim-reversal in the course of which women were depicted as victims of mass murder. In the following discourse analysis of feminist texts from the 1980’s, I will show that this denial, called “Schuld und Erinnerungsabwehr” by Theodor W. Adorno, has been paired with the idea that Judaism was an especially patriarchal religion. The idea of female victimhood was dominant in different currents of the feminist movement in Germany and Austria in the 1980s – and at that time questioned only by a few marginalized and severely attacked critics. Yet some theoreticians of

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1. Ljiljana Radonić, *Die friedfertige Antisemitin? Kritische Theorie über Geschlechterverhältnis und Antisemitismus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004).

the matriarchy went even further by accusing Judaism of destroying a matriarchal system which, some scholars claimed, pre-dated monotheism – and ended up blaming Jews for the Shoah. The article argues that in the 1980's non-gender-specific elements of secondary<sup>2</sup> antisemitism, like “anti-fascist anti-Zionism,” or the “reputable antisemitism” as Jean Améry has called it, became paired with feminist ideas such as that of Judaism being an especially patriarchal religion. Thus, while ‘the feminism’ does not exist, a specifically feminist form of secondary antisemitism does, despite all the significant differences between different currents. This atmosphere made Jewish feminists realize that it seemed impossible to be both Jewish and feminist in a German context.

Later on, from the 1990's onwards, several promising studies were published on female perpetrators, but the question of female antisemitism was either ignored or discussed in a highly ideological way, as the works of Margarete Mitscherlich<sup>3</sup> showed, which I discussed in my book in 2004. Recently, two books have made me reappraise the state of the debate since they have shown that there are still some open questions regarding the relation of gender and antisemitism: Wendy Lower's *Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (2013) and Judith Butler's *Parting ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (2013). I will finish by taking a look at the question of how female anti-Semitism is discussed today in literature dealing with female Nazi perpetrators. And, given the fact that Butler is Jewish and a ‘post-feminist’ queer theoretician, the question must be asked: how compatible are these two factors today?

#### FEMALE NAZIS

During World War II, especially in Eastern Europe, *Hitler's Furies* (as they were called in Lower's 2013 book) experienced the daily routine and the attractiveness of the *Ausnahmezustand*<sup>4</sup> as a new autonomy. The US

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2. Elements of modern antisemitism were modified after 1945 when one could not openly say any more that Jews ruled the world and had to be annihilated. This secondary antisemitism “not despite, but because of Auschwitz” includes the denial of guilt and memory and claims that one has suffered “just like the Jews”, who will never forgive “us” Auschwitz. By trend, to the Right the need to be able to identify with Germany again seems decisive while for the Left the predominantly anti-Zionist denial of responsibility becomes possible through e.g. arguing that Israelis are the new Nazis –a perpetrator-victim reversal. Lars Rensmann, *Kritische Theorie über den Antisemitismus. Studien zu Struktur, Erklärungspotential und Aktualität* (Berlin/Hamburg: Argument, 1998).

3. Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die friedfertige Frau. Eine psychoanalytische Untersuchung zur Aggression der Geschlechter* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1989).

4. This text regularly touches upon questions of German philosophy and ideology which lack direct translations into English. The term ‘Ausnahmezustand’ was coined by Carl Schmitt in the 1920s and later used for the Nazi regime – ultimately in an apologetic

historian Wendy Lower paints a convincing picture of the *Ostrausch*, the “intoxication of the East – (. . .) an imperial high that increased the violence of war and genocide”<sup>5</sup>, the picnics at the sites of mass murder, the Jew-hunting societies, and the wives and mistresses of high-ranking Nazis looting in the ghetto. For the typical secretary who volunteered to ‘go east’, typing deportation lists was – as Lower showed – as much a part of the daily routine, as sparing people who they still needed in some way, e.g., the secretary who saved her Jewish hairstylist or the women “had not finished knitting a sweater for her”<sup>6</sup> from deportation. The majority of those approximately 500.000 ‘ordinary women’ had volunteered for deployment in ‘the East’.

The most prominent female perpetrators were the concentration camp overseers, trained mostly at Ravensbrück. We learn from Goldhagen that even in the end phase of the war, when orders often did not get through, the overseers acted on their own initiative: While everyone else got clothes and shoes for the death marches, Jewish women did not.<sup>7</sup> On the home front, only caregivers murdered directly. This began with the T4 euthanasia program,<sup>8</sup> but did not have an antisemitic background. In contrast to that, antisemitism was very much present among welfare workers (“Fürsorgerinnen”) who came to the conclusion that one could not visit Aryans after breathing the air from a Jewish flat.<sup>9</sup> The field in which women were most strongly represented was among denunciators, around 30 percent of whom were female.<sup>10</sup> Such sometimes deadly activism was accompanied by the responsibility for making sure that neighbors did not buy from Jews. While some German women held rallies for their Jewish husbands, others organized themselves in the *Stahlhelmfrauenbund* (Steel

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way. The conventional translation as ‘state of emergency’ aims at democratic states, whereas the ‘Ausnahmezustand’ moves to the foreground the idea of imminence, first of all through the ‘Gegenvolk’. All the translations from German contained in this paper are mine.

5. Wendy Lower, *Hitler's Furies. German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* (New York: HMH, 2013)

6. *Ibid.*, 105.

7. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitlers willige Vollstrecker. Ganz gewöhnliche Deutsche und der Holocaust* (Berlin: Siedler, 1996), 413; Simone Erpel, ed., *Im Gefolge der SS: Aufseherinnen des Frauen-KZ Ravensbrück* (Berlin: Metropol, 2011).

8. Ernst Klee, “Euthanasie” in *NS-Staat. Die “Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens”* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2011), 24.

9. Emilija Mitrovic, “Fürsorgerinnen im Nationalsozialismus: Hilfe zur Aussonderung,” in *Opfer und Täterinnen. Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Angelika Ebbinghaus (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 50.

10. Gisela Diewald-Kerkmann, *Politische Denunziationen im NS-Regime oder Die kleine Macht der “Volksgenossen”* (Bonn: Dietz, 1995), 131.

helmet women's union) or the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft völkisch gesinnter Frauen* (Working committee of racially aware women).<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Dagmar Herzog has shown that the official mother's cult gives a false impression about Aryan sexuality in the Nazi era,<sup>12</sup> which was actually characterized by a Nazi version of libertinage, especially when it came to the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (BDM): it included the proliferation of condom machines and sex guidebooks which stressed the role of the clitoris and the importance of male and female orgasms. Conservatives and representatives of religious movements were strongly opposed by those who wanted to redefine sexual liberty as an Aryan privilege and free it from any association with Jews or Marxism.<sup>13</sup> According to Herzog it was considered a priority in the 1950's to establish a very different (sexual) morality – and to remove the condom machines – in order to delimit the Nazi era and restore marriage and family values. Yet, although even Viktor Klemperer wrote about the hospitals full of BDM girls suffering from gonorrhoea, the dominant image of sexuality in the Nazi era today goes in an opposite – and quite delusional – direction. A group called A.G. Gender-Killer stressed that the BDM focused on issues such as toughening girls up, group games, gymnastics, obedience, and a modest appearance without luxury, make-up or high-heels – the list is endless and includes everything but fun and sexuality.<sup>14</sup> The authors claimed that the same applied to grown-up women who were clean, decent and disciplined, loyal housewives “desexualized and subordinated to biological expedience”<sup>15</sup> Herzog insightfully explains this shift in the narrative as a result of the ‘normalization process’ of the 1950s, when it seemed impossible to admit in front of one's children and the rest of the world that the Third Reich was in any way fun.<sup>16</sup>

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11. Claudia Koonz, *Mütter im Vaterland. Frauen im Dritten Reich* (Freiburg: Kore, 1991), 163–165.

12. Dagmar Herzog, *Die Politisierung der Lust. Sexualität in der deutschen Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (München: Siedler, 2005), 36.

13. Herzog, *Politisierung der Lust*, 24.

14. A. G. Gender-Killer, “Geschlechterbilder im Nationalsozialismus. Eine Annäherung an den alltäglichen Antisemitismus,” in *Antisemitismus und Geschlecht. Von “maskulinisierten Jüdinnen”, “effeminierten Juden” und anderen Geschlechterbildern*, ed. A.G. Gender-Killer (Münster: Unrast, 2005) 37–38.

15. *Ibid.*, 29–31.

16. Yet, Herzog does not discuss that the Nazi libertinage – understood in psychoanalytic terms – must be seen as one that wipes out the partial drives, which leads to a highly battered sexuality. (Ljiljana Radonić, “Genitalfixiert statt polymorph-pervers. Politisierung von Sexualität im Nationalsozialismus und heute,” *Unique* 11, 2012, <http://www.univie.ac.at/unique/uniquecms/?p=2792>).



## GERMANY'S 'NEW WOMEN'S MOVEMENT' AND THE NAZI PAST

While the state of research on the role of women in the Nazi era is satisfying today, this issue was largely ignored for decades after 1945. In the 1980's, a lot of works were published, but the 'New women's movement' in Germany and Austria largely turned a blind eye to female perpetrators in the Third Reich and depicted women as victims reduced to their role as mothers, as Angelika Ebbinghaus was one of the first to point out in 1987: "This might be explained by the fact that women's historiography is often pursued with the goal to build a sense of identity."<sup>17</sup> In 1990, Lerne Gravenhorst added that there had been individual cases of a feminist public confrontation with the Nazi period. "Jewish feminists contributed significantly to these discussions. But it seems that this has not led to a broad discussion of the issue."<sup>18</sup>

These publications broke with the myth of female victimhood, but they remained heavily criticized, since, until the late 1980's, feminist publications had depicted women in the Nazi era predominantly as victims. So while the few critical publications until the 1990's are of singular character, the examples I will quote in the following are picked from a high number of similar, repeating argumentations. Some authors denied that women had been perpetrators at all, like Annette Kuhn, who depicted Nazism as evil outside and a "dissident women's culture inside".<sup>19</sup> Other feminist authors understood the crimes committed by women to be a result of female victimhood. Renate Wiggershaus depicted female overseers in concentration camps as "surveillance machines ready to function". Just like "birthing machines", they were simply women instrumentalized by men.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Angelika Ebbinghaus, ed., *Opfer und Täterinnen. Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1996), 9.

18. Lerne Gravenhorst, "Nehmen wir Nationalsozialismus und Auschwitz ausreichend als unser negatives Eigentum in Anspruch? Zu Problemen im feministisch-sozialwissenschaftlichen Diskurs in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," in *Töchter Fragen. NS-Frauengeschichte*, eds. Lerne Gravenhorst and Carmen Tatschmurat (Freiburg: Kore, 1990), 18.

19. Annette Kuhn, "Zur Täterschaft von Frauen im NS," in *Dokumentation der AG "Täterinnen im Nationalsozialismus" des aktiven Museums*, ed. Aktives Museum Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin (Berlin: Verein aktives Museum, 1992), 12. Gerda Szepansky went in the same direction, arguing that the female struggle for survival was "resistive by its very nature" ("in sich widerständig") since the struggle for survival meant struggle against the war and that opposition to the war was resistance against the system (Gerda Szepansky, "*Blitzmädel*", "*Heldenmütter*", "*Kriegerwitwe*" (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1986), 70).

20. Renate Wiggershaus, "Frauen unterm Nationalsozialismus," in *Terror und Hoffnung in Deutschland 1915–1933. Leben im Faschismus*, ed. Johannes Beck et al. (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1980), 365.

This idea of female hench(wo)men was very popular in the 1980's: "In 1933 women had already internalized and accepted the basis of the patriarchal argumentation. From this point of view the misogynistic Nazi ideology and policy could be misunderstood as a departure towards a period of 'equality' and 'tribute' to women. This is how the victims could become hench (wo)men (*Handlanger*) of the perpetrators."<sup>21</sup>

The role of women in the Nazi era was often portrayed in a contradictory way, as the works of the famous psychoanalytic Margarete Mitscherlich show. In her book about "memory work"<sup>22</sup> she both argued that women in the Nazi era came "just before cows"<sup>23</sup> and that it is a pity that "today's generation of young women does not identify with the mothers of the war and post-war years who learned to live independently, but with the women of the 1950s who blended into the earlier unpugnacious subordinated role and thus supported the regressive anti-enlightening consolidation of family and gender relations."<sup>24</sup> So, did women in World War II live independently or were they subordinated almost like cows? Is Mitscherlich aware of female perpetrators when she mourns that young women do not identify with the women of the war years? She calls the gender relations of the 1950s anti-enlightening, ignoring the fact that the emancipation of women in the Third Reich was only possible due to their enhanced status as partners in the murderous Nazi politics. In her famous book titled *The peaceful anti-Semitic woman*<sup>25</sup> Mitscherlich at least tackled the question of female antisemitism, but came to the conclusion that women are not "really" antisemitic, and it is rather the case that they . . .

"lapse into antisemitism as a consequence of their identification with male prejudices because they are afraid of love deprivation. . . . They comply acquiescently when confronted with inconsistent demands in the Third Reich: from a doe [*Weibchen*] at the stove that is supposed to give birth to sons for the Führer, to a BDM leader, munitions worker or even concentration camp overseer."<sup>26</sup>

Since the historical chapter above has shown that women did not only "comply", but acted with self-initiative in an antisemitic and racist way,

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21. Marianne Lehker, *Frauen im Nationalsozialismus. Wie aus Opfern Handlanger der Täter wurden – eine nötige Trauerarbeit* (Frankfurt: Materialis, 1984), 93.

22. Margarete Mitscherlich, *Erinnerungsarbeit. Zur Psychoanalyse der Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (Frankfurt: Fischer 1993).

23. *Ibid.*, 152.

24. *Ibid.*, 11.

25. Mitscherlich, *Friedfertige Frau*.

26. *Ibid.*, 157.

Mitscherlich's argumentation must be understood as denial of responsibility in order to create positive identification for women, her-story as opposed to history.

Another element of this victimhood narrative is the idea of a Holocaust on Jews and women. According to Gisela Bock, who was not a feminist bigot from some kind of radical fringe but a history professor who rendered outstanding services to the institutionalization of gender history, one percent of both men and women were sterilized starting from 1934. Yet, she argues that this numerical parity served only "in order to hide" that the mass murder was part of Nazi politics especially against women.<sup>27</sup> The death of the sterilized women "was not only an invidious 'by-product' of a birth policy aiming 'only' at sterilization and 'not' at murder, but planned and conscious mass murder. For women the sterilization program was not a pre-stage, but the beginning and the first stage of mass murder on women and men."<sup>28</sup> She claims that sterilized German women as well as murdered female Jews and Roma were part of the racist Nazi "birth war" – thereby mixing racial persecution with other reasons in order to construct an overall female victimhood. This peaks in the formula that – next to the "final solution of the Jewish question" – the Nazis planned a "solution of the women's question"<sup>29</sup> Since she demands that the treatment of female minorities must be understood as indicative for the "overall situation of the female gender"<sup>30</sup>, female perpetrators become unthinkable. The imagined mass murder of women is a specifically feminist form of the mechanism of perpetrator-victim reversal,<sup>31</sup> demonstrated best by the feminist journal *Schlangenbrut* ("Brood of Vipers") who declared 1988 the "year of the Holocaust on woman," defined as "the destruction of our self-esteem, the fear that still burns inside of us as a result of the patriarchy".<sup>32</sup>

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27. Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus*(Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986), 12.

28. *Ibid.*, 380.

29. *Ibid.*, 18.

30. *Ibid.*, 13.

31. The German term 'Täter-Opfer-Umkehr' is more precise than its common translation as 'blaming the victim' since it focuses more on the fact that the perpetrator or a group of perpetrators imagine themselves as victims (Max Horkheimer, *Zur Kritik der instrumentellen Vernunft* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1997), 314).

32. Susanne Heschel, "Konfigurationen des Patriarchats, des Judentums und des Nazismus im deutschen feministischen Denken," in *Der feministische "Sündenfall"? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung*, eds. Charlotte Kohn-Ley and Ilse Korotin (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 167.

## FEMINIST ANTISEMITISM AND ANTI-ZIONISM

This mechanism went hand in hand with the idea that Judaism was an especially patriarchal religion, an argument which can be considered dominant among different feminist fractions.<sup>33</sup> Yet, theorists of the matriarchy like the Catholic theologian Gerda Weiler went even further when they argued that Judaism had destroyed matriarchy:

For our modern set of problems the history of the 'chosen people' has an exemplary character: Dissolved away from their ancestral ground this people leaves the tolerant Weltanschauung of their mothers, demonizes the all-pervasive love of patriarchal religion, carries out destructive acts of aggression and strives for supremacy in the Middle East through a brutal 'extermination program'. On the flip side of power there is powerlessness. Israel is devastated and stops existing as a state. We can learn from this path that a total claim to power has to lead to doom and total annihilation.<sup>34</sup>

Judaism is depicted as a morbid notion of a patriarchal God. As the feminist theologian and Jungian psychoanalytic Hanna Wolff put it: Whoever is familiar with literature on the morbid notion of God "does not wonder about wartime atrocities, concentration camps, the Holocaust or the newest excesses and is painfully forced to think about the relationship of such perverse violence to the morbid notion of God."<sup>35</sup> Since Judaism was responsible for the morbid notion of god and since this notion led to the Holocaust, the Jews were therefore themselves responsible for their annihilation. Furthermore, Wolff depicted Jesus as representative of female values and as the greatest Holocaust victim, "scarred and martyred through 2000 years of our projections."<sup>36</sup>

The Protestant theologian Christa Mulack claimed that Jahwe had murdered the goddesses:

The goddesses of revenge disappeared together with matriarchy and the just and holy anger of female power. This automatically made the regime more authoritarian, while power and law became absolute values. The last consequence of this process materialized in the Nazi system, in which 'German

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33. Leah C. Czollek, "Sehnsucht nach Israel," in *Suchbewegungen. Interkulturelle Beratung und Therapie*, ed. Maria del Mar Castro Varela and Sylvia Schulze (Tübingen: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Verhaltenstherapie, 1998), 42.

34. Ibid.

35. Hanna Wolff, *Neuer Wein – Alte Schläuche. Das Identitätsproblem des Christentums im Lichte der Tiefenpsychologie* (Stuttgart: Radius, 1981), 178.

36. Susanne Heschel, "Konfigurationen des Patriarchats, des Judentums und des Nazismus im deutschen feministischen Denken," in *Der feministische "Sündenfall"? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung*, eds. Charlotte Kohn-Ley and Ilse Korotin (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 172.

sons' were trimmed to harass and kill Jewish mothers, children and fathers. This clearly shows how right the goddesses of revenge were when they prophesied: 'A new law means upheaval ["Umsturz"] when the law of the mother's murderer and perdition gain the upper hand.'<sup>37</sup>

These theologians obsessively repeated the analogy between the ancient crimes of Jews and the Holocaust. Mulack claimed that the Holocaust was only one of the numerous results of patriarchal thinking which was not only to be found in the Hebrew bible and was not only harmful towards Jews, "but first of all harmful to women. They are all tragic victims of the patriarchy in the same way."<sup>38</sup> Mulack accused her critics of mistaking anti-patriarchalism for antisemitism, which proved that they were still caught in patriarchal chains.<sup>39</sup> The above-mentioned journal *Schlangenbrut* also claimed that those who accused the theorists of the matriarchy like Weiler or Mulack of anti-Semitism were showing themselves to be agents of the patriarchy who wanted to burn their sisters at the stake in order to succeed in the patriarchal system.<sup>40</sup>

I argue that it is an expression of a specific female form of secondary antisemitism when matriarchal researchers blame Judaism and old Israel's murderous program for the destruction of matriarchy and depict it as an especially patriarchal religion. This narrative is needed in order to understand all this to be an explanation for the Holocaust – and thus blame it on the Jews. Of course other feminist publications quoted above did not go so far as to blame the Jews for the Holocaust, but it would be too easy to understand these authors only as part of the religious anti-Jewish tradition, to ignore the secondary antisemitic element while putting their 'feminism' in inverted commas.

Furthermore, Charlotte Kohn-Ley stresses the good relationship between German church-feminist and left-feminist groups who had anti-capitalism and anti-Zionism in common.<sup>41</sup> The specific feminist element is combined with the general anti-Zionist anti-Semitism predominant in left wing movements after the Six Days War up until today – a phenomenon Charlotte Kohn insightfully called "antifascist anti-Zionism":

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37. Christa Mulack, *Die Weiblichkeit Gottes. Matriachale Voraussetzungen des Gottesbildes* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1986), 248.

38. Christa Mulack, "Kontrovers diskutiert," *Schlangenbrut* 22 (1998).

39. Mulack, *Die Weiblichkeit Gottes*, 144.

40. Susanne Heine, "Die feministische Diffamierung der Juden," in *Der feministische "Sündenfall"? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung*, ed. Charlotte Kohn-Ley and Ilse Korotin (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 15–16.

41. Charlotte Kohn-Ley, "Antisemitische Mütter – antizionistische Töchter?" in *Der feministische "Sündenfall"? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung*, eds. Charlotte Kohn-Ley and Ilse Korotin (Vienna: Picus, 1994), 221.

A thorough analysis of the development of the feminist movement after 1968 shows that anti-Fascism and anti-Zionism became *one* ideological basis. All feminist efforts were based on this consensus: feminist theologians, theorists of the matriarchy, leftist groups, the feminist peace movement, the ecologists and women campaigning for the Third world, all of them were self-evidently antifascist anti-Zionists.<sup>42</sup>

After the Six Days War numerous women's conferences passed declarations in which they condemned Zionism as the worst form of racism. Phyllis Chesler describes such a conference in Copenhagen in 1980 as her "first post-modern 'pogrom'", dominated by PLO women who not only made it impossible for Jewish women to speak about their persecution, e.g. in Iraq, but who totally dominated the events, even making it impossible for non-Jewish speakers to broach the issue of persecution of women. Although the Palestinian women did not even pretend to be feminists, their agenda was successful again and again since it met the anti-Zionist consensus first of all of the leftist feminists – 94 members voted for the condemnation of Zionism as – next to Apartheid – one of the greatest evils of our time, only four voted against the declaration. Anti-Zionism which was not a feminist specific was conflated with the idea of Jews as especially patriarchal and thus developed a dynamic that often overshadowed discussions about the discrimination of women.<sup>43</sup> The same happened five years later, at the world women's conference in Nairobi in 1985, where Israeli women were hushed by calls of "Do away with Zionist terrorists!" and Zionism was equated with Nazism, while no one bothered to be scandalized that the Kenyan president opened the conference by calling women "creatures of the human kind".<sup>44</sup>

In reaction to that, Jewish feminists often claimed that it had become impossible to be Jewish and feminist in (secondary antisemitic) Germany or Austria.

Before leaving Germany, Maria Bader addressed the emotional cost of Jewishness.

"This summer I will move to New York. This is the end of a part of my history which is . . . part of women's history in Western Berlin and of Jewish history in post-war Germany. . . . I am tired of working myself into the ground in the German context. I don't want to have to endure being Jewish here."<sup>45</sup>

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42. Ibid., 218.

43. Phyllis Chesler, *Der neue Antisemitismus. Die globale Krise seit dem 11. September* (Berlin: Schwartzkopf Buchwerke, 2004), 58–59.

44. Kohn-Ley, "Antisemitische Mütter – antizionistische Töchter?", 227.

45. Maria Baader, "Zum Abschied. Über den Versuch, als jüdische Feministin in der Berliner Frauenszene einen Platz zu finden," in *Entfernte Verbindungen. Rassismus*

In *Longing for Israel* Leah C. Czollek described German Jewish experience in greater detail:

Then, in Western Berlin, I come in touch with feminist therapists. I learn from them that Judaism is a patriarchal religion that one should categorically disapprove of. A Jewish woman and a feminist, that's impossible. My identity is questioned. Germans still and repeatedly define what and who is Jewish . . . One of them feels persecuted in Germany like the Jews, because she is a feminist. I am either oversensitive or aggressive. And anyway, what do I have to do with 'it', what do they have to do with 'it'? We were all born 'after it'. German therapy is somehow universal. Me, the Jew, must not speak out. Still, they love to talk with me about the Nazi period. . . . Sometimes I don't want to. Then there is my arrogance again. I become a 'you [Jews]'. I keep being asked what 'we' think of something. I have hoped to find political allies in feminist circles. The private in the political seems to be conceptualized on a level I don't understand.<sup>46</sup>

These findings might today sound like a state of affairs which is long over, or something specific for the German post-Nazi society, but is it really so simple? When working with these two texts in my courses I learned that they still provoke secondary antisemitic reactions, are assessed as "extreme" or as motivated by hatred towards "all Germans". Scholarly debate has moved further, and Gisela Bock revised her ideas about the mass murder of Jews and women in the second half of the 1990s, but in what direction did the debate develop?

#### FEMALE ANTISEMITISM

It is certainly true that from the early 1990's onwards feminist publications from different currents have critically discussed the issue. Several studies on female Nazi perpetrators have been published<sup>47</sup> as well as detailed research on female victims of Nazism that do not serve the old collective victims narrative.<sup>48</sup> The relationship between antisemitism and

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*Antisemitismus Klassenunterdrückung*, ed. Ika Hügel et al. (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993), 82; 93.

46. Czollek, "Sehnsucht nach Israel", 42.

47. Gudrun Schwarz, *Eine Frau an seiner Seite. Ehefrauen in der "SS-Sippengemeinschaft"* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1997); Marita Krauss, *Sie waren dabei. Mitläuferinnen, Nutznießerinnen, Täterinnen im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2008); Kathrin Kompisch, *Täterinnen. Frauen im Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Böhlau, 2008).

48. Johanna Gehmacher and Gabriella Hauch, eds., *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Fragestellungen, Perspektiven, neue Forschungen* (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2007).

gender has been more closely scrutinized,<sup>49</sup> yet has predominantly targeted gender-specific anti-Semitic projections on Jews and Jewesses. The question of female antisemitism still remains insufficiently analyzed, as Wendy Lower's recently published book on *Hitler's Furies: German Women in the Nazi Killing Fields* showed. She asked if there was a "female form of antisemitic thinking and expression, specific to women's roles, their place in the Nazi system and society,"<sup>50</sup> and wisely referred to *The Authoritarian Personality (Studies in Prejudice)*, a book by a team around Theodor W. Adorno, in order to answer the question. Yet, – while referring to Adorno – Lower ended up withdrawing her insights about the freedom of decision and the *Ostrausch* which she formulated in the rest of her book. "For many women of the Nazi era, the father, the husband and the Führer were all authoritarian figures that shaped their lives in different stages. Erna Petri's father disapproved of Horst, her Nazi husband, but eventually Erna chose to align herself with a brutish mate instead of a protective father. The postwar testimony of many female defendants exhibits a fear of authority and the belief that one must obey or fulfill one's duty."<sup>51</sup> Lower excluded the most important insight of the study, the psychological benefit of antisemitism, and turned the theory into a kind of excuse. Furthermore, when she wrote that no psychological experiments on women were published, she was not aware of a preparatory study for *The Authoritarian Personality*, in which predominantly female probands were questioned. Else Frenkel-Brunswik and Robert N. Sanford tested students of a US state university in 1944 – mostly women, because many men were in the army. They did not doubt that there were authoritarian personalities among women in the first place, so they commented only briefly – but insightfully – on the gender specifics. They came to the conclusion that there are similar mechanisms of male and female antisemitic projections, but the contents of these projections differ. Antisemitic women showed a conventional female façade, but were full of latent, suppressed aggressions, while men appeared to be male, aggressive and hard-bitten, but were longing for passivity and dependency.<sup>52</sup>

Another insight provided by Lower's book, beside the need for studies dealing with female antisemitism, is that the idea of female perpetrators has not become common knowledge yet. The reviews of Lower's research on

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49. Karin Stögner, *Antisemitismus und Sexismus. Historisch-gesellschaftliche Konstellationen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014); A. G. Gender-Killer, "Geschlechterbilder".

50. Lower, *Hitler's Furies*, 155.

51. *Ibid.*, 160.

52. Else Frenkel-Brunswik and Robert Nevitt Sanford, "Die antisemitische Persönlichkeit. Ein Forschungsbericht," in *Antisemitismus*, ed. Ernst Simmel (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1993), 144.



13 biographies of women who 'went East' and often committed cruel crimes show how newsworthy her results are: the reviewers did not seem so much upset about the fact that Jewish children were thrown from balconies or slammed against ghetto walls, but found it particularly tragic that this was committed by housewives, young mothers or pregnant women.<sup>53</sup>

#### JEWISH FEMINISTS AND POST-JEWISH POST-FEMINISTS

When we think back to what Leah C. Czollek experienced in the 1990's, we can ask if it is possible to be Jewish and feminist today, even if the question itself might sound absurd when we think about the Israeli feminist movement. But has the relationship between gender and antisemitism/anti-Zionism changed decisively in the post-modern era and if so, how? Isn't the leading figure of queer-theory, Judith Butler, herself an "antifascist anti-Zionist", as Kohn has put it? She definitely is a declared (Jewish) representative of "anti-Zionism" or "post-Zionism" – she uses both self-attributions in *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. By justifying a dozen times why she refers to Jewish authors in her book in the first place she gives the impression that being Jewish and post-feminist is impossible, even nowadays. This is just one of numerous examples from quite similar passages:

By claiming there is a significant Jewish tradition affirming modes of justice and equality that would, of necessity, lead to a criticism of the Israeli state, I establish a Jewish perspective that is non-Zionist, even anti-Zionist, at the risk of making even the resistance to Zionism into a 'Jewish' value and so asserting, indirectly, the exceptional ethical resources of Jewishness. But if the critique of Zionism is to be effective and substantial, that claim of exceptionalism has to be refused in favor of more fundamental democratic values. However important it may be to establish Jewish oppositions to Zionism, this cannot be done without a critical move that questions the sufficiency of a Jewish framework, however alternative and progressive, as the defining horizon of the ethical. The opposition to Zionism requires the departure from Jewishness as an exclusionary framework for thinking both ethics and politics.<sup>54</sup>

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53. "So brutal töteten Hausfrauen und Mütter im Dritten Reich wehrlose Kinder", *Focus Online*, September 29, 2013, accessed September 26, 2015, [http://www.focus.de/wissen/mensch/geschichte/tid-33823/massenmord-durch-hitlers-furien-so-brutal-toeteten-hausfrauen-und-muetter-im-dritten-reich-wehrlose-kinder\\_aid\\_1115584.html](http://www.focus.de/wissen/mensch/geschichte/tid-33823/massenmord-durch-hitlers-furien-so-brutal-toeteten-hausfrauen-und-muetter-im-dritten-reich-wehrlose-kinder_aid_1115584.html).

54. Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 2.

Referring to Jewish values, Butler imagines she could be accused of what she seems to fear most: “You attempt to depart from Jewishness, but you cannot!” One might now argue that Butler is against any kind of identity (politics), but this is obviously not true when it comes to the Palestinians; it is always the Jewish and the American identity she criticizes. So her anti-Zionism – often denied or marginalized by the recipients of her gender theory – does not link directly to queer theory. There is yet one passage in the book where the two topics connect. Butler’s greatest role model for co-habitation with the Palestinians, Hannah Arendt, had a different concept of Jews and of gender. Arendt wrote in a letter to Gershom Scholem about her Jewishness which she calls an “indisputable fact in my life”:

I have never pretended to be anything else or to be in any way other than I am, and I have never felt tempted in that direction. It would have been like saying that I was a man and not a woman – that is to say, kind of insane. . . . There is such a thing as a basic gratitude for everything that is as it is; for what has been given and not made; for what is *physei* and not *nomos*.<sup>55</sup>

Arendt regarded it as “insane” to try to deconstruct either her Jewishness or her gender, which leaves Butler only able to ask: “Does she overstate the case? . . . One can, after all, refuse those categories, disown Jewishness or change gender.”<sup>56</sup> What Butler does not discuss, however, is that Arendt not only considered being Jewish as something “pre-political” (a word that is missing in the English translation of the letter), but also did not reject her Jewishness, no matter what she thought about Israel and Eichmann at that time. In contrast to Butler, Arendt was well aware that the “circumstances of Jewish politics” (mentioned in the part of the letter Butler omits in her quote) are defined by antisemitism and that the Third Reich taught us that one cannot “disown Jewishness”. Arendt also saw the danger of Jewish self-hatred and Jewish identification with the aggressor.

