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# CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM IN MODERN MEDIA, THE LEGAL AND POLITICAL WORLDS

*Edited by Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat,  
Lawrence H. Schiffman*

AN END TO ANTISEMITISM!



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**Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media,  
the Legal and Political Worlds**

# **An End to Antisemitism!**



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Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat,  
and Lawrence H. Schiffman

## **Volume 5**

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# Preface and Acknowledgements

Extreme right-wing movements are no longer the only home for antisemitism. On the contrary, antisemitism is ever more present in all parts of our society. The unfathomable tradition of discrimination against Jews, insults, and antisemitic hate crimes is carried out by political, religious, and lay groups from all sides of the political spectrum. Modern media such as TV, internet, and online social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are cauldrons of antisemitic agitation and unconsciously contribute to the dissemination of Jew-hatred around the globe. Given this unacceptable reality, in February 2018, approximately one thousand scholars, activists, decision makers, and influencers met in Vienna at the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” The conference was jointly organized by the European Jewish Congress, New York University, Tel Aviv University, and the University of Vienna to study antisemitism with an unprecedented interdisciplinary breadth and historical depth. Over 150 presenters from all over the world engaged with all forms of antisemitism from a variety of perspectives. The present series, “An End to Antisemitism!,” documents the conference’s output and research results from various fields. Leading experts in religious studies, history, political studies, social sciences, philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, and cultural studies shed light onto antisemitic traditions from all their respective viewpoints. Together, they help to shape a discourse of understanding, knowing, and recognizing various forms of antisemitism in order to confront and combat them.

One of the aims of the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” was, therefore, to create concrete policy recommendations regarding how to effectively combat antisemitism. These have been collected and published in a separate *Catalogue of Policies*,<sup>1</sup> a document of practical impact. They also form one of the bases of the first volume of the present series.<sup>2</sup> All subsequent volumes are addressed to an academic audience. They document the research leading to these policy recommendations.

The present volume focuses on the history of the so-called “New Antisemitism.” Its contributions try to trace the history of transformation of antisemitism after World War II and the Shoah and its continuing reshaping. Opposition to

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1 A. Lange, A. Muzicant, D. Porat, L. H. Schiffman, M. Weitzman, *An End to Antisemitism! A Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism* (Brussels: European Jewish Congress, 2018).

2 A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

Zionism and criticism of the Israeli government, especially from the Muslim world, are often now the most visible representations of this new form of antisemitism. They flourish worldwide and are not restricted to the margins of the political spectrum. The first part of the present volume thus engages with the socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic processes that led to this transformation of Jew-hatred and, on the other hand, identifies antisemitic elements that have an age-old tradition and that are reiterated in new contexts and in a new form. Manifestations of this new form of antisemitism can be encountered first and foremost in modern media. The internet and its worldwide accessibility contributed vastly to the spread of global antisemitism in its various forms. The second part of the volume thus provides some examples of how modern media serve as outlets of social, political, and economic discontent that is reflected back upon the Jews and often conflated with age-old stereotypes, narratives, and conspiracy theories. The last part, finally, presents our readers with ideas and proposals to strategically confront and, possibly, counteract Jew-hatred, both on an individual and a global socio-political level supported by international and intergovernmental organizations. Each of these three parts is preceded by a short overview of its articles that brings together different strands of the overarching topic of the transformation of antisemitism and manifestations of its various new forms. A general introduction to the volume brings together theoretical aspects and historical theories of “New Antisemitism” that form the basis for the understanding of this new form of Jew-hatred and its subsequent manifestations both on- and offline, in both Muslim and Western societies.

A project like this volume, and the whole series, surely cannot be completed without the assistance of other individuals. Therefore, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to a list of people who have supported us in shaping this volume and bringing it to life.

First, we would like to give a word of thanks to all our colleagues who have contributed to the present volume. Their research documents a vast interdisciplinarity of fields which makes not only the present volume but the complete series “An End to Antisemitism!” an unparalleled publication.

We are grateful to De Gruyter Publishers for accepting our five-volume series of conference proceedings for publication. The support that Albrecht Döhnert, Sophie Wagenhofer, and Alice Meroz gave us in preparing these mammoth proceedings for publication has been exemplary. The same gratitude is due to Anna Cwikla. As with volumes one and two, she has made an enormous effort in proof-reading, copyediting, and English stylizing.

The other editors are especially grateful to Kerstin Mayerhofer for again taking the lead in editing our proceedings. Her commitment has been unparalleled

and without her, neither the present volume nor the other outcomes of the conference would exist.

Of course, a project like this requires significant funds which are often surprisingly difficult to raise. It is therefore a more than a pleasure to express our gratitude to our main sponsor Moshe Kantor, President of the European Jewish Congress. Moshe Kantor provided much needed financial support not only for the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” in 2018 but also for all its printed outcomes. At the same time, we would also like to take the opportunity to convey words of thanks to all other sponsors as listed on pages 433–34.

Many more people have been involved in the project. They participated in the conference in 2018 and have supported us in the preparation of the conference proceedings. All their names are listed in volume one of *An End to Antisemitism!*<sup>3</sup>

New York, Tel Aviv, and Vienna, July 13, 2020

Armin Lange  
Kerstin Mayerhofer  
Dina Porat  
Lawrence H. Schiffman

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<sup>3</sup> Lange, Mayerhofer, Porat, and Schiffman, *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism*, xi–xvii.



Lisa Jacobs, Armin Lange, and Kerstin Mayerhofer

## Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal and Political Worlds: Introduction

Today's ever-increasing antisemitism confronts politicians, legislators, and other decision makers with unique challenges. The ADL Global 100 survey, which began in 2014, has shown that around twenty-six percent of the inhabitants of all surveyed countries harbor antisemitic attitudes in a variety of forms, from politically influenced anti-Israel sentiments to openly expressed Jew-hatred. It has also documented that antisemitic sentiments are on the rise in all countries of the world in which surveys have been conducted between 2014 and 2019. This means that a total of more than one billion people around the globe from any side of the political spectrum foster negative attitudes against Jews as individuals, Jews as a community, the State of Israel, or Zionist movements.<sup>1</sup> This increased number of antisemitic views and antisemitic behavior that manifests itself in hate speech and hate crimes directed against Jews all over the world cannot be ignored. Jews and non-Jews alike are faced with new forms of antisemitism that demand the attention of all human beings more than ever. To understand the transformation of antisemitism and its various manifestations in the modern world, one needs to deal with a set of questions. We need to ask ourselves: What are the reasons for the shocking and seemingly surprising explosion of Jew-hatred? In which parts of our societies do we encounter antisemitism today? What role do the internet and modern media play? How can antisemitism be combatted effectively, both on a national and international scale? Are there countries, cultures, and religions that are particularly prone to Jew-hatred? If so, how and why do their views regarding Jews and Judaism differ from those of other communities? How can Jews, Jewish communities, and Jewish institutions be protected? The answers to these and other questions will help to address what can only be described as one of the humanitarian crises of our times.