At the end of Judith Butler’s deconstruction process, on the other hand, stands the end of Jewishness. Here is how she develops this argument: She does not speak about the “old Israel” anymore, but blames today’s “illegitimate”, “racist” Israel for its impending destruction due to “an ongoing process of deportation”<sup>57</sup> and “concentrating colonialism”<sup>58</sup> She only refers to the Holocaust in order to implicitly compare it to the fate of the Palestinians which produces some quite awkward formulations like “Jewish population, when not explicitly destroyed, were certainly

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55. Butler, *Parting Ways*, 133.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*, 101.

58. *Ibid.*, 37.

dispossessed from home and land under the Nazi regime.”<sup>59</sup> She refuses to equate Israel with the Third Reich numerous times throughout the book, but only because this would be “unwise” and because there is a difference in the *grade* of oppression, expulsion and murder. Just like the different feminist groups from the 1980’s, Butler seems to be proud of her “anti-fascist anti-Zionism”, as Kohn-Ley called it.

While the incongruity of feminism and Jewishness was forced upon Leah C. Czollek from the outside, the incongruity of Jewishness and Butler’s post-feminism is internalized here. The theorists of the patriarchy projected all evil onto Judaism as the murderer of the patriarchy, the annihilation of Jews being their own fault. Butler implicitly ascribes this patriarchal aspect to the violent Jewish state and depicts the Diaspora as the only “ethical” form of Jewishness. “Jewishness can and must be understood as an anti-identitarian project insofar as we might even say that being a Jew implies taking up an ethical relation to the non-Jew.”<sup>60</sup> But she ends up deconstructing Jewry when she elaborates on the meaning of exile or Diaspora: “In this sense, to ‘be’ a Jew is to be departing from oneself, cast out into the world of the non-Jew, bound to make one’s way ethically and politically precisely there within a world of irreversible heterogeneity.”<sup>61</sup> Butler demands that even the Diaspora needs to “disperse” itself in order to remain “ethical”, “to locate Jewishness in the moment of its encounter with the non-Jewish, in the dispersing of the self that follows from that encounter.”<sup>62</sup>

Despite the possible impression that I am comparing apples and oranges here by comparing German non-Jews with a Jewish US-based theorist, the continuity of the problem of being Jewish in a first feminist, later post-feminist, queer context seems evident.

#### CONCLUSION

When Maria Baader, one of the Jewish feminists quoted above, co-founded the “Lesbian-Feminist Shabbat Circle” in Western Berlin in 1984, she found that the group provoked aggressions from their feminist audience immediately because of its name, and that all the members were identified as Jewish although several members had explicitly stated they were non-Jews. This took place in a period when most publications I was able to trace that dealt with the role of women during the Nazi period supported the narrative of female victimhood. This first big wave of disencumbering

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59. Ibid., 15.

60. Ibid., 117.

61. Ibid., 15.

62. Ibid., 26.

publications showed typical elements of secondary anti-Semitism, claiming that ‘we’ also suffered during the war “just like the Jews” – or were even the greatest victims. Jewish women already caused irritation by their very existence, since they reminded the non-Jews of the crimes generally referred to as the Holocaust. This phenomenon could be observed in German and Austrian society in general – anti-Zionism being a dominant element especially in leftist political groups since the Six Days War. But when Jewish women openly identified themselves as feminist and Jewish, they faced strong aggression and were told that this was an impossible combination, since Judaism was a particularly patriarchal religion. This specific feminist anti-Semitic element was sometimes even connected with the idea that the Jews were responsible for the Holocaust because they had killed matriarchy and introduced violence. Non-Jewish feminists, who opposed this dominant mechanism, like Baader’s friends from the Shabbat Circle, were either identified as Jewish and/or faced harsh critique, and were accused of burning their sisters at the stake. Karin Windaus-Walser, Lerke Gravenhorst, Charlotte Kohn-Ley, Angelika Ebbinghaus and a few others who publicly opposed the perpetrator-victim-reversal were by no means the dominant voices among the feminists – and just like Baader and Czollek they were fed up at some point.

The secondary antisemitism of Weiler, Mulack and co., but also the denial of female antisemitism in World War II and the perpetrator-victim-reversal of Bock and Mitscherlich, allowed to think of women and feminism as something solely unproblematic with a focus on earlier ‘innocent’ victimhood. Yet once telling history as ‘herstory’ became established in the 1990’s, narratives other than those that serve the inner identity of the movement(s) became acceptable and the way was paved for a critical assessment of the role of women in the Nazi era. What was still missing when I published my book in 2004 was the question whether anti-Semitism worked for women in the same way as for men. So I tried to close this gap by discussing psychoanalytic approaches, Adorno’s critical theory and the concept of the “authoritarian personality” showing that antisemitism satisfies different needs depending on the different gender images of men and women. I assumed that the trend to critically confront the Nazi past and the institutionalization of gender history weakened the need to idealize and exculpate the role of women in the Third Reich. While this seems to still be true, it recently struck me that Judith Butler’s book from 2013 showed that being Jewish and queer/post-feminist stills seems impossible for her, which Butler internalized with the effect of becoming a Jewish leading figure for the anti-Zionist movement. In no way does this mean that ‘the feminism’ or queer theory (for which Butler cannot stand *pars pro toto*) is antisemitic ‘by nature’, but this article makes the case for

continued high awareness of antisemitic and/or anti-Zionist tendencies due to the history of the movement(s).

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# Antisemitism and the Swedish School System

Anna Sarri Krantz\*

This article analyses a case study of antisemitism, directed towards a young Jewish girl and the Stockholm school system. The girl defines herself as a Third Generation Survivor, a concept examined from a social anthropological perspective. The methodology during the research process includes collection of data about antisemitic attitudes in school and in-depth interviews with the subject of the case study. There are a multitude of studies on antisemitism in Sweden and Europe but there are seldom, if ever, accounts of how the affected individuals respond to the manifestations. The upper secondary school mentioned failed to follow the legislation, failed to address the problem and failed to take sufficient action when an antisemitic action occurred. The article proposes that improved strategies for handling undemocratic manifestations should focus on knowledge and education, as they are two of the most critical aspects when fighting prejudice and misconceptions.

In Swedish upper secondary schools one can find visible Nazi symbols in the general landscape of the school buildings. When you walk around Swedish schools today you see them on the walls of the classrooms, on school benches and in the corridor walls. This article will focus specifically on one example of an antisemitic outbreak, which was directed towards a particular high school student, inside the school. This teenage student, who went to one of the larger, and very popular upper secondary schools in the Stockholm city centre, one day found the Nazi Swastika on the door to her locker. She was shocked and the school reported the incident to the police. When the shock had dissipated she decided to visit other upper secondary schools in Stockholm to tell the story of her life as a Third Generation Survivor, and of her belonging to a Jewish family with grandparents who survived the extermination camps during the Holocaust, but also to a family in which some relatives were murdered. She decided she wanted to tell her story and let others, of her own age, take part in it. She thereby took part in an ongoing remembrance of the Holocaust discussed by for example Hirsch, Webber, Balf, Waxman<sup>1</sup> and her story

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1. M. Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); J Webber, "Making Sense of the Past: Reflection on Jewish Historical Consciousness" in *Identity and Networks: Fashioning*



became part of a larger narrative about the Holocaust that is taking place in Europe: see for example Assman, Kingsepp, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Shandler<sup>2</sup> This article will concentrate on the case study and the visible antisemitism directed toward her and the school system. The aim is to discuss the specific case and the long tradition of antisemitism in Sweden. There is a manifold field of studies on antisemitism in Sweden and Europe, but there are seldom, if ever, accounts of how the individuals who are exposed to the outbursts react, reflect and respond. The article presents and explores this aspect without any possibility of statistical generalizations.

Swedish schools are governed by a system of laws and legislation specifically focusing on events related to violations of the human rights. Since the 1990's the school curricula clarify the necessity to respect the rights of the individual and oblige Swedish schools to create a democratic, tolerant, and respectful environment. I will show that the Swedish school curricula is a result of the ever present antisemitism in Sweden by using evidence from research conducted by the historian Heléne Lööw and exemplifying how the regulations were violated using the mentioned example<sup>3</sup>

Over the period of one year, the focus for the research has been the concept of the Third Generation Survivor, with an analysis of this concept from a social anthropological perspective. Social anthropology focuses on exploring, understanding, and interpreting, among many other things, concepts. Social anthropologists attempt to understand why a concept has been created and explain the phenomena and enable the opportunity to “study the relationship between the particular and the universal, the

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*Gender and Ethnicity across Cultures*, eds. D. F. Bryceson, J. Okely, and J. M. Webber. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 73-90.; M. Balf, “Holocaust Survivors on Kibbutzim Resettling Unsettled Memories” in *Holocaust Survivors: Resettlement, Memories, Identities*, ed. D. Ofer, F. Ouzan, and J. T. Baumel-Schwartz (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 165-183.; Z. Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2006).

2. J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); E. Kingsepp, *Nazityskland I Populärkulturen: Minne, Myt, Medier* (Stockholm: Stockholms universitet, 2008); E. Kingsepp, “Populärkulturen Och Förhållandet Till Nazityskland” in *Hitler För Alle Populärkulturella Perspektiv På Nazityskland, Andra Världskriget Och Förintelsen*, eds. E. Kingsepp and T. Schult (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2012); B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and J. Shandler, “Introduction: Anne Frank, the Phenomenon,” in *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, eds. B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and J. Shandler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 11-28.

3. H. Lööw, *Nazismen I Sverige 1980 – 1989* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 1998); *Nazismen I Sverige 1924 – 1979* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 2004); H. Lööw, *Nazismen I Sverige 2000-2014* (Stockholm: Ordfront förlag, 2015).

individual and the collective, the local and the global.”<sup>4</sup> The case study presented in the article is an event that influenced one individual but, at the same time, is a result of a contemporary and historical construction of thought or mindset in Swedish society in general. The data gathered during the fieldwork indicates that the student’s experience is not an unusual occurrence and that antisemitic actions occur on a regular basis in Stockholm.

I have conducted ethnographic interviews within the community of people who define themselves as Third Generation Survivors. The interviews have been structured and in-depth and were conducted on a regular basis during 2013. In-depth interviews with representatives from the Jewish Assembly also took place. I have attended different kinds of religious services in the largest of the synagogues in Stockholm in 2013. The focus has been on ethnographic participation together with structured interviews as the method of choice<sup>5</sup> During the research process I have collected data about antisemitic attitudes in schools even though the main interest during the research has been in other areas<sup>6</sup> There are different experiences of antisemitism among those individuals who have participated in the study. Some of them have experienced it while attending public schools in the Stockholm area and they have then chosen to leave the public schools in order to attend the Jewish alternative. None of the participants report experiencing antisemitism in public places or in any kind of professional, working situation but this could be explained by them not making their minority status publicly known<sup>7</sup>

In order to initially approach an understanding of the concept of the Third Generation Survivor, I attended the Official Remembrance day of the Victims of the Holocaust in the Great Synagogue of Stockholm in January 2013. During the ceremony a young woman gave a speech about her experiences in today’s Stockholm. In her speech she told the story about how her grandfather fled from Nazi Germany and came to a safe haven in Sweden just before Hitler invaded Poland. She also described how her grandmother came to Skåne, in the southern part of Sweden. Her

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4. D. Spencer, “Introduction Emotional Labour and Relational Observation,” in *Anthropological Fieldwork: A Relational Process*, eds. D. Spencer and J. P. Davies (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010), 1-47.

5. C. A. Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography a Guide to Researching Selves and Others* (London: Routledge, 2008).

6. The research has mainly focused on understanding the concept Third Generation Survivor, aspects of remembrance, the narrative of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism. The research will result in a PhD thesis in Social Anthropology at the University of Lund.

7. In 1999 a new legislation was founded which identify Jews as an official minority in Sweden, L. Dencik, *Judendomen I Sverige En Sociologisk Belysning* (Uppsala: Studier av interreligiösa relationer 24, 2006).

grandmother came on her own since the vast majority of her relatives had been killed.

In her speech the young woman also told the congregation about the episode in her school when she one day came to her locker, during the spring of 2012, and found the Nazi swastika scratched onto on the door. I will come back to this episode later. Her speech concluded with the idea that the ideology which had persecuted her grandparents 70 years earlier was still present in Stockholm, in a school in the city center. The young woman decided to devote herself to work for remembering the Holocaust and, as she said, to put a stop to evil<sup>8</sup>

After the Remembrance Day I contacted the Jewish community and was able to get in touch with the young woman, here called Ester, which is the name she chose for this article, and we conducted structured interviews on a regular basis throughout 2013. I have made the purpose of the interviews explicit as well as explaining the recordings and the project<sup>9</sup>

#### ANTISEMITISM IN THE SWEDISH SOCIETY

Swedish-Jewish history has been intertwined for a relatively short period. There are no historical references to violations, violence or pogroms towards the Jews since the group was prohibited from living in Sweden before 1774<sup>10</sup> The prohibition of immigration by Jews was in itself a result of an ongoing prejudice towards the group<sup>11</sup> and must be seen as a sign of antisemitism.

There are many researchers who have studied antisemitism from both a contemporary and historical perspective<sup>12</sup> One of them, the historian

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8. This speech gave me a first hint of what later became the focus point of the research for the PhD-thesis. Anti-Semitism, remembrance of and the narrative about the Holocaust is strongly linked together in an intricate pattern.

9. J. P. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979).

10. D. Fischer, *Judiskt Liv En Undersökning Bland Medlemmar I* (Stockholms Judiska Församling, Spånga: Megilla-Förlaget, 1996); R. Bredefeldt, "De Judiska Minoriteterna I Sverige Och Finland – Olika Men Ändå Lika" in *Från Sidensjalar Till Flyktingmottagning: Judarna I Sverige: En Minoritets Historia*, ed. L. M. Andersson and C. H. Carlsson (Stockholm: Historiska institutionen, Uppsala universite, 2013), 49-74.

11. H. Bachner, *Återkomsten Antisemitism I Sverige Efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2004).

12. For example: M. Byström and K. Kvist Geverts, "Från En Aktivism Till En Annan. Hur Ska Sveriges Agerande I Flyktingfrågan under Andra Världskriget Förklaras," in *Sverige Och Nazityskland: Skuldfrågor Och Moraldeba*, eds. L. M. Andersson and M. Tydén (Stockholm: Dialogos Förlag, 2007), 148-168.; H. Maccoby, *Antisemitism and Modernity: Innovation and Continuity* (London: Routledge, 2006); D. Mulinari, Neergaard, "Sverigedemokraterna Och Det Teoretiska Fältet," in *Det Vita Fältet*, ed. M. Deland, F.

Heléne Lööw, has thoroughly studied antisemitism in Sweden and more specifically the Nationalist Socialist movement in Sweden, between the years 1924 – 1979, 1980 – 1989 and 2000 - 2014<sup>13</sup> The research shows the impact the ideology has had on Swedish society over a period of decades.

Smaller political clusters with an antisemitic agenda have existed since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Sweden. There have been a large number of political formations and organizations of varying sizes which have a focus on anti-democratic ideas, antisemitism and fascism in different geographical areas of the country. One of the first publicly known antisemites was Mauritz Rydgren and his successor Barthold Lundén, who initiated *Svenska Antisemitiska Föreningen*, (Swedish Antisemitic Association, author's translation) in 1923, which existed until 1931<sup>14</sup> During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the different parties had difficulties organizing themselves but in 1924 three brothers founded the first known nationalist socialist party, *Svenska Nationalsocialistiska Frihetsförbundet*, (Swedish National Socialist Labour Congregation, author's translation) and two years later another party was founded by Elof Eriksson, *Sveriges Fascistiska Kamporganisation* (The Swedish Fascist Combat Organisation, author's translation), which later changed its name to *Sveriges Nationalsocialistiska Folkparti* (Sweden's National Socialist Peoples Party, author's translation). This party became a school for future national socialist and fascist leaders. But parallel to this larger, nationwide party, there existed several other, smaller clusters of organisations, associations and parties who in 1930 gathered in one larger party called the *Nysvenska Nationalsocialistiska Partiet* (The New Swedish Nationalist Socialist Party, author's translation) which later took the name The Swedish Nationalist Socialist Party. Two of the members, Furugård and Lindholm had an impact on the political arena for many decades and formed different parties and associations. During the 1930's The Swedish Nationalist Socialist Party also tried to make its mark at a parliamentary level but never managed to gather enough supporters. The historian Koblik points out that none of the Swedish national socialist parties had an impact on the parliament or domestic or international politics<sup>15</sup> But according to, for example, Åmark and Rudberg, the Swedish

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Hertzberg, and T. Hvitfeldt (Det vita fältet: Upsaliensis 41 Opuscula Historica, 2010); W. Benz, "Antisemitismforskning Som Akademiskt Ämnes Och Allmän Uppgift," in *Det Vita Fältet II: Samtida Forskning Om Högerextremism*, eds. M. Deland, P. Fuehrer, and F. Hertzberg (Lund: Arkiv förlag et tidskrift för samhällsanalys nr 2013), 167-185.

13. Lööw, H, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980 – 1989; Nazismen i Sverige 1924 – 1979; Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

14. Lööw, H, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

15. S Koblik, *Om Vi Teg, Skulle Stenarna Ropa Om Sverige Och Judeproblemet 1933 – 1945* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1987).

government had a very restrictive refugee policy during the 1930's and the beginning of the 1940's, specifically directed to Jews in Europe<sup>16</sup> The Swedish government only permitted a small number of Jews to enter Sweden at this time<sup>17</sup> This only changed with the persecution of Norwegian Jews in 1942 and Danish Jews in 1943<sup>18</sup>

Antisemitism and National Socialism were no longer ideologically viable after World War II, but the ideology and the mindset never disappeared, neither in the different clusters of political associations or organisations, nor among the Swedish population. According to Lööw, antisemitism must be understood as consistently present in the Swedish society, whether visible, obvious, present, hidden, or disguised<sup>19</sup> Certain groups such as *Sveriges Nationella Förbund* (The Swedish National Association, author's translation), had after 1945 and during the 1950's a phase of reorganization where they paved the way for formation of the National Socialist and antisemitic parties which were founded during the 1980's, for example *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* (Keep Sweden Swedish, author's translation).

Lööw has studied the shifting agenda during the 1970's and 1980's from a classical nationalist socialist approach to a militant and radical ideology with violent tendencies<sup>20</sup> One of the groups who received public attention was the mentioned *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* (Keep Sweden Swedish, author's translation). They launched their first xenophobic activities and public appearances in the 1970's and became well known to the public during the 1980's. They focused more on issues related to immigration and xenophobia. According to Lööw, they were the first ones to openly discuss the existence of refugees in, and immigration to, Sweden which later became a national political question when *Sverigedemokraterna* (The Democratic Party of Sweden, author's translation) received enough votes to enter the Swedish parliament in 2010. The *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* activists during this period were also the first

16. K. Åmark, "Demokratin, Neutraliteten Och Moralen. Sverige under Andra Världskriget," in *Sverige Och Nazityskland: Skuldfrågor Och Moraldebatt*, ed. L. M. Andersson and M. Tydén (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2007), 45-66.; P. Rudberg, "Flyktingpolitik, Främlingslagstiftning Och Tillämpning" in *Från Sidensjalar Till Flyktingmottagning: Judarna I Sverige: En Minoritets Historia*, ed. L. M. Andersson and C. H. Carlsson (Uppsala: Historiska institutionen, Uppsala universite, 2013), 101-145.

17. I. Lomfors, *Förlorad Barndom – Återvunnet Liv de Judiska Flyktingbarnen från Nazityskland* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 1996).

18. K. Åmark, "Koblik, 1987, Kvist Geverts, K, Stockholm: Mellen antisemitisme, ambivalens og handling," in ed. C. E. Stokholm Bank, A. Jerichow, *Holocaust og civilsamfundets reaktion*, (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2013), 150-162.

19. Lööw, H, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

20. Lööw, H, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980 – 1989*.

ones to identify Swedish society as their prime enemy and their prime target, together with other groups whom they believed controlled and governed the world, such as Jews, homosexuals and communists.

Bachner, who has studied antisemitism in Sweden in particular, claims that the 1980s was a decade where antisemitic attitudes became apparent publicly during and after the Lebanon War in 1982. Swedish newspapers published a large number of articles where they discussed the war and the actions initiated by Israel with an obviously antisemitic voice. This occurred for the first time in the post-war period and Bachner claims it transformed the existing tone.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1990's, the scenario shifted. The old national socialists from the 1930's connected with a group of youths and formed an organisation called *Vitt Ariskt Motstånd*, (White Aryan Resistance, author's translation) which became publicly known due to their criminal activities. This group focused on a more hard-core approach, with a militant xenophobic agenda. When the newspapers wrote about their criminal actions and racist ideas, it attracted others and thereby organized and positioned the antisemitic and xenophobic questions on the public agenda<sup>22</sup>

In the aftermath of *Vitt Ariskt Motstånd* more groups were formed in the 1990's and continue to be part of the Swedish political scene through to the present day. The Swedish foundation Expo has published yearly reports focusing on the activities of national socialist groups and the xenophobic, intolerant environment in Sweden since 2008. What Expo saw in 2013 is how the activities reached a new high, with 2334 actions and events.<sup>23</sup> This was an increase of 28% compared to 2012. The different types of activities include the spread of propaganda, public meetings, handing out pamphlets, and demonstrations. The geographical areas where Expo has seen a growth are the Stockholm area (Expo refers to Stockholm county and not the municipality), the Gothenburg area (Västra Götaland) and Värmland, together with Skåne. Two of the largest organizations, *Svenska motståndsrörelsen* (Swedish Resistance movement, authors translation) and *Svenskarnas parti* (Swedes party, author's translation) started their election run-up during the autumn of 2013 and aimed to attract a larger number of

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21. Bachner, *Återkomsten Antisemitism I Sverige Efter 1945* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2004).

22. Löw, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980 – 1989*.

23. A-S. Quensel, "Färre Organisationer Men Fler Aktiviteter in Intolerans 2013 Expo Årsrapport," (Stockholm: Stiftelsen Expo, 2014), accessed 2014-07-01, [www.research.expo.se](http://www.research.expo.se); See also A. Dalsbro, "Nazister Storsatsar Inför Valet in Intolerans 2013 Expo Årsrapport," (Stockholm: Stiftelsen Expo, 2014.), accessed 2014-07-01, [www.research.expo.se](http://www.research.expo.se).

members, often working in the area around the Swedish upper secondary schools<sup>24</sup>

A strong wave of antisemitism dominated the summer of 2014 in Europe, among them several cities in Sweden, due to the military conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Violent outbreaks of antisemitism have been directed towards the Jews, and both synagogues and individuals have been attacked verbally and physically right across Europe. In January and February in 2015, we have seen an even more violent wave of antisemitism with lethal attacks on Jews in both Paris and Copenhagen.

Over time the political parties have used different forms of propaganda to spread their message. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century some of the parties and/or individuals tried to produce and distribute smaller newspapers. Others have produced pamphlets, posted stickers, organized public meetings, and arranged concerts. The Internet has obviously constituted a possibility for different types of networks to keep in touch, interact, and cooperate<sup>25</sup> Lööw claims that one of the main traits of post-World War II propaganda among the National Socialist parties began immediately after the war, focussing on the denial of the Holocaust. This has been an idea and a statement that has lasted ever since<sup>26</sup> and been studied and discussed by other scholars as well, for example Bruchfeld, Englund, Guttenplan<sup>27</sup>

This review shows the prevalence of historical and contemporary antisemitism in Sweden. Today Nazi organizations, such as the *Svenska motståndsrörelsen*, focus their activities in and around upper secondary schools. In the following section of this article an account of an antisemitic attack on an individual will be given. There is no knowledge about who committed the assault or the reason why it took place and Lööw states there has not been enough research conducted about the individuals who commit these illegal attacks<sup>28</sup> There is no knowledge whether it was an action committed by an individual or by a group. There is no knowledge whether

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24. J. Jakobsson, "Upptrottat Våld in Intolerans 2013 Expo Årsrapport," Stockholm: Stiftelsen Expo, 2014, [www.research.expo.se](http://www.research.expo.se).

25. R. Wiederer, "En Kartläggning Av Det Högerextrema Nätverket På Internet – Strukturella Mönster 2006 – 2011," in *Det Vita Fältet II*, eds. M. Deland, P. Fuehrer, and F. Hertzberg (Lund: Arkiv Tidskrift för samhällsanalys nr 2, 2013), 101-139.

26. Lööw, H, *Nazismen i Sverige 1980 – 1989; Nazismen i Sverige 1924 – 1979; Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

27. S. Bruchfeld, *Förnekandet Av Förintelsen – Nynazistisk Historieförfälskning efter Auschwitz* (Stockholm: Svenska Kommitteen Mot Antisemitism, 1996); P. Belzec. Englund, "Polen – Tisdagen Den 18 Augusti 1942 " in *Det Eviga Hatet Om Nynazism, Antisemitism Och Radio Islam*, ed. P. Ahlmark (Stockholm: Albert Bonniers Förlag and SKMA, 1993); D. Guttenplan, *Förintelsen Inför Rätta* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2001), 97-131.

28. Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

it was an organized act directed to several individuals in Stockholm or if it was a deed committed spontaneously, but we do know it was directed towards and had a deep effect on an individual.

#### A THIRD GENERATION SURVIVOR

Ester was born into a Jewish family. Her mother converted and her father's mother survived the Holocaust and is the main survivor from a large Jewish-Polish family. Ester's grandmother's parents and brothers were all killed in Auschwitz. Her grandfather escaped from Germany just before the war and was the only surviving member of that side of the family. Her grandfather's family and relatives were all killed during the Nazi regime.

Ester was brought up in a Jewish environment and celebrates all annual Jewish holidays such as Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Chanukah, together with the weekly Shabbes dinners with both her closest and extended family. Her family is not orthodox and they do not follow any of the stricter kosher regulations which she would like to do later on when she has her own household. Ester follows the Jewish week with Shabbes and attends services in one of the orthodox synagogues of Stockholm. When she was younger, she attended different Jewish schools in Stockholm and spent her summers in the Jewish summer camp outside Stockholm. She also sings in one of the Yiddish choirs and takes part in the different Jewish youth organizations. But Ester is also strongly involved in the Student Corps of the upper secondary school which she attends, which is not a Jewish school, and she has a lot of non-Jewish friends. There are no Jewish upper secondary schools in Stockholm in 2013. Ester identifies herself by her gender, her relationship to her family (daughter, sister) and friends, and as the vice chairman in the Student Corps, as well as her Jewishness. When she drew her identity chart she did not mention citizenship or belonging to any kind of geographical area, continent, nation or city.

She could be regarded as an ordinary girl who lives an ordinary teenage life. But something exceptional happened one day in her school, which she describes in the following way during a recorded interview. Just ahead of this passage we had talked about when she participated in a journey, with the Jewish community, March of the Living. The journey takes place in order to commemorate the Holocaust and to visit Majdanec, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka and places where a Jewish vibrant life used to exist in Poland:



*Ester:* It was when I started to give lectures with Emelie (a friend).

*Me:* But it was in a combination with something else?

*Ester:* It was in combination with somebody who carved the swastika on my locker.

*Me:* Have you notified the police about the event?

*Ester:* Yes.

*Me:* Yes, you have [. . .]

*Ester:* Yes, with a key or something. And it was really this big. Like this. On my locker. And this was two weeks before the trip [March of the Living]. And then I felt even more, like this. I felt that like this, what is happening, this cannot happen but if it happens, I will make sure that it never happens again. I just felt that I want to do something. I knew that I wanted to do something. I felt that I wanted to go on the journey and see where it takes me.

*Me:* What did the school do?

*Ester:* It was a teacher who came very quickly and helped me. It was just after there had been a shooting in a Jewish school in Toulouse as well. Just two weeks ahead of it. And he was a Frenchman and was really upset about it. And he helped me a lot so it was great. And then. It happened on a Friday and then the Monday after I had a meeting with the principal and my mentors. Everything happened very quickly. They painted the locker so the swastika would not be visible, the same day. But, but. . . The principal said that there were surveillance cameras in the corridor where I had my locker. But they were not turned on. And then they asked me if I could imagine or think about somebody that could have done it and I kind of, I don't know. And then we reported it to the police but nothing happened. The police did not know where to look or investigate the matter. But it is reported to the police.

*Me:* How did your parents react?

*Ester:* My father was very upset. I did not call him at once because I was so very confused and upset, stunned. I did not really know what to do with myself when it happened. It was so confusing. It was so chaotic. There were so many students there, ahead of me. It was like, my entire class was there before I came to the locker, and they were gathered beside my locker. And then I came. It was so chaotic when it all happened.

*Me:* What was chaotic? Was it their reaction? The swastika? Your feelings?

*Ester:* Everything together. One part was the number of people there. They were there before I came, before I had seen anything. Everybody was talking.

But I could not really perceive anything. And then I saw that the teacher came. But I could not reach the locker. And then, the others, they were so upset. It was so strange. The entire thing. But then when I called my dad, he was so angry. But really. He asked me a lot about my teachers. He could not really do anything. The school really dealt with it. They were so good. He could not do much.[. . .]

*Ester:* This with the swastika. It has a totally different meaning to me compared to somebody who doesn't have the same background as I do, with a grandma like mine. It is such a burdensome symbol to me who has a personal relation to the Holocaust. [. . .] After the journey (to Poland, authors remark). After the swastika. I wanted to do something but I did not really know what. But after the journey I felt that I had a responsibility and I felt even more that I had to do something. It was a combination. And now we do it.

During another interview we talked about memory and why Ester thinks it is important to remember the Holocaust and why she feels she has to do it.

*Me:* What was it that you wanted to tell, with your stories and lectures?

*Ester:* From the beginning. It was very spontaneous. It was nothing we planned. It just happened: we have to do something. That was it.

*Me:* Why did you feel that "we have to do something"?

*Ester:* Well, it was after that I had the swastika carved on my locker at the school. And I felt that: this can't happen. I mean. Why does it happen? Now? In Sweden 2013? My school is really, really good. I do not want to brag. But it is a very respectable school. And I felt that I had never believed that people had such opinions. Especially not in such a respectable school. But no matter what, it should not exist. If I can do something to prevent it from happening again, then I want to do it. And then I went on that journey for two weeks, just after, and I started thinking about my grandmother as well and then I realized, kind of, she is 85 and she will not live forever, so okay, what do we do when she is not around. Somebody has to know about what happened to her. It can't die when she dies. It can't be that way. So, oh well, that was how it started. I guess.

In the interviews Ester discusses and describes her experience. She gives a picture of the event, her confusion and her feelings but also the reactions from both the school and her parents. Just after the incident in the school she went on a journey which influenced her as well. Those two events had an impact on her and she made a decision: to talk to others of her own age about the Holocaust. In this way, she hopes and believes that she can have an impact on society, and especially the younger population. She also hopes the memory of her beloved grandmother and what she

experienced will last and make a change for the future. When she decides to memorize and talk about her grandmother's experiences and the Holocaust she also takes part of a larger tradition of commemoration. It must also be seen as a reaction to the antisemitic attack.

In the sequence of the interviews it is not stated whether the police or the school continued to work on the matter in any kind of investigation, precaution, or discussion. It is important to clarify how Ester claimed that none of the two institutions dealt with the incident after the mentioned meeting with the principal. The upper secondary school and the police both seemed to take a passive position. The school did not act or react apart from painting the locker and covering the Nazi symbol. The police conclude that they did not have any leads or evidence and could therefore not continue their investigation. None of the institutions elaborated about the existing swastika, why it was there, who had painted it, or what it meant for the school that the action took place there. In the aftermath of the incident the school never brought it up again with Ester or initiated any kind of preventive work addressing the general student population. According to Lööw, institutions in society have difficulties addressing outbursts like the one mentioned. It is sometimes seen as a puerile, childish joke or prank without any kind of ideological conviction to those who go on to commit more serious crimes. Society in general struggles to openly discuss the ever-present antisemitism and the rather new political situation with established, xenophobic and antisemitic political parties such as the aforementioned *Sverigedemokraterna*. One argument is that society and the media should treat the political parties and ideological actions with silence in order to decrease attention to the matter while others argue that it has to be discussed openly.

Associations, organisations, political parties but also single individuals see society as the prime enemy and thereby the school and its students as a prime target<sup>29</sup> The last part of this article will contain a discussion about research related to the legislative aspects of intolerance and discrimination in the educational sector.

#### ANTISEMITISM AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

According to Bachner, antisemitism in Sweden cannot be seen as something that Swedish society has imported, but must be understood as part of a larger European historical process, which has existed and developed over centuries<sup>30</sup> During the last 15 years, discussion and research about antisemitism has continued in Sweden. Bachner and Ring

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29. Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

30. Bachner, *Återkomsten Antisemitism I*.

have completed a larger survey about antisemitic attitudes and ideas in Sweden<sup>31</sup> The survey was sent to 5,000 individuals within the age span of 16 to 75 years, and 2,956 people answered the survey. The result showed that 5% had a strong and consistently antisemitic approach, 36% had an ambivalent attitude towards Jews and 59% had no antisemitic reflections. In the analysis of the results it was noted that the answers were consistent in the different age groups. Bachner and Ring support the idea that the antisemitic attitude in Sweden is a heritage from the past which also exists in a contemporary form with an increased, generalized xenophobic approach and atmosphere. It is a question of a historical heritage and a social mindset in Sweden which also influences and is a part of the Swedish school system and its pupils. This will be discussed in the section focusing on legislative and curricular aspects.

The school is an arena of great interest for the nation. Schools are strongly governed by the national parliament and strictly regulated by a large amount of legislation and curricula on both general and specific levels. One of the most important aspects of Swedish school curricula is that of human rights. Everybody must be respected for who he/she is no matter his/her age, sexual orientation, ethnic or religious belonging, handicap, or gender,<sup>32</sup> and schools are obliged to take action in order to follow this.

Through her research, Arneback has seen how schools are dealing and working with the multifaceted field related to bullying, racism, xenophobia and antisemitism<sup>33</sup> Since 1994, when the legislation relating to xenophobia was first introduced, the Swedish school system has addressed the mentioned areas. However, it has differed over time due to the shifting legislative focus of the government, and the legislation has shifted in relation to the activities of the intolerant, xenophobic, and antisemitic political movements. During the beginning of the 1990's, it was an issue for schools to prevent xenophobia by educating their students. Later on it

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31. H. Bachner and J. Ring, "Antisemitiska Attityder Och Föreställningar I Sverige," (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia och BRÅ, 2005), accessed 2012-01-22, [www.levandehistoria.se](http://www.levandehistoria.se). A compilation of different studies, surveys etc. concerning antisemitism and islamophobia in Sweden has been conducted: B. Löwander and M. Hagström, "Antisemitism Och Islamofobi – Utbredning, Orsaker Och Preventivt Arbete," (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2011), accessed 2012-01-15, [www.levandehistoria.se](http://www.levandehistoria.se).

32. Skolverket, "Läroplan för Grundskolan, Förskolan Och Fritidshemmet 2011," (Stockholm: Skolverket, 2011); Skolverket "Läroplan För Gymnasieskolan 2011," (Stockholm: Skolverket, 2011), accessed 2014-07-15, [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se).

33. E. Arneback, "Bemötanden Av Främlingsfientlighet I Gymnasieskolan," in *Det Vita Fältet II*, eds. M. Deland, P. Fuehrer, and F. Hertzberg (Lund: Arkiv Tidskrift för samhällsanalys nr 2, 2013), 139-165.

was necessary to counteract and to respond to intolerant actions. This work was supposed to take place without any specific plan, agenda or instruction to the schools of how this should be conducted. A new set of laws was enacted in 2006, focusing on equal and human rights of students and on counteracting any kind of discrimination in relation to sexuality, gender, ethnicity, or religion. The new legislation demanded that schools had to take precautions and that they were legally responsible for the prevention of any violation of the students' human rights. Schools all over Sweden wrote action plans for equal rights where they clearly stated what would and could happen if the action plans were violated. Arneback has also seen how schools have decided in their action plans to talk to students who have displayed intolerant behaviour or language, as well as to educate teachers on how to deal with it.

Arneback concludes that the Swedish school system has, as opposed to society in general, a firm legislative set-up for how to deal with racism, xenophobia and antisemitism. In a school in Sweden in 2015, freedom of speech is strongly regulated. A student cannot say whatever he or she feels like to other students without the threat of repercussions if their language is viewed as inappropriate. According to Arneback it is rare that schools and their action plans address the real issue behind oppressive behaviour and what structures linger behind such a phenomenon, such as antisemitism.

The Living History Forum in Stockholm conducted a survey among teenagers about their attitudes regarding tolerance.<sup>34</sup> Where students have had a thorough and in-depth education concerning the Holocaust, human rights, and world religions, they have a larger degree of tolerance towards Jews and other minority groups in Sweden. The report also concludes that schools bear the responsibility to teach students about human rights, national minorities, world religions, and the consequences of the Second World War. The Swedish School Inspectorates, a commission whose objective is to engender good education in a safe environment, have inspected schools in Sweden and the results show that schools either fail to teach about the mentioned areas or that the quality of the teaching varies. The report states that it is a question of the teacher's own solid and in-depth knowledge about the identified areas which impacts teaching and education and thereby teenagers' tolerance.

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34. Forum för levande historia, *Den mångtydiga toleransen. En studie av gymnasieungdomars attityder läsåret 2009/2010*, Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2010, accessed 2014-07-01, [www.levandehistoria.se](http://www.levandehistoria.se).

## UNDERSTANDING THE PHENOMENON

Ester is a young girl who lived an ordinary teenage life in Stockholm in 2012. She went to one of the most popular schools in the city centre, a school that only really accepts students with a strong educational history, as there is a long list of students applying to it. Only high performing students can study there. Ester believed she was safe from undemocratic outbursts and that her human rights would be respected. During one of the interviews, she said that she never thought an outbreak of antisemitism would take place there, due to its status of being a respectable school as she herself defines it. As the article has shown, this is exactly what happened on that day when she found the Nazi Swastika on her locker door. A couple of weeks later she participated in the educational program, March of the Living, in Poland to learn more about the Holocaust. Following the journey, she and her friend decided to give lectures about their experiences in Poland, what they had learned about the Holocaust and to talk about what had happened to Ester. They wanted to tell students of the same age how she had experienced antisemitism herself, in Stockholm in 2012, just as her grandparents did during the Nazi regime under the 1930s and 1940s.

As research has shown Swedish society has a long tradition of firmly grounded antisemitism. It is part of the Swedish mindset. One of the institutions which is affected by antisemitic outbursts is the Swedish school. Political parties with an antisemitic agenda organize activities around school buildings, and this article has shown how outbursts also take place within schools. School legislation and the curricula govern the work in Swedish schools and focus specifically on human rights. It is stated that schools carry the responsibility to protect their students from any kind of discrimination. The upper secondary school mentioned in the article has failed to follow this legislation, has failed to address the problem and has, together with the police, failed to take sufficient action when it happened.

Knowledge and education are two of the most important tools for fighting prejudice and misconceptions. The Swedish curricula for different subjects, for example history, social science and religion, have a limited focus on Israel, Judaism and the Holocaust<sup>35</sup> The word “genocide” is mentioned in the history syllabus but without the precise distinction of which episode to work with. I suggest that the work in the upper secondary schools has to have a stronger focus on the education about the mentioned areas; the establishment of Israel, the Jewish living conditions and traditions, and aspects of the Holocaust that go beyond the regular, summarized stories. In addition, I suggest that students who are studying those aspects also connect their work to that of Facing history and

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35. Skolverket, 2011

Ourselves, an educational organization that wants to “shape a humane, well-educated citizenry that practices civility and preserves human rights.”<sup>36</sup> Results from Sweden show the necessity of working within these areas in order to create tolerance. There is a general Holocaust fatigue in Swedish schools that has to be addressed, and the pedagogy and didactics have to be revitalized. However, the solution is not to create new laws regulating the work of the schools and teachers but rather to initiate a general discussion focusing on the phenomenon. The discussion has to take place within schools, among teachers and principals, as well as publicly in the media, among politicians and researchers, in order to formulate a new agenda on how to approach antisemitism in Swedish society and specifically within schools.

In relation to this, as Lööw claims<sup>37</sup>, research about the individuals or groups who commit antisemitic attacks and carry this ideology or mindset has not yet been conducted. This is an area of research that has to be covered in order to interpret and understand why the Swedish school system and its students are targets.

Some individuals from the group who define themselves as Third Generation Survivors are organized in a group called *Zikaron*. This word means “to remember” in Hebrew. The goal for *Zikaron* is to reach out with stories from the Holocaust to teenagers in Swedish schools. Ester is one of the initiators of *Zikaron* and this is a way for her to make a change and have an impact on the future of Sweden using her and her family’s experiences and memories from one of the largest crimes in history. Ester defines herself as a Third Generation Survivor and says she commemorates in order to put a stop to evil.

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36. Facing History and Ourselves,” accessed 2015-09-26, [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

37. Lööw, *Nazismen i Sverige 2000 – 2014*.

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# Denying the Holocaust in Poland

Alina Cała\*

The Nazis carried out their mass extermination of the Jewish people mainly on Polish soil. Poles witnessed all the stages of this crime. For this reason, one might expect that “Holocaust denial” should not take root in Poland. But a kind of rivalry with the narration of Polish martyrdom was already under way quite early after the war. The pre-war tradition of antisemitism, and the focus on dealing with their own trauma, were not conducive to an empathic contemplation of the Jews’ tragedy during the Holocaust. Of course, such emotions among Polish society were an object of political manipulation by different factions of the communist regime. Due to these tensions, a specific form of Holocaust denying developed, especially in 1968. A kind of struggle continues regarding contemporary antisemitism in Poland, in which remembrance is still being divided between “Jewish” and “Polish” themes. This paper examines the development of Holocaust Denial’s propaganda motives and absorption of elements of the Auschwitz lie in Poland after 1989.

The Nazis carried out their mass extermination of the Jewish people mainly on Polish soil. Here, the Germans established mass extermination camps near Chelmno, in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka. German chemists and companies developed the technology in those places for committing mass murder via gas chambers. Germans transported Jews who had been deported from many countries of Europe<sup>1</sup> to the extermination camps. Poles witnessed all the stages of this crime. For this reason, one might expect that “Holocaust denial” should not take root in Poland. However, this assumption is only partially correct.

It was difficult for Polish antisemitic propaganda to deny the fact of the Holocaust as such, or in particular the use of gas for killing in gas chambers. However, discussions on the numbers of victims and their “not quite so” tragic fate were already under way quite early after the war. In saying it, we must make clear a few facts.

It must be stressed that the Second World War was a great trauma for all Poland’s citizens. In waging total war, the armies of the Third Reich,

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1. R. Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Yale University Press, 1967); *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Y. Bauer, *History of the Holocaust* (New York: Turtleback Books, 2001).

which invaded Poland in September 1939, acted brutally from the very outset. They did not limit their hostilities to the Polish army, but also struck at the civilian population. Towns were bombed and streams of refugees strafed by German warplanes. The German attack on Poland (as well as the Soviet Union's seizure of Poland's eastern provinces) caused huge losses to the population. Six years of occupation followed, which were marked by terror, persecution and the merciless implementation of racist laws. Each day brought arrests, torture, and executions of political elites, intellectuals, members of the resistance, and even random hostages taken from street round-ups. Each Polish family lost someone either in combat, or through Nazi repression and persecution.

The trauma of war affected the entire Polish nation. Shortly after the liberation, it showed itself in deep indignation and led to demands for collaborators and national traitors to be held to account. Court cases that were launched against collaborators enjoyed great popular support. Nevertheless, following the occupation, many Poles harboured guilty consciences or moral uncertainties about what they had done. Those ambivalent feelings manifested themselves, among others, through the projection of restless consciences onto Jews who had survived the Holocaust. The traditions of pre-war antisemitism, reinforced by the invasive anti-Jewish racist propaganda pursued by the German occupiers for six long years, led people to seek an imaginary enemy and "traitor of the nation" in the Jews - especially as the Jews were demanding the return of sequestered workshops, homes or belongings<sup>2</sup> A notion in circulation already before the war, and used by antisemites, accused all Jews of having a "birthright of their race", namely a tendency to subversion manifested by supporting the left. After 17 September 1939, when the Soviet Union took advantage of German aggression against Poland and occupied the eastern reaches of the Polish Republic, Polish antisemites began accusing Jews of favouring the annexation and even greeting it with enthusiasm. The German authorities reinforced this message, identifying Jews with the Soviet apparatus of coercion and accusing them of crimes against Poles, such as the mass arrests of elites, the deportation of around one million Poles to Soviet labour camps in Siberia, and Soviet involvement in numerous atrocities. Soviet crimes were attributed to Jews: in society, it was a readily propagated element of anti-Jewish Nazi propaganda in the

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2. A. Cała, "Die Genese des Polnischen und des Jüdischen Märtyrermythos nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Der Holocaust in der Polnischen Erinnerungskultur*, ed. Anna Wolff-Powęska and P. Forecki (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2012).

occupied territories of Poland, especially from 1941, when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union<sup>3</sup>

The idea of the Jew as a national traitor, founded on the delusions caused by post-war trauma, who was “once again trying to corner all business”, calling for the return of “all that belonged to the Jews – though, not necessarily to him personally” and conspiring with communists to “enslave the Polish nation” or constituting, indeed, the very essence of communism: this was the most common image of Holocaust survivors in the eyes of antisemites. Moreover, antisemites were quite numerous. In addition, anti-Jewish sentiments rose after the war, not only in Poland, but also in many other European countries<sup>4</sup> In Poland, they led to numerous clandestine killings and three pogroms. As a result of anti-Jewish violence in 1945-1947, nearly a thousand Jews were murdered, mainly by anti-communist partisans, but also by their former neighbours. They were also the frequent targets of robberies because, contrary to reality but in line with traditional views, Jews were associated with wealth. Also, collective anti-Jewish actions led to blood libel rumors and *post-war* spilling of blood in Kazimierz and Krakow (1-2 deaths) including the torching of the Kupa synagogue. Tension continued the following year as rumors of Jews kidnapping children triggered riots at Kielce (43 deaths) on July 4, 1946.<sup>5</sup>

Hostile attitudes to the Jews and the focus on dealing with their own trauma were not conducive to an empathic contemplation of the Jews’ tragedy during the Holocaust. While in 1944-1946 there was public support for penalising those who had betrayed Jews or had somehow facilitated their murder by the Germans, by 1947 such proceedings increasingly met with a wall of silence from Polish witnesses and obstruction from judges. In parallel, a myth started to arise about the martyrdom of the Polish nation and its heroic struggle against the Nazi invaders. The fate of the Jews began to be seen as equivalent to Polish martyrdom – or even as a less important “spin-off” of the Poles’ suffering. Collaborators could not fit this martyrly-heroic vision, so attempts were made to forget inconvenient facts.

Communist state policy stoked these attitudes. Official memorials and celebrations of anniversaries embellished the martyrly-heroic myth. Concentration camps such as Majdanek and Auschwitz were turned into

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3. J. T. Gross, “The Jewish Community in the Soviet-Annexed Territories on the Eve of the Holocaust,” in *The Holocaust in the Soviet Union*, ed. L. Dobroszycki and J.S. Gurock (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

4. A. Cała, *The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew Univ. 1995).

5. A. Cała, *Ochrona bezpieczeństwa fizycznego Żydów w Polsce powojennej: Komisje Specjalne przy Centralnym Komitecie Żydów w Polsce [Protecting the Physical Safety of Jews in Post-War Poland. Special Commissions of the Central Committee of Jews in Poland]* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny im Emanuela Ringelbluma, 2014).

museums. Nevertheless, the extermination camps that the Nazis had built specifically to murder Jews, such as in Chelmno or Auschwitz-Birkenau, were not commemorated. An exposition presenting the extermination of Jews was opened in one of the barracks at Auschwitz, but it was dismantled as early as in 1949. The information presented in the Auschwitz Camp Museum was manipulated. One could learn that the Poles were murdered at Auschwitz as well as people of many other European nations. The nationalities were listed alphabetically, so “Jews” (in Polish “Żydzi”) were placed last. There was no clarification that the overwhelming majority of those nationalities, apart from Poles, Gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war, were Jews who were transported to the gas chambers in Auschwitz-Birkenau from countries occupied or dominated by the Third Reich, such as Austria, Hungary, Romania, Greece, and France. Around this time, historians somewhat mechanically determined the numbers of victims of the Second World War as three million Poles and three million Polish Jews, thus making equal the weight of the losses of these two nations.

The outcome of state policy was that the genocide of the Jews started slipping from memory. School textbooks barely mentioned the Holocaust: the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was also noted, but on only one page. The leftist narrative ignored the nationality of Nazism’s victims, giving due attention to the ideas of “humanitarianism” and “internationalism” but thereby obscuring the differences between Jewish and Polish fates during the war. In society the belief grew that Polish suffering was the same, or even greater, than that of the Jews<sup>6</sup>

The communist state’s strong censorship expunged antisemitic propaganda from printed texts. This did not mean, however, that it did not exist in the spoken word. A subsequent generation of communist activists recognised its potential for social engineering. At the beginning of the 1960’s, the bosom of the ruling single party gave rise to a faction of activists that adopted antisemitic discourse in the struggle for a more authoritarian model of communism that was coupled with nationalism. Mieczyslaw Moczar stood at the head of this faction, named the “Moczarites”. They enjoyed the tacit support of the leadership of the Soviet Union, which at that time had decided to side more actively with the Arabs during the conflict with Israel. As a result of this conflict, strong anti-Israel and anti-Zionist propaganda developed from 1969 on in the Soviet Union<sup>7</sup>

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6. A. Cała. “La malédiction de la mémoire traumatique,” in *Juifs et Polonais 1939-2008*, ed. Jean-Charles Szurek and Annette Wieviorka (Paris, 2009).

7. S. T. Possony, *Antisemitism in the Russian Orbit* (Leiden-Boston, 1976); E. Goldhagen, *Communism and Antisemitism* (Berlin, 1987); D. Libionka, “Brakujące ogniwo. Sowiecka Literatura Antyżydowska w Polsce przed i po Marcu 1968 [The Missing Link. Anti-Zionist Soviet Prints before and after March 1968],” in *Komunizm: Ideologia, System, Ludzie*, ed. T. Szarota (Warszawa: Wydawn. NERITON, Instytut Historii PAN, 2001).

But Poland was pioneering in anti-Zionist propaganda, starting already in 1967. In 1968, the Moczarites took advantage of nationwide student protests that were being organised against censorship and restriction of freedom of thought, as a pretext in the struggle for power in the communist party. Another faction of communists tried to beat the Moczarites with their own weapon, namely antisemitism hidden in anti-Zionist rhetoric. Thus, in 1968-1969 an antisemitic campaign was unleashed in all contemporary media. Many intellectuals of Jewish origin experienced various types of harassment, as a result of which more than 13,000 of them were forced to emigrate from Poland<sup>8</sup>

On the initiative of the Moczarites, in 1968 the key words devoted to the Second World War were changed in the new edition of an encyclopaedia that had been published since 1965. This was accompanied by a press campaign against the editor and the head of the publishing house that had issued it, which emphasised his Jewish origin. The publisher lost his position and was forced into exile. He moved to Sweden, where he lived until his death. He was accused of being “unfavourably disposed towards Poland and Polish people”, that he had overstated the number of Jewish victims, exaggerated the description of their suffering during the Holocaust, and detracted from the extent of assistance they had received from Poles. The slogans enforced by the Moczarites contained the seeds of the “Auschwitz lie” because they underestimated the number of Jewish victims, while inflating the number of Nazism’s Polish victims.

Antisemites who were supportive of the Moczarites published books and articles, which, quite remarkably, transposed the Jewish victims of the Holocaust with their persecutors. Jews were accused of having supported the Nazis, all cases of Jewish collaboration in the ghettos were widely publicised, and emphasis was placed on the role of Jewish police in carrying out deportations from ghettos to death camps. In one book, which played on conspiracy theory, Zionists were accused of having initiated the destruction of European Jewry by secretly influencing the policies of the Nazis<sup>9</sup> The Moczarites stressed the roles of many Poles who had helped the Jews, overstating their numbers and accused those saved of showing ingratitude. At that time, another frequently adopted antisemitic journalistic theme was to accuse Israel of conspiring with its “former oppressors” in West Germany against Poland. The alleged aim was to decrease Poland’s international standing through “false” accusations of antisemitism. It is worth noting that this last propaganda theme of the Moczarites carried

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8. D. Stola, *Kampania Antysyjonistyczna w Polsce 1967-1968* (Warsaw: Inst. Studiów Politycznych, 2000).

9. T. Bednarczyk, *Obowiązek Silniejszy od Śmierci* (Warsaw: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1982).



particularly well in Polish society, which, though brimming with anti-German resentment, was quite well disposed towards Israel, where it was believed, the most widely spoken language was Polish and Polish Jews were vanquishing the pro-Soviet Arabs (anti-Soviet resentment was as strong as anti-German).

The Moczarites' propaganda was finally suppressed after one year, when the faction was broken up. The authorities amended the rules on censorship, which resulted in a general ban on Jewish subjects –which contributed to further forgetting of the Holocaust and the multi-ethnicity of Poland's past. Nevertheless, the seed of a specifically Polish version of the Auschwitz lie still managed to take root among antisemites.

The lack of any attempt at all to combat antisemitism and also the lack of counter-polemic to the Moczarites' propaganda offensive (due to lack of freedom of speech under communism) had long-lasting effects. First, antisemitic authors, though they could no longer publish any anti-Jewish texts, failed to change their views, thus contributing to the sustainability of certain strands of Moczarist propaganda. Collective memory was distorted. There was a fairly common belief that the fate of the Jews was an offshoot of the Nazi plan to murder all Poles, that the sufferings of both parts of society were identical or very similar, and that the Poles did everything they could to help and save the persecuted Jews. This view still lingers today and is even strengthening along with the passing of a generation of witnesses who remember and can provide a somewhat different portrayal of the past.

Views like those described above started a kind of struggle over memory that is still continuing. Previously, it had been manifested by the removal of traces of Jewish martyrdom (as in 1949 on information boards in the museum at Auschwitz), and currently in the specific conflict "over memorials"<sup>10</sup> In the 1980's, a monument was erected for the deportees of the Warsaw ghetto. Its abstract form resembles a wagon, into which Warsaw's Jews were packed and sent to the Treblinka extermination camp. In the 1990s, a monument was built nearby for Poles who were transported by the Soviet authorities in 1939-1941 to Siberia. The symbolic form was very similar: a realistic wagon in which deportees were displaced. The wagon was filled with crosses to underline the Catholic faith and Christ-like martyrdom. For balance, one matzevah was included among the crosses – to commemorate the Jewish victims of the deportations. The proportions of religious symbols indicate, however, that despite the facts, the Jews suffered much less than Catholic Poles<sup>11</sup> Given the entrenched

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10. E. Janicka, *Festung Warschau* (Warsaw, 2011).

11. Deportees in 1940-41 included 52% Poles, 30% Jews, 18% Ukrainians and Belarusians. D. Boćkowski, "Losy żydowskich uchodźców z centralnej i zachodniej Polski

belief among antisemites that Jews in the Soviet apparatus of coercion were responsible for the deportations, this monument's location near the first is contentious. Some people are not so concerned about the equation of Polish martyrdom with that of the Jews, but about the transformation of Jewish victims into oppressors. When the Jewish History Museum was established, antisemitic groups initiated a monument for Poles who had saved Jews. Remembrance is being divided between "Jewish" and "Polish" themes.

The numbers of Polish and Jewish victims of Auschwitz, as well as of the whole Second World War were revised by historians only after the fall of communism, i.e., in the 1990's. Those new findings, although carefully grounded in historic sources, aroused, and continue to arouse, the opposition of parts of Polish society. In particular, the fall of communism and the building of the foundations of a democratic system gave an opportunity for antisemites to reveal their views in print and to create legal political bodies, in which antisemitism could be the most important or a key trait of political identity. A significant number of politically active antisemites were originally supporters of Moczarism, with the difference that they had rejected communism and bound themselves with the extreme right, including ultraconservative Catholic circles. A group of such activists, who were prior Moczarites, determined the political content of Radio Maria, the strongest antisemitic Catholic media in Poland and possibly Europe, which, at the height of its popularity in the late 1990's, had an audience of just less than 8% of Polish society<sup>12</sup>

In Poland, modern antisemitism is a mix of old pre-war anti-communist propaganda motives, combined with Moczarist argumentation, whose totalitarian communist roots are barely masked. Antisemitic narrative threads arriving from Western Europe are adopted with some delay. One of those threads is historical revisionism. We can fairly accurately trace the process by which this theme was adopted.

The maturing of the generation that drew its knowledge about the Nazi genocide only from school paved the way for a group of historians questioning the numbers of victims of the Holocaust and trying to minimise or deny the Nazis' guilt. It is no coincidence that they started their work in England and the United States, countries that had not experienced the trauma of extermination within their borders, and where the different stages

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przebywających na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich w 1939 [Fates of Jewish refugees from central and western Poland in the north-east borderlands in 1939]," in *Świat Nie Pożegnany*, ed. K. Jasiewicz (Warsaw London, 2004).

12. A. Cała, *Żyd—wróg odwieczny?: Antysemityzm w Polsce i Jego źródła* ["The Jew as Eternal Enemy?" *Antisemitism in Poland and its Roots*] (Warsaw: Wydawn. Nisza, 2012); Y. Bauer, *The Danger of Antisemitism in Central and Eastern Europe in the Wake of 1989-1990* (Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1991).

of the debate on the greatest crime of the twentieth century did not impinge upon the sense of national identity, as, for example, was the case in Germany and Poland. They were able to achieve popularity because it was easier for them to hide the ideological entanglements of their assessments. The greatest exposure was achieved by David Irving, an English historian, who in the late 1970's began to undermine the very fact of the mass murder of Jews in death camps, arguing that the crematoria were actually bathing houses and that gas was used for disinfection<sup>13</sup> These statements were taken up by antisemitic publicists in the US, Germany and Scandinavian countries. Historical revisionism has become one of the most important components of a new wave of antisemitism and neo-Nazism in Western Europe and the United States. The authors of revisionist books were taken to court several times, during which time their lies and factual errors were proven false and they were ordered to make large compensation payments, which circumscribed the circulation of their conclusions in popular and academic spheres. Germany introduced the category of "Auschwitz lie" to the Penal Code, with its dissemination penalised by courts.

In Poland, strands of Western European historical revisionism began to be accommodated in the 1990's. The stages can be traced in detail. First, the National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski)<sup>14</sup> group issued a selection of translations of works by Western revisionist historians, titled *The Holocaust Myth (Mit Holokaustu)*, as the first volume of a "Szczerbiec" Library series (1993). Nonetheless, this publication went unnoticed. Three years later, the subject was picked up by Tomasz Gabis. In a two-part article *The Holocaust Religion* ("Stanczyk", No. 2/1996, Part

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13. D.J.C. Irving, *Hitler's War* (New York: Viking Press, 1977); The first person to question the genocide of the Jews was a French socialist Paul Rassinier, a former prisoner of Buchenwald, author of the book *Le drame des Juifs européens* (1964). D. L. Hoggan in *The Myth of the Six Million* (1969) accused Jews of inflating the number of victims to extort compensation. The 1970s saw a flowering of similar anonymous publications in the US, for example, *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses* (1973), *Why Do They Lie to Us? Perhaps Hitler was Right?* (1974), *Did Six Million Really Die?* (1974) etc. The term "revisionism" appeared for the first time in the title of a book by H. E. Barnes (1967) *The Public Stake in Revisionism*. The year 1979 saw the establishment in the US of the Institute for Historical Review that propagated revisionism. A similar organisation was set up in 1982 in the Federal Republic of Germany – both were shut down by court order in the mid-1980s. D.E. Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (New York: Turtleback Books, 1994); H. Schulman, *The Revisionist* (London, 1999).

14. (NOP) National Rebirth of Poland emerged from the skinhead movement in 1989. The name refers to a similar pre-war fascist grouping. Registered in court in 1992, it has cooperated with the English International Third Position and the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands. It is active to this day, although with marginal support.

II in No. 1/1997) he accused the West of succumbing to “the Holocaust myth”, which he said is an omnipresent, constantly updated and instrumentalised component of ideology and politics. He believes that it has taken the form of a religion, with its temples (the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles or Yad Vashem in Jerusalem) and “holy books” (e.g. *The Diary of Anne Frank*). Christianity is being not only dethroned, but also indicted for joint responsibility for the Holocaust. He claims that the “metaphysical guilt” for crimes committed on Polish soil leads to a state of “theological humiliation” of Poles and a charge of “deicide” against the Polish nation. According to the author, “only” 300,000 people of Jewish origin died in the death camps, and the Jews overstated the number of victims to justify the creation of Israel and to force favour for the country on the international arena. He used quotation marks for each mention of the word “Holocaust”. Gabis’s article resonated in certain right-wing circles, though it did not yet lead to much debate. Igor Figa discussed this article in details in the ultra-Catholic “Fronda” publication titled *On the Holocaust Religion (O Religii Holocaustu)*, “Fronda”, 1997, No. 9-10), writing in conclusion:

The Jews themselves and the Germans have already noticed the phenomenon which Gabis has termed the “Holocaust religion” and are devoting increasing numbers of studies and analyses to it and putting it to earnest debate. Meanwhile, in Poland, discussions have not yet begun. [. . .] Dialogue cannot avoid sensitive and controversial issues, if we want Polish-Jewish reconciliation to be not fictional, but a reality.

Gabis was praised for combating the “Holocaust myth”, on the pages of *Nasz Dziennik*, a newspaper associated with the Catholic Radio Maria. According to the paper’s editors (23 February 1999, “Stańczyk as a Conservative”), the author presented the conclusions of “very serious historians that negated the generally accepted stereotypes about numbers of casualties during the Second World War, the internal policies of the Third Reich, concentration camps, etc”. The Radio Maria fraternity was not the only one that picked up on the conclusions of Auschwitz liars. In 1999, the *Kwartalnik Narodowy* (No. 2), published by Leszek Bubel (antisemitic activist and leader of the Polish National Party<sup>15</sup>), printed a translation of a

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15. The Polish National Party acted legally from 2004. It specialised in mass printing of antisemitic publications. It achieved 8,000 votes in the elections of 2005. It ceased its activity around 2009, after several sentences handed down to its leader for inciting ethnic hatred.

piece by the French denier Robert Faurisson<sup>16</sup>, “There Were no Gas Chambers”. One *Nowe Pokolenie* editors (1999, No. 1), claimed:

I do not intend to question the Holocaust, but to make it clear that a Christian cannot afford to believe in the Holocaust Religion, which is being stubbornly promoted and recognised by governments and media around the world. Currently, the Holocaust has taken on all the features of a new religion, which is slowly displacing others. There is no room for religious tolerance, each challenge of Holocaust dogma is punishable by imprisonment [...] it is just another instrument being used by the “chosen people” to fight Christianity and the Truth.

Gabis’s conclusions were then repeated by Grzegorz Gorny on the pages of *Rzeczpospolita*, one of the most widely read newspapers, which was taken over in 2006 by right-wing activists, in an article entitled “Auschwitz instead of Sinai” (18 July 2009)<sup>17</sup> Gabis’s text inspired Dariusz Ratajczak, a lecturer of history at the University of Opole and an activist in one of the National Parties<sup>18</sup> He wrote a book called *Dangerous Subjects* (*Tematy niebezpieczne*, 1999) which sparked a nationwide debate that concluded in court. In his chapter on Holocaust Revisionism (pp. 21-25), Ratajczak supported Irving’s hypotheses. He described the researchers of the Nazis’ genocide of Jews as “followers of the Holocaust religion and therefore supporting censorship and imposing a false, propaganda-based image of the past onto world opinion”. He repeated the English historian’s assertions: “In summing up this theme, we can say without much error that Zyklon B was used in the camps as a disinfectant and not to kill people”.

The book came out in April 1999. In May, the author was suspended from his duties as lecturer and investigated. This led to court proceedings in November and an acquittal in December “due to the low harm to society”. In the verdict’s justification, the judges wrote that the publication was

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16. R. Faurisson was a lecturer of literature at the University of Lyon. In 1983, he was suspended for promulgating the Auschwitz lie and fined in 1990 and 1991. Like Irving, he referred to the “Leuchter Report”, the author of which, claiming to be an engineer, argued that the operation of the gas chambers, as described by witnesses, was not feasible for technical reasons. In 1991, it was revealed that Fred Leuchter did not possess a technical education and was obliged by a court to withdraw the false allegations contained in the report. Irving also publicly withdrew certain of his claims, on grounds that he had been misled by Leuchter.

17. <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/336127.html>><http://www.rp.pl/artykul/336127.html> (Internet version of the article by G. Gorny in “*Rzeczpospolita*”).

18. The National Party was founded in 1928. It was the strongest nationalist group in interwar Poland, preaching antisemitism. It was headed by Roman Dmowski (1864-1939), the father of Polish nationalism. After the fall of communism in Poland, six parties with the same name were active in 1989-2001. Each of them claimed to be advancing Dmowski’s legacy.

issued in a negligible print run of 300 copies. However, it was re-issued by Leszek Bubel's publishing house and fragments of it began to circulate on the internet. Despite the acquittal, in April 2000, the Senate of the University of Opole decided to remove Ratajczak from his position, with a three-year ban on teaching.