With the exceptions of the State of Israel as well as Jewish organizations and communities outside of Israel, decisions makers worldwide were often and largely reluctant to properly acknowledge the explosion of Jew-hatred. For more than a decade, little to nothing has been done to address, discuss, and counter it. Only in recent years did some transnational organizations and states begin to address the issue of rising antisemitic beliefs and manifestations. Others still ignore it, are ambivalent to Jew-hatred, openly support antisemitism, or employ antise-

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1 Cf. ADL Global 100, accessed July 13, 2020, <https://global100.adl.org/>.

mitic sentiments. For instance, only a few years ago, Hungary's prime minister Viktor Orbán, in a national election campaign of his Fidesz [Hungarian Civic Alliance] party, described the Jewish billionaire George Soros as a grinning Jew using a classic antisemitic stereotype in his polemics against the philanthropist.<sup>2</sup>

Scholars, decision makers, and activists disagree about the causes of contemporary Jew-hatred, its nature, and how to combat it effectively. In the academic world, such controversies often lead to productive discourses that facilitate a better understanding of Jew-hatred and help to develop strategies to combat it. However, outside the academic discourse, the fight against antisemitism suffers from disagreements as each state and organization not only understands the nature of antisemitism differently but also sometimes employs even contradictory strategies in fighting it. For instance, when antisemitic hate speech is prohibited in some countries but not legally persecuted in others, antisemites can simply broadcast their agitation via websites from states that have a very far reaching interpretation of freedom of speech into states that have a much stricter policy with regard to hate speech. An example for this practice can be found in the German Neo-Nazi band *Volkszorn*. When listed by the German Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the band distributed its music via a US music label keeping it thus accessible not only for German Neo-Nazis but for antisemites around the world.<sup>3</sup>

Acknowledging the current deteriorating situation and in an effort to raise awareness to the fight against antisemitism, the conference “An End to Antisemitism!” has developed a catalogue of policies to combat antisemitism.<sup>4</sup> This catalogue offers strategies for decision makers in different parts of society and provides suggestions for how to effectively combat Jew-hatred in a coordinated and long-term approach. The present volume of our conference proceedings does not want to reiterate these strategies but rather to shed light on the discourse out of which these recommendations developed for the realm of the modern media, the legal, and political worlds.

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2 Cf. N. Thorpe, “Hungary Vilifies Financier Soros with Crude Poster Campaign,” *BBC News*, July 10, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40554844>.

3 Cf. Bundesverfassungsschutz, ed., *Rechtsextremistische Musik* (Cologne: Bundesverfassungsschutz, 2007), 11.

4 Cf. A. Lange, A. Muzicant, D. Porat, L. H. Schiffman, M. Weitzman, *An End to Antisemitism! A Catalogue of Policies to Combat Antisemitism* (Brussels: European Jewish Congress, 2018). The conference proceedings volumes support the recommendations for the fight against antisemitism that are presented in the catalogue on a multi-disciplinary scholarly level. Cf. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019).

As a proven academic approach, the conference organizers consciously invited academics, decision makers, and activists who hold different and sometimes even conflicting opinions about the nature and causes of antisemitism as well as about the proper way to fight it. The discourse between such contradictory opinions allowed for constructive criticism out of which policy recommendations for fighting antisemitism were developed. The present volume does not only document these disagreements for reasons of scholarly productivity, but it also wants to present its readers with the broad scope of opinions regarding the rise of and fight against antisemitism present at our conference and wants to thus invite readers to draw their own conclusions.

Because the nature of antisemitism is as diverse as the many forms in which Jew-hatred expresses itself, the conference participants of “An End to Antisemitism!” were and are committed to a wide spectrum of different theories explaining it. Social, philosophical, and psychological theories about the nature of antisemitism are the conceptual focus of volume 4 of the present series.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the theoretical approach to understanding antisemitism also determines the practical recommendations a given scholar might or might not provide for effectively combatting antisemitism. If scholars are committed to an economical explanation of antisemitism, their recommendations for combatting it might include the growing precariousness of the world’s population in both its developing and developed societies. If scholars are committed to a social psychological approach, their recommendations might focus more on the causes of patterns of hatred in a given societal community. However, given the diversity and *longue durée* of antisemitism, a single theoretical framework falls often short of explaining it. The contributions to the present volume are therefore committed to a whole range of theories of antisemitism depending on which aspect of Jew-hatred they focus on in their studies. What unifies them is neither a shared theoretical approach nor that they reflect antisemitism from a scholarly or activist perspective. As in all other volumes of “An End to Antisemitism!”, the guiding principle is to reflect both the plurality of theoretical approaches to antisemitism and the plurality of different ways to confront it in practice.

Therefore, the present volume consists of three parts that each address different aspects of *Confronting Antisemitism in Modern Media, the Legal, and Political Worlds*. The first part is dedicated to the theoretical reflection of antisemitism in political, legal, media, and other contexts. The second part engages with var-

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5 Cf. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, eds., *Confronting Antisemitism from Perspectives of Philosophy and Social Sciences*, vol. 4 of *An End to Antisemitism!* (Berlin: De Gruyter, forthcoming).



ious manifestations of antisemitism. Together, the first two parts shed light on the modern and contemporary evolutions of antisemitism from the twentieth century onwards. Herein, they cover a crucial part of the history of antisemitism and serve as complement to volume 3 of the present series which focuses on the historical continuity of antisemitism prior to the twentieth century. The third and last part of the present volume gives a voice to activists who combat antisemitism in their everyday work. This part points to the need of a globally coordinated approach on the political and legal levels as well as with regard to the modern media to effectively combat and, hopefully, put an end to antisemitism.

## The Recent Transformation of Antisemitism

Most if not all contributions to the present volume identify a transformation of antisemitism in recent decades that resulted in what is now often described as “New Antisemitism.”<sup>6</sup> After the Shoah, open and blatant Jew-hatred became taboo in most Western states and was more or less marginalized toward the radical right of the political spectrum. In the last decades, however, antisemitism became socially acceptable again in the Western world. In many Muslim countries, on the other hand, antisemitism was never socially unacceptable which points to a different societal development in the Arab world. Today, antisemitism seems to even form a pan-Islamic ideology that wants to form a common pan-Arabic group identity or—beyond the Arab world—a pan-Islamic identity by attacking an alleged “Zionist imperialist enemy.”<sup>7</sup>

To cover all manifestations of New Antisemitism would of course go beyond the possibilities of a single collected volume or even all volumes of this miniseries. The essays of the present volume focus thus on select topics and emphasize especially the systemic aspect of New Antisemitism. Their three main topics are (1) the internet as a main communicator of Jew-hatred that makes antisemitism socially acceptable again all over the world; (2) antisemitism in the world of Islam; and (3) anti-Zionism, especially in Muslim countries and the left-wing political spectrum in the Western world as an expression of New Antisemitism. The

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6 Cf. e.g. I. Cotler, “Global Antisemitism: Assault on Human Rights,” *ISGAP Working Papers* (2009): 5–18, <https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ISGAP-Working-Papers-Booklet-Cotler-09-copy.pdf>; N. Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, nos. 3–4 (2004): 5–8; R. Wistrich, “The Old-New Anti-Semitism,” *The National Interest* 72 (2003): 59–70.

7 G. Jikeli, “Attitudes of Syrian and Iraqi Refugees in Germany toward Jews,” 239–68 of the present volume.

editors and authors of the present volume are keenly aware that other expressions of Jew-hatred are virulent today as well—such as racist right-wing antisemitism—but regard the mentioned three expressions of Jew-hatred as particularly neglected in the last decades and therefore as all the more dangerous.