This was not the end of the matter. Following an appeal in November 2001, Ratajczak was, nonetheless, found guilty of an Auschwitz lie and received a suspended sentence and a small fine<sup>19</sup> The book and the court cases were widely discussed and reported in the press. They also triggered a fierce debate on the limits of free of speech. Radio Maria's on-air defenders of ideas propounded by Ratajczak were Andrzej L. Szczesniak, Ryszard Bender and Thomas Wituch. Bender has stated,

Oswiecim was not an extermination camp, but a labour camp. Jews, Gypsies and others were destroyed there through hard work, although it was not always that hard and they were not always destroyed, because first-hand reports exist that the camp provided meals three times a day and sick inmates were given delicate soup, milk and white bread, and Jews often held important camp positions, such as kapo.<sup>20</sup>

The scandal of Ratajczak's book contributed to revisionism becoming one of the most common themes of antisemitic discourse in 1999-2005. In 2000, Jewish organisations' protests prevented the publication of Irving's book by the state publishing house, Bellona, associated with communist military circles. Since then, private publishing houses have printed translations of all of his works and the author has visited Poland several times, invited by various antisemitic organisations.

From 2007 onwards, antisemitism began to decline in Poland. Several political and sociological factors have been responsible for this. The most turbulent phase of the transition from communism to market capitalism had ended. Society had adapted to often painful reforms. The older generation of antisemitic activists, guided by pre-war and Moczarite traditions, were no longer active. Among young people, the skinhead subculture lost its fashionable appeal. Meanwhile, the West radiated new examples of

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19. D. Ratajczak wrote for antisemitic periodicals, like *Myśl Polska*, the weekly *Najwyższy Czas* and the Wrocław-based *Opcja na Prawo*. He took odd jobs and for a long time was unemployed. Having fallen out with his family, he lived in a car. He was found dead on 12 June 2010. An autopsy showed the cause of death as alcohol poisoning. This has become fertile ground for internet conspiracy theories about his assassination through an injection of alcohol.

20. "Night Talking", Radio Maria, 26 XI 1999. This statement led to the protest of the Catholic University of Lublin's Senate and the start of proceedings for a disciplinary dismissal, but were interrupted after a court in Torun dismissed the complaint against Bender's assertion.

xenophobic ideologies that exploited hostility towards immigrants and Islamophobia, and to a lesser extent, antisemitism. Political correctness prevailed over aggressive antisemitic hate speech. This does not mean that one cannot discern patterns of antisemitism rooted beneath polite wording, including accusations of moral responsibility for crimes of communism and the alleged anti-Polish stance of Jews. Nevertheless, Holocaust denial has not taken permanent root in Polish antisemitic discourse.

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# Ruptured Memory on the Streets of Vienna

Karen Frostig\*

*The Vienna Project* is a new multi-media, social action memorial project situated on the streets of Vienna. Using participatory methodologies to engage public audiences, the memorial was developed as an inclusive memorial, naming seven different Austrian victim groups murdered between 1938-1945, under National Socialism. The project recognized the different circumstances of persecution maintained by the different groups, while creating the basis for a shared history that, in turn, led to an enhanced appreciation of difference and equality. “Ruptured Memory on the Streets of Vienna” captures the discourse surrounding the project’s design and its reception in Vienna. The project opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 and closed one year later, on 18. October 2014 at Austria’s National Library at the Hofburg Palace.

The Vienna Project is a new multi-media, social action memorial that grew out of my experience as a returning Jewish artist, looking for my family in a city consumed with history, but where memory remained hidden. The three national memorials dedicated to remembering the victims of National Socialism left me feeling estranged from a city that bore the burden to remember the past.

I had claimed Austrian citizenship in 2007,<sup>1</sup> and Austria was now “my” country. Walking the streets searching for the evidence of thousands upon thousands of murdered citizens, I gradually felt compelled to tell a story about National Socialism in Austria that had not yet been told.

Relying on the project axiom “What Happens When We Forget to Remember,” The Vienna Project would be developed as a memorial project marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anschluss,<sup>2</sup> representing seven

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1. In 2007, I learned from the department of immigration that I had always been an Austrian citizen, based on my father’s record of citizenship before 1936. This meant that I was not “acquiring” Austrian citizenship, but, rather, “claiming” my Austrian citizenship.

2. The Anschluss occurred on March 12, 1938 when Austria was annexed into greater Germany. The Anschluss marks the turning point when racial persecution officially began in Austria. The Nuremberg laws went into immediate effect. 130,000 Jews fled Austria—the majority of Jews were expelled—starting in 1938 until the borders were closed. My father was among those arrested and sent into exile. From Grimm, Laura. “*Adolf Hitler: Biography*,” 2015, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.biography.com/people/adolf-hitler-9340144>

persecuted Austrian victim groups, murdered under National Socialism between 1938-1945. Perceived as an outsider without family, friends, or connections in Vienna, I developed the project at a distance of 4,000 miles, without speaking German, and with no advanced funding. For many years I was the only Jewish member of the project team, and I remained the only descendant of murdered Austrian victims.

“Ruptured Memory on the Streets of Vienna” reviews the project’s inception in Vienna in conjunction with my gradual movement from outsider to insider status. The essay also compares The Vienna Project’s Naming Memorial with the Deserter Memorial, two memorials with contrasting agendas and methodologies, presented the same week, 400 meters apart. Consideration of outsider and insider status shed light on how these two memorials were received at a time when political issues concerning immigration policies were gaining widespread media attention.

Designing, directing and implementing The Vienna Project reflected my scholarship as an artist, writer, and activist, interested in the artistry of public art and public memory. Opening on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013 at the Odeon Theater in the second district, The Vienna Project closed on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2014 at the Austrian National Library at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna’s first district.

### TODAY’S AUSTRIA

In 1923, the city of Vienna was home to the largest German-Jewish population in all of Europe, numbering 201,513 inhabitants and constituting 10% of the population.<sup>3</sup> Following the devastating effects of the Shoah on Austria’s Jewish community, an estimated 10,000-15,000 Jews live in Austria today.<sup>4</sup>

A small and wealthy country, Austria has one of the highest standards of living in all of Europe. Voted year after year as the world’s most livable city,<sup>5</sup> Vienna is referred to as a “city of the future,” a smart city with a top-

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3. Weinzierl, Erika. *The Jewish Middle Class in Vienna in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Austrian Studies, University of Minnesota, 2003).

4. Prodhon, Georgina. “Austria’s Jews Wary of Quiet Rise in Anti-Semitism,” *World News*, accessed March 9, 2015, [http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2013/03/11/17265291-austrias-jews-wary-of-quiet-rise-in-anti-semitism?lite](http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/03/11/17265291-austrias-jews-wary-of-quiet-rise-in-anti-semitism?lite).

5. “2014 Quality of Living World-wide City Rankings,” *Newsroom*, 2014, accessed February 19, 2014, <http://www.mercer.com/content/mercerc/global/all/en/newsroom/2014-quality-of-living-survey.html>.

notch infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> Vienna has also been named Europe's new capital for the arts, a city boasting of its expenditures in the arts, reflected in an enormous network of opera houses, theaters, museums, and world-renown orchestras.<sup>7</sup> Vienna was recently nominated a "Human Rights City" based on its democratic policies and its commitment to "respect, protect, implement, and promote human rights."<sup>8</sup>

Following worrisome trends of anti-Semitism growing in many major cities across Europe, combined with increased presence of Austria's right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) under the leadership of Heinz-Christian Strache now holding 27% of the electoral vote,<sup>9</sup> the Austrian government now faces new challenges regarding minority representation. These challenges are further exacerbated by the growing presence of asylum-seekers arriving in Austria. Taxed by the rising tide of nationalism, a tight economy, and new demands for protection of minority rights, political leaders in Austria, as well as in other parts of Europe, are caught navigating an increasingly complex terrain.

Political tensions are also measured by recent protests concerning the annual "Wiener Korporationsring" (WKR) Ball sponsored by far-right extremists groups.<sup>10</sup> The ball takes place at the Hofburg palace at the end of January (near or on Holocaust Remembrance Day). A second event, organized by the same group and dedicated to "commemorating the dead," occurs on May 8<sup>th</sup> at the crypt at Heldenplatz.<sup>11</sup> Far-right extremist groups congregate there each year to publicly mourn murdered Wehrmacht soldiers. Starting in 2012, the Austrian government instituted a "Celebration of Joy" concert with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra to commemorate Victory Day in Europe, when the allies defeated Germany,

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6. Jahr, H. *Sustainable Urban Infrastructure*, 2009, accessed November 22, 2014, <https://www.mobility.siemens.com/mobility/global/SiteCollectionDocuments/en/integrated-mobility/mobility-consulting/sustainable-urban-infrastructure-vienna.pdf>.

7. Murphy, Tim. "Vienna: The World's Secret Capital of Contemporary Art," *Traveler*, 2014, March 1, 2015, <http://www.cntraveler.com/stories/2014-12-03/vienna-fair-austria-contemporary-art-mak>.

8. Nowak, Manfred. "Vienna-City of Human Rights," *Human Rights*, 2015, February 22, 2015, <http://bim.lbg.ac.at/en/vienna-city-human-rights-0>.

9. Salzmann, M. *Austrian State Elections: Far-Right Freedom Party makes Significant Gains*, 2015, accessed July 13, 2015, <https://www.wsfs.org/en/articles/2015/06/04/farr-j04.html>.

10. Tejas, Aditya. "38 Arrests in Vienna at Protest Against Far Right 'Academics' Ball," *Politics*, 2015, March 1, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/38-arrests-vienna-protest-against-far-right-academics-ball-1801284>.

11. Heldenplatz, which means "Heroes Square," is situated in front of the Hofburg Palace and is historically the site for a great deal of political activity. On March 15, 1938, Hitler spoke from the balcony of the Hofburg Palace, facing throngs of jubilant Austrians gathering there to celebrate the Anschluss, that had taken place three days earlier.

in an effort to displace far right extremist groups who were claiming historic allegiance to Heldenplatz. The momentum for this kind of remembrance initially came from far left political groups. The Social Democrats and liberal NGOs then stepped on the train.

In these limited examples, one can quickly grasp how Austria's past is gaining ground on present-day politics. While Social Democrats and other liberal groups actively support memory work regarding the racist treatment of minority groups under National Socialism, right-wing extremists remain fervently tied to neo-Nazi nationalist ideologies.

Historic tensions polarizing mainstream Austrian "insider" groups from minority "outsider" groups also impacted my ability, perceived as both an insider and an outsider, to secure The Vienna Project as a major national memorial project. I soon discovered that funding The Vienna Project was significantly compromised by the City of Vienna's parallel efforts to fund a new public memory project dedicated to memorializing the Austrian deserters of the Wehrmacht army. The Vienna Project, with its independent focus on the murder of minority groups under National Socialism, was initially regarded as an untimely distraction from the all-encompassing mission to drive right-wing extremist groups from the Hofburg.

### PUBLIC MEMORY IN VIENNA

When I first met with Austrian officials to discuss The Vienna Project, everyone was friendly. I was assured that Vienna had adequately memorialized the history of National Socialism with three national monuments and multiple plaques posted around the city. Additionally, Austrian officials and institutional directors reported that Austrians did not like naming memorials. Unflustered, I maintained course, believing in my ideas and my capacity to make a valuable contribution to Austria's memory culture. I was also motivated to create a memorial that would include the names of 16 members of my family.

I was told that the only possibility for funding a project on such a short timeline to meet the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary date of the Anschluss was through KOER, a temporary public art foundation. Sometimes KOER funds memory projects, but if the project is too tightly tied to history, they exclude it from funding: research-based history projects are eligible for support through a different municipal fund. Creating a project that would qualify for funding by KOER partially explains the temporary nature of the design. In 2011, 2012, and 2013, I submitted three different applications representing different aspects of project development to KOER. All three applications were rejected without further explanation. City officials communicated their disappointment, expecting me to abandon my plans.

Funding a public art project is always a challenge. I could not decipher if the funding stalemate was about money or about my status as an outsider. I assumed both.

As director, it was my job to find funding and keep the project solvent. In Vienna, project development must take into account that everyone expects to be paid: artists, students, as well as interns. Artists funded by government programs are typically established German-speaking Austrian artists, who enjoy some degree of public recognition. As an outsider without a prior history of Austrian funding, I needed to build my own network for support.

Becoming acclimated to Austria's cultural industry, I quickly learned that Austria does not have a strong record of philanthropy. There are no tax incentives. The economic crisis hitting Europe in 2012 made it plausible for federal ministries, private foundations, corporations, and small companies to decline making a financial contribution to the project, despite Austria's robust economy.

Partnerships were also difficult to establish. Most institutions managed a tight operational budget. Partnerships providing in-kind support signaled to funding agencies that they were enjoying some degree of budgetary surplus. Contributing any form of support to The Vienna Project would jeopardize future funding for their programs. Therefore partnership development, like philanthropy, was generally not forthcoming.

In addition, laws granting permission to install art in the public sphere are highly regulated. Without government permission, which is generally quite liberal, art activism becomes an outlawed practice. Thus, in regard to gaining permission and funding, Austrian artists are obliged to work with the government. Under such circumstances, securing government approval, while pursuing politically charged art that likely critiques government policies, undercuts the very definition of art activism. Despite various cultural blind spots, these facts were fairly easy to assimilate. Other negotiations, dealing with more nuanced expressions of resistance, were harder to decipher.

While I did not have funds to hire Austrian artists and historians, I could do the preliminary work of organizing the project independent of Austrian funding. Since I wanted the project to represent a collaboration between Austrian artists and historians with my own work as an Austrian-American artist and scholar of Jewish ancestry,<sup>12</sup> I would eventually need to secure Austrian funding. However, this could happen closer to project

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12. I use the term of "Jewish ancestry" in lieu of being identified as a "Jewish artist." The latter term does not conform to public policy that prevents identifying someone by his or her religion. For practical purposes, I was referred to as an American artist, on occasion as an Austrian artist, but never as an Austrian-American artist or a Jewish artist.

implementation, when permissions and working partnerships to support project production were in place.

Over the course of many months, I learned about three memorial projects sited for Vienna that were currently under consideration. One proposal was for a permanent naming memorial, to be developed by the City of Vienna, for Jewish victims who were deported from the Aspanghof train station in the third district. Another was for a permanent naming memorial for Jewish victims of the Holocaust, developed by a Canadian survivor and supported by the Jewish community of Vienna, to be situated in a public park. The third, mentioned earlier as a memorial dedicated to Austrian Wehrmacht deserters, is the only new memorial that has been completed to date.

### METHODOLOGIES OF REMEMBRANCE

The Vienna Project was initiated under my direction and developed as a new methodology for memorialization that featured a number of conceptually fresh ideas. The Vienna Project would present multiple persecuted Austrian victims of National Socialism, murdered between 1938-1945. As an inclusive and differentiated memorial project, multiple victim groups with different histories would be presented at the same time. This methodology was integrated into ten aspects of project development, including: Opening Events, the “Sidewalk Installation” project encompassing 38 memory sites, performance art, oral history video interviews, guided tours, the Reading Marathon, Holocaust education curricula, social media activity, the Closing Ceremony, and the Naming Memorial.

The interactive and participatory approach of The Vienna Project was primed to invite contemporary public discourse in the form of video art installations, performance art, guided tours, and social media output.<sup>13</sup> The goal was to find a means of combining archival research with participatory practice without compromising the approach or integrity of either discipline. This methodology was particularly effective in developing the “Sidewalk Installation” project, comprised of 38 memory sites, referencing 1938, when racial persecution officially began.

The 38 memory sites reflected rigorous scientific research, conducted by historian Jerome Segal, at the University of Vienna. Extensive research represented multiple victim groups and different examples of aggression and exclusion, as well as instances of resistance and rescue occurring in 16

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13. O’Neill and Doherty describe participation as a “form of civic practice” O’Neill, P. and C. Docherty. eds. *Locating the Producers: Durational Approaches to Public Art* (New York: Valiz/Antennae Series, 2011), 9.

districts around Vienna. Waltraud Jungwirth from the University of Applied Arts worked with graphic design students to create hand-cut stencils containing the project axiom in ten languages “What Happens When We Forget To Remember?” The sidewalk stencil sprays marked the location of the 38 sites.<sup>14</sup> Rather than install static sprays that would become “invisible” over time, I wanted to activate the sites with contemporary commentary from Austrian artists and performers. I hired Ildiko Meny to curate the performance art program, who worked closely with Johanna Taufner, our social media coordinator.

The smartphone app was initially developed by Kabren Levinson as a navigational tool to find the 38 sites. The app was also capable of seamlessly integrating historic research about the sites, produced in German and English, with video clips from contemporary artists, plus oral history video interviews from survivors and historians commenting on the history of specific sites, further enhanced by a guided tour program. Georg Traska and Jerome Segal conducted these interviews, and Kate Melchior created the guided tours. The result was a rich interplay of information about each site that could be accessed through one’s smartphone while standing at the site.

Subsequently, a new generation of smartphone apps has appeared in Europe to mark historic sites for a variety of purposes. However, I have not heard of any apps of this type, equally as ambitious. The actual design of The Vienna Project’s smartphone app, developed by software engineers in our partnering organizations (Kapsch AG and CSS GmbH), featured the project’s many programs. The programs, unfolding in public spaces over twelve months time, required the support of a large, interdisciplinary team, consisting of two historians, a fleet of graphic designers, a cartographer, a performance art recruiter and curator, a social media coordinator, a tour guide and curriculum specialist, technologists, and documentation artists. The Reading Marathon became an additional site-based project developed in conjunction with the Closing Ceremony, requiring additional staffing of students, teachers, volunteers, translators, as well as transcribers, readers, documentation artists, and navigators. Taking place for one hour, archival letters collected from 16 countries were read by Austrian high school students and adult children of Austrian émigrés and refugees, at 26 memory sites located in 16 districts.

The Sidewalk Installation project was distinguished from other European memorial projects in additional ways. Not only did the 38 sites

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14. The phrase reoccurs in different configurations around the city in ten languages, representing victim groups, present-day minority groups, and tourist groups: Deutsch, Yiddish, Romani, Slovenian, Polish, Russian, Serbo-Croatian/Bosnian, Turkish, Hebrew and English.

mark places where different groups were murdered, deported, and on occasion, rescued, the sites also identified state-sponsored, racist institutions depriving citizens of their civil rights. Permission to spray stencils in front of the Parliament, national museums, universities, the courts, prisons, and cultural institutions represented a new level of criticality that was endorsed by the Austrian government. While these historic sites warranted fresh attention, such a candid look at the past is indeed remarkable by any government, given the degree of savagery this history represented.

While outreach to performing artists in Vienna was extensive, only one performing artist, historian and actor, Philipp Reichel, came forward to do a reading from letters and documents in his possession that substantiated his grandfather's allegiance to the Nazi party. At first, the project team was concerned that representing such a presentation could somehow be construed as promoting a pro-Nazi agenda. In fact, the opposite was the case. The Vienna Project was designed to juxtapose historical data with contemporary commentary. In retrospect, it was striking how rarely conversations about family members took place. With that said, it is my impression that many Austrian historians and sociologists, as well as Austrian students of history and art, are eager to explore this history. It is largely a matter of government funding, as to which and how many of these projects move forward.

The Naming Memorial constituted another example of original methodologies regarding activities of remembrance. A number of key components, circumscribed in the Naming Memorial, set this memorial apart from other memorials in Europe. These components include: a non-hierarchical presentation of multiple groups of victims' names displayed at the same moment, multiple victim groups differentiated by group affiliations, multiple victim groups defined by genocide or murder, individual names presented in relation to group representations, groups in relation to other groups, and names and percentages of victims pertaining to each group displayed alongside the multiple groupings. This information was depicted through graphic means, across an unimaginable panoramic view of 91,780 victims' names, projected onto the walls of buildings surrounding Josefsplatz. The Naming Memorial represented a single narrative of a nation's history of genocide and murder.

Early on, people joined the project on the basis of creating an inclusive memorial whereby all names would be treated equally; same font, same size letters, and same duration for projection. When it became clear that I would include group affiliations as part of victims' identity and history, some team members expressed a concern that Jewish victims not dominate an "inclusive" memorial project. I was advised more than once, that "the memorial should not be too Jewish." I was quick to take the



position that an inclusive memorial must also represent the history accurately. This included noting victims' names in conjunction with archival categorizations. Nonetheless, team members perceived the issue of numbers as problematic, arguing that depicting group affiliations in any form to reveal numbers would create hierarchy.

Erasure of archival information was unacceptable to me, especially in representing a history of genocide and murder that was all about erasure. The number of Jews murdered reflected factual information, not the urge to dominate or control the narrative. A division of opinion regarding inclusion and difference continued to polarize members of the project team. The debate strengthened my conviction that difference could be represented graphically without imposing a new hierarchical order. As the original artist, the founding director, and producer of the Memorial Project, I was in a position to determine the conceptual design of the Naming Memorial. I worked closely with video artist Elisabeth Wildling to implement the complexity of this plan.

The Naming Memorial became the pinnacle of my scholarship concerning a respectful depiction of this horrific history. No one was left out, nor was history rewritten to satisfy a sanitized or politically revised presentation of memory.<sup>15</sup> The projections were fleeting, lasting about three hours. It was a miraculous moment: a naked confrontation with a dark past, paid for by the Austrian government.

## TWO MEMORIAL PROJECTS UNDER PARALLEL DEVELOPMENT

I first introduced The Vienna Project to members of the Austrian government in 2009. At the time, the Austrian government politely expressed disinterest in the project. I did not know that the government was preparing to launch a "call for artists" to submit a proposal for a new memorial project for Austrian Deserters. In fact, five years later, these two memorials had an uncanny convergence.

The Vienna Project opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013 and closed on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2014. The unveiling for the Deserter Memorial occurred on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2014, just 400 meters away. Curiously, the same rationale invoked at our opening was used at the unveiling of the Deserter Memorial: "national identity must include national memory" (Austria's National Day

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15. Names of persecuted victims of National Socialism came from six databases. Acknowledgement of the "unnamed" victims, noted in the archives as "N.N., männlich N.N., weiblich N.N." was included as the final slide of the naming memorial. Therefore, "all" recorded names found in the databases, that also encompassed the "unnamed," were noted in the project's "Naming Memorial."

was celebrated a few days later on both occasions). Additional parallels are equally striking.

The two projects had the same timeline for development, from 2010-2014, and addressed the same history from different vantage points, using different methodologies of remembrance. German artist Olaf Nicolai's permanent memorial reflected the ideas of an individual artist, using traditional motifs and materials (a pedestal, an inscription, and concrete). The memorial is centrally located across from the Federal Chancellery, dedicated to memorializing deserters.<sup>16</sup> Wehrmacht deserters were Austrian. Unlike the persecuted Austrian minority groups represented in The Vienna Project's Naming Memorial, these Austrians were not perceived as "other," actively persecuted as a result of a racist ideology. The plight of deserters and their post-war history was compelling on different grounds. A striking three tier monument, constructed in the shape of an "X," the structure symbolized anonymity and heteronomy. Plans for the Deserter Memorial followed the "Recognition Act" passed in 2009 to overturn prior sentences, as well as grant compensation to deserters and their families. The two memorials cost roughly the same amount of money: 220,000 € for the Deserter Memorial and 300,000 € for The Vienna Project. Closing and unveiling events attracted approximately the same size audiences, roughly 250-300 attendees.<sup>17</sup> Additional distinctions are worth noting.

Initially, The Vienna Project was poorly received. I was discouraged from pursuing my ideas by government offices, as well as numerous institutions presumably sympathetic to my goals. I was an unknown entity, without a track record for project development in Vienna. Over time, however, an attitude of disinterestedness gave way to an expression of support. By the project's closing, government officials in both Federal and City offices, as well as every major cultural and historic institution in Vienna celebrated the project. Ninety percent of funding came from the Austrian government, Austrian corporations, and in-kind institutional support. The inclusive design of the memorial project with the caveat that groups be presented in a differentiated format, received high accolades. Despite this enormous outpouring of support, not one news reporter attended the Closing Ceremony or the Naming Memorial. The size of The Vienna Project, the complexity of its design, plus our lack of PR funding may have contributed to these circumstances.

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16. Weiharther, Elke . *Olaf Nicolai: Memorial for the Victims of Nazi Military Justice*, 2014, accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.koer.or.at/cgi-bin/page.pl?id=493&lang=en>.

17. "Austria Inaugurates Memorial to Wehrmacht Deserters Killed by the Nazis," 2014, November 21, 2014, <http://www.dw.de/austria-inaugurates-memorial-to-wehrmacht-deserters-killed-by-the-nazis/a-18019168>.

By contrast, the Deserter Memorial's unveiling received widespread attention from international news media. While the impetus to create the memorial came from the government, its public reception was fraught with political backlash. Deserters continue to hold a controversial place within Austria's history of National Socialism. Many Austrians feel that deserters do not deserve public recognition, continuing to be perceived as traitors of the regime. By funding this project as a government-based initiative, public memory in Vienna took a new turn.

The Deserter Memorial accomplished the dissemination of three significant messages regarding National Socialism. First, in the aftermath of an unjust war, conducted under an evil and repressive regime defined by hateful racist ideologies, resistance against one's government can be condoned as a moral and courageous act. Second, the strategic location of the memorial, placed in Ballhausplatz across from the Chancellor's office, highlighted the historic murder of Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss during an unsuccessful Austrian Nazi coup attempt in 1934. Austrofascist history between 1933-1938 was distinctly different from its German counterpart,<sup>18</sup> despite an endless supply of photos documenting Austria's triumphant response regarding its unification with Germany. Third, the monument becomes a concrete symbol of how today's government distances itself from the history of National Socialism by recognizing Austrian deserters as courageous opponents to this unlawful regime.

The Vienna Project's Naming Memorial also contained significant elements of controversy, breaking through years of silence. The first Naming Memorial of its kind in Europe and the first naming memorial in Vienna to actually name Jews, Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, the mentally ill and physically and mentally disabled, Jehovah Witnesses, Carinthian Slovenians, and dissident victims, The Vienna Project achieved an unprecedented level of openness that lives on as a memory of a memory. The multi-faceted memorial provided the Austrian government with the opportunity to endorse multiple victims groups. While the history itself could not be rehabilitated, ideas about memory advanced, embracing new measures of inclusion, participation, and historic accuracy.

## CONCLUSION

The Vienna Project officially began in 2010 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anschluss. The history of this project and its favorable reception within Austria supports a new chapter in Austria's history and

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18. Botz, G. "The Coming of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regime and the Stages of its Development." in *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe*, eds. C. P. António and A. Kallis (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014), 121-141.

memory of National Socialism. “Ruptured Memory on the Streets of Vienna” sheds light on how today’s Austrian government supports Holocaust memory while seeking to distance itself from the fascist and racist ideologies of the past.

One of the project’s most salient accomplishments was to bring members of different political parties together in support of The Vienna Project. Curiously, this was an unintended by-product of a massive fundraising campaign.

In bringing the project to a close, I was told that my American spirit of invincible optimism and entrepreneurialship surprised many Austrians, who were moved to help. While the city was slow to endorse the project, once a few leaders pledged support, others joined in. Of equal significance was the fact that no one “blocked” the project. The inclusive design of the memorial appealed to most groups. No single group dared oppose the project on those grounds. In the end, small amounts of support came from twenty-one Austrian organizations, six private foundations, nine municipal and four federal offices, five corporations, ten small businesses, and eight individuals. US contributions were incidental. This meant that Austrian support was diversified and could not be construed in political terms. As the project moved from the margins to the center, so did my status as an outsider. By the project’s end, government offices and organizations were eager to be named in the program booklet as a sponsor or contributor to the project. People of different political persuasions shared a collective sense of pride in helping to make this project a reality.

While the story of funding pales in comparison to the innovative design of the memorial project, it is the context of Austria’s daunting history of genocide, paired with a history of denial that makes these facts so significant. How a country moves from denial to bearing responsibility for crimes committed is of great interest to scholars working with histories of genocide.

The obligation to remember the past, the victim groups, criminal acts perpetrated by regime members, as well as courageous actions of resistance, must be renewed again and again as each generation comes of age. Protecting and promoting human rights in the present is best understood when the darkest chapters of a nation’s history are also remembered.

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# Western Societies, Cultural Relativism, Anti-Zionism and the Politics of History

Andreas Benl\*

Since 9/11 there has been a broad debate about immigration, Islamism, discrimination and antisemitism in the West. The article refutes the dichotomy between immigrants of Muslim descent on the one hand and indigenous inhabitants seen as a homogenous bloc on the other. Cultural relativism transcends this dualism – it is a political game between different parties. Antisemitism and anti-Zionism are at its center but often a blind spot at the same time. While secular Western laws and politics in general are painted as discriminatory against Muslims by Islamists and cultural relativists alike, the state of Israel is often condemned as the peak of neo-colonial repression against the oriental ‘Other’. The article shall show instead, how the different brands of cultural relativism and anti-Zionism in Western countries relate to the history of Islamism on the one hand, the repressed in the history of Western societies between colonial past on one hand, and the Holocaust and its remembrance on the other.

## I. ANTISEMITISM AND CULTURAL RELATIVISM TOWARDS ISLAM

During the mass marches in Europe on the occasion of the war of the Israeli Army against Hamas in the summer of 2014, there was a short dispute in the German press about a possible new wave of antisemitism in Germany and Europe, its actors and its relevance. When asked by *die taz*, the leading newspaper of the German alternative left, about protesters who shouted antisemitic slogans on demonstrations against Israel, Wolfgang Benz, former head of the Berlin Center for Research on Antisemitism answered:

“It is a small minority of fanatics and not the majority of the German population. This minority now gets an attention they do not deserve from their political and numerical weight. . . . For years, some people would have us believe that Islam is inextricably linked with hatred of Jews. But this is wrong.”<sup>1</sup>

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1. Wolfgang Benz, “Hitler steht nicht wieder vor der Tür,” *die tageszeitung*, July 24, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015,

This description was challenged two days later by the journalist Christian Geyer in the influential liberal-conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* daily, who claimed:

“This antisemitism stems from . . . the minds of migrants from Turkey and Arab-Islamic countries of origin . . . One is neither racist nor islamophobic, if one also takes into account these religious roots of the new Jew-baiting instead of dismissing the antisemitic bullying in a deliberately blurred vision as the outcome of a lack of integration. Antisemitism cannot be integrated.”<sup>2</sup>

Benz sees no reason to be alarmed at all and emphasizes that it is a completely wrong concept to depict Islam as inherently antisemitic. On the other hand, Geyer from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* sees current violent antisemitism as a phenomenon brought to Western societies by Muslim immigrants. The role of the majorities of these societies remains unclear in debates of this kind; the only question is whether there is a relevant problem with antisemitism among Muslim immigrants or not. But if antisemitism and Islamism are seen as virtual ontological features of people with a Muslim background, the question arises, why normally only Turks and Arabs are mentioned in those debates, while the Iranian immigrants are left out. Shouldn't they be at the center of the stage, given the fact that the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran was the most important event for the spread of global Jihadism and Islamist anti-Zionism since the creation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928?<sup>3</sup>

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<http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/digitaz/artikel/?ressort=sw&dig=2014/07/24/a0134&cHash=f24898c1f4b1d807b83f27a11a74b344>.

2. Christian Geyer, “Antisemitismus: Nicht dumm stellen,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 25, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/nicht-dummstellen-die-migrantischen-wurzeln-des-neuen-antisemitismus-13065014.html>.

3. For the significance of Khomeini for the founders of Al Qaeda in spite of the Sunni-Shia divide, see: Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 47f, for the interconnections between the Muslim Brotherhood and Iranian fundamentalists see the article series by Amir Taheri, “Iran and the Ikhwan,” May/June 2014, accessed September 18, 2015, <http://english.aawsat.com/2014/05/article55332765>, <http://english.aawsat.com/2014/06/article55332848>, <http://english.aawsat.com/2014/06/article55332991>, For Teheran's support of Sunni Islamists see for example the 2014 US Department of State “State Sponsors of Terrorism Overview”, accessed September 18, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/239410.htm>, and “English translation of leaked 31 August 2014 minutes of high-level security, military meeting” of the Sudanese Sunni Islamist military regime, accessed September 18, 2015,



A controversy of the late seventies may serve as starting point for a more nuanced perspective on the interconnections between Westerners and people with a Muslim family background regarding regressive ideologies: In 1978, a polemic erupted between Michel Foucault and an Iranian woman living in Paris, one of the first of many controversies to follow, where oriental freethinkers are criticized by western liberals or leftists for a supposed hatred of Islam. Foucault had just written a series of articles about the unfolding revolution in Iran where he was very clearly favoring the Islamist current of the revolutionaries. The woman from Iran with the alias Atoussa H. wrote in reply about Foucault's fascination with the perspective of a future 'Islamic Government' in Iran and about life under Sharia law:

"It seems that for the Western Left, which lacks humanism, Islam is desirable. . .for other people."