Most states of the world of Islam either do not address the rampant antisemitism in their societies or even actively support Jew-hatred and anti-Zionism. In these societies, Jew-hatred draws on traditions that reach back to the beginnings of Islam. This pre-colonial Muslim antisemitism was transformed before, during, and after World War II by the influence of Western antisemitism. The colonial powers communicated Western Jew-hatred into many Muslim countries even before the twentieth century. Especially Nazi propaganda played a significant role in transforming Islamic antisemitism during and after World War II contributing thus to its current shape. In this way, Muslim anti-Zionist antisemitism became one of the new faces of Islamic Jew-hatred already during the Nazi period. Nowadays, this transformed Muslim Jew-hatred influences in turn the Western world both through Muslim immigrants and anti-Zionist propaganda that meets especially open ears in the left part of the Western political spectrum.

Anti-Zionism is therefore a second important theme addressed and discussed in various essays in all three parts of the present volume. Hatred and demonization of the State of Israel links Western left-wing antisemitism with the Jew-hatred of the Muslim world. The BDS movement builds bridges between anti-colonialist groups of the Western hemisphere that depict the Palestinian peoples in particular or even the Arab world in general as a victim of Israel as an alleged colonial apartheid state. Palestinian and other Muslim organizations that form a pan-Islamic and/or pan-Arabic group identity in applying earlier antisemitic traditions of the Muslim and Western worlds to the Jewish state is another important factor. In both hemispheres of the world, the State of Israel was turned into the figurative “New Jew” subjected to New Antisemitism. Through anti-Zionism, Muslim antisemitism had and has a significant impact on the Western world, contributing to the increased social acceptance of anti-Zionist attitudes in the West. Here, Muslim anti-Zionism found receptive ears as it met with earlier anti-Zionist and antisemitic traditions in all parts of the political and religious spectrum of its societies. At least in part, the acceptability of Jew-hatred is thus due to the Muslim influence on the Western world as communicated through the BDS movement and other manifestations of Western anti-Zionism. A particular danger in the Western world is the coded (anti-Zionist) Jew-hatred in left and center parts of its political spectrum. This form of antisemitism is not easily identified by the untrained eye.

Many essays of the present volume are concerned with the question of what enabled the transformation of antisemitism into a form of Jew-hatred that, once

again, became acceptable in the societies of the Western world. They identify the internet in general and social media in particular as a crucial factor. By way of its global reach and its uncontrolled spread of false information and slander, the internet in general and social media in particular have contributed to freeing the political and general public from their inhibitions with regards to Jew-hatred and thus helped antisemitism become socially acceptable again. The internet is thus one of the most important and main multipliers of contemporary Jew-hatred.

All of the above as well as the arguments made in the essays of the present volume point to a need for a globally coordinated approach in which the decision makers and influencers of the political, legal, and media worlds could and should play a significant and decisive role. Suggestions and recommendations how to counter antisemitism on an international and intergovernmental level are given in the third part of the present collection. Together with others, these suggestions were developed into the systematic approach outlined in the first volume of the present miniseries.<sup>8</sup>

## Confronting Antisemitism through Critical Reflection/Approaches

Antisemitism is a hydra with many heads. As in the ancient myth, when one of these heads is cut off, that is, when one form of antisemitism is eradicated, two new ones grow in its stead. The reason for this seeming imperishability of antisemitism is the pluralistic nature and *longue durée* of antisemitism. Antisemitism is a quasi-religious ideology that is employed by a whole range of different groups, religions, and cultures which are often even hostile to each other. Antisemites and antisemitic groups use the religious symbols, stereotypes, and prejudices of antisemitic thought to interpret not only the Jewish “Other” but, even more importantly, their own reality. In this way, various crises are conceived in light of antisemitic cultural memories.<sup>9</sup> This versatility of antisemitism is the reason why no single theoretical approach is sufficient to understand its nature. De-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lange, Mayerhofer, Porat, and Schiffman, *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism*.

<sup>9</sup> For more information on antisemitism as a form of system of religious symbols and its role in the formation of religious and cultural identity cf. A. Lange and K. Mayerhofer, “Introduction,” in *Confronting Antisemitism from Perspectives of Christianity, Islam and Judaism*, vol. 2 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L. H. Schiffman, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 1–22.

pending on the historical, cultural, and religious contexts, antisemitism's character varies as much as the causes that trigger it. Therefore, the essays in the first part of the present volume employ a whole range of different theory-driven approaches to understand the nature of contemporary antisemitism. Among these approaches, the critical theory as founded by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno<sup>10</sup> and as developed in post-colonial thought plays a significant role (see in particular the contributions by Ljiljana Radonić, Jan Rathje, and to a lesser extent, by Stephan Grigat).

As critical theory informs many of the more theoretically oriented contributions to the present volume, a few words about this particular theoretical approach will support the reader in accessing these essays. Critical theory's understanding of antisemitism is based on a combination of economic criticism, psychology, and cultural theory. It perceives Jew-hatred as a projection of reality and as a constant criticism of power. Horkheimer and Adorno do not claim to provide a universal theory explaining the history of Jew-hatred. Instead, their critical theory is interested in the contradictions of society and thus derives the object of criticism from the circumstances and relations of power and domination. The antisemitism of the modern period differs and, consequently, needs to be distinguished from earlier forms of Jew-hatred that were more religiously motivated. This change goes hand in hand with the rise of capitalism and the immense social developments that ensued with it. The conflation of Jews with money and usury in pre-modern times laid the foundation based on which not only everything inherently negative but even the abstraction of capitalism could be projected onto the Jews perceived as a collective providing thus simple explanatory patterns for complex phenomena. Examples for this perceptive shift include the fiscal Jewish world conspiracy theory claiming that Jews would manipulate the monetary system to secretly rule the world.

According to the critical theory, provoked by changing social conditions, the "biologization of capitalism"<sup>11</sup> added a new dimension to modern antisemitism. This biologization can only be understood in terms of its manifestations in an abstract way. Jews are no longer seen as individuals but rather as belonging to a communal group, that is identified as "International Jewry,"<sup>12</sup> projecting any antisemitic stereotype onto the Jews in a wholesale approach. The Nazi extermination camps, like Auschwitz, are interpreted as factories that would destroy

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. T. W. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> M. Postone, "Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to 'Holocaust'," *New German Critique* 19 (1980): 112.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

general social and cultural values of this communal group, that is, they destroyed “the personifications of the abstract.”<sup>13</sup>

Critical theory emphasizes, on the other hand, that this new dimension of modern antisemitism was not an invention of the Nazis. Adorno notes that “antisemitism was not first injected into German culture by Hitler from outside, but rather this culture was permeated with antisemitic prejudices right up to the point where it appeared to be most cultivated.”<sup>14</sup> Critical theory’s approach to antisemitism is thus limited in its theoretical reflection to a particular form of Jew-hatred and neither intends nor is it suited to guide the study of all forms and aspects of antisemitism. Critical theory rightly emphasizes the impact that the birth of capitalism had on antisemitism, but it is, for example, not suited to take the religious aspect of contemporary Islamic antisemitism into consideration.

Therefore, other theoretical frameworks employed by the essays in this part include intersectionality (Karin Stögner), the idea of a clash of cultures (Andreas Benl) as well as a conceptual history approach (Dan Michman). A special focus of all these papers is the antisemitism and anti-Zionism of the Muslim world and its reflections in western societies. Other essays (Jan Rathje, Dan Michman) view contemporary antisemitism with a long-term perspective pointing to the changed attitude toward Judaism in European societies and the transformed nature of antisemitic hatred as compared to medieval and early modern times.