She concluded:

"Many Iranians are, like me, distressed and desperate about the thought of an 'Islamic' government. . . . The Western liberal Left needs to know that Islamic law can become a dead weight on societies hungering for change. The Left should not let itself be seduced by a cure that is perhaps worse than the disease."<sup>4</sup>

Foucault, in a short rejoinder published the following week in the magazine *Nouvel Observateur*, wrote that what was "intolerable" about Atoussa H.'s letter was that it "merges together all the aspects, all the forms, and all the potentialities of Islam within a single expression of contempt." He concluded by lecturing Atoussa H. that „in order to approach it [Islam] with a minimum of intelligence, the first condition is not to begin by bringing in hatred."<sup>5</sup>

Foucault's arguments might sound familiar from current debates about so-called Islamophobia, and would hardly produce a public outcry today. In 1979, however, the ensuing terror campaign by Khomeini against women, homosexuals, and political opponents activated such prominent figures as

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<http://sudanreeves.org/2014/09/29/arabic-original-and-hand-written-english-translation-of-31-august-2014-meeting-pages-3-6/>

4. Atoussa H., "An Iranian Woman Writes," in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, ed. Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 209.

5. Michel Foucault, "Foucault's Response to Atoussa H.," in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 210.

Simone de Beauvoir<sup>6</sup> against the new regime in Iran and brought Foucault harsh criticism by other leftist intellectuals. The renowned Marxist Orientalist Maxime Rodinson warned of Islamism as a sort of “archaic fascism” and compared Khomeini’s concept of an Islamic Government with the Spanish Inquisition. Without naming Foucault, he talked about “Europeans convinced of the vices of Europe and hoping to find elsewhere (why not in Islam?) the means of assuring a more or less radiant future.”<sup>7</sup> The former Maoists Jacques and Claudie Broyelle accused Foucault of window-dressing a murderous regime.<sup>8</sup>

During the remaining years of the cold war and even in the 90s, the attitude of many Western intellectuals towards Islamist terror and the Iranian regime remained critical.<sup>9</sup> In 1989, the so-called Rushdie affair - the death fatwa by Khomeini against the novelist - sent shock waves through European capitals, and solidarity with Salman Rushdie was an issue for liberals and leftists. British scholar Kenan Malik has written a history of the events, citing his own experiences.<sup>10</sup>

One key point of Malik’s book is the transformation of the anti-racist movements against xenophobia and neo-fascism of the 70’s and 80’s into so-called multi-cultural community politics, after the Rushdie affair. This development was supported by government agencies that were weary of political activists with a civil rights agenda. They preferred self-appointed community leaders speaking on behalf of Islamic or other ethno-religious defined entities instead.<sup>11</sup>

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6. “Speech by Simone de Beauvoir,” in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 246.

7. Maxime Rodinson, “Islam resurgent?” in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 233, 236

8. Claudie Broyelle and Jacques Broyelle, “What Are the Philosophers Dreaming About? Was Foucault Mistaken about the Iranian Revolution?” in Afary and Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*, 247-249. For a defense of Foucault’s writings on Iran see: Thomas Lemke: “‘Die verrückteste Form der Revolte’ – Michel Foucault und die Iranische Revolution,” accessed September 18, 2015, <http://www.thomaslemkeweb.de/publikationen/Iran%20II.pdf>

9. See for example the books by Peter Pilz and Norbert Siegmund about the regime murders of exiled Iranian Kurds in Vienna and Berlin: Peter Pilz, *Eskorte Nach Teheran: Der Österreichische Rechtsstaat Und Die Kurdenmorde* (Wien: Ibero & Molden, 1997); Norbert Siegmund, *Der Mykonos-Prozess: Ein Terroristen-Prozess Unter Dem Einfluss Von Aussenpolitik Und Geheimdiensten; Deutschlands Unkritischer Dialog Mit Dem Iran*. (Münster: Lit, 2001)

10. Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic, 2009).

11. Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad*, 36-79

The Rushdie affair marks a turning point. Initially, many liberal and leftist intellectuals expressed solidarity with Rushdie, while mainstream media and institutions were often hesitant and put state reason and Realpolitik above freedom of speech. Malik exposes his own experience as a radical advocate of free speech for Rushdie's Satanic Verses with the voluntary self-censorship of British media.<sup>12</sup> But Khomeini's Fatwa also challenged the leftist self-image. During the cold war, the Western New Left had sided even with the most retrograde national liberation movements – but always in the name of universal values, stating that the particular should only be the form of the universalist content. Now an assault on free speech was declared in the name of Islamic particularism: the form became content. In light of the crisis and imminent collapse of the so-called 'Real socialism' in Eastern Europe, Islamism could start its ideological expansion in the West, by fusing a particularist ideology with the remnants of anti-imperialism after the end of the Soviet Union: anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism.

## II. ISLAMISM IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNITY

In order to understand the connection between cultural relativism and historical and current antisemitism, it is necessary to view them in the context of the history of Islamism in societies minted by the Islamic religion, many of which have seen attempts to separate religion and state in the first decades of the 20th century. Especially in Turkey and Iran, this concept, secularism, had been put in place for decades as a state mission from above. In Iran there had been even a liberal-bourgeois revolution in 1905 demanding the separation of religion and the state. At that time, clerics who opposed secularization were clearly in retreat. The Islamic clergy took varying positions to safeguard its influence. The prominent Shia cleric Ayatollah Abol Ghasem Kashani first allied himself with the modernist monarch Reza Shah Pahlavi, was arrested by the British occupation forces in World War II as an enemy of the Anti-Hitler-Coalition, briefly supported the reformist anti-imperialist Mohammad Mossadegh in the early 50's, and then forged an alliance with Reza Pahlavi's son Mohammed Reza to topple Mossadegh.<sup>13</sup> His political foster-son, Khomeini, only broke with Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in the early 60's,

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12. Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad*, 151-153

13. Matthias Kuentzel, *Die Deutschen Und Der Iran: Geschichte Und Gegenwart Einer Verhängnisvollen Freundschaft*. (Berlin: Wolf Jobst Siedler Jr., 2009), 106-109. Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979*. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 343-349.

when Pahlavi introduced authoritarian changes from above like a land reform and women's suffrage.

Khomeini never shared the modernist goals of the liberal and leftist adversaries of the Shah of Persia, but he could ultimately gain reputation among secular anti-imperialists who were frustrated about the failure of Mossadegh<sup>14</sup>, had hardly made a thorough critical analysis of the role of religion in Iranian history and thus were susceptible to having their agenda reformulated in Islamic terms. Khomeini introduced anti-Zionism as a religious-political propaganda tool. He speculated whether the Shah was a Jew because of the good relations between imperial Iran and the Jewish state. In the 60's and 70's, Khomeini did not endorse the propagandistic distinction later made by many Islamists, between Jews and Zionists.<sup>15</sup> In the introduction to his main opus *Islamic Government*, he presents the Jews as conspirators against Islam: „From the very beginning, the historical movement of Islam had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda and engaged in various stratagems, and as you can see, this activity continues down to the present.”<sup>16</sup> While Khomeini ultimately became the charismatic leader of Islamism, two Iranian intellectuals who died before the revolution of 1979 stood for the transformation from secular to religious anti-imperialism and cultural relativism in the 60's and 70's.

The first was the former communist party member Jalal Al-e Ahmad with his essay “Gharbzadeghi” from 1962, which has been translated as “Plague from the West”, “Westoxification” or “Occidentosis”. In this essay, Jalal Al-e Ahmad denounces a cultural colonization of the Iranian society by western capitalism, which he sees as a soulless culture of the machine. Islam is identified as a possible means of resistance, among others, against this development, but less on a theological or spiritual level, and more as part of a cultural empowerment for a modernization of the East, in coordination with ascending Eastern countries, as a counter-empire

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14. Stephen Kinzer in his book *All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008) blames solely the US for the downfall of Mossadegh, while Barry Rubin gives a more nuanced account of the history of US-Iranian relations: Barry M. Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran* (London: Penguin, 1981).

15. For this shift see a speech held after the revolution and distributed by Iranian state broadcast PressTV, “Imam Khomeini on Jews and Zionists,” accessed September 19, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCMwol-Rljo>

16. Ruhollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 180, 27.

to Western capitalism.<sup>17</sup> In the preface of the book, he refers to the German national conservative writer Ernst Juenger, and states that Juenger and Jalal Al-e Ahmad himself were “both exploring more or less the same subject, but from two viewpoints”<sup>18</sup>, a possible reference to Juenger’s anti-liberal, anti-Western literature and essays.

Sociologist Ali Shariati added an anti-imperialist dynamic to Jalal Al-e Ahmad’s cultural critique. Shariati criticized the conservative, quietistic tradition of Islam and offered a social revolutionary re-interpretation of Islamic history. From his studies in Paris he knew Sartre’s existentialism and the anti-colonial writings of Frantz Fanon. At the same time he was a fierce critic of Marxism, which he saw as the peak of humanist “Western fallacies”.<sup>19</sup> While Jalal Al-e Ahmad took Islam as a tool for the return to the oriental cultural heritage, Shariati saw a perceived desire for “authentic cultural values” as a bridge towards Islam, which he saw as the only possible savior of those values. His work “Hajj” substantiates sacrifice and martyrdom as the core values of a revolutionary Islam opposed to the “alienation of mankind” by consumerism and worldly rationalist thinking.<sup>20</sup> In his essay “Fatima is Fatima” from 1971, he criticizes the confinement of traditional women to the household on the one hand and feminist, individual, so-called ‘westernized’ emancipation at the other. Instead, Shariati demands that women should be given the opportunity to be active members of society - but only if they are willing to become (spiritual or literally) soldiers of Islam and join the fight against a perceived western cultural invasion.<sup>21</sup>

As the practitioner of the Islamic revolution, Khomeini had more concrete problems, but he carried on Shariati’s shift of emphasis from the dichotomy of believer/unbeliever to oppressor/oppressed, which could relate to secular-universalist anti-imperialism, in spite of the religious-

17. “The time has come to adopt an orderly and appropriate plan covering a period of, say, twenty years and in accordance with the scientific and technical needs of the country whereby we send students to India or Japan and nowhere else, certainly not Europe or America. I mention these two countries in the hope that we might learn how they came to terms with the machine, how they adopted technology (especially Japan), and how they came to terms with the problems that now confront us.” Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983), 121.

18. Al-e-Ahmad, *Occidentosis*, 25.

19. Ali Shariati, “Marxism and Other Western Fallacies. An Islamic Critique,” accessed September 19, 2015, <https://rosswolfe.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/ali-shariati-marxism-and-other-western-fallacies.pdf>

20. Ali Shariati, “Hajj,” accessed September 19, 2015, <http://www.alislam.org/printpdf/book/export/html/28463>

21. Ali Shariati, “Fatima Is Fatima,” 1971, accessed February 8, 2015, [http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/fatima\\_is\\_fatima1.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/fatima_is_fatima1.php).

particularist content of political Islam. Islamism at first sight seems to represent complete stagnation and the rejection of historical development subsequent to the era of Muhammad. But Khomeini was determined to prove that an Islamic state, built on the religious laws of the Quran was a possibility in the 20th century. He ridiculed the secular Iranian notion that the Islamists were opposed to the technological achievements of modernity. He demanded, on the contrary, that these should be used for the establishment of the Islamic theocracy. With the concept of Velayat-e faqih, the guardianship of the Islamic jurists, Khomeini introduced a significant innovation: centrality shifts from the holy texts to the religious leader as a mediator between god and the masses. In a Machiavellian turn, Khomeini stated that the religious leader may even change the religious tradition and sharia laws in case of a state of emergency: “The government has the right to prevent anything, whether related to religious rituals or not, as long as it is against the interests of Islam.”<sup>22</sup>

Islam here is less a term of religious and more of political theology, reminiscent of the Third Reich law theorist Carl Schmitt, who defined the political as the distinction between friend and enemy<sup>23</sup> and the sovereign as the one who decides on the state of exception.<sup>24</sup> In the Islamic Republic, this is the Guardian Jurist, mandated by God. Even more important than the religious laws or the definition of the contents of a certain religious orthodoxy is the identification of metaphysical enemies – on top of which list are the Jews, Zionism and the state of Israel. In the summer of 1979, only months after his takeover, Khomeini introduced Quds [Jerusalem] Day as a global Muslim duty to rally against Israel and the West, fusing anti-imperialist oppressor/oppressed rhetoric with Islamist anti-Zionism, and denouncing all non-participants in the Muslim world as unbelievers and traitors:

“Quds Day is an international day, it is not a day devoted to Quds alone. It is the day for the weak and oppressed to confront the arrogant powers, the day for those nations suffering under the pressure of American oppression and oppression by other powers to confront the superpowers; it is the day when the oppressed should arm themselves against the oppressors and rub their noses in the dirt; it is the day when the hypocrites will be distinguished from the true

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22. Mehdi Khalaji, “Apocalyptic Politics: On the Rationality of Iranian Policy,” January 2008, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/apocalyptic-politics-on-the-rationality-of-iranian-policy>

23. Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff Des Politischen: Text Von 1932. Mit Einem Vorwort Und Drei Corollarien*. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963), 26ff.

24. Carl Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel Zur Lehre Von Der Souveränität*. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004), 13.

believers. For the true believers acknowledge this day as Quds Day and do what they must do. The hypocrites, however, those who are secretly affiliated with the superpowers and are friends of Israel, are either indifferent on this day or do not allow the people to hold demonstrations.”<sup>25</sup>

One of Ayatollah Khamenei numerous speeches illustrates the continuity of decisionistic anti-Zionist politics in the Islamic Republic: a unity which is solely forged by the enemy:

“We have passed through the barrier of denominational discord. We helped Hizbullah of Lebanon –which is a Shia group – in the same way that we helped [Sunni groups] Hamas and Islamic Jihad [PIJ] and we will continue to do that. We did not become a prisoner of denominational limits. We did not differentiate between Shia, Sunni, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi’i and Zaidi denominations. All Palestinian areas have to become armed.”<sup>26</sup>

### III. ANTI-ZIONISM AS THE COMMON DENOMINATOR OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM AND ISLAMISM

Cultural relativism is the counter-term to ethical and sociological universalism, meaning that cultures can only be understood from within their own values and history. After the Second World War, this kind of relativist approach was defined as opposition to German and European ethnocentrism and racism. In 1952, Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote the booklet “Race and History” for the UNESCO, wherein he refuted the notion of substantial differing races, while at the same time denouncing the self-image of European enlightenment looking down upon other cultures:

“...[M]odern man has launched out on countless lines of philosophical and sociological speculation in a vain attempt . . . to account for the diversity of cultures while seeking, at the same time, to eradicate what still shocks and offends him in that diversity.”<sup>27</sup>

Anti-colonial thinkers like Frantz Fanon took up the critique in the 60’s and tried to identify a revolutionary culture of the oppressed against the colonial oppressor.<sup>28</sup> In his essay “The defeat of the Mind” from 1987,

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25. “International Quds Day”, accessed September 19, 2015, [http://theshiapedia.com/index.php?title=International\\_Quds\\_Day](http://theshiapedia.com/index.php?title=International_Quds_Day)

26. Michael Segall, “Iran Accelerates Arming of Hizbullah and Hamas for Possible Clash with Israel,” December 22, 2014, accessed September 19, 2015, <http://jcpa.org/article/iran-arming-hizbullah-hamas/#sthash.ox6jjHvx.dpuf>

27. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race and History* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 13.

28. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1965)

French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut criticized Fanon, claiming that his attempt to escape European philosophy had failed and only led him to side with German national romanticism as represented by Johann Gottfried Herder, who thought in closed, unchangeable national cultural entities, as opposed to the universalism of the French Revolution.<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that, within the framework of the Cold War, these discussions remained ambivalent. When Edward Said started the 'linguistic turn' in anti-imperialism, and denounced Marx's writings about the Orient as part of western imperialist 'Orientalism'<sup>30</sup>, he was for example severely criticized by the leftist Syrian thinker Sadik al-Azm for creating an "Orientalism in reverse" by transforming negative western stereotypes about the East into an affirmed essence of 'the other'.<sup>31</sup>

Since the attacks of 9/11, the panorama has changed: we are hardly anymore talking about a plurality of cultures seen as static entities but about a dichotomy - the West against Islamism. While it was possible to try to mix ethnology and Marxism in the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements during the cold war, this was no longer conceivable after 1989 and even less so after 9/11. The competition is no longer between two secular, universalist alliances disagreeing over the worldly terms of the French Revolution: freedom on the one hand, equality on the other. There is no alternative economic system like the former Eastern bloc but only remaining oil rent states like Iran, Russia, and Venezuela, and the plunder economy of the "Islamic State" challenging Europe and the United States. In the past, it was the Soviet Union that supported nationalist or religious anti-western movements in the Third World on a tactical basis. Venezuela's 'Socialism of the 21st century', on the contrary, is maintained with counter-insurgency assistance by Iranian revolutionary guards, not the other way round.<sup>32</sup>

Within this political-ideological dynamic, anti-Zionism gets to the center of the stage. For the radical left, it is what has remained from the former global contention between western capitalism and so-called real socialism: Israel is no more seen as an ally of the West against supposedly

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29. Alain Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

30. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

31. Sadik Jalal Al-'Azm, "Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse," accessed September 21, 2015, <https://libcom.org/library/orientalism-orientalism-reverse-sadik-jalal-al-%E2%80%99azm>

32. Joseph Humire, "Iran Propping up Venezuela's Repressive Militias," *Washington Times*, March 17, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/17/humire-irans-basij-props-up-venezuelas-repressive-/?page=all#pagebreak>.



progressive Third World movements as during the cold war constellation, but as the center of all evil by a leftist anti-imperialism which does not hesitate to ally itself with Islamism. For liberal multi-culturalists, on the other hand, the conflict between Israel and Palestine represents all the perceived injustices committed by the West against the oriental 'other'.

If we take a closer look, it is possible to detect politics of history going back beyond the cold war. The solidarity with the Palestinian struggle in western European societies is formulated in terms related to the colonial or fascist past of the respective countries. While in France, and especially in Great Britain, anti-Zionism is wrapped in anti-imperialist and post-colonial concepts, in Germany and Austria it is regularly connected to the Nazi past: its cruelties are seen as an obligation - not for solidarity with the Jewish state, but with Palestinian anti-Zionism.

Three examples from the Academy should illustrate this thesis:

Austrian scholar Claudia Brunner has written a very emotional account of her reworking of the genocidal Nazi past of her grand uncle Alois Brunner. In the end she tries to explain the shift of her academic interest towards suicide bombers in the Middle East as a logical continuation of her interest in the history of Nazism and her "close relationship with the family phantom [Alois Brunner], but just under different conditions." "In the course of research on the resistance of the Palestinians against the Israeli policy, I finally get back on a personal, emotional level to the dimension of the European / German / Austrian responsibility for the situation in the Middle East, a responsibility I cannot and want not to oversee within a historical perspective."<sup>33</sup> This is a very frank and revealing personal account demonstrating the psychological connection between guilt feelings about a Nazi family history and the desire to see current antisemitic terror as "resistance" against Israeli repression.

In regard to the Gaza demonstrations of 2014, Hamburg sociologist Vassilis Tsianos also cites personal experiences in a newspaper article. In this case it is the history of racist discrimination against his Greek family in Germany. Tsianos links this experience to so-called post-migrational and postcolonial grievances of Muslims in Germany. Without any explanation, he then presents the yearly Berlin Al-Quds demonstration staged by the Iranian regime as a Muslim protest against a supposed Israeli colonialism. He then states that generations of immigrant youth are taught in history lessons about the Holocaust in a European manner, and that the history of their families is not mentioned. He omits the fact that the starting point of his article was his own European family. In his stream of consciousness, the European narrator approaches the Muslim 'other' in an alleged

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33. Claudia Brunner and Uwe Von Seltmann, *Schweigen die Täter reden die Enkel* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006), 83.

common history, the victimhood of virtual racist and colonial oppression by Israel.<sup>34</sup>

My third example is an article written in summer of 2014 by Hamid Dabashi on the Al-Jazeera website, called “Gaza: Poetry after Auschwitz”. Dabashi is of Iranian descent and professor of Iranian Studies and Comparative Literature at the Columbia University in New York. He claims that Adorno’s statement from 1949:

“to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” today applies to a “macabre chorus of death” which is the poetry that Israelis are singing upon the graveyard of Gaza. “Israel is the puerile poetry after Auschwitz. It is barbarism manifest”.<sup>35</sup>

Among these three examples, Dabashi’s article is definitely the most radical expression of anti-Zionism; he even reproaches the rulers of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Erdogan’s Turkey for a supposed fake opposition against Israel. But while Dabashi’s description of Israel as a society of genocidal child killers resembles the chants of the mobs marching through European streets in summer of 2014, no one of the latter would have the idea of citing Adorno, the critic of antisemitism, as an imaginary soulmate.<sup>36</sup> Nor does Dabashi argue from a Muslim or Islamist perspective. Provided with enough unscrupulousness, any European could have written the article.

#### IV. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ROLE OF ANTISEMITISM BEFORE AND AFTER 1945 AND ITS IMPACT ON DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

What unites these three examples is the naturalness with which anti-Zionism is presented as a lesson of the colonial or the Nazi past of Europe without any further arguments. It is easy to refute the absurdity of the anti-colonialist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist attitude of scholars or politicians

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34. Vassilis Tsianos, “Diverse Erinnerungskultur,” *die tageszeitung*, August 19, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.taz.de/1/archiv/digitaz/artikel/?ressort=me&dig=2014/08/19/a0076&cHash=734f0d8c259beb2dde05c57e4c25e7bf>.

35. Hamid Dabashi, “Gaza: Poetry after Auschwitz,” Al Jazeera English, August 8, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/08/gaza-poetry-after-auschwitz-201487153418967371.html>.

36. Dirk Braunstein, “The Vigilant Jew as an Annoyance: How Hamid Dabashi Misreads Adorno.” *Telos Press*. Web. August 27, 2014, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.telospress.com/the-vigilant-jew-as-an-annoyance-how-hamid-dabashi-misreads-adorno/>

who try to whitewash Islamism and anti-Zionism. In reality, the godfather of Palestinian anti-Zionism, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was neither a classical anti-colonialist nor much less anything like an anti-fascist, but was first appointed by the British Mandate for Palestine and then resided in Nazi Germany, where he supported the genocidal antisemitism of the regime.<sup>37</sup> Then there was Western collaboration with Islamists in the cold war. But these forgotten facts repressed by a post-fascist and post-colonial anti-Zionism lead to a new question: What has changed in antisemitic expressions since the pre-Nazi-era and why?

In their essay “Elements of Antisemitism” in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno analyzed antisemitism as a blind and murderous ritual of the masses, a psychological compensation for the hardships endured in a class society by the underprivileged, and as a tool of cynical manipulation to cover up interests of the ruling class.<sup>38</sup> But the genocide perpetrated by the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft transcended traditional political and class boundaries. After Auschwitz, antisemitism had lost its ‘good reputation’ in the West, but at the same time the political panorama which had evolved in the Dreyfus affair<sup>39</sup>, and separated right-wing antisemites from liberal and left-wing enemies of antisemitism, was put into question. While the rise of Nazism in Europe marked the failure of its liberal and leftist adversaries, modernist political movements in the Middle East after the Second World War and Israel’s war of independence almost immediately showed a hybrid character mixing leftist anti-imperialism with an antisemitism that had earlier been associated with the extreme right.<sup>40</sup>

After 1945, and antisemitism’s transnational destructive force became known, a taboo emerged against open declarations at least in Western Europe and North America. A complicated politico-ideological division of labor arose. Anti-Jewish western intellectuals and politicians voiced understanding for genocidal ideologies as an expression of Palestinian or Muslim victimhood. Such an approach poses a much smaller political risk for its agents than if they had represented these ideologies and inherent

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37. Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti Von Jerusalem und Die Nationalsozialisten: Eine Politische Biographie Amin El-Husseinis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007).

38. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 137-172.

39. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1979), 89.

40. Matthias Küntzel, “Das Erbe Des Mufti,” accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/das-erbe-des-mufti>

antisemitism themselves. On the other hand, anti-Zionism and antisemitism have been the common denominator and instrument of power for Middle Eastern despotisms of differing ideologies. The destruction of Israel was a central benchmark of success for pan-Arabism and other post-colonial movements in the Middle East. When this goal was not achieved, the rise of the Islamists was logical: They blamed even the weak and ill-organized attention of the secular revolutionaries for social progress and well-being as a distraction from the war against the Jews and the West with the result has been the preservation of backwardness and regional devastation.

But this constellation has collapsed. For years, the most explicit and vocal critics of Islamism had been Middle East intellectuals and Middle East immigrants with first-hand experience of Islamism. On the other hand, Islamism, with its blending of Islamic history and western technology and reactionary modernism, made the passage to Europe. i.e. during the 2014 Israel and Hamas conflict, several observers remarked on the greater potential to incite antisemitism in European capitals, than on the streets of the Middle East.<sup>41</sup> Antisemitism after Auschwitz can neither be confined to a particular social or ethno-religious layer of society. With the rise of the Sunni Islamic State and the Shia Islamic Republic's race towards nuclear arms, concern for post-war mutations of antisemitism must be guided by practicality begging the following: *Is a global coalition against Islamism and genocidal anti-Zionism possible?*

#### V. CONCLUSION

Given Jihad's antisemitic and global, genocidal implications an examination of historical Islam and modern Islamism is in order. Though few would decry the examination of Christian anti-Judaism as a generalizing, offending or even 'racist' idea, this is not the case for adherents of Islam. With its reenactment by totalitarian antisemitic movements, history is not identical. There have been multiple exchanges of ideological fragments between western and Islamist thinkers and ideologues. First, Islamism's founding fathers Hassan al Banna<sup>42</sup> and Jerusalem's Mufti absorbed Nazi styled fascism along with modern antisemitism. It was only after the Islamic revolution and decline of the Eastern bloc, that Islamism became a fascination for western intellectuals.

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41. Amir Taheri, "Look Who Hates the Jewish State," New York Post, July 30, 2014, accessed February 8, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2014/07/30/look-who-hates-the-jewish-state/>

42. Matthias Kuentzel, "Hitler's Legacy: Islamic antisemitism and the impact of the Muslim Brotherhood," accessed September 21, 2015, <http://www.matthiaskuentzel.de/contents/hitlers-legacy-islamic-antisemitism-and-the-impact-of-the-muslim-brotherhood>

I have tried to expose that cultural relativism and Islamism are the edges of the same problem and what is the role of antisemitism in this political-ideological constellation. For decades, all kinds of despots have held Middle Eastern societies hostage in the name of the struggle against Israel. To overcome this phantasm has now become a central precondition to prevent a similar destruction of the Middle East like that of Europe by the Nazis. The delegation by Westerners of genocidal antisemitic resentments to Palestine and the Middle East in the name of understanding for the Islamist ‘other’ has been put in question by the turmoil in Syria and Iraq, the ensuing refugee crisis, and the influx of Jihadists coming back from the Middle East to Europe. The question is now whether there is enough humane self-interest left in the West for forging an alliance with all those in the Middle East who oppose Sunni and Shia Jihadism between Gaza, Raqqa, and Tehran.

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# Antisemitism of the Ayatollahs: Holocaust Denial and Hatred of Israel in Khamenei's and Rouhani's Iran

Stephan Grigat\*

This article argues that the constant threats to annihilate Israel and the denial or relativization of the Shoah are not rhetorical but essential elements of the Iranian regime. Conspiracy theories are analyzed as structural features of the specific ideology of Iran's rulers. Under Hassan Rouhani, the regime's eliminatory anti-Zionism still plays a crucial role in the formulation of its foreign policy.

What distinguishes the Iranian regime from other despotisms conditioned by Islam, and makes it especially dangerous, is the combination of a revolutionary-activist Islamism centered on belief in the Mahdi, the state-driven effort to obtain the technology for weapons of mass destruction, and a radical anti-Zionism shared by all currents within the regime. The Mahdi is the hidden Twelfth Shi'ite Imam who, it is believed, will one day return. Under the Iranian Constitution, it is he, rather than the Supreme Leader, who is the head of state in Iran.<sup>1</sup> *Vilayat-e Faqih*, "guardianship of the Islamic Jurists" is intended through puritanical terror within and the export of the Islamic revolution abroad, to pave the way for his return.

The regime that has ruled Iran since 1979 openly proclaims its religious-ideological goal of world rule. Proving the existence of this claim does not require sophisticated critical techniques. A brief look at the explicit content of the writings of the regime's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, is quite enough.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, his successor and current holder of the office of Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, who has described Israel as a "cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut"<sup>3</sup>, has also made clear statements in this respect.<sup>4</sup>

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1. See Özuguz, *Verfassung*, 5.
  2. See "Reden des Ayatollah Chomeini," 242.
  3. "Iranian MP Lauds Hezbollah's Anti-Israel Stance."
  4. See Khamenei, "Grundzüge der islamischen Ideologie," 17.

The regime's antisemitism – expressed in traditional Jew-hatred, a worldview based on conspiracy theories and projection, Holocaust denial and relativization, and hatred of the Jewish state – is routinely downplayed in scholarly and political discussions.<sup>5</sup> Breaking with this practice, it will here be argued that the constant threats to annihilate Israel and the denial or relativization of the Shoah are essential elements of the regime, that Khomeini already espoused traditional Jew-hatred, and that conspiracy theories and projection are structural features of the ideology of the Iranian rulers. Against this background, we will address the questions of whether there have been any substantial changes under the new Iranian president Hassan Rouhani and what role the regime's antisemitic ideology plays in the formulation of its foreign policy. Finally, some recent statements by leading figures in the regime will be discussed in relation to the negotiations over the Iranian nuclear and missile programs that took place at Vienna's Theodor Herzl Square until July 14<sup>th</sup> 2015.

#### TRADITIONAL ANTISEMITISM AND ELIMINATORY ANTI-ZIONISM

For the Iranian dictatorship, the Middle Eastern conflict is not about improving the lot of the Palestinians, a two-state solution, or any kind of agreement or compromise, but explicitly about destroying Israel. This position is neither new nor confined to particular Presidents or officials. The destruction of Israel has been the official policy of the Islamic Republic since 1979. It is advocated not only by the fanatical supporters of ex-President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, but also by conservatives and those Mullahs and Ayatollahs that the West treats as pragmatists, moderates or reformists. In 1997 Ali Khamenei proclaimed in an address to the Revolutionary Guards that Israel would be expunged from the pages of history. In a meeting with Sheikh Yassin, he assured the then leader of Hamas that Iran would “not recognize this cancerous ulcer for a single hour”.<sup>6</sup> In Iran, the slogan “death to Israel” has since 1979 been a staple of Islamist state propaganda and has been daubed at military parades on missiles that are already capable of reaching Tel Aviv. Wahied Wahdat-Hagh has aptly described the program of the Iranian regime as “eliminary anti-Zionism”.<sup>7</sup>

In order to deny the antisemitic character of the Iranian regime, much is often made of the still existing Jewish community in Iran. Admittedly, the Jews in Iran are not currently suffering the kind of systematic

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5. See Grigat, “Delegitimizing Israel in Germany and Austria.”