In his essay, Dan MICHMAN presents the *Jews as a Problem for Modern European Political Logic*. He describes the historical situation of the Jews in Europe by means of a conceptual history of Jewish identity. Beginning with the European Middle Ages, Michman argues that Judaism has a unique position: Jewish identity was considered as religious and ethnic and as posing no problem to existing norms. Jews were tolerated but were nevertheless perceived as a religious and cultural “Other” opposed to the Christian majority society. This situation changed in the early modern period with the gradual emergence of modern states. With the enlightened idea of individualism, the Jewish ethnic or national identity was no longer tolerated. Modern antisemitism, finally, provided an answer for how to deal with Jewish identity, namely to see the problem in “Jewishness” itself. In the nineteenth century, following the rise of Zionism, the conceptualization of the “Jew” was increasingly replaced by the “Israelite” to emphasize the special character of the Jews as one nationality. By the end of

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>14</sup> T. W. Adorno, “Zur Bekämpfung des Antisemitismus heute,” in *Vermischte Schriften 1: Theorien und Theoretiker, Gesellschaft, Unterricht, Politik*, vol. 20 of *Gesammelte Schriften in zwanzig Bänden* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2003), 382–83. Translation by Lisa Johanne Jacobs.

the nineteenth century, “new racial theories provided antisemites with a tool that could put all the different Jews into one basket—the Jews as a race, or better, as a counter-race” (39). Michman concludes that hatred of Jews is a simple answer to a complex situation based on pseudo-scientific concepts that generalize Jewish identity.

Conspiracy theories played a significant role in contemporary antisemitism at least since the 9/11 terror attacks. In his essay “*Money Rules the World, but Who Rules the Money?*” *Antisemitism in post-Holocaust Conspiracy Ideologies*, Jan RATHJE demonstrates how antisemitism and conspiracy theories are connected. In the first part, Rathje compares the structures and functions of conspiracy narratives and antisemitism and points to striking similarities: “Antisemitism is ultimately defined by Horkheimer and Adorno as a ‘*pathische Projektion*’ (*pathological projection*), which implies a projection without reflection of the Self within the object of consideration; antisemitic conspiracy ideologies and myths are a part of this process” (51). Rathje further corroborates his argument by pointing to the historical continuity from the Middle Ages through *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* until today. In particular, he discusses the linguistic vehicle of “detour-communication” (52), which means that antisemitism is no longer expressed explicitly but implicitly. In a qualitative analysis of two hundred postings on German conspiracy-ideological Facebook pages, Rathje shows how the myth of a “Jewish World Conspiracy” is coded. It becomes clear that even today, elements of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* are still being used in conspiracy-ideological communications on the internet. A larger public needs to be educated about antisemitic conspiracy theories to be able to identify and combat conspiracy narratives and antisemitism.

The papers by Karin Stögner, Andreas Benl, and Ljiljana Radonić discuss various aspects of reception of Muslim antisemitism in the Western world and are guided in their approach by critical theory as well as by other approaches.

Karin STÖGNER employs the concept of intersectionality in her essay *Antisemitism and Intersectional Feminism: Strange Alliances* and uses antisemitic “pinkwashing” polemics against the state of Israel as a test case for her theory. Intersectionality describes how social and political categories of an individual or social group (such as race, class, and gender) might combine to modes of discrimination. Stögner shows, on the one hand, that antisemitism is the blind spot in intersectionality concepts and how Queer feminism increasingly allies with global antisemitism. In particular, Stögner addresses the anti-Israel accusation of “pinkwashing,” that is, the practice of shifting the focus away from the Israeli-Palestine conflict to Israel’s exemplary tolerance of LGBTIQ+ people. Stögner then analyzes the reasons for why the concept of intersectionality is instrumentalized for the expression of latent or manifest antisemitism. She identi-

fies antisemitism as inherently intersectional and “anti-identity,” with other social determinations like race, class, and gender greatly influencing antisemitic manifestations. However, antisemitism claims a special role since it does not correspond with clear-cut divisions such as blackness/whiteness or female/male. Rather, Jews serve as figurative representations of either side of a socio-political spectrum as well as surpassing classic categories of socio-cultural determination. They are seen as symbols of both capitalism and communism, they are neither clearly male nor female, and overall can be regarded as social and cultural misfits with regards to their wholesale artificiality and unauthenticity. Therefore, in her analysis, Stögner aims at a new concept of intersectionality, with which she wants to describe the relationship between antisemitism and other ideologies and which she calls “intersectionality of ideologies” (69).

Andreas BENL engages with *Cultural Relativism and Antisemitism: History, Encounters, and Consequences of Ethno-Religious Identity Politics in the Orient and the West*. He explains how the “Clash of Cultures” came to be the leading explanation for the religio-political problems in the Middle East, proposed by actors of the political left and right alike. His main thesis is that political Islam was favored in its rise by the increasingly dominant cultural relativism in Western states. Using the historical development of Iran since 1905 as an example, Benl demonstrates how political Islam could finally become a state ideology. With the Islamic revolution, antisemitism and the destruction of the Jewish state became one of the guiding principles of the Iranian regime. Benl sees the decisive link between left cultural relativists, right ethnopluralists and Islamists in their antisemitism or anti-Zionism. For a better future in the Middle East, Islamist identity politics need to be confronted. Solidarity with Israel needs to be created as much as a situation in which antisemitic regimes will fear the consequences of their actions.

Ljiljana RADONIĆ investigates *New Antisemitism and New Media: Leftist De-realization of Islamist “Emancipation.”* Similar to Benl, Radonić assumes that there is a common ground across different political camps on the left, the right, and Islamism in anti-Zionism and antisemitism. She describes modern antisemitism as a response to the rise of capitalism and social changes throughout the twentieth century. The Jews were identified as the evil and juxtaposed with the capital in an abstract way. Opposing them were the symbolic good deeds—such as labor and commodity. Antisemitism could thus be interpreted as a camouflage of capitalist criticism. On this basis, Radonić investigates this form of “New Antisemitism” on discussions in leftist new media. Before doing so, however, she describes a form of left-wing antisemitism that only developed after the Holocaust and establishes a connection to the so-called “New Antisemitism.” Therein, Radonić describes “a far-reaching ideological convergence of antisemit-

ism since 9/11 and the ‘Second Intifada’ across a range of ideologies and milieus that traditionally had precious little in common” (111). In a second empirical part, she examines reactions to the Hamas policy paper of 2017 and recognizes a whitewashing of Hamas’ Islamist antisemitism, especially apparent in the new media, on the internet, in online for a, and on various social media platforms. At last, Radonić collects and analyzes forum postings in the Austrian center-left daily paper *Der Standard* at the time when the Hamas Charta was published. This evidence provides examples for Radonić’s concluding claim that the existence of Islamic antisemitism is denied and is instead replaced by staging Muslims as the “new Jews.”

Islamist antisemitism has increased dramatically in recent years. Tracing *Islamic Radical Movements and Antisemitism: Between Old and New*, Meir LITVAK offers explanations for why antisemitism is so successful in Islamism. Antisemitism is rooted in Islamism in two ways. First, because in modern Islamism Jews are identified with “the West” which in turn is seen as the ultimate threatening “Other.” Second, in a conflation of religious and historical tradition and ideology, it is conceptualized as a result from the battles the Prophet Muhammad fought against the Jewish tribes of Medina. Litvak names three reasons why antisemitism is so successful in Islamism compared to other radical currents. First, there is a difference between desire and reality in Islam: the desire that Islam is the only and best religion and “the gloomy reality of the Islamic world’s weakness and lagging behind most other regions in the world” (136). Secondly, the longing for the glory of period of the Prophet Muhammad who defeated all his enemies and died as a ruler. “Thus, for Islamists the conflict of the Prophet Muhammad with the Jews serves as the model that must be reenacted in order to restore history to its proper course” (137). And third, Litvak identifies a clash of universalism: the universalism of the West stands against the universalism of Islamism where the West is seen as the ultimate evil. This is accompanied by the conspiracy theory that Western universalism is a tool to propagate interests of an imagined Jewish world conspiracy. This conspiracy theory is virulent in Islamism because it reduces complex interrelationships of modern society to a single actor. Litvak concludes that antisemitism is so widespread in Islamism because its roots lie in Islam itself, both on a theological and socio-cultural as well as socio-political level.

In his essay, *Antisemitic Anti-Zionism: Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and Hezbollah*, Stephan GRIGAT studies the Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and Hezbollah and their anti-Zionism in a comparative approach. He examines the antisemitisms of the mentioned Islamist groups and states and establishes similarities with the National Socialists (also direct influenced by Radio Zeesen). Grigat concludes that both Nazi and Islamist antisemitic ideologies see the greatest enemy in



“communism and materialism, liberalism and Western ‘plutocracy,’ individualism, emancipation, and Zionism” (150). Conspiracy-theorizing and projective worldviews, Holocaust denial and relativization are also commonplace. The State of Iran serves as an example for Grigat, because since the “Islamic Revolution” in 1979, it can be considered as fundamentally antisemitic, and is one of the main promoters of global antisemitism. Grigat identifies three main points of the regime’s antisemitism: firstly, the traditional Jew-hatred, secondly, the denial and relativization of the Holocaust and, lastly, the explicit threats to destroy Israel as a Jewish state. The Modern Islamic antisemitism “is decoded as a projective repudiation of a new, ambivalent and potentially emancipatory form of society” (151). Following his identification of a continuity of the Jew-hatred in the Middle East, Grigat calls for a new policy toward Iran, especially from the EU with a special focus on the nuclear agreement of 2015. Only in this way can antisemitism be effectively combated in Iran as well.

## **Comprehending Contemporary Manifestations of Antisemitism**

From more theoretically guided studies of the present volume’s first part, the essays in the second part move to the analysis of contemporary manifestations of antisemitism. This second part documents how antisemitism is a social and cultural constant that underwent a paradigm shift in the almost eight decades since the Shoah ended. An important trigger of this transformation is the internet as it provides uncensored and unfiltered opportunities for antisemites to reach widespread audiences from various cultural, social, and national backgrounds. The internet contributed thus to a spread of Jew-hatred on an unprecedented scale since the mid-twentieth century and the Nazi era.

One of the reasons why the increase of contemporary Jew-hatred was ignored outside of Judaism for such a long time is its understanding as a particular expression of a form of racism of the radical right only. This understanding ignores the contemporary and historical plurality of antisemitism. Today, as much as in the past, antisemitic sentiments can be found on all sides of the political spectrum—on the right and on the left, as well as in the middle of the society. Antisemitism is and was at home in Islam and Christianity as much as in secular groups. It was never restricted to the political right, neither today nor in previous times. What changed in contemporary antisemitism is thus not its ideological and/or religious affiliation. Rather, it is the unprecedented outreach that Jew-hatred has today which could only be achieved with the help of the internet

as mass medium. By providing it a global audience, the internet legitimized an ideology that after the Shoah was mostly ostracized by social consensus.

As a second aspect, the importance of Islamic antisemitism for the exploding Jew-hatred in today's global village is highlighted. It reaches the Western world through the internet, immigration from Muslim countries, and the BDS movement. In the world of Islam, antisemitism is particularly active in its anti-Zionist expression. While anti-Zionism existed already before the founding of the State of Israel in both the Western and Muslim worlds, today, anti-Zionism is particularly important as a pan-Arabic ideology that is intended to unite the Arabic countries in a fight against an alleged common enemy, namely Israeli and diaspora Jewry. Antisemitism in general and anti-Zionism in particular serve thus as an ideology that is instrumentalized to construct a pan-Arabic identity in delegitimizing the Jewish state as the demonic Jewish "Other." Beyond this pan-Arabic aspect, the BDS movement functions as a bridge between Arabic and western anti-Zionism that carries the Jew-hatred and anti-Zionism of the Muslim world to Europe and the Americas where it found and finds "open ears" due to already existing anti-Zionist and antisemitic sentiments in their cultural memories.

Anti-Zionism, however, now has a new target: next to the individual Jew and the collective Jewish cultural and religious "Other," now also Israel as the Jewish state becomes an object of antisemitic hatred. Nevertheless, the age-old religious symbols, stereotypes, and prejudices of Jew-hatred remain the same in anti-Zionist agitation. Next to individual Jews and the collective Jewish "Other," they are now simply also applied to the Jewish state.

The studies of the second part of the present volume largely do not point to a misguided social critique of capitalism as the root cause of today's Jew-hatred today. Rather, they focus on the internet and onto a pan-Arabic anti-Zionist ideology as those factors that triggered the contemporary explosion of Jew-hatred. The growing precariousness of the world's population might have made it more receptive to the resurgence of Jew-hatred but should not be regarded as its sole cause. After a general study concerned with social media, several case studies on antisemitism in Poland, Turkey, as well as on Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Germany engage with this subject in more detail.

Marc NEUGRÖSCHEL examines *Antisemitism and Anti-Americanism in Social Media* as a form of online redemption. He presents a review of respective social media content which combines antisemitic and anti-American narratives. Both are linked through common notions and theories of Jewish world conspiracy, manipulation of humanity, and control of the media. Neugröschel compares classical antisemitic and anti-American worldviews by focusing on their semantics which can be interpreted as a quest for enlightenment. Online discussion of an alleged Jewish world conspiracy claims to open the eyes of their audience and

aims at an acknowledgement of both the Jews' and the United States' "oppression and deception of humanity by a clandestine but powerful ruling circle" (196). Sometimes, antisemitic and anti-American ideas even intersect, identifying American Jews as the source of the utmost evil. They are furthermore conceptualized as a form of emancipation in what Neugröschel identifies as an anti-Jewish victim-perpetrator inversion. Neugröschel claims that the general public needs to free itself from their purported Jewish "oppressors." Herein, the notion follows the historical process of Jewish strive for freedom from political during the Enlightenment period. Confronting the special form of antisemitism intersecting with anti-Americanism is especially difficult since its adherents do not see themselves as reactionary and racist discriminators and continue to claim righteousness in their belief in emancipation. Herein, Neugröschel also identifies one of the bases for contemporary antisemitism that is no longer a phenomenon of the political right. Hence, he calls for a halt to the reductive perception of antisemitism as an authoritarian and conformist worldview alone.