6. Quoted by Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran*, 290.

7. Wahdat-Hagh, “Die Herrschaft des politischen Islam im Iran,” 44.

persecution meted out to, for example, the Baha'i.<sup>8</sup> However, this line of argument consciously downplays the fact that the small Iranian Jewish community faces systematic discrimination and has no choice but to constantly dissociate itself from Israel.<sup>9</sup>

Khomeini was not only hostile to the Jewish state, but openly proclaimed his enmity towards the Jews. He considered Islam to have been at war with them since its inception. In a classic case of projection of his own megalomania, Khomeini believed himself engaged in a struggle against an unfolding plan for Jewish world domination about which he had already fantasized in his central text, *Islamic Government*, a collection of lectures that he gave while in exile in Iraq in the 1970s. "We must protect and make the people aware that the Jews and their foreign backers are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world"<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere he asserts:

"And as you see the Jews have grasped the world with both hands and are devouring it with an insatiable appetite, they are devouring America and have now turned their attention to Iran and still they are not satisfied [. . .]"<sup>11</sup>

A major role in the spread of antisemitism in Iran has been played by the Persian translation of the antisemitic screed, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. First published in 1978, large print runs of several new editions have since been issued by official Iranian bodies, sometimes with modified titles such as *The Protocols of the Jewish Leaders for the Domination of the World*.<sup>12</sup> This modified title is in itself enough to show that the sporadic efforts by the Iranian leadership to draw a sharper distinction between Jews and Zionists have had little effect. Moreover, when Iranian propaganda talks about "Zionists" it almost always associates the term with the conspiracy theories characteristic of traditional antisemitism against Jews. In the Iranian regime's ideology and propaganda, Zionism is attacked not as an everyday political opponent, but as the root cause of virtually all the world's problems, whose destruction would pave the way to salvation.<sup>13</sup>

Virtually all the *topoi* of modern antisemitism can be demonstrated in the Iranian Islamists' ideology, in particular the glorification of a

8. See *ibid.*, 49-50, and Wahdat-Hagh, "Drangsaliert, gedemütigt, verfolgt," 193-204.

9. Before 1979 between 60.000 and 150.000 Jews lived in Iran. Today the estimated number is 20.000. As non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state they are treated as *dhimmi*, with special laws and restrictions.

10. Khomeini, "Islamic Government," 127.

11. Khomeini, "Speech, September 28, 1977," 368.

12. See Posch, "Juden im Iran," 32.

13. See Schiedel, "Heiliger Hass" 170-173.



concretely transfigured, organic, authentic, destiny-fulfilling and harmonious community seen as the opposite of a chaotic-abstract, alienated, rotten, artificial, immoral, materialist, conflict-ridden and, in the last analysis, Jew-associated social model. Ulrike Marz places special stress on the resentful anti-capitalism of Islamist ideology which has hitherto attracted too little attention: “The belief in the possibility of excluding exploitation from the capitalist economy and laying the blame for it on an enemy of Islam leads the Iranian religious leaders to a critique of capitalism that is not only religious, but also antisemitic.”<sup>14</sup> While the Nazis drew a distinction between “rapacious” [“raffendes”] and “productive” [schaffendes] capital and identified the former with the Jews and the latter with the Aryan folk community, the Ayatollahs proclaim, as the alternative to “parasitic capitalism”, an “Islamic economy” that is only “an ethically and morally overlaid variant of capitalism that no more breaks with wage labor, exploitation and surplus value than do other ideologies that attempt to manage capitalism”.<sup>15</sup>

Marz rejects both explanations of Islamic antisemitism based on the exegesis of religious texts that find the root of the Jew-hatred of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Koranic verses, and the “import thesis” according to which antisemitism was simply injected into the Islamic world from Europe at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, she offers an analysis of the modern-regressive tendencies in Islamic society itself: in her view, Iranian antisemitism draws firstly on “explicitly Islamic attitudes to and accusations against the Jews”, secondly on a “specific Iranian social context” and thirdly on features borrowed from modern Western antisemitism and Islamically reinterpreted.”<sup>16</sup> The Iranian Islamists “try to combat the crises of modernity with a religiously-referenced construction of a collective identity.”<sup>17</sup> Marz shows the extent to which the Iranian regime’s ideology is a “regressive-modern phenomenon” and Iranian Islamist antisemitism a modern ideology that employs an anti-modern content and modern means in pursuit of its realization.<sup>18</sup> This ideology is one of the main reasons for the Ayatollahs to spend billions on fighting Israel, and it repeatedly produces overtly antisemitic actions, such as the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA), the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, the Argentine capital in 1994.

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14. Marz, *Kritik des islamischen Antisemitismus*, 138.

15. *Ibid.*, 151.

16. *Ibid.*, 378-379.

17. *Ibid.*, 15.

18. *Ibid.*, 35. It would be fruitful to compare this analysis with Jeffrey Herf’s characterization of Germany’s National Socialism as “reactionary Modernism”. See Herf, *Reactionary Modernism*.

## ALL CHANGE WITH ROUHANI?

Eighty five people were killed and hundreds seriously wounded in the AMIA attack, making it one of the bloodiest antisemitic incidents since 1945. The Argentinian judiciary continues to accuse the Tehran regime and Hezbollah of this outrage, and Interpol has issued arrest warrants against senior Iranian officials in relation to it. According to Argentinian special prosecutor Alberto Nisman, who died, allegedly murdered, at the beginning of 2015 and Abolghasem Mesbahi, a former Iranian secret service officer who defected in the late 1990's, the decision to commit this massacre was approved by a special committee closely linked to the Iranian regime's Supreme National Security Council. Hassan Rouhani, the victor in the Iranian Presidential elections of June 2013 was, as a member of Ali Khamenei's inner circle, at that time the Secretary of the Council.

According to Nisman, the Special Committee that decided on the attack in Argentina and allegedly also on the murder of Iranian oppositionists in Europe also included then President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani —deemed “moderate” by the West, Secret Services Minister, Ali Fallahian (in the 1990's an official guest at the German secret service HQ in Pullach and of the German Chancellery), Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati (still active in Khamenei's inner circle) and – Hassan Rouhani.

Moreover, above and beyond his role in the murder of 85 people in the Argentinian capital and numerous Iranian oppositionists in Europe, Rouhani is by no means the “man of compromise and reconciliation”<sup>19</sup> depicted in a number of media reports or the “bearded bringer of hope with a heart”, portrayed in the German daily newspaper *taz*.<sup>20</sup>

The election of Rouhani has not changed anything essential vis-à-vis the constitutional commitments of the Islamic Republic - in which the Supreme Leader has, in any case, the final say in all decisive matters - neither as regards the anti-Israeli policy nor as regards the effort to achieve a nuclear military capability. The only novelty is the employment of a new tactic for the pursuit of these goals: Rouhani favors a more restrained rhetoric than his predecessor.

After Rouhani's election, the commander of the paramilitary Basij, Brigadier-General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, once again proclaimed the approaching end of Israel<sup>21</sup> and the announcement by Pasdaran leader Mohammad Ali Jafari, that the Jewish state would face “imminent

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19. Frey, “Reform und Charakter.”

20. Nirumand, “Irans neuer Präsident.”

21. “Basij Commander.”

destruction” if the USA and France were to intervene militarily in Syria,<sup>22</sup> once again made the antisemitic logic of the Iranian regime crystal clear to everyone – and was, like previous such statements, shrugged off. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 Rouhani, like his predecessors, attended the annual military parade in which banners in front of the proudly displayed Shahab-3 missiles carried the message that Israel must “cease to exist”. In July 2014, again like his predecessors, he took part in Tehran in Al-Quds Day, on which, at Khomeini’s behest, demonstrations calling for the destruction of the Jewish state have been held throughout the world at the end of Ramadan since 1979. For Rouhani, as for every other representative of the Iranian regime, Israel is “an old wound that has been sitting on the body of the Islamic world”<sup>23</sup>, “a miserable country,”<sup>24</sup> and a “festering tumor.”<sup>25</sup>

Rouhani stands for a change of tactics, not of strategy. The goals remain the same, but the rhetoric has changed from that employed during Ahmadinejad’s presidency. Even were Rouhani prepared to adopt a more moderate approach to some issues, the dominant position of the Supreme Leader, the influence of figures such as Chief Justice Sadegh Larijani, and the power of the Revolutionary Guard — which increased massively under Ahmadinejad and exercises wide-ranging control over the nuclear and missile programs — would prevent him from getting his way.

#### PRAGMATISM AND “STRATEGIC VISION”

Time and again, the question arises as to what role the antisemitic ideology and hatred of Israel play in the Iranian regime’s political decision-making. The Islamic Republic’s foreign policy has from the outset been characterized by equal measures of pragmatism and destructive irrationality, and this has enabled Western observers to continually downplay the significance of the latter — the destructive fantasies towards Israel — by reference to the former. In fact, however, as Menashri puts it, “Iran’s attitude to Israel [has been] one of the rare examples of adherence to dogma.”<sup>26</sup>

On the one hand, the commitment to a “revolutionary foreign policy” is inscribed in the Islamic Republic’s Constitution. The Iranian Constitution, following the conception of the Iranian Islamists, is meant to apply beyond the borders of Iran. If it is to remain true to the letter of its own Constitution, the regime is obliged consistently to pursue an activist

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22. “IRGC Commander.”

23. IRIB News.

24. “Iran’s Rouhani Dismisses Israeli Threats.”

25. “Takfiris, Zionists.”

26. Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics*, 281.

foreign policy based exclusively on the dictates of revolutionary political Islam.

On the other hand, in order to achieve the best possible balance between ideology and pragmatism, the requirement to obey even the Supreme Leader has been explicitly lifted precisely as regards discussions about foreign policy issues. The results can be seen in the publications of Iranian think-tanks such as the *Institute for Middle East Strategic Studies*, in which, within the framework of the Islamic Republic's ideology, sharply contrasting positions on international political questions are sometimes expressed.<sup>27</sup>

Representatives of the Realist school of International Relations, refer to the concept of *Realpolitik*, and conclude from this that it should be possible to pragmatically integrate the Iranian regime into an international or at least regional security architecture. Such conclusions overlook the fact that the Ayatollahs have seized every opportunity to expand their sphere of influence, and they also ignore the fact that, as regards the threat to Israel, pragmatism can have no meaning for Tehran other than waiting for the right moment to go on the offensive.

When Khomeini took power in 1979 in Iran, he took a purist view of foreign policy, the thrust of which was documented by one of his first prominent visitors, Yasser Arafat, who, in a festive ceremony, was given the keys to the former Israeli Embassy in Tehran after many future Pasdaran officers had received their initial military training in PLO camps in southern Lebanon. If Khomeini had had his wish, his credo that his Islamic revolution was neither "western nor eastern", e.g. neither capitalist nor socialist but some kind of an Islamic "third way", would have been applied to the foreign policy of the newly established Islamic Republic. However, even a fanatic like Khomeini had to yield to the facts of the situation facing the regime in the first decade of its existence. While he still lived, the regime established good economic ties with several West European states, notably West Germany<sup>28</sup> and Austria,<sup>29</sup> and close relations with one of the most important "eastern" countries, the People's Republic of China. A decisive role in developing the pragmatic response to the existential threats to the regime – which involved no change in the hostility to Israel and the USA - was played by two politicians who still today play a crucial part in determining Iran's destiny: the then President Khamenei and his successor Rafsanjani.<sup>30</sup>

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27. See *Institute*, <http://en.cmess.ir/Default.aspx?tabid=66>.

28. See Küntzel, *Germany and Iran*.

29. See Grigat, "In die Bresche springen," 136-142.

30. See Garver, *China and Iran*, 59.

In the current situation, many observers are once again pondering the question of how far political pragmatism might affect the revolutionary goal and whether *maslahat* – expediency over and above any ideological principles or goals – a principle that the Iranian Islamists have always recognized, will ever entail a renunciation of eliminatory anti-Zionism as part of the basic core of the regime’s ideology.

Even a mainstream German-Austrian Iran expert such as Walter Posch accepts that there is no chance of this. When it comes to Israel self-interest, *maslahat* only means that the Islamic republic is currently not looking for an all-out war with the Jewish state but prefers to support its proxies, like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Islamic Jihad in Gaza and the West-Bank, with weapons and billions of Dollars. *Maslahat* means “not defeating ideology, but at most restricting its scope.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Posch clearly explains what the core of this ideology is: a “strategic vision” based on the “paradigm of the illegitimacy of the state of Israel.”<sup>32</sup> In another article Posch points out that the recent noises about Iran having the same right as other countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy cannot hide the original aim of the nuclear program. In the early 1990s the argument was quite openly advanced that, “nuclear weapons are necessary in order to wipe Israel off the map. Such arguments were even put forward by political figures now advocating a moderate approach.”<sup>33</sup>

However, this understanding has not prevented Posch from proposing that the West work with the very same figures who have presented the “end of Israel” as a strategic goal. In particular, he advocates the establishment of relations with that very “Iranian think-tank scene” in which such strategic visions of destruction are expressed in the sober language of international relations analysis. So, the acceptance by the West of the “moderate, constructive foreign policy”<sup>34</sup> that Posch thinks the Iranian regime could adopt would also mean the acceptance of the “strategic vision” of the destruction of Israel and “paradigm of the illegitimacy of the Jewish state” as legitimate positions in international politics.

#### RESTABILIZATION OF THE REGIME - REFORMED HOLOCAUST DENIAL

Internally, the Islamic Republic is marked by the existence of parallel state and “revolutionary” institutions, organized in the form of competing,

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31. Posch, “Dritte Welt,” 18. For further discussion of the doctrine of *maslahat*, that includes the possibility for the Supreme Leader to overrule Islamic law when such action is considered necessary for the survival of the Islamic Republic, see Eisenstadt and Khalaji, “Nuclear Fatwa.”

32. Posch, “Dritte Welt,” 26.

33. Posch, “Zwischen Ideologie,” 754.

34. Posch, “Mäßigung statt Neuanfang,” 1.

gang-like factions. However, the antisemitic and conspiracy-theorizing worldview and the threats of destruction against Israel, shared by all factions of the regime, play a decisive and indeed necessary role in integrating the hostile gangs and the factional fight is not only over who is to get the biggest share of the pie, but also over who can best advance the program of eliminatory anti-Zionism.

In the original and for a long time operational conception of the Islamic Republic, the Supreme Leader ruled over the factions and mediated between them. The “Prince of the Believers” — as one of the many titles held by the Leader describes him — embodies the awareness that, as Khomeini once put it, the regime needs two wings in order to achieve its goals and would be in danger of falling if one of them were simply to be cut off.

This conception was called into question by Khamenei’s clear and early support for Ahmadinejad during the 2009 electoral farce. Since Rouhani’s election, it has once again become operational. One expression of this restoration has been the composition of Rouhani’s government. In choosing his ministers, Rouhani took into account the wishes of almost all the factions to create a kind of grand coalition in order to broaden the base of the regime and so strengthen it for the prospective annihilation effort. Admittedly, supporters of Ahmadinejad and his longstanding spiritual mentor and political promoter Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, who has declared that “the Jews are the most corrupt in the world, . . . the most seditious group among all human beings and they will not leave Muslims alone until they destroy Islam”<sup>35</sup>, are not represented in Rouhani’s cabinet. However, the fact that Khamenei has appointed Ahmadinejad a member of the influential Expediency Council shows that even this faction, which stands for an especially radical interpretation of the Mahdi doctrine, will continue to play a role.

The struggle for official positions and influence between the spiritual, political, and military leaderships, the Revolutionary Guards, Secret Services and economic elites, and the Larijani brothers, the Khamenei circle and the Rafsanjani clan has calmed down a bit under Rouhani. The various factions must now pay somewhat more heed to the overall interests of the regime. However, the interest groups have not disappeared and further such conflicts are inevitable, particularly in relation to efforts to contain the power of the Revolutionary Guards.

Immediately after the election of Rouhani, the Guards, the very name of whose “Quds Unit” expresses the goal of all their efforts, made it clear that they would not let their efforts be impeded. A Pasdaran general, Massoud Jazayeri, not only informed the USA and the “Zionist forces in

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35. Quoted by Litvak, “Anti-Semitism in Iran.”

the region” that they were within the action radius of the Iranian regime, but also that “the major policies of the Islamic Republic would not be affected by nuclear talks or negotiations about other issues”.<sup>36</sup>

Nonetheless, Khamenei himself is now clearly determined to rein in the Pasdaran’s power somewhat, following speculation during Ahmadinejad’s term of office about whether the Guards, who had been extending their control over ever widening spheres of economic and political life, really needed the clergy any more and whether the theocracy might turn into an open military dictatorship. As a result, there are only three Pasdaran ministers in Rouhani’s government whereas over half of the members of Ahmadinejad’s first cabinet were recruited from the Revolutionary Guards or Basiji. However, this shift has nothing to do with some kind of wind of moderation. It represents merely a shift between power centers, in this case towards the traditional security apparatus, which is in competition with the Pasdaran, and in particular in favor of the VEVAK security service, which is more strongly represented in Rouhani’s government than in any since 1979.<sup>37</sup>

The clear, if surprise, winner of the battles over the composition of Rouhani’s government is Rafsanjani. Despite unexpectedly being excluded from running in the recent presidential election by Khamenei – among other things as a punishment for his maneuverings during the protests following the 2009 election – the composition of Rouhani’s cabinet, which includes numerous Rafsanjani supporters, is a kind of comeback for the “Richelieu of Iranian politics”.

Against all the evidence, Rafsanjani, identified in the 1997 Mykonos judgment in Germany as one of the prime movers behind Iranian state terrorism in Europe<sup>38</sup>, was dubbed a “moderate” during his Presidency by both the Western media and governments in just the same way as Rouhani, who in a sense stepped into Rafsanjani’s shoes after the latter’s exclusion, is being now. Rafsanjani’s statement that only a single nuclear bomb would be needed to destroy Israel while the Islamic world would only be harmed by the anticipated counter-strikes is notorious.<sup>39</sup> Less well known is his Holocaust denial.

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36. *Tehran Times*, <http://www.tehrantimes.com/component/content/article/110129>, 19.8.2013.

37. See Alfoneh, “President Rohani’s Cabinet.”

38. In 1992 Sadegh Sharafkandi, chairman of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan, and three of his associates were murdered by agents of the Iranian regime in the restaurant Mykonos in Berlin.

39. See Hashemi-Rafsanjani, “Quds Day Speech.”

According to the Anti-Defamation League, he stated on Iranian radio that his personal researches had led him to the conclusion that Hitler had murdered only 20,000 Jews.<sup>40</sup>

His successor, Mohammed Khatami, a vehement supporter of the death penalty for homosexuals<sup>41</sup> is still regarded as a shining example of a “reformist Islamist” maintained the tradition when he positioned himself as one of the most passionate defenders of the French Holocaust denier Roger Garaudy.<sup>42</sup> The current President wants to tone things down in this respect and has developed a kind of “moderate Holocaust denial”: when asked in an interview whether he believed the Shoah was a “myth”, Rouhani reaffirmed his position as a politician and unable to comment on the “dimensions of historic events.”<sup>43</sup>

Rafsanjani, who, sidelined during Ahmadinejad’s Presidency, will now once again play a role in Iranian politics, has for the past 35 years been promoting what even before the 1979 revolution he declared to be the sacred duty of all Muslims in his book *Israel’il va Qods-e Aziz*<sup>44</sup>: the struggle against Israel, for which he was all too keen to gain allies in Germany. Not only Ahmadinejad, but also his perennial opponent Rafsanjani saw German reunification, which took place at the same time as the consolidation of the rule of the Mullahs in Iran following the end of the war with Iraq, as the beginning of a new era. According to him, not only Germany, but also Iran had suffered decades of Allied domination. The breaking of the “strategic alliance between the two countries during the Second World War” had enabled the Allies to divide Germany into West and East, wrote the pistachio magnate in a preface to a study by the former Iranian Ambassador to Germany.<sup>45</sup> In Rafsanjani’s view the most important development at the end of the Cold War was the restoration of a sovereign Germany independent of the victors in the Second World War, which had enabled the two countries to restore their “historical ties”. This restoration would go further, with a clear end in view: in Posch’s summary, Rafsanjani advocates the “strategic goal of Iran, through its nuclear activities, achieving nuclear parity with Israel, as a result of which the Muslim world, based on its demographic advantage and strategic depth, would finally gain the upper hand<sup>46</sup> The recent successes of Rouhani’s charm offensive in the USA and Europe, which must surely have exceeded even the high hopes of

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40. See Anti-Defamation League, *Holocaust Denial*, 8.

41. See “Iran’s Ex President Responds.”

42. See Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics*, 279.

43. Karami, “Rohani’s Holocaust Comments.”

44. See Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics*, 290.

45. Mousavian, *Iran-Europe Relations*, VII-VIII.

46. Posch, “Dritte Welt,” 24.



Khamenei and his tacticians, bring the Iranian regime a big step closer to the achievement of this “strategic goal”.<sup>47</sup>

Under Rouhani, this goal is now being pursued using somewhat more moderate rhetoric. However, the position of the key figure in the regime on the Holocaust is crystal clear: long before Ahmadinejad’s Holocaust denial caught the world’s attention, Ali Khamenei had described the existence of gas chambers in the Second World War as “fairy tales”.<sup>48</sup> On Khamenei’s official English language webpage one could for years and can to this day read about “the myth of the massacre of Jews known as the holocaust”.<sup>49</sup> At the start of 2014, Khamenei once again questioned the historical reality of the Shoah.<sup>50</sup>

The 2006 Holocaust denial conference in Tehran was officially opened by Manouchehr Mottaki, the pre-predecessor of Rouhani’s current Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. Despite this, Mottaki shortly afterwards got a friendly reception from his German and Austrian counterparts. Zarif strives for “moderation” in this area too. Nevertheless, during his initial charm offensive in the USA he could not bring himself simply to reply “yes” to the question of whether he believed the Nazis had murdered six million Jews, but resorted repeatedly to the rhetoric of “moderate” Holocaust relativization that talks about the Nazis’ “major atrocities” to which many Jews also fell victim.<sup>51</sup> The essence of this prattle was clearly exposed when in September 2013 Zarif announced that “we condemn the massacre committed by the Nazis against the Jews and we condemn the massacre committed by the Zionists against the Palestinians.”<sup>52</sup> Absurdly, this was interpreted throughout the world as a clear break with Ahmadinejad’s ideas and a generous recognition of Jewish suffering, although the statement boils down to nothing more than the antisemitic smear that the Israelis are the new Nazis.

The fact that this “change”, from the pro-active courting of Western Holocaust deniers to the equation of the Shoah – reduced to a “massacre” – with the state of its survivors and their descendants, was greeted in the West as an “important signal”, “major progress”, a “hopeful sign”, etc., showed how easy it was going to be for the new-style Iranian regime to dazzle Western public opinion while work on decisive components of the nuclear and missile programs proceeded almost uninterrupted. The same goes for the eager reception of the report, swiftly categorically denied by

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47. See Larise and Schmidinger, *Zwischen Gottesstaat und Demokratie*, 243.

48. “Leader Recives Air Force Servicemen.”

49. “Khamenei stellt erneut Holocaust in Frage.”

50. “Columbia University Student Takes on Iranian Ambassador.”

51. “Irans Außenminister verurteilt ‘Massaker an Juden.’”

52. See “Iran Denies Media Reports.”

*Fars News*, that Rouhani had congratulated the world's Jews on Rosh Hashana in 2013. It is not in fact of much importance whether the greeting did or did not in fact come from Rouhani, since, despite the various openly anti-Jewish statements by senior regime figures, it was in no way out of line with the Islamic Republic's ideology to send a few friendly words to the Jews and such things happened from time to time even under President Ahmadinejad. The insistence on the difference between religious Jews who are granted the right to live as a discriminated minority in the *Umma* so long as they make clear their hostility to Israel, on the one hand and, on the other, Zionists, who are talked about in exactly the same terms employed to describe the Jews in traditional antisemitic discourse, is part of the regime's basic ideological equipment – and creates points of contact with sections of the anti-Zionist left in Europe and the USA. The extent of the susceptibility of parts of this milieu for the friendly face of the Iranian terrorist regime became evident when 70% of respondents in a *Guardian* online poll agreed that Rouhani deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for 2013.<sup>53</sup>

#### NEGOTIATING TOWARDS THE BOMB AND REGIME IMMUNITY

The systematic whitewashing of Rouhani is the precondition for the nuclear talks with the Iranian regime that have been ongoing since 2013 and resulted in 2015, not in a halt to the Iranian nuclear program, but in its institutionalization, since its infrastructure would remain more or less intact. Immediately after Rouhani's election, both Brussels and Washington indicated a readiness to reach wide-ranging compromises with Khamenei, who, a few days before the Geneva talks opened in October 2013, called again for the "liberation of Palestine" and identified the "criminal Zionist network" as, alongside the USA, the "main enemy"<sup>54</sup> and even when the talks were under way assailed Israel as an "illegitimate and bastard" regime<sup>55</sup> — none of which was even mentioned, let alone criticized, by any of the participating governments.

Here we are already up against one of the basic problems of such negotiations: almost no one is talking any more about the regime's antisemitic character, a situation about whose implications the historian Jeffrey Herf has emphatically warned.<sup>56</sup> The negotiations and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), announced in July 2015 in Vienna, not only lend the Ayatollahs a legitimacy that they lost a long time

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53. See "Readers' Nobel Peace Prize Winners."

54. "Supreme Leader's Hajj Message."

55. "Khamenei: Zionist Regime Is an Illegitimate and Bastard Regime."

56. See Herf, "Taking Iran's Anti-Semitism Seriously."

ago in the eyes of significant layers of the Iranian population, but also immunize them against criticism.

Just one day after the Geneva agreement, in a meeting with the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, Nabih Berri, Rouhani inveighed against the “artificial regime of Israel”, whose existence was due to colonialism and had led to a “redoubling of the problems” in the Middle East. “Over the past 65 years, the tracks of the Zionists have been traceable in every trouble and problem in the region.”<sup>57</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Speaker of the Iranian pseudo-Parliament, Ali Larijani, declared Israel to be the “modern face of fascist racism.”<sup>58</sup> Only days before the announcement of the JCPOA Rafsanjani declared, according to the *Islamic Republic News Agency*, that Israel “will be wiped off the map.”<sup>59</sup>

Once the Iranian regime had learned that it could strengthen its position vis-à-vis the West and in the region with little likelihood of criticism from the EU or USA, the momentary cautiousness regarding Holocaust denial vanished. Between 29 September and 1 October 2014, the Ayatollahs once again gave a platform to the Conspiracy Theorists and Antisemites International at the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Horizon Conference in Tehran. Billed as an international meeting of “independent thinkers and filmmakers,”<sup>60</sup> alongside the old school Holocaust deniers, a large proportion of the “independently thinking” speakers were 9/11 Truthers.

Among the participants were the longstanding head of *Radio Islam*, the Swedish-Moroccan Ahmed Rami, who has been found guilty of hate speech, and the Italian history professor, Claudio Moffa, openly presented on the Conference website like this: “He achieved international fame through revisionist statements, in particular by the public denial of the Holocaust”<sup>61</sup> In 2006, former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke had been a guest in Tehran. Now the regime could celebrate the appearance of Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink and a key activist in the American “peace” and BDS movement. From France came former Front National member, Olivier Lemoine, who has lately been active in smaller far-right organizations. Before the conference, according to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the participation of the antisemitic comedian and activist Dieudonné M’bala M’bala was announced. However, on the website, only

57. “Die Diplomatie der Regierung.”

58. “Iranian Parliament Speaker.”

59. “Rafsanjani.”

60. *New Horizon*,  
[http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=159&Itemid=139](http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=159&Itemid=139).

61. *New Horizon*,  
[http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=155:prof-claudio-moffa&catid=34&Itemid=31](http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=155:prof-claudio-moffa&catid=34&Itemid=31).

the names of cartoonist Joe le Corbeau, presented as “closely related” to Dieudonné<sup>62</sup>, and Holocaust denier Maria Poumier, who took part in the film *L’antisémite* produced by Dieudonné with the support of the Iranian Institute of Cinema, were to be found.

One of the topics raised at the conference was the supposed Zionist subjection of Germany. Manuel Ochsenreiter, active over the past two decades as a writer, editor and interviewer for a variety of German far-right publications, was there to explain about the “Israeli lobby in Germany”. Ochsenreiter has for many years been identified as an intermediary between the German-language far-right scene and the Iranian regime and in particular the Lebanese Hezbollah.

Senior government officials attended the conference. Saeed Jalili, an unsuccessful candidate in the 2013 Presidential election as well as a former chief negotiator for the nuclear program and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, took part as did Alaeddin Borojerdi, the current President of the Iranian pseudo-Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee and Ali Asghar Soltanieh, the regime’s longstanding representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna.

The difference from the 2006 Holocaust denial conference is striking. While the earlier event drew condemnation from almost the entire world and attracted a great deal of media attention, the only noteworthy protest in the age of Rouhani came from ADL Director, Abraham Foxman. In October 2013, Rouhani had taken care to prevent such a conference happening shortly after his assumption of office. Back then it would have hindered the charm offensive against the West. Now, however, the Iranian regime has clearly ceased to feel the need for such caution.

#### CONCLUSION

As regards the conspiracy-theorizing and projective worldview, Holocaust denial and relativization, and the Iranian regime’s threats to destroy Israel, nothing substantial has changed under Rouhani, nor have things improved in other relevant areas. The regime still spends billions to support and arm the sworn enemies of Israel like Hezbollah, and it will be able to spend much more money for the fight against Israel if the sanctions are lifted according to the JPCOA. The key figure in the regime, Ali Khamenei, has repeatedly threatened Israel’s destruction e.g., on 9 November 2014, the anniversary of “Kristallnacht”,<sup>63</sup> and most recently in

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62. *New Horizon*,

[http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=137:joe-le-corbeau&catid=34&Itemid=31](http://newhorizon.ir/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=137:joe-le-corbeau&catid=34&Itemid=31).

63. “Why Should & How Can #Israel Be Eliminated?”

his book *Palestine*, published in 2015. This book again clearly highlights the centrality of the desire for the destruction of Israel for the Iranian regime. The annihilation of the Jewish state, which Khamenei again calls “a cancerous tumor”<sup>64</sup>, is not mere rhetoric from the early times of the revolution, but a non-negotiable doctrine. There are still voices in the West like British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond who see in Iran a “more nuanced approach” to Israel after the JPCOA.<sup>65</sup> He got his answer directly from Hussein Sheikholeslam, foreign affairs adviser to Ali Larijani, who declared: “Our positions against the usurper Zionist regime have not changed at all. Israel should be annihilated and this is our ultimate slogan.”<sup>66</sup> Also Seyed Mahmoud Nabavi, a representative of Ali Khamenei, and Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Marziyeh Afkham openly contradicted Hammond’s assertion.<sup>67</sup>

In other relevant areas the situation in Iran has not only not improved under Rouhani but to the contrary further deteriorated compared to Ahmadinejad’s presidency: The number of executions has dramatically increased since Rouhani’s inauguration.<sup>68</sup> The death penalty for homosexuality continues to be implemented. Oppositionists and religious minorities such as the Baha’i are being persecuted just as mercilessly as in previous years. The alliance with the Lebanese terrorist militia, Hezbollah, remains intact, that with the radical Islamists of Hamas has been restored<sup>69</sup> and the rulers in Tehran can now proudly announce that they dominate the politics of four Arab capitals: Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad and Sanaa.

For Khamenei’s nuclear drive, Hassan Rouhani is the right man in the right place at the right time. For the West he is a comforting excuse for not taking any serious action against the Iranian regime. In Israel, the response to Rouhani’s election and the course of the nuclear negotiations with the JCPOA as its result has stimulated discussion about how the Jewish state should now prepare itself to act independently, if necessary, to stop Iran getting nuclear weapons. The JCPOA was not only strongly criticized by the current Netanyahu government, but by all important political mainstream parties in Israel, e.g. by Yair Lapid from the liberal Yesh Atid party and by Eitan Cabel and Jitzhak Herzog of the center left Zionist Union. It is widely discussed in Israel what would be the best way of

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64. “Palästina aus der Sicht Ajatollah Khomeinis.”

65. “Philip Hammond Defends Thaw.”

66. “Parliament Adviso.”

67. “Leaders Representative.”

68. United Nations General Assembly, “Situation of Human Rights.” According to Amnesty International Iran executed at least 743 people in 2014 and nearly 700 in the first half of 2015. “Iran Executions.”

69. See Al-Mughrabi, “Hamas’ Deputy Chief.”

dealing with the Iranian threat now and in the future, but the warnings against any appeasement towards the Iranian regime are almost unanimous. Also, former high-ranking security officials who criticized Netanyahu for the way he handled the Iran issue do not preclude a military option for the future. Notwithstanding the controversial discussion in Israel about how to react to the Iranian threat, almost all mainstream politicians in Israel act on the assumption that nuclear weapons would not only help the Ayatollahs to stay in power but would be an existential threat to Israel even if Teheran might not have the intention to immediately use them against the Jewish state.<sup>70</sup>

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70. See Klein-Halevi and Oren, "Israel's Worst Nightmare." For global consequences of a nuclear armed Iran see Kroenig, *A Time to Attack*.

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— *Synagogue, Tehran*

# Islamic Jihadism and the Legacy of Nazi Antisemitism

David Patterson\*

This article argues that the central tenets of National Socialist antisemitism are reflected in antisemitism that defines Jihadist ideology. Like Nazis, Jihadists ideologues embrace a totalitarian worldview dividing humanity into good and evil, with the Jew as the primary, unredeemable evil. Hasan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, and Haj Amin al-Husseini are examined. Drawing largely on *Mein Kampf* the article outlines the Jihadist strategy of using propaganda in order to incite Jew hatred and to promote fanaticism demonstrating that the Jihadist hatred of the “Zionist entity” has nothing to do with the occupation; rather, it is a religious hatred of evil itself, which takes “Zion” to be a base of operations for the Jewish domination of the world: the Jews must be destroyed for the sake of all humanity.

The last words to come from the hand of Adolf Hitler as he prepared for his suicide were a plea to humanity to continue to “resist mercilessly the poisoner of all nations, international Jewry.”<sup>1</sup> Numerous groups have heeded the Führer’s dying words, from the North America’s Aryan Nations to the British Nationalist Front, from Russia’s Pamyat Nazi Party to the International Stormfront; Wikipedia, in fact, lists eighty-seven such organizations.<sup>2</sup> The most systematic, most pervasive, most violent response to the call of the Führer, however, has come from the Islamic Jihadists. No other groups bent on the extermination of the Jews are so heavily armed or so generously funded, often receiving support from Islamic governments. Where and how did this bond between Nazi antisemitism and Islamic Jihadism arise? And what does it tell us about the extent to which Jihadist antisemitism represents a further development of Nazi antisemitism?

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1. Quoted in David Welch, *Hitler* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 97.  
2. *List of Neo-Nazi Organizations*, Wikipedia.org, accessed September 6, 2015, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_neo-Nazi\\_organizations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_neo-Nazi_organizations).

## EARLY INFLUENCES AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPAGANDA

From the time he founded the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, Hasan al-Banna, author of “On Jihad,”<sup>3</sup> professed his admiration of Adolf Hitler.<sup>4</sup> During the 1930’s he sent delegations to the Nuremberg rallies,<sup>5</sup> and in October 1938 the Brotherhood organized the Parliamentary Conference for Arab and Muslim Countries in Cairo, where they distributed Arabic translations of *Mein Kampf* and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Al-Banna indicated that he had learned a great deal from the Führer about the importance and methods of propaganda.<sup>6</sup> Both for the Nazis and for the Islamic Jihadists, the aim of propaganda was neither to inform nor to persuade but, in the words of Hitler, to “reimplant the spirit of proud self-reliance, manly defiance, and wrathful hatred.”<sup>7</sup> In keeping with the aim of implanting wrathful hatred, Hitler understood deception to be an important part of any propaganda campaign, insisting that “something of the most insolent lie will always remain and stick.”<sup>8</sup> The Nazis were masters of “the most insolent lie,” accusing the Jews of everything from the age-old Blood Libel to secretly plotting to take over the world. And the Jihadists repeat the Nazi lies.

Learning well his lessons from the Nazis, al-Banna “gave careful thought to all the details of a far-flung propaganda campaign,”<sup>9</sup> and in 1935 he organized the Muslim Brotherhood’s first propaganda committee.<sup>10</sup> Slogans extolling the Nazis were part of the propaganda that the Brotherhood spread during the Palestinian Arab Revolt of 1936 – 1939, an uprising not only incited by the Mufti of Jerusalem and future Nazi activist Haj Amin al-Husseini,<sup>11</sup> but also supported by arms and money from the

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3. See Hasan al-Banna, *Five Tracts of Hasan al-Banna: A Selection from the Majmuat Rasail al-Imam al-Shahid Hasan al-Banna*, trans. Charles Wendell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 133-61.

4. See, for example, *ibid.*, 97.

5. Matthias Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the Roots of 9/11*, trans. Colin Meade (New York: Telos Press, 2007), 30.

6. *Ibid.*, 45-46.

7. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 632.

8. *Ibid.*, 232.

9. Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964), 152.

10. Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 55.

11. Ziad Abu-Amr, *Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 1.

Nazis.<sup>12</sup> The Brotherhood's insolent lies about the Jews found a receptive audience among the Arab Muslims, many of whom applauded the Nazi agenda. During those years, for example, there was a musical refrain that floated about the Middle East: "Bala Misou, bala Mister, bissama Allah, oria alard Hitler (No more monsieur, No more Mister, in heaven Allah, on earth Hitler)."<sup>13</sup> The Arab Revolt as promoted by Haj Amin al-Husseini, notes Matthias Kuntzel,

took place against the background of the swastika: Arab leaflets and signs on walls were prominently marked with this Nazi symbol; youth organizations. . .paraded as 'Nazi-scouts,' and Arab children greeted each other with the Nazi salute.<sup>14</sup>

#### A JIHADIST TIE TO THE NAZIS: HAJ AMIN AL-HUSSEINI

In March 1933 al-Husseini had his first meeting with Nazi General Consul Heinrich Wolff in Jerusalem. While cultivating his contacts with the Germans, he established connections with the Muslim Brotherhood, when he met with Abdul Rahman al-Banna, brother of Hasan al-Banna, who went to Jerusalem to set up an alliance with the Mufti in 1935. On 2 October 1937 al-Husseini met with Adolf Eichmann and Herbert Hagen; Eichmann "reported that 'Nazi flags fly in Palestine, and they adorn their houses with Swastikas and portraits of Hitler.'"<sup>15</sup> Days later, wanted for inciting insurrection against the British Mandate, the Mufti fled to Lebanon. Two years later he set up his base of operations in Baghdad and was on the payroll of the Nazis until the end of the war. Once the war was underway, he joined with Rashid Ali al-Gaylani to lead a Nazi-backed takeover of the Iraqi government on 1 April 1941. By 31 May the British had suppressed the coup, but not before al-Husseini issued a fatwa announcing a jihad against Britain and the Jews.<sup>16</sup> On 28 November 1941 the Mufti met with Adolf Hitler, who assured him that the Nazis and the Arabs were engaged in the same struggle to exterminate the Jews.<sup>17</sup> By January 1942 al-Husseini was recruiting Muslims to serve in SS killing

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12. Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 21.

13. Raoul Aglion, *The Fighting French* (New York: Holt, 1943), 217.

14. Matthias Kuntzel, "National Socialism and Anti-Semitism in the Arab World," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17 (Spring 2005), Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-kuntzel-s05.htm>.

15. Chuck Morse, *The Nazi Connection to Islamic Terrorism* (New York: iUniverse, 2003), 46.

16. Joseph B. Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Fuehrer: The Rise and Fall of Haj Amin el-Husseini* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1965), 110.

17. *Ibid.*, 306.

units, the most infamous of which was the Handschar Division of 21,065 men.<sup>18</sup>

Although Gilbert Achcar claims that “the number of books” about al-Husseini “is altogether disproportionate to his historical importance,”<sup>19</sup> he nevertheless notes the Mufti’s ideological affinity with the Nazis as evidenced in a speech that the Mufti delivered on 2 November 1943. There al-Husseini declared that the Jews’ inherent traits “make them incapable of keeping faith with anyone or of mixing with any other nation: they live, rather, as parasites among peoples, suck their blood, steal their property, pervert their morals. False Germany is also struggling against the common foe who oppressed Arabs and Muhammadans in their different countries. It has clearly recognized the Jews for what they are and resolved to find a definitive solution for the Jewish danger that will eliminate the scourge that the Jews represent in the world.”<sup>20</sup> On 21 January 1944 al-Husseini began his radio broadcasts for that year by declaring, “National Socialist Germany is fighting world Jewry. The Koran says, ‘You will find that the Jews are the worst enemies of the Moslems.’ There are also considerable similarities between Islamic principles and those of National Socialism.”<sup>21</sup> Klaus Gensicke lists seven principles that the Mufti identified as ideological affinities between the Nazis and the Jihadists: (1) the oneness of leadership embodied in the Führerprinzip, (2) the rule of power and the insistence upon obedience, (3) the primacy of battle and waging war, (4) the unification of the Volk or the umma, (5) the importance of family and the proper indoctrination of children, (6) hatred of the Jews, and (7) the virtues of hard work and creativity.<sup>22</sup>

On 1 March 1944, in one of his Nazi propaganda broadcasts to the Arab world, al-Husseini enjoined Muslims to “kill the Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God.”<sup>23</sup> After the war ended, now a wanted Nazi war criminal, he turned up in Egypt on 20 June 1946, where he received a hero’s welcome. Ten days later the Muslim Brotherhood publicly extolled al-Husseini, declaring, “The Arab hero and symbol of Al Jihad and patience and struggle is here in Egypt.”<sup>24</sup> Soon he had his first official

18. David G. Dalin and John F. Rothman, *Icon of Evil: Hitler’s Mufti and the Rise of Radical Islam* (New York: Random House, 2008), 55.

19. Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 131.

20. *Ibid.*, 157.

21. Quoted in Morse, *The Nazi Connection to Islamic Terrorism*, 82; see also Schechtman, *The Mufti and the Fuehrer*, 139.

22. Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem, Amin el-Husseini, und die Nationalsozialisten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 207.

23. Quoted in Morse, *The Nazi Connection to Islamic Terrorism*, 62.

24. Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World*, 242.



meeting with al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb, the man who would become the most influential of the Jihadist ideologues; now allied with Hitler's Grossmufti, the Brotherhood would continue "the same struggle that Hitler and Germany—and Husseini himself—had been waging during the war."<sup>25</sup>

#### SYSTEMATIZING JIHADIST IDEOLOGY: SAYYID QUTB

The writings of Sayyid Qutb reflect both parallels and likely influences of Nazi thinking. Central to both Nazi and Jihadist Jew hatred is the principle that the Jew is an invisible enemy of humanity, an "invisible wirepuller,"<sup>26</sup> Hitler puts it, as invisible—as metaphysical—as Satan. Here we have two essential ties between the antisemitism of the Nazis and the antisemitism of Islamic Jihadists such as Qutb: (1) the promulgation of the lie that the Jews are secretly, invisibly plotting to take over the world through their invisible control over the banks, media, and power centers, and (2) the Jews embody the invisible, insidious essence of evil itself. The point is not that the Jews' actions are evil but that they are themselves the source of all evil actions. Qutb even accused Jews of secretly installing Zionists operatives in the highest echelons of Muslim regimes that he did not deem Muslim enough.<sup>27</sup> Reiterating numerous declarations from Hitler, Qutb averred that the aim of international world Jewry is to "eliminate all limitations, especially the limitations imposed by faith and religion, so that the Jews may penetrate into the body politic of the whole world and then may be free to perpetuate their evil designs."<sup>28</sup> The final solution to such a threat? The Islamic domination of the world—hence the absolute need for worldwide jihad.

The second point that the Jihadists such as Qutb draw from the Nazis—namely that that the Jew not only commits evil but embodies the essence of evil and is therefore beyond remission—is equally crucial to an understanding of Islamic Jihadism and the legacy of Nazi antisemitism. Here one must consider the category of race in Nazi thinking. More than a biological or anthropological category, the notion of "race" in Nazi ideology is rooted not just in color or physiognomy, but in a concept of essence: it is a metaphysical category that fuses body and soul, biology and being, into one. The concept has a name: it is *Rassenseele* or "race-soul." Explaining the meaning of *Rassenseele*, Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg

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25. Ibid., 244.

26. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 493.

27. Quoted in Ronald L. Nettle, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987), 50.

28. Sayyid Qutb, *Maalim fi al-Tariq [Milestones]* (Damascus: Dar Al-Ilm, 2006), 111.

writes, “Soul means race viewed from within.”<sup>29</sup> If race may be viewed from within, then it is not reducible to any outward manifestation such as skin tones or hair texture; rather it is conceptual. This concept, says Rosenberg, “departs from the single but completely decisive avowal. . . that blood and character, race and soul are merely different designations for the same entity.”<sup>30</sup> If character and soul are in the blood, then so is a way of thinking; the German Geist is “poisoned by Judaism,” says Rosenberg, and not just by Jewish blood, as the –ism is in the blood.<sup>31</sup> Hence the Jewish threat to humanity “would not be altered,” Rosenberg explains, “if the Jew denied the Talmud, because the national character, which remains the same, would continue to represent an equally inflexible, dogmatic viewpoint.”<sup>32</sup>

Cultivating their alliance with the Arabs, the Nazis were careful to insist that their antisemitism was specifically Jew hatred, and did not include Arabs. In November 1942, for example, the *New York Times* reported that a Berlin foreign ministry spokesman took “great pains” to assure the Arabs, “We have never said the Arabs were an inferior race. On the contrary, we have always pointed out the glorious historic past of the Arab people.”<sup>33</sup> What made the Arabs’ past glorious, in the eyes of Nazi thinkers such as Professor Dr. Sturmbannführer Johannes von Leers, was the Jew hatred that manifested itself in the Arabs’ present, as we see from his essay “Judaism and Islam as Opposites,” in which he cites al-Husseini with great admiration.<sup>34</sup> There he underscores the fact that “the Quran is full of warnings about the Jews, who are bluntly called ‘Satans’ [see 4:55, 4:60, 58:14-19, and 98:6]” and affirms that the present age owes “a great debt” to the Muslims for battling and exposing the Jews for what they are.<sup>35</sup>

Here both a distinction and a parallel between the Nazis and the Jihadists must be noted. While the Nazis were indeed racists, their

29. Alfred Rosenberg, *Race and Race History and Other Essays*, ed. Robert Pais (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 34.

30. Quoted in Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes against the Jewish People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 26; emphasis in original.

31. Rosenberg, *Race and Race History and Other Essays*, 131-32.

32. *Ibid.*, 183.

33. “Nazis Reassure Arabs—Antisemitism Confined to Jews, Spokesman Explains,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1942; quoted in Andrew G. Bostom, “Islamic Antisemitism—Jew Hatred in Islam,” in *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History*, ed. Andrew G. Bostom (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008), 31.

34. Johann von Leers, “Judaism and Islam as Opposites,” trans. Steven Rendall, in *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism*, ed. Andrew G. Bostom (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2008), 621.

35. *Ibid.*, 620.

ideological stance toward the Jews was not reducible to a racist position. Falling outside the array of human races, the Jews were the source of contamination and corruption of all races; they do not constitute a race any more than Satan may be said to belong to a race. Hence, Emil Fackenheim argues, the Nazis were not antisemites because they were racists; rather, they were racists because they were antisemites.<sup>36</sup> As for the Jihadists, Qutb insists that Islam rejects all distinctions based on race or class, asserting that “only Islam has the distinction of basing the fundamental binding relationship in its society on belief” alone.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, he blames the Jews and Judaism for bringing “racial arrogance” into the world.<sup>38</sup> What the Jihadists inherit from the Nazis, then, is not race theory but an essentialist antisemitism, which leads to an exterminationist antisemitism.

Developing the Nazi theme that the Jews embody the essence of evil, Qutb maintained that “Jews as Jews were by nature determined to fight Allah’s Truth and sow corruption and confusion,”<sup>39</sup> that the Jews’ “passion to control others” was a “driving force in their national character,”<sup>40</sup> and that “the deeper cause of the Jewish hatred of Islam was the malevolent Jewish nature.”<sup>41</sup> This malevolence applies to the Jewish state. Like the Nazis, who understood the Jewish evil to lie in the Jewish essence, Qutb’s Jihadist followers set out “not simply to morally delegitimize Israel as a Jewish State and a national entity in the Middle East, but to dehumanize Judaism and the Jewish people as such.”<sup>42</sup> Once demonized, the Jew is dehumanized and cannot be accorded the same possibility of conversion that is open to the rest of humanity, any more than one can convert the Devil.

#### THE ATTENDANT FANATICISM

Thus we glimpse the roots of fanatic antisemitism, both Nazi and Jihadist. “The greatness of every mighty organization,” writes Hitler, “lies in the religious fanaticism and intolerance with which, fanatically convinced of its own right, it intolerantly imposes its will against all

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36. See Emil L. Fackenheim, “The Holocaust and the State of Israel,” in *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination*, Michael L. Morgan, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 132.

37. Qutb, *Maalim fi al-Tariq [Milestones]*, 96.

38. Sayyid Qutb, *Basic Principles of the Islamic Worldview*, trans. Rami David (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2006), 21.

39. Quoted in Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations*, 35; emphasis added.

40. *Ibid.*, 37-38; emphasis added.

41. *Ibid.*, 44; emphasis added.

42. Kenneth R. Timmerman, *Preachers of Hate: Islam and the War on America* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 63.

others.”<sup>43</sup> This fanatic imposition of one’s own will upon all others is the mark both of Nazi and of Jihadist totalitarianism. Just as Hitler declared that he was “acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator,”<sup>44</sup> so al-Husseini cried out, “Slaughter Jews wherever you find them! Their spilled blood pleases Allah,”<sup>45</sup> and the Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini insisted, “Islam says: Kill in the service of Allah.”<sup>46</sup> Kill whom? Kill the Jews. Following the diatribes of Qutb (whose writings he translated into Farsi), the Ayatollah writes, “From the very beginning, the historical movement of Islam has had to contend with the Jews, for it was they who first established anti-Islamic propaganda.”<sup>47</sup> Thus Islam must “make people aware that the Jews and their foreign backers are opposed to the very foundations of Islam and wish to establish Jewish domination throughout the world.”<sup>48</sup> The war against the Jews, whether Nazi or Jihadist, then, is a holy war that can end only in victory or death. It is not for nothing that in his introduction to the Arabic edition of *Mein Kampf*, the translator Luis al-Haj describes Hitler’s “struggle” as a jihad,<sup>49</sup> which is holy. There is no surrender, no negotiation, no compromise in a holy war.

The holy war against the Jews is waged against an enemy who is evil incarnate, who is therefore other than human, and who requires extermination. The Jew is “an ape,” says Hitler,<sup>50</sup> echoing the teaching from the Quran (5:60). “The whole existence of [the Jews],” he adds, “is based on a continuous lie,”<sup>51</sup> also calling to mind verses in the Quran claiming that the Jews falsified Scripture and history to suit their own ends (2:59; 3:78). Therefore to wage a holy war against the Jews is to wage war for the sake of the truth. Indeed, Qutb deemed the Jews the “falsifiers of Divine Truth,”<sup>52</sup> so that for anyone who loves the truth and hates the lie, Jew hatred is a mark of righteousness: killing Jews—killing evil and lies—is a holy act pleasing to Allah. As the champions of divine truth, Islamic Jihadists must wage war against the Jews, who by definition are committed

43. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 351; emphasis added.

44. *Ibid.*, 65.

45. Tom Knowlton, “Nazi Roots of Modern Radical Islam,” accessed September 6, 2015, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/816232/posts>.

46. Quoted in Amir Taheri, *Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terrorism* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1987), 242.

47. Ruhullah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941 – 1980)*, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 27.

48. *Ibid.*, 127.

49. Luis al-Haj, introduction to *Kafaahi*, by Adolf Hitler, trans. Luis Al-Haj (Beirut: Dar Baysan, 1963), 6.

50. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 302.

51. *Ibid.*, 307.

52. Quoted in Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations*, 7; emphasis added.

to lies. As in the case of the Nazis, the Jihadists' holy war against the Jews has nothing to do with politics or territory, a point made by Salafist Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Yaqoub in an Egyptian television broadcast on 17 January 2009:

If the Jews left Palestine to us, would we start loving them? Absolutely not. The Jews are infidels—not because I say so... but because... Allah who said that they are infidels False They are enemies not because they occupied Palestine. They would have been enemies even if they did not occupy a thing False Our fighting with the Jews is eternal... until not a single Jew remains on the face of the earth. As for you Jews, the Curse of Allah upon you, you pigs of the earth!"<sup>53</sup>

Here we discover that the Jihadists are not antisemites because they are anti-Zionists; rather, they are anti-Zionists because they are antisemites—another trait that they share with the Nazis.

#### NAZI AND JIHADIST ANTI-ZIONISM

In 1921 Alfred Rosenberg published his diatribe *Der staatsfeindliche Zionismus* (Zionism: Enemy of the State), in which he argued that Zionism is a Jewish strategy for world domination. Francis Nicosia describes Rosenberg's *Der staatsfeindliche Zionismus* as "a major contribution to the National Socialist position on Zionism" that would continue to shape Hitler's views of the movement.<sup>54</sup> Rosenberg's theories, says Nicosia, "demonstrate a fundamental ideological hostility and incompatibility between National Socialism and a Zionist movement that was considered to be merely an instrument of a monolithic Jewish world conspiracy False Nevertheless, it appears that Rosenberg did recognize from the beginning the utility of encouraging the Zionist movement in Germany as a means of facilitating the removal of Germany's Jewish population."<sup>55</sup> The policy here, it must be noted, was strictly utilitarian, as Nicosia indicates; ideologically, the Zionist movement posed an existential threat to the Nazis, as it did to the Jihadists. Therefore neither the Nazis nor the Jihadists could accept that Zionists' stated aim of seeking not just a homeland but also a haven for the Jewish people in a world that itself posed an existential threat to them. Given the antisemites' premise that the Jew is not threatened but rather poses the threat, the ultimate outcome can only be the

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53. Muhammad Hussein Yaqoub, "We Will Fight, Defeat, and Annihilate Them," Al-Rahma TV, 17 January 2009, Middle East Media Research Institute, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://memri.org/bin/latestnews.cgi?ID=SD227809>.

54. Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 24.

55. *Ibid.*, 24-25.

extermination of the Jews, even if their removal to Zion might be acceptable as a stopgap measure. While perhaps temporarily acceptable to the Nazis, such a measure was from the very beginning quite unacceptable to the Jihadists.

As though writing the script for Islamic Jihadists, in *Mein Kampf* Hitler asserts, “While the Zionists try to make the rest of the world believe that the national consciousness of the Jew finds its satisfaction in the creation of a Palestinian state, the Jews again slyly dupe the dumb Goyim. It doesn’t even enter their heads to build up a Jewish state in Palestine for the purpose of living there; all they want is a central organization for their international world swindle.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, “the Jewish state is completely unlimited as to territory.”<sup>57</sup> The measures taken to oppose the Jewish state must be equally unlimited. Nazi and Jihadist anti-Zionist antisemitism represents a radical perversion of the most ancient, most fundamental evil—murder—into the highest good that, at least among the Jihadists, brings with it the highest reward. In the Jihadist appropriation of God, not only is the prohibition against murder eliminated—it is twisted into a commandment to murder, for the sake of an entry into paradise. Jewish blood is the Jihadist’s ticket to Paradise, as preached by Islamic Jihadist ideologue Abdullah Azzam,<sup>58</sup> something that one does not find among the Nazis.

Repeating the Nazis’ representation of the Zionist movement, Sayyid Qutb viewed the Jewish state as just a small part of a “universal Zionist conspiracy; indeed, like Hitler, he took Marxism and Zionism to be part of a single conspiracy.”<sup>59</sup> A familiar image employed by Nazi propagandists to illustrate the Zionist threat shows an octopus with its deadly tentacles wrapped around the entire globe and a Star of David inscribed on its head. The same image can be found among many of the Jihadist illustrations of “world Zionism.”<sup>60</sup> This image of world Jewry as something monstrous finds its way into many Jihadist texts and documents. When in December 1948 the Muslim Brotherhood was banned in Egypt, for example, al-Banna blamed International Zionism.<sup>61</sup> In 1950 Islamic scholar Abd al-Rahman Sami Ismat wrote, “The Jews and Zionism are like an evil tree. Its root is in New York, its branches all over the world, its leaves the Jews—all of them,

56. Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 325.

57. *Ibid.*, 301.

58. Malise Ruthven *A Fury for God: The Islamist Attack on America* (London: Granta, 2004), 206.

59. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations*, 55.

60. See, for example, Adam Levnick, “Anti-Semitic Cartoons on Progressive Blogs,” Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2 September 2010, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://jcpa.org/article/anti-semitic-cartoons-on-progressive-blogs/>.

61. Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred*, 54-55.

old and young, male and female, without exception, are its thorny leaves and poisoned thorns, and the poison is swift and deadly.”<sup>62</sup> Years later Hezbollah’s Al-Manar broadcast system would repeatedly depict “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a key part of a larger effort to halt the ‘cancer’ of Zionism.”<sup>63</sup> Similarly, Article Thirty-Two of the Hamas Charter of Allah states, “After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates.” And: “Their plan is embodied in the ‘Protocols of the Elders of Zion.’” And: “The Islamic Resistance Movement considers itself to be the spearhead of the struggle with world Zionism.”<sup>64</sup> Article Twenty-Two, in fact, states that the Jews are behind every calamity that has befallen humanity.<sup>65</sup> The Jihadist struggle, therefore, is for the sake of humanity and is carried out in the name of Allah.

#### THE ASCENT TO THE THRONE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

The Nazis’ claims about the Jews’ desire to plunge the world into war, their plotting to take over the world, and so on are all too familiar. In the Jihadist discourse, one finds a parallel in the allegations that the Jews have an exterminationist agenda toward the Arabs, that they are behind the 9/11 attacks, that they seek to conquer the world, and that they are consumers of blood. How does this last accusation constitute a projection of Jihadist aims onto the Jews? On 28 November 1971, Jordan’s Prime Minister Wasfi al-Tal was assassinated by the Palestinian group Black September in front of Cairo’s Sheraton Hotel. One of the assassins went over, bent down, and licked his victim’s blood.<sup>66</sup> And in February 2006 Hamas produced a video of a homicide bomber’s final testimony to the world, in which he declared, “My message to the loathed Jews is that there is no god but Allah [and] we will chase you everywhere! We are a nation that drinks blood, and we know that there is no blood better than the blood of Jews. We will not leave you alone until we have quenched our thirst with your blood, and our

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62. Quoted in Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 15.

63. Avi Jorisch, *Beacon of Hatred: Inside Hizballah’s Al-Manar Television* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2004), 68.

64. Quoted in Dimitry Kapustyan and Matt Nelson, *The Soul of Terror: The Worldwide Conflict between Islamic Terrorism and the Modern World* (Washington, DC: International Affairs Press, 2007), 147-48.

65. *Ibid.*, 139-40.

66. See Barry Rubin, *Revolution Until Victory?: The Politics and History of the PLO* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 37-38. Black September was formed in 1970 to avenge the Jordanian killing of several thousand Palestinians in September 1970.

children's thirst with your blood."<sup>67</sup> This most radical appropriation of the soul of the other person—the soul that is in the blood—is characteristic of the Jihadists' radical appropriation of God, as they assume the throne of divine judgment.

Jihadism not only legitimizes spilling Jewish blood—it sanctifies it. This undermining of the divine, absolute prohibition against murder is very often a defining feature of antisemitism, inasmuch as the antisemite's project, whether Nazi or Jihadist, is often to be as God, not only knowing but determining good and evil. According to the Jewish teaching that both the Nazi and the Jihadist antisemite would obliterate, we are to read the Ten Commandments not from top to bottom but from right to left (in Hebrew): "I am God" means "Thou shalt not murder" (see, for example, the Midrash Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael, Bachodesh 8). Because the Jews have been singled out for the task of unmasking false gods, the desire to be as God is a desire to kill the Jews, which is the deepest desire of the antisemite. The dynamic of Jew hatred, moreover, works in two directions, with each fueling the other: in order to ascend to the divine throne of judgment, one must eliminate the divine prohibition against murder, and in order to eliminate the divine prohibition, one must eclipse, appropriate, or otherwise eliminate God. The elimination of God amounts to the elimination of any absolute limiting principle that might curb one's actions. The crimes of the Nazis, therefore, were not unimaginable but everything imaginable, for their actions were limited only by their imagination and their will. There was no measure too extreme: it was impossible to go too far, to be too brutal, or to murder too many Jews. Just the opposite: the principle that guided them in their actions was "Thou shalt murder every Jew." For this reason, as Fackenheim has maintained, murder was not a byproduct of National Socialism—it was its very essence.<sup>68</sup> Why? Because antisemitism was its very essence, as it is the essence of Islamic Jihadism.

Thus "Jihad and Jew-hatred belong together," Matthias Küntzel observes.<sup>69</sup> Elsewhere Küntzel notes another important parallel between National Socialism and Islamic Jihadism: "Just like National Socialism was propelled by a utopia which advocated salvation through destruction, Islamism is propelled forward by a similar utopia. In both cases, it is the distorted image of a perceived enemy which provides the perpetrator with his own identity. In both cases, the annihilation of evil is considered to be

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67. Itamar Marcus and Barbara Cook, " Hamas Video: 'We will drink the blood of the Jews,'" Palestine Media Watch, 14 February 2006, accessed September 6, 2015, <http://www.pmw.org.il/latest%20bulletins%20new.htm#b140206>.

68. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Jewish Return into History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 246.

69. Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred*, 149.



the precondition for the realization of an idealized dream of homogeneity. In both cases this evil is projected onto ‘the Jew.’”<sup>70</sup> As we have seen, the Jihadist resemblance to National Socialism that Küntzel notes is not accidental.

In both instances it is clear that each shares with the other, Nazis and Jihadists, an essentially exterminationist Jew hatred. Robert Wistrich sums up very well a crucial point to be made about Islamic Jihadism and the legacy of Nazi antisemitism:

The Muslim fundamentalists—like the Nazis before and during the Shoah—rant against the ‘anonymous powers’ of globalization and the plutocratic West. They (falsely) claim to speak for frustrated, underprivileged, and impoverished masses betrayed by more traditional Arab and Muslim ruling elites. Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories lie at the very heart of the Muslim fundamentalist and Arab nationalist world view today—linking together plutocratic finance, international freemasonry, secularism, Zionism, and communism as dark occult forces led by the giant octopus of international Jewry. This mythical structure of thought is in many ways virtually identical with Nazi anti-Semitism. Fundamentalist Islam has the same totalitarian, pseudo-messianic aspiration to world hegemony as German Nazism.<sup>71</sup>

And so the pattern of modern—or perhaps anti-modern—antisemitism repeats itself. Eclipsing God, the Nazis eclipsed the absolute obligation imposed from beyond, so that the will from within posed the only limits to their actions. Appropriating God, the Jihadists appropriate the authority to impose from beyond what they have determined to be the will of Allah, which is not a matter of human will but an absolute obligation. What makes the Jihadist embrace of the Nazi legacy an embrace of antisemitism—and not just an affirmation of fascism or totalitarianism—is this appropriation of God, as when Hamas, for example, deems its charter to be the Charter of Allah or when Hezbollah declares itself to be a “‘clearinghouse for mankind,’ where those who will be admitted into paradise are separated from those destined for hell.”<sup>72</sup> For the elimination of God through such an appropriation is in the end a defining feature of antisemitism itself, at least in its religious, political, and ideological manifestations. Because the Jews are the most ancient, most enduring witnesses of the first utterance at Mount Sinai—“I am God” (Exodus 20:2)—the Jihadist who would ascend to the throne of God must eliminate the Jews. There lies the key to the

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70. Küntzel, “National Socialism and Anti-Semitism in the Arab World.”

71. Robert S. Wistrich, “Islamic Judeophobia: An Existential Threat,” in *Muhammad’s Monsters: A Comprehensive Guide to Radical Islam for Western Audiences*, ed. David Bukay (Green Forest, AR: Balfour Books, 2004), 196.

72. Taheri, *Holy Terror*, 87.

exterminationist antisemitism that the Jihadists have inherited from the Nazis.

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# Old and New in the Palestinian Holocaust Public Discourse

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On the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day (April 2014) Palestinian President Mahmoud ‘Abbas called the Holocaust “the most heinous crime” in modern history. This paper examines attitudes toward the Holocaust in Palestinian public discourse. ‘Abbas’ reflects a new approach in Palestinian and Arab public discourse in response to international and regional developments and has yet to receive attention by Israeli and Jewish leaders. Mainstream Palestinian public discourse acknowledges the Holocaust but continues to challenge its uniqueness and scope, and to de-legitimize Israel and Zionism.

On the eve of Israel’s Holocaust Memorial Day in April 2014, Palestinian President Mahmoud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin) released an unprecedented statement calling the Holocaust “the most heinous crime” in modern history. He “expressed his sympathy with the families of the victims and many other innocent people who were killed by the Nazis.” The Holocaust, he went on, “is a reflection of the concept of ethnic discrimination and racism which the Palestinians strongly reject and act against,” urging the Israeli government to use “the incredibly sad commemoration of Holocaust day” to take the chance to find a “just and comprehensive” peace with his people, based on a two-state solution.<sup>1</sup>

This was the first public official reference to the Holocaust by a Palestinian or Arab leader, which acknowledged the Holocaust for what it is, but tied it to other deeds of the Nazi regime. The statement was met by a sour official Israeli reaction that interpreted Abu Mazin’s move as an instrumentalist attempt to soothe criticism against the unity deal he had reached with his Islamist rival Hamas a few days earlier.<sup>2</sup> ‘Abbas’ statement is not new and reflects a trend — a new approach — in

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1. “The President in an Interview with Rabbi Schneier”; “Abbas Expresses on Holocaust Memorial Day his Sympathy”; “Abbas Describes the ‘Holocaust’ as a heinous crime”; Ravid, “Abbas.”