The transformation of Jew-hatred that Neugröschel recognized as a general tendency in the world of the internet is also observed in studies focusing on individual countries. Yochanan ALTMAN et al. investigate the *Online Trade and Consumption of Jewish Figurines and Pictures of Jewish Figures in Contemporary Poland* and discuss the question of whether and how this phenomenon can be understood in the frame of an antisemitic discourse. The buying and selling of figurines depicting Orthodox Jews is widespread in contemporary Poland since they are supposed to bring good luck and wealth to their owners. While until the 1990s these figurines could be purchased mostly as souvenirs at fair markets, their online trade is flourishing in present times. The paper examines not only this internet trade but especially the verbal descriptions and notions surrounding these figurines which corroborate a symbolic image of "the Jew" in Poland. The authors' findings show that what is discussed broadly is not only these artefact's potency but also the treatment they require in order to deliver prosperity. Concluding, the authors call for reading the discourse surrounding this phenomenon "in relation to the broader historical and contemporary socio-political context, which grounds its understanding and helps to uncover the undertow of what seems at first glance to be neutral or even positive disposition but altogether continues and enshrines the well trodden path of anti-Jewish sentiment" (201).

In another case study, Rifat BALI scrutinizes *Antisemitism in Turkey as a New Phenomenon or More of the Same?* Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, a discourse was established which ought to present Turkey in the light of tolerance and following its predecessor the Ottoman Empire in its example of serving as a refuge for "all manner of refugees throughout its history" (223). Turkey was sub-

sequently glorified as a state in which antisemitism did not exist. However, Bali shows that the purpose of this glorification was a political one. Armenian-Americans had been trying to lobby the US government to officially acknowledge the Armenian genocide of 1915–1916, and Turkey was preoccupied to shore up its national image among the US public. Leaders of the country’s Jewish community were instrumentalized to support the Turkish public relations campaign to convey a clear message: “a nation that could behave with such tolerance toward its Jewish minority could not have committed the crimes against humanity that it has been accused of” (224) such as the Armenian genocide. Having disclosed this political intention, Bali traces Turkish antisemitism during the twentieth century and the history of Turkish government’s relationship with its Jewish community. Therein, he shows that while during the present period, antisemitism in Turkey is indeed on the rise, this phenomenon can only be understood in connection with the “explosion of communication [...] as Turkey has entered the digital age” (232). With increased online access, the visibility of antisemitism too has grown and with it, a second problem has arisen. The Turkish public and political establishment do not see antisemitism as a social problem to be solved. This makes combatting it very difficult and Bali calls out for a thorough information and action plan to raise general awareness for the problem. Only if the Turkish public recognizes the problem of rising antisemitism in their country and will no longer hesitate to overcome their fear of being accused as “Zionist” or “Israel lovers” and speak up against antisemitism, sufficient pressure can be generated to get the country’s decision makers to act on a political and legal level too.

Günther JIKELI, in his essay, traces *Attitudes of Syrian and Iraqi Refugees in Germany toward Jews*. Antisemitism is on the rise in present-day Germany and while different factors contribute to this rise, immigration is an important aspect. Many people who take refuge in Germany come from countries where antisemitism is politically and culturally institutionalized, such as in Syria or Iraq. Often enough, culturally inherent antisemitic attitudes intersect with Islamism and sexism which in turn fuels racist intolerance, both from immigrants and from German indigenous population itself. Jikeli’s study shows that attitudes of refugees from Syria and Iraq in Germany toward Jews range from “pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli positions, to tolerance or lack of interest, to accordance with individual antisemitic stereotypes [...] and antisemitic conspiracy theories with genocidal tendencies” (247). While Jews are generally accepted as a religious community, a Jewish nation state is ignored or explicitly denied. Religiously motivated antisemitism is also widespread among the examined cohort. Islamistic antisemitic stereotypes such as the ideas of Jewish forgery of the Holy Scripture and attempts to kill Muhammad are linked with notions of modern antisemitism like the “rich” and “conspiring” Jews, as well as with the presumption of general

hatred between Jews and Muslims. Based on his investigation, Jikeli extracts six social or ideological factors that influence antisemitic positions among Syrian and Iraqi refugees: the prevalence of antisemitism in their indigenous countries, especially also in the form of public propaganda, the widespread prevalence of antisemitism in old and new media and their uncritical consumption, an identification of Palestinians with hatred of Israel and Jews, a pan-Arab ideology opposing a common “‘Zionist imperialist’ enemy” (266) and the antisemitic interpretation of the Qur’an and its related scriptures. All of these factors cannot be separated and often reinforce each other which makes them particularly dangerous.

Jikeli’s case study pointed already to the importance of Muslim antisemitism for the global explosion of Jew-hatred. The essays by Küntzel and Shavit, therefore, address important aspects of this problem.

In his essay, Matthias KÜNTZEL poses the question: *How to Challenge Islamic Antisemitism?* Islamic antisemitism is especially dangerous as it links the Arab countries in a fight against a common enemy, namely Israeli and European Jewry. It lies at the core of the Islamist’s war against Israel and the modern world. Küntzel engages with the foundations of Islamic antisemitism which differ greatly from European antisemitism. The phantasm of the Jewish world conspiracy is foreign to Islamist antisemitism. Instead, a religious hostility based in the Qur’an and related scripture, accompanied by a general devaluation of Judaism, forms the basis for contemporary antisemitism in Muslim and, especially, Islamist communities. However, Küntzel sees Islamic antisemitism not simply as “a continuation of tradition or a response to injustice,” rather, he considers it “the product of a process of deliberate fusion of old Islamic scriptures and new conspiracy theories” (272). According to Küntzel, these theories date back only to the period of World War II. They are nevertheless not easy to combat since they are today connected to the Muslim creed. Another factor is the continuous downplaying, ignorance, and denial of Islamism and Islamic antisemitism in the politics and media of the West. Islamic Jew-hatred is often regarded as “antisemitism of the oppressed,” (275) thus claiming Israel’s liability for an unstable political situation in the Arab world. According to Küntzel, factors like these can only be countered by a “political movement against right-wing populists and against appeasers of the Left; a movement which brings together those Muslims, ex-Muslims, and non-Muslims, who want to fight Islamic antisemitism and Islamism and who want to change the attitudes of governments and media in this respect” (277). Of course, Küntzel recognizes the challenges of this enterprise. However, it is crucial to challenge Islamic antisemitism, not only as a means of protection for the Jewish communities in Europe and in the Middle East but also because it threatens the peace in the world altogether.

A particular part of Muslim propaganda claims that Muslim can be identified as the “new Jews” thus comparing Israel with the Nazi persecution of Jews. This trope is part of a typical antisemitic argumentation strategy in anti-Zionist Jew hatred, that is, that Israel would treat the Palestinians as the Nazis treated the Jews. Beyond such polemics, Uriya SHAVIT reflects on contemporary parallelisms which claims that “*Muslims are the New Jews*” in the West. He examines a canon of contemporary Muslim texts by essayists, scholars, and activists in the Arab world, in Europe and in the United States. Based on Jewish experience in the West, conclusions can be drawn and lessons learned for Muslim minorities too. Antisemitism and the struggle to combat it, segregation from and integration into surrounding major societies as well as political lobbying are Shavit’s focus. He argues that “the diversity of Jewish realities, past and present, and the general sense that Jewish minorities in the West ultimately found ways to preserve their religious identity while amassing social-political influence, have rendered comparisons between Muslims and Jews an essential aspect of different (and at times contesting) arguments about the future of Muslim minorities in the West” (283). However, Shavit also acknowledges that comparisons are often intended to convey a certain ideological discourse, are often reductionist and simplistic and sometimes even entirely ignore “the complexity of different aspects of Jewish and Muslim experiences” (302). Still, a sense of comfort can be found in a shared experience: learning that someone else has already experienced similar difficulties and still prevailed can encourage others to withstand, unite in action, both educational and political, to counter both antisemitic and anti-Muslim sentiments and to protest against common Western perceptions of Jews and Muslims alike. Being a Jew in Europe always has been a challenge, today, being a Muslim is too. Shared experience and comparison, reflected in another minority, can thus help to strengthen self-value and identity as a religious, cultural, and social minority so often threatened by social and economic marginalization, religious, and cultural demonization and general racism.