2. “Mahmoud Abbas Shifts on Holocaust”; *al-‘Arab* (Qatar), *ibid.*; *Ha’aretz*, *ibid.* [I find this unclear. I suggest to repeat: “Abbas Describes the ‘Holocaust’ as a heinous crime”; Ravid, “Abbas.”]

Palestinian and Arab public discourse on the Holocaust, that has emerged since the mid-1990s in response to international and regional developments, but has not received due attention, especially by Israeli and Jewish leaders. Despite the setbacks it suffered due to the lingering peace process, the Palestinian intifada in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the upheavals of the “Arab Spring” since 2011, this new approach seems to be gaining - momentum.

This paper seeks to highlight divergent attitudes to the Holocaust in Palestinian public discourse, which has “indigenized” the Holocaust and its terminology, either for the reconstruction of Palestinian national identity or for the demonization and de-legitimization of Israel. Expanding consciousness of the Holocaust and studies worldwide have proved to create a double-edged result. On the one hand, the Holocaust has been turned into a yardstick of all evil, and its memory and lessons are revered by the international community; and, on the other hand, its symbols and terminology are increasingly inverted and used against the state of Israel.

#### TRADITIONAL ARAB APPROACH TO THE HOLOCAUST

The traditional Arab approach toward the Holocaust stems from the viewpoint that it did not concern the Arabs. It claims that the scene of the disaster was Europe, and that the perpetrators of the extermination acts were European, but that “the Jewish problem” and its solution were exported to the Middle East. Europe relieved its feelings of guilt through the establishment of the state of Israel, and the Palestinians were those who paid the price. The “price” meant the loss of Palestine and Palestinians becoming refugees in their own land or in Arab countries. If it were not for the Holocaust, this viewpoint asserts, Israel would not have come to exist. The proximity of these two events led to their convergence and the creation of a causality relationship between them.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this conviction, the Palestinians and the Arabs could not separate their attitude toward the Holocaust from their attitude and animosity toward Israel and Zionism. Resistance to the establishment of Israel as the solution to the “Jewish problem” overshadowed their ability and willingness to acknowledge and sympathize with the Jewish tragedy. It was an instinctive reaction gradually buttressed by ideological, political, and even cultural claims.

Initial responses to the Holocaust in the immediate years after WWII were not monolithic: they underwent a swift change in the course of three

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3. The role of the Holocaust in facilitating the establishment of Israel preoccupied Israeli historiography for years. For those who claim a direct causality, see Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 242-60; Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn*. For those who dispute this view, see Michman, “She’erit Hapletah,” 107-116.

years, however, from the end of World War II up to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, moving from a more empathic and humanitarian approach toward the suffering of the Jews and the Holocaust victims, to their representation as the major cause of the injustice which befell the Palestinians. This shift was the result of the need to obfuscate, deny, justify or ignore the Holocaust, which was perceived as the major factor in the success of Zionism in luring the international community into accepting the establishment of the Jewish state.<sup>4</sup> The official response of the Arab League to British Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin's announcement of 13 November 1945, for example, was a case of official implicit or partial denial of the Holocaust. The League expressed Arab appreciation of the humanitarian desire to help the Jews of Europe and others who had been persecuted during the Nazi and Fascist period. Concurrently, it warned of dealing "with one case of oppression by perpetrating a new one," and replacing one oppression by another. "Should Zionism attain its goals it would lead to the dispossession of the Arabs from their homeland and from their national rights," which is "no less cruel than the oppression of the Jews which the world complains about." Fortunately, it concluded, the victory of the democracies over Nazism and Fascism would enable the solution of the Jewish problem on a democratic basis and permit the return of the persecuted Jews to their homelands from which they had been expelled by Nazi and Fascist fanatic actions.<sup>5</sup> Thus the fate of the Jews was reduced to mere expulsion from their homeland, something even less serious than the anticipated dispossession of the Palestinian Arabs. Moreover, the statement cast a certain doubt as to the scope of oppression, which the world "complains" about. Both arguments would become central themes in future Arab argumentation.<sup>6</sup>

Since then, up until the mid-1990's, the Holocaust was rarely raised as an independent subject in Palestinian as well as in general Arab public discourse. One possible reason for avoiding the Holocaust was its perceived potential to arouse sympathy worldwide, particularly in Europe, which had suffered from feelings of guilt since the end of the war with the unfolding horrors that had been perpetrated against the Jews. There was a genuine fear that acknowledging the Holocaust would contradict the recognition of the Palestinian right for self-determination and might lessen

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4. On the representation of the Holocaust in the Arab world, see: Litvak and Webman, *From Empathy to Denial*; Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*; Bishara, "The Arabs and the Holocaust," 54-71. See also Harkabi, *The Arabs' Position*, 254-258; Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites*, 203-218.

5. *Al-Ahram*, November, 27, December 7, 1945.

6. See a similar insinuation by Kafuri, *Al-Sahyuniyya*, 19, who charged the Jews with exploiting "the persecutions attributed to some states against the Jews living in their midst during the war."

the public's sympathy for, or identification with, the Palestinian cause. Zionism and Israel were accused of using the Holocaust and exploiting the world's sympathy to achieve their goals, which led the Arabs to ignore it, deny it, or instrumentalize it in their struggle against them. Even Arab intellectuals, who assailed Nazism, did not admit or denounce the Nazi genocide against the Jews, instead charging Zionism of cynically using the Holocaust or inventing it as a means of financial and psychological extortion. This process intensified as the Holocaust assumed an increasing central role in Israeli and Jewish identity, as well as in western culture.

Moreover, the Jewish tragedy was conflated with the suffering of the Palestinians. An *al-Ahram* editorial, for example, wondered if anyone could imagine a time in which the Jews, "who had been subjected for generations to harshest oppressions and tyrannies", would do the same to others. The Zionist efforts to dislodge people from their homes and disperse them "constitute the same disaster (*ma'asa*), which the Jews had experienced." The whole world, it went on, denounced the German Aryan racism that had shed human blood, particularly that of the Jews. Why then did Zionism seek to operate as the Germans did and implement such methods in Palestine, which would lead to the perdition (*fana'*) of a people, its deportation and destruction?<sup>7</sup> Palestinians, who are often represented as the Holocaust's true victims, seemed to be competing with the Jews for the status of victimhood.<sup>8</sup> There was no room left for accommodating the suffering of "the other." Yet, there is another possible explanation for the avoidance of the Holocaust. Historical evidence shows that Arab intellectuals were aware of the extent of the horrors, but might have been constrained by emerging official attitudes from representing them fully. Politics, history, and memory were reflected in Arab literature. The subject of the Arab-Israeli conflict captivated Arab writers and they had no qualms about using antisemitic motifs in the portrayal of Jews and Zionists,<sup>9</sup> but references to the Holocaust were rare. Under such conditions, the lack of Arab literary interest in the Holocaust seems obvious and almost inevitable.

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7. *Al-Ahram*, November 14, 1945, January 11, 1946. See also Rif'at, *Qadiyyat Filastin*, 98-99.

8. Competition over victimhood is not unique to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Scholars of history and memory point to the development of a "culture of victimhood" in the West, especially since the 1980s and 1990s, as part of ethnic and national identity and collective memory that involves the recognition and rectification of past evils. See for example, Maier, "A Surfeit of Memory?", 136-7; Neeman-Arad, "A History of Memory," 19; Chaumont, *la concurrence des victims*, 160-180; Miles, "Third World Views," 371-393.

9. See for example: Balas, *Ha-sifrut ha-'arvit be-zel ha-milkhama*; Moreh, "Dmuto shel ha-yehudi ba-sifrut ha-'arvit me-az qom ha-medina," 25-52; Somekh, "Tall Buildings," 26-35.

This basic anti-Zionist stance determined attitudes toward the Holocaust, as towards antisemitism in general.<sup>10</sup> Hence, the Palestinian/ Arab Holocaust discourse developed in the shadow of the Arab-Israeli conflict as part and parcel of a broader anti-Zionist and antisemitic discourse. Discussion of the Holocaust always revolved around its political ramifications, and the flow of information about the Holocaust was deliberately limited after the establishment of the state of Israel, leading to a great deal of ignorance. Few Arab studies had focused on the Holocaust—an exception was Mahmud Abbas Abu Mazin’s notorious linking of Zionism to Nazism.<sup>11</sup> Based on his 1982 doctoral dissertation, submitted to Moscow’s Oriental Institute, the alleged conspiracy “showed” Zionist-Nazi collaboration to destroy European Jewry.

In his Introduction ‘Abbas argues that the number of Jewish victims was considerably lower than historians have previously reported and cites French Holocaust-denier Robert Faurisson as well as the Canadian denier Roger DeLorme, dismissing the gas chambers as a “myth.”<sup>12</sup> The fact that the writer is a prominent Palestinian leader naturally attracted more attention to his work, and was perceived as an official Palestinian position.

The Holocaust was frequently invoked, explicitly or implicitly, in the writings on and discussions of historical and political issues, such as the Jewish history and the Jewish problem, the Palestine problem, and the Zionist enterprise. There existed a correlation between the narratives, which evolved around those issues, and certain motifs of Holocaust representation. The context affected the nature of the reference to the Holocaust. For example, justification emerged as a major motif in the debate about Jewish history and Nazi atrocities,<sup>13</sup> whereas in the discussion of the Palestine problem the Jewish tragedy was conflated with the Palestinian *nakba*, and the attitude of the Jews toward Palestinians was compared and equated to the Nazi behavior toward Jews.<sup>14</sup>

#### A NEW APPROACH EMERGES

The collapse of the Soviet Block in the early 1990s and its impact on world affairs, including the Middle East; the emergence of the notion of a new world order; the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian accords in 1993, and

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10. Bishara, “The Arabs and the Holocaust,” 54.

11. ‘Abbas Abu Mazin, *Al-wajh al-akhar*. See also: Faris, *Zionist Relations with Nazi Germany*; Mahmud, *Al-sahyuniyya wal-naziyya*; al-Masiri, *Al-sahyuniyya wal-naziyya wa-nihayat al-tarikh*.

12. ‘Abbas, *al-Wajh al-akhar*, “Introduction,” b, g. Delorme was a TV personality who ran for the Progressive Conservatives Party in a Quebec by-election in May 1977 and failed.

13. See for example, Litvak and Webman, *From Empathy to Denial*, 199-203.

14. *Ibid.*, 215-217, 309-314.

the 1994 Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement: all these provided grounds for a revision of the Arab traditional approach towards the Jewish Holocaust among liberal Arab intellectuals. Criticizing prevailing Arab perceptions of the Holocaust, they called for the unequivocal recognition of the suffering of the Jewish people, which eventually would lead to the recognition of the Palestinian tragedy by the Israelis and facilitate reconciliation and coexistence between the two peoples. This new discourse marked a significant turning point in the Arab discussion of the Holocaust, by expanding its dimensions and legitimizing diverse views. Despite its relative limited number of propagators, this approach brought about a change in the representation of the Holocaust even among its opponents. It diversified the mainstream discourse, while increasingly confining denial to Islamists, who adamantly continued to oppose any kind of reconciliation with the Jewish state. The starting point of the discourse is the acknowledgement of the Holocaust as a horrible historical fact, albeit without relinquishing other persistent themes, such as relativization and minimization of the Holocaust, equation of Zionism with Nazism, and the accusation of Zionist collaboration with the Nazis.

Although there were few Arab intellectuals and activists, such as Israeli author and communist activist Emile Habibi and Palestinian Christian theologian Naim Stifan Ateek, who spoke of the Jewish tragedy recognizing its occurrence and its importance to the Jews before the 1990s,<sup>15</sup> only the debate triggered in 1997, by Arab intellectuals living in the West and closely familiar with its culture, aroused a wide-range reaction. Most prominent among them were the late Palestinian and Professor for Comparative English Literature, Edward Said, and liberal Lebanese writer and editor of *al-Hayat* daily, Hazim Saghiya. They both challenged the notion that “the Holocaust does not concern us.” Saghiya contended in his book *Defending Peace* that this notion resulted from a limited understanding of European history and modernity, laziness, lack of curiosity and a certain degree of opportunism. He accused the Palestinians of concentrating on the adverse political dimensions of the Jewish tragedy, and failing to identify with the human aspect of the Jewish tragedy or show any sympathy.<sup>16</sup> The Arabs, claimed Saghiya, could surely not be blamed for the Holocaust but as members of the international community, they should not exclude themselves from responsibility for the calamity. In order to understand western and world sympathy toward Israel, the Arabs

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15. Habibi, “Your Holocaust Our Catastrophe,” 26-27; Ateek, *Justice and only Justice*, 168-170. See also: Wicken, “Views of the Holocaust,” 108-114.

16. Saghiya, *Difa’an ‘an al-Salam*, 63-9. Faysal Jalul, a Lebanese journalist living in Paris agreed with this criticism in his review of Saghiya’s book, *Al-Nahar*, December 29, 1997. See also: Kassir, “La Nakba recommence?” 61-63.



should try to understand the Holocaust, he insisted, and should show more sensitivity and understanding of the Jewish tragedy in order to gain worldwide respect and sympathy for the Palestinian tragedy. Mutual sensitivity would help overcome the barriers on the road to peace.<sup>17</sup>

Edward Said as well linked the Arab attitude toward the Holocaust to his general view of the Arab political and social situation. “The history of the modern Arab world – with all its political failures, its human rights abuses, its stunning military incompetence, its decreasing production, the fact that, alone of all modern peoples, we have receded in democratic and technological and scientific development – is disfigured by a whole series of outmoded and discredited ideas, of which the notion that the Jews never suffered and that the Holocaust is an obfusatory confection created by the elders of Zion is one that is acquiring too much, far too much, currency,” he explained.<sup>18</sup> Said called for an act of comprehension that “guarantees one’s humanity and resolve that such a catastrophe should never be forgotten and never again recur.” Seeking bases for coexistence, he claimed that a link exists between what happened to the Jews in World War II and the catastrophe of the Palestinian people, and unless this connection was recognized there would be no foundation for coexistence. He insisted that he did not attach conditions to the comprehension of and compassion for the Jewish tragedy; however, he believed that “such an advance in consciousness by Arabs ought to be met by an equal willingness for compassion and comprehension on the part of the Israelis and Israel’s supporters.”<sup>19</sup> The recognition of the realities of the Holocaust, he added, does not constitute “a blank check for Israelis to abuse us, but as a sign of our humanity, our ability to understand history, our requirement that our suffering be mutually acknowledged.”<sup>20</sup>

The motif of mutual recognition of the Jewish and the Palestinian tragedies as a paramount element in any reconciliation between the two peoples is central to this approach. It was even formally expressed in the official Palestinian People’s Appeal on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *nakba* published in May 1998, which stated that “while we extend a compassionate recognition of the unspeakable Jewish suffering during the horror of the holocaust [sic], we find it unconscionable that the suffering of

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17. Saghya, *ibid.*, 63-94; *Ha’aretz*, March 21, 1997; *al-Hayat*, November 10, 14, 15, 18, 28, 1997, December 18, 1997.

18. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, June 25, 1998; *al-Hayat*, June 30, 1998.

19. *Al-Hayat*, November 5, 1997; *al-Ahram Weekly*, November 6, 1997; *Ha’aretz*, February, 20, 1998; *Le Monde Diplomatique*, August-September 1998.

20. *Al-Ahram Weekly*, June 25, 1998; *al-Hayat*, June 30, 1998.

our people be denied or even rationalized.”<sup>21</sup> A historical reconciliation does not only mean recognition of past suffering and its importance to the collective memory of each people but requires the creation of a new narrative which takes into account the histories of both peoples, and necessitates the assimilation of the history of each other and of their respective tragedies.<sup>22</sup>

Another dominant theme in this approach is the universalization of the Holocaust. The lessons from the Holocaust, contended Saghiya and Tunisian writer Salih Bashir in *al-Hayat*, became universal moral values that serve as a bulwark for democracies against the threats of fundamentalism, extremism and racism, which target Jews and Muslims alike. The increasing recognition of the Holocaust’s significance, the expansion of sphere of memory, and the participation of other peoples in it, point to the expropriation of the Holocaust from its limited Jewish possession, and its assuming a meaning and a message for all humanity. Only this broader perception of the Holocaust by the Jews accompanied by a similar recognition the Palestinian rights “will be tantamount to an infringement of the sanctity of the Holocaust, which has become a yardstick for universalistic values.”<sup>23</sup>

The new Arab approach gradually gained the support of additional Arab intellectuals and writers, and evoked intensive debates on the Holocaust in the Arab press. The acknowledgment of the occurrence of the Holocaust is gradually infiltrating into the mainstream Arab discourse, although this does not necessarily entail the acknowledgement of its dimensions, uniqueness and meaning. The controversy over the issue of the Holocaust as a unique Jewish experience versus its universalistic meaning has continued unabated. As the corollary of the process of the universalization of its memory by the international community such beliefs are simply not accepted in Muslim nations.<sup>24</sup>

#### CONFLICTING TRENDS IN THE PALESTINIAN HOLOCAUST DISCOURSE

The new approach has also ushered in a counter-reaction and a spate of new publications dealing with Holocaust denial. Such was the case with Jordanian-Palestinian Islamist Ibrahim ‘Allush’s ideological embrace of

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21. PNA, Ministry of Information. The Palestinian People’s Appeal on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Catastrophe “Al-Nakba”, May 15, 1998.

22. Khalidi, “Fifty Years after 1948,” 55; *al-Hayat*, December 18, 1997, May 15, 1998; *al-Ahram Weekly*, January 14, 1999.

23. *Al-Hayat*, December 18, 1997; *Ha’aretz*, February 21, 2000. See also: Bishara, “Response,” 104; Jayyusi, “The End of Innocence,” 33; Kronemeijer, *An Arab Voice of Compromise*, 46-50.

24. Litvak and Webman, *From Empathy to Denial*, 169, 184-86.

Holocaust denial.<sup>25</sup> ‘Allush, who returned to Jordan after thirteen years in the US, continued to claim that the acknowledgment of the Holocaust is an acknowledgment of its uniqueness as a Jewish tragedy that diminishes the Palestinian one, and that constitutes recognition of Israel’s right to exist. His view reflects the general Islamist approach to the Holocaust and to any reconciliation with the Jewish state.<sup>26</sup> American-based Palestinian scholar, Joseph Massad, who does not deny the Holocaust, considered the Arab discourse of denial as a submission “to the Zionization of the Holocaust and to its appropriation by Israeli propagandists for their own purposes.”<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, the new approach was criticized for failing to mention the Palestinian suffering and explicitly call for a mutual recognition.<sup>28</sup> The centrality of Holocaust denial in the Arab discourse was manifested in two events in 2001 – a cancelled conference of western revisionists in Beirut, and an Arab forum on historical revisionism, which took place in May in Amman.

A conference on “Revisionism and Zionism,” co-sponsored by the California-based Institute of Historical Review (IHR), the leading Holocaust denial organization in the world and by the Swiss-based Truth and Justice Association, was scheduled to be held between March 31 and April 3, 2001, in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. Jorgen Graf, the founder of Truth and Justice who fled to Iran to avoid a 15-month prison sentence, was a driving force in its organization. The conference was cancelled due to the intervention of the American State Department with the Lebanese government at the Beginning of March, as a result of the pressure exerted by Jewish organizations. If it had materialized, it would have been the first such conference in the Middle East.<sup>29</sup>

The cancellation of the conference aroused a bitter controversy which culminated in an initiative to hold an alternative conference in Amman. A

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25. *Al-Sabil*, April 27, 2004, November 8, 2005.

26. The issue of the Islamist approach to the Holocaust is not discussed in this paper. Islamists engaged in the justification of the Holocaust in the 1950s and 1960s in line of their view of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a religious conflict between Muslims and Jews. They explained the Holocaust as a punishment and as the result of God’s rage against them. Consequently, they considered Hitler as the last link in the chain of persecutions in Jewish history, sent by God to punish the Jews for their deeds. Gradually, perhaps in view of the success and victories of the Jewish state, denial substituted the justification motif in the Islamist discourse. Litvak and Webman, *From Empathy to Denial*, 159, 170, 195-199.

27. Massad, “Palestinian and Jewish History,” 61-62.

28. See for example: Rub’i al-Madhun, *al-Hayat*, January 20, 1998; al-Ansari, “Edward Said,” 21-24 (The same article was published in two installments in *al-Hayat*, November 11, 12, 1997).

29. US Newswire, *Jerusalem Post*, February 12, 2001; *Ma’ariv*, *Ha’aretz*, February 13, 2001; Institute for Historical Review, “Beirut Conference 2001”; *Tishrin*, February 24, 2001; al-Nahar, al-Safir, March 3, 2001; Tehran Times, March 4, 2001.

group of Arab intellectuals led by Ibrahim ‘Allush, a member of the Jordanian Writers Association (JWA), decided to organize a special meeting in Amman to discuss “what happened to the Revisionist historians’ conference in Beirut?” The meeting, which was postponed twice due to the intervention of Jordanian security authorities, took place at last on 13 May to coincide with the commemoration of the Palestinian *nakba*, in cooperation with the Association against Zionism and Racism (AZAR). In contrast to the Beirut conference where all the speakers were to have been western Holocaust revisionists, the principal participants in the Amman conference were Arab journalists and members of anti-normalization professional associations. They sought first and foremost to demonstrate opposition to the intellectuals who had called for the cancellation of the Beirut conference. The two main speakers were Amman-based Lebanese journalist Hayat ‘Atiyya and Jordanian journalist ‘Arafat Hijjazi. ‘Atiyya, who appeared two days later in an al-Jazira talk show dealing with the question “Is Zionism worse than Nazism?,” emphasized in her talk the alleged parallels between Zionism and Nazism and argued that historical revisionism is not an ideology but a well-documented research project. Hijjazi dealt with aspects of Holocaust denial, reiterating the notion of Jewish exploitation of the Holocaust, the exaggeration of the number of Jews exterminated, and challenging the existence of gas chambers.<sup>30</sup>

The outbreak of al-Aqsa *intifada* at the end of September 2000, the stalling peace negotiations, and the growing antagonism between Israelis and Palestinians curtailed the continued development of the new approach. Crude Holocaust denial re-emerged as a means for delegitimizing Israel and Zionism, along with motifs that had typified the discourse of the early years of the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as regret that Hitler had not finished the job. Jarir al-Qidwa, an education adviser to Yasir ‘Arafat, stated that claims that Jews were murdered in the Holocaust are “all lies and unfounded claims” to evoke sympathy from the world. There was “no Dachau, no Auschwitz. [They] were disinfecting sites,” he concluded.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, a history lecturer at the Islamic University in Gaza, ‘Isam Sisalim, considered to be an expert on Jews and Judaism, reasserted in the Palestinian TV program “Pages from our History,” on November 29, 2000, that “No Chelmo, no Dachau, no Auschwitz! [They] were disinfecting sites.” He accused the Jews of inventing the lie of extermination in order to

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30. “The Jordanian Writers Association”; Jerusalem Post, April 17, 23, May 22, 2001; al-Safir, April 20, 2001; “Why the ‘Holocaust’ Is Important to Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims?”; “A Conversation with Dr. Ibrahim Alloush,” 7; Jordan Times, May 15, al-Hayat al-Jadida, May 15, 2001; al-Jazira TV, May 15, 2001, MEMRI, Dispatch 225, June 6, 2001; “Short Report on Amman Forum.”

31. The Jewish Week, December 20, 2000.

justify the establishment of Israel, a “foreign entity, implanted as a cancer” in the Arab land. “They always portrayed themselves as victims, and they made a Center for Heroism and Holocaust. Whose heroism? Holocaust? Heroism is our nation’s, the holocaust was against our people. . . We were the victims, but we shall not remain victims forever.”<sup>32</sup> PA semi-official paper *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, for example, published on 13 April 2001 an article by Khayri Mansur, “marketing ashes,” in which he raised several recurring themes of Holocaust denial: the claim of political and economic exploitation by Zionist propaganda, the deflated number of the exterminated Jews, and the lack of scientific evidence on the use of gas.<sup>33</sup>

References to the Holocaust seem to increase, especially in times of crises and Israeli-Palestinian encroachments, such as operation “Cast Lead” in 2008-9, “Protective Edge” in 2012, and “Pillars of Defense” in 2014 in Gaza.<sup>34</sup> Social networks and catchy caricatures play an important role in reinforcing the major themes of the traditional Arab representation of the Holocaust. Among these are the denial and trivialization of the Holocaust, the equation of the Palestinian tragedy with the Holocaust, the equation of Jewish/Zionist ideology and policies with Nazi racist ideology and deeds, and the accusation of Zionist instrumentalization of the Holocaust. International Holocaust Remembrance Day also serves as an occasion to refer to the Holocaust in the press and in the social networks, revealing a blend of denial and ignorance.<sup>35</sup>

But voices propagating the new approach did not disappear, and their impact was reflected in statements, by Arabs visiting Auschwitz and Holocaust Museums, and by Arab scholars participating in conferences dealing with the Holocaust. Jordan’s Prince Hasan Bin Talal, brother of the late King Husayn, was among the special guests invited to a ceremony marking the rededication of the lone remaining synagogue in the Polish town of Oswiecim in September 2000.<sup>36</sup> Palestinian scholar Ghasan ‘Abdallah visited Yad Vashem twice in 1999 and 2000,<sup>37</sup> and other Palestinian scholars discussed the Holocaust from a Palestinian perspective in different academic forums. Nadim Rouhana, an Israeli Arab scholar,

32. PATV, November 29, 2000, Palestinian Media Watch (PMW) November 29, 2000.

33. *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, April 13, 2001. See also *Jerusalem Post*, April 18, 19, June 8, 2001; *Ma’ariv*, April 19, 2001.

34. See for example: *al-Dustur*, December 29, 30, 2008; Massad, “The Gaza Ghetto Uprising”; *al-Risala*, July 3, 2014; “Al-Qawasmeh.”

35. See for example: *Al-Dustur*, May 11, 14, *al-Ayyam*, May 17, *al-Sinara*, April 18, 2008.

36. Satloff, *Among the Righteous*, 182-3; *New York Times*, *Victoria Advocate*, September 13, 2000. Oswiecim had a thriving Jewish community before the Germans built the nearby death camp, Auschwitz, and turned it into the industrial core of the final solution.

37. Ghasan, “Filastini fi al-sarh al-tazakkuri lil-hulukust,” 56-59.

participated along with other Muslims in the “Third World Views of the Holocaust” conference which took place in Boston in April 2001; Palestinian activist Ata Qaymari presented a paper on in the Palestinian perspective at a conference held in Cyprus in 2004. The conference, co-sponsored by the Yakar Center for Social Concern, the Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy and Community Development (Panorama), and the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, brought together 16 Israeli and Palestinian academics and journalists to discuss shared histories. US-based Palestinian scholar Saliba Sarsar also wrote a paper on the Holocaust and the *Nakba* in cooperation with Dan Bar-On.<sup>38</sup>

The event that symbolizes, more than any other, the acceptance of the Holocaust for what it is was the trip to the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 26-30, 2003, by a group of 250 Israeli Arabs and Jews and a group of Muslims, Christians and Jews from France, in defiance of significant criticism, particularly by Israeli Arabs.<sup>39</sup> The trip was initiated by Christian Arab educator Father Emile Shoufani, who launched a campaign “memory for peace” to learn “the Jewish pain” and “the origins of anxiety” which determined the Israelis’ attitude toward the ‘other,’ in order to share the pain and eventually pave the way for better understanding and coexistence. Realizing the significance of the Holocaust in the Israeli psyche, he believed that “the memory of the Holocaust is the key for reopening the dialogue” between the Palestinians and the Israelis, which had been severed due to the *intifada*.<sup>40</sup>

Shoufani rejected any linkage between his will to share the Jewish pain and the acknowledgement of the Palestinian suffering, insisting that the act of compassion is unilateral in order to “break the cycle of give and take that proved to be a vicious circle.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Palestinian activist Ata Qaymari suggested that the Palestinians learn not to mix their anger against occupation with a human reaction to the suffering of the other. “Such an attitude will help Jews not only overcome their trauma, but also to identify with the three forms of the Palestinian agony, namely, racial discrimination, occupation and exile.”<sup>42</sup>

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38. Rouhana, “The Holocaust and Psychological Dynamics”; Qaymari, “The Holocaust in the Palestinian Perspective,” 148-153.

39. *Fasl al-Maqal*, February 21, 28, March 7, 2003.

40. *Ha'aretz*, February 3, 5, 7, May 27, 2003; *al-Sinara*, February 7, March 14, 2003; *Kul al-'Arab*, February 7, June 5, 2003; *Panorama*, February 7, May 30, June 11, 2003; *al-Mashhad al-Isra'ili*, May 2, 2003; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, May 25, 2003; *Ma'ariv*, May 28, 2003; *Yedi'ot Aharonot*, May 30, 2003. A comprehensive account of Shoufani's worldview and initiative, see: Mouttapa, *Un Arabe Face à Auschwitz*.

41. Mouttapa, *ibid.*, 271.

42. Qaymari, “The Holocaust in the Palestinian Perspective,” 152-3.

## CONCLUSION

Upon becoming the Palestinian Authority's Prime Minister in 2003 and in line with the new approach, Mahmud 'Abbas, (whose Ph.D. dissertation accused Zionism of collaborating with Nazism and contested the number of Jewish victims) retracted his thesis' assumptions, in an interview with Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* admitting that "the Holocaust was a terrible, unforgivable crime against the Jewish nation that could not be denied." He reiterated this view in his concluding statement at the end of the Aqaba summit between him and Israeli PM Sharon on 4 June 2003,<sup>43</sup> but only this year did he dare to declare his view explicitly to his own people.

The responses to his statement in the Arab media were diverse. There were those who supported his approach but most of them qualified that support. An editorial in a pan-Arab daily agreed with 'Abbas, despite what it termed "the Holocaust industry". Several talkbacks called to separate the Palestinian problem and the Holocaust, yet accused "international Zionism" of inflating it and turning it into a myth. Egyptian paper *Al-Masry al-Youm* chose to emphasize, in an article by Muhammad Kassab, the controversies in the Arab discourse on the Holocaust over the veracity of the event and its exploitation by Israel for plundering Germany and the western countries, while the oppressive acts of the 'Chosen People' against the Palestinians continued. Kassab quoted the late Egyptian intellectual 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Masiri, considered an expert on the Holocaust, who claimed that Israel is using the Holocaust and forces Europe to support her, while blackmailing it politically and economically. *Al-Quds al-'Arabi's* editorial on April 27, titled "'Abbas and the Holocaust industry", approved of 'Abbas' approach but at the same time accused Israel of turning the Holocaust memory into an industry which justified the oppression of the Palestinians.<sup>44</sup> A post in a Palestinian site by Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir Muhammad Abu al-Nahl on April 28 repeated similar allegations, adding that the Zionist enemy is the "real Nazi," and the "Palestinian people is [sic] being burnt in the fire of the Zionist occupier."<sup>45</sup> A pro-Hamas site, on the other hand, criticized 'Abbas on April 28, in an article by Fayiz Abu Shamala, agreeing with Netanyahu that he should choose between Palestinian conciliation and appeasement of Israel. It claimed Holocaust denial was of little concern but that Israel was

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43. *Ha'aretz*, May 28, 2003; *The Guardian* 29 May 2003; "PM Abbas and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon," 150.

44. Kassab, "The Holocaust." See also editorial "'Abbas and the Holocaust Trade."

45. Abu al-Nahl, "The Fire of the Real Holocaust."

“the Holocaust of the Palestinians,” as per Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zahra.<sup>46</sup>

In the second decade of the 21st century, it seems that the taboo on the Holocaust has been partly lifted. Calls for original Arab research and for spreading knowledge of the Holocaust, Arabs admitting visiting the death camps, Yad Vashem and the Washington Holocaust Museum (USHMM) are a far cry from the ban on information of the past. Mainstream Palestinian and Arab discourse accepts the occurrence of the Holocaust, but it continues to challenge its uniqueness and scope while de-legitimizing Israel and Zionism, and while the major themes of the traditional Arab representation of the Holocaust still prevail.

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46. Shamala, “The Holocaust and Reconciliation”; “Netanyahu Accuses ‘Abbas.’”



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