The BDS movement is not only the most prominent anti-Israel association active in present times it also builds bridges between Arab and Western anti-Zionism. In his essay, Alex FEUERHERDT asks the question *Why Israel?* To answer this question, he traces the BDS movement’s history and shows how it targets all fields of culture, from the general public, to the political sphere and from music and the arts to university campuses. The core element of BDS is the perception and denunciation of any of Israel’s political and social actions as a breach of human rights. In reverse argumentation, any act *against* the Jewish state is interpreted and welcomed as a vindication *for* human rights. Herein, the BDS movement is clearly antisemitic because it follows age-old strategies to diminish Israel as a Jewish state and the Jewish people in general in the same way that medieval

Christian polemics, Nazi ideology, Social Darwinism or post-colonialism did. However, the BDS movement goes further insofar as it tries to infiltrate every aspect of society and even collaborates with non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or the United Nations. The charges that were brought against Israel at the “World Conference against Racism” in Durban 2001 served and continue to serve as the basis for BDS’ calls for boycott, sanctions, and diplomatic isolation of the Jewish state. All of this, according to Feuerherdt, is done “with the goal to demonize Israel and to cast it as an illegitimate state which has no right to exist but has to disappear” (314). The BDS movement has thus “successfully” managed to morph antisemitism “from targeting the individual Jew to turning against the Jewish state as a collective subject” (314) while still reiterating age-old antisemitic imagery and ideologemes. Attacking Israel is their primary goal and any claim of serving the purpose of human rights, civilian society or humanitarian causes are nothing but “rhetorical gimmicks” (317).

## Activist Perspectives on Combating Antisemitism

The seven essays collected in the third and last part of the present volume enrich the scholarly perspectives brought together in the previous parts with the practical experience of activists who stand at the forefront of the fight against all forms of contemporary Jew-hatred, discrimination, and persecution. The first three essays provide national, global, and internet perspectives regarding the frightening increase in and changed character of antisemitism in Europe and worldwide.

The British Labour party is an example for a national perspective on the changed character of antisemitism and the increase of Jew-hatred. In his essay, Dave RICH asks *Why is the British Left Anti-Israel, and Why Does it Matter?* He engages with the origins of antisemitism in the political left of Britain in general and the Labour Party in particular. From a firm commitment to stand against antisemitism, the Labour Party developed into a haven for anti-Zionist Jew-hatred in particular and other forms of leftist antisemitism in general. Rich points to the anti-colonial discourse of the late sixties which polemized against Israel as an alleged colonial power, and he traces the antisemitic thought of the British left back to the identification of Jews with capitalism in the political left of the nineteenth century. Drawing into existing conspiracy theories that associated Jews with capitalism, the emerging left increasingly argued “that the working classes were oppressed by a specifically Jewish network of power and wealth” (328). Similar nineteenth-century roots can be identified for left wing

anti-Zionism, which “has never been comfortable with the idea that Jews form a nation or that Zionism is an authentic movement of national liberation.” Rather, Marxist theory denied Jews the status of an “authentic national people,” and regarded Zionism as “counter-revolutionary,” and that “both will become redundant with the onward march of history” (326). Resulting from these age-old views is an identification of Israel by the British left as “embodiment of Western domination, racism, and colonialism,” whereas the Palestinians “have come to represent all victims of Western power and militarism” (324).

A global as well as a national Australian perspective on the changed character of antisemitism and the increase in Jew-hatred is provided by Jeremy JONES in his essay *Thinking Locally, Acting Globally*. Jones traces the history of so-called ‘non-antisemites’ who commit acts of Jew-hatred while publicly denying any antisemitism. He understands non-antisemitism as a reaction to the Shoah and the taboo of antisemitism that developed after World War II as a response to this taboo. Only in countries or groups that were not affected by the shock of the Shoah, undisguised antisemitism is active today. For the past, Jones regards the Australian approach to combat antisemitism as a role model. Widespread education combined with a reappraisal of antisemitic thought in Christian traditions and their eradication contributed as much to the purging Jew-hatred from Australia as did legal restraints that quelled antisemitism in the media, political parties, religious institutions and civil society. However, the global nature of online communication made this strategy insufficient. To develop a new strategy in combating antisemitism building on the Australian model, Jones suggests as a first step “to map the universe of anti-antisemitism” and “to identify role models, inspirational figures, with standing and/or celebrity” (340).

Given the significant role of the internet as the main cause of the increased spread of antisemitism globally, André OBOLER suggests a global approach to local action in his paper *Solving Antisemitic Hate Speech in Social Media through a Global Approach to Local Action*. Such a global approach to local action is necessary to counter the worldwide spread of “Antisemitism 2.0,” that is, the “normalisation of antisemitism in society through the use of social media” (343). Currently, antisemitism is among the most widespread and common forms of hate speech on the internet, however, given its versatility, it is all the more difficult to counter and combat. Antisemitism is no longer a right-wing worldview, but rather it has become accepted largely in the general public as valid point of view, as legitimate and a form of vindication of human rights especially when it intersects with anti-Zionism. As the internet provides a forum for open and free speech, antisemitic hate speech is difficult to identify especially when looking at social media. Still, the Global Fora for Combating Antisemitism have made a solution to this problem as their top priority. A thorough monitoring process on



social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube is as much needed as an overall transparency which can be achieved through global cooperation. However, local actions and cooperation are equally important as they support community resilience and accountability. All of these methods, which Oboler describes in clear detail, can result in the development of responses to counter common and new narratives and symbols of antisemitism alike. Only in this way, technological gaps, languages barriers, and cultural differences can be bridged and both civil society and governments can be empowered to “tackle the rising, global problem of Antisemitism 2.0” (363).

Both Jones and Oboler demonstrate the need to respond to the globalized character of antisemitism on a transnational scale. Transnational organizations play a key role in successfully combating any form of Jew-hatred, discrimination, and persecution. Therefore, the following four contributions by Michael Whine, Talia Naamat, Simone Dinah Hartmann, and Giovanni Quer engage with what transnational and intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union and the United Nations could and should do to successfully combat antisemitism.

Michael WHINE reflects on *Europe’s Undertakings to Combat Antisemitism* and examines the role of European intergovernmental organizations in combating antisemitism as well as their successes and limitations. For this purpose he investigates European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe (CoE). Whine observes that all these institutions were slow in recognizing “that rising antisemitism was coming from new and different directions at the end of the twentieth century” (384). The resolutions and statements which these European institutions have agreed upon and which they released, resulted in recognizing the need to become active. The specific character and dangers of antisemitism “required both more holistic and focused responses than those required to combat other forms of racism” (385). Only when barriers that remain on a national level can be overcome and when the individual states prioritize the fight against antisemitism, effective measures are possible and more informed and efficient protection of Europe’s Jewish communities will become feasible.

Talia NAAMAT addresses the legal aspect of the transnational fight against antisemitism in her contribution *Are the New Forms of Antisemitism Prohibited in the European Legal Systems?* She detects a shift in how antisemitism manifests itself. While Jew-hatred originally targeted Jews and Jewish institutions, common-day antisemitism expresses itself as anti-Israel propaganda and as actions against the State of Israel, often hidden in the rhetoric of human rights. In the legal arena, today, Naamat identifies two central questions pertaining to antisemitism: “when speech ostensibly targeting the State of Israel may [...] be consid-

ered unlawful ‘hate speech,’” and “when actions against Israel violate the principle of non-discrimination” (398). While each European country varies in its approach to the new antisemitism that targets Israel, a general trend emerges nevertheless that may lead to a more nuanced approach to applying non-discrimination and hate speech laws. It needs to be thus assured that “one may no longer safely hide behind political sounding speech if it is tainted with antisemitism, or when [...] it affects the security of Jewish people, or incites to hatred against them” (398).

Simone Dinah HARTMANN demands a transnational paradigm shift in the European Union’s fight against antisemitism in her paper *What the EU Should do against Antisemitism: Toward a Strategic Paradigm of Prevention, Containment, and Deterrence*. She asks for an “effort by the whole of society and its institutions” that “encompass[es] confronting Islamism and the cultural-relativist Left, in addition to the traditional racist Far Right” (401). Based on the earlier neglect of the EU to combat antisemitism effectively, Hartmann suggests a strategy of prevention, containment, and deterrence. For prevention, she suggests the empowerment of secular Muslims to confront political Islam and Muslim antisemitism. For containment, Hartmann asks for a “European-wide cordon sanitaire” that would enact prohibitions for “governments and political parties, civil society, the media, and influential companies in Europe from seeking partnerships and cooperation with organizations and individuals involved in promoting and spreading antisemitism” (408) and pertain to the EU’s foreign policy as well. For deterrence, “the law must be enforced consistently and the legal framework on hate crimes and those spreading hate speech needs to be expanded” (409).

With his paper *Antisemitism and the UN*, Giovanni QUER moves the discourse from the European Union to the United Nations and hence from a European to Global perspective. He points out that the United Nations and its organizations either condemn antisemitism “as a form of Holocaust denial” or relegate it to be “a phenomenon existing merely in extreme right-wing and racist speech” (413). Quer provides a survey of the UN’s reports about and actions against antisemitism and their lack, respectively. In relation to antisemitism, Quer identifies three tendencies with US agencies: (1) A focus on Holocaust denial and Nazi glorification that seldom mentions its connection with antisemitism. Even the word “Jew” seems to be avoided. In this way the Jew-hatred that is inherent in Holocaust denial and Nazi glorification is obliterated; (2) “[A]ntisemitism is mostly associated with forms of hate speech typical of the Western extreme right’s rhetoric” (425) and UN agencies would therefore overlook Jew-hatred in other parts of the world as well as in different cultural contexts; (3) While contemporary forms of antisemitism targeting the state of Israel are recognized, they are conflated with islamophobia and christianophobia. “This trio of separate forms of

hostility, however connected they may be, is not further explored and, consequently, they are ambiguously diluted without any clear stance against antisemitism” (425). Quer therefore calls for a structural change that brings antisemitism “back to the center of the human rights discourse in its entirety” (426).

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## **Confronting Antisemitism through Critical Reflection/Approaches**



Dan Michman

# The Jews as a Problem for Modern European Political Logic

## Introduction

The conference the proceedings of which are presented in this and further volumes attempted to deal with antisemitism with the noble aim of putting an end to this phenomenon. The achievement of this goal remains questionable, because hatred and rage are difficult to control and suppress. However, there are certainly ways to minimize the extent of its expressions through legislation and education, at least in countries in which historical knowledge is considered important—in countries that understand the dangers of antisemitism and are committed to human rights and dignity. Indeed, various types of action have been taken in recent decades. However, the recent upsurge of antisemitic expressions and events, and even the emergence of a phenomenon that I would call “Antisemitism Denial,” demand more analysis. In order to develop strategies of coping and conflict management, scholarly understanding of the origins, dimensions, images, language, and conceptual problems of the phenomenon is required.

In 2009, David Engel wrote a provocative article in which he argued that the term antisemitism is not useful for scholars as an overarching analytical concept for a broad variety of encounters between Jews and non-Jews. This is because it is vague, scholars fail to agree upon a clear-cut definition of the concept, and putting events that occurred in remote places, under different circumstances, and in different times into one basket is problematic. Consequently, he declared that he avoids using this term in his studies.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to Engel, I believe that there are certain common elements that may be found in a variety of cases of anti-Jewish activities, ideas, and statements, which, at face value, are disconnected from each other. The cluster of these elements set the contours of “antisemitism,” and it is the task of scholars to detect and analyze the recurring elements in events in different times and different situations in order to determine the elements that we sense constitute the phenomenon of “antisemitism.”

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<sup>1</sup> D. Engel, “Away from a Definition of Antisemitism: An Essay in the Semantics of Historical Description,” in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. J. Cohen and M. Rosman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 30–53.



## Jews and Judaism as a Major Threat to Normalcy

According to my understanding, one typical element or feature of “antisemitism” is the fear of the threat that Jews and Judaism pose to normalcy, to accepted rules and standards. It is not just the fact that Jews are “different”—“others,” as is often claimed—but that the assumed *nature* of their “otherness” poses a threat to a supposedly achievable harmonious world. In early Christianity, this found expression in the critique of the Jewish rejection of Jesus, as Paul says in his letter to the Thessalonians:

the Jews who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to *everyone* in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. (1 Thess 2:15–16, New International Version)

In other words, not only did the Jews reject Jesus, but they “are hostile to *everyone*” (my emphasis, DM), and they tried to prevent Jesus’ redeeming vision from being proposed to the entire non-Jewish world. This means that they are not only wicked but that they act against the improvement of the rest of the world or, in other words, they are anti-human. In a similar mode, though from a different, enlightened worldview, Baron Paul Henri Thiry d’Holbach made the following claim in the eighteenth century:

The conduct of modern Jews indicates that, like their ancestors, they feel no obligation towards those who are not members of their holy nation. [...] [their] law [...] is obviously calculated to make men unsociable and maleficent [...] By regarding such a book [the Bible] as divinely inspired and as containing the rules of conduct, a man can only become unjust, without faith, without honor, without pity, in a word completely devoid of morals.<sup>2</sup>

That is, Jewish teachings as conceived in the Bible shape a human being who behaves entirely contrary to the requisite virtues of an enlightened society. D’Holbach’s view is undoubtedly an enlightened (con)version of a Christian view that was deeply entrenched in Christian European culture.

These are just two examples that present the element of viewing the Jews as a danger to society and normalcy, but there are many more. In modern times,

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<sup>2</sup> P. H. Thiry d’Holbach, *Tableau des Saints, ou Examen de l’esprit, de la conduite, des maximes & du mérite des personages que le christiannisme révère & propose pour modèles* (London: n.p., 1770), 90–92; see the English translation, L. Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism, Volume III: From Voltaire to Wagner*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1975), 123. See also M. Onfray, *Atheist Manifesto: The Case against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam*, trans. J. Leggatt (New York: Arcade, 2007).

with the emergence of the centralized nation-state and secularization, the inability of European societies to cope with the non-conforming complexity of Jewish identity contributed a new dimension to the element of the Jews as a mysterious threat to accepted standards.

## Premodern Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity and in the European Middle Ages

Though the contents and nature of “Israel,”<sup>3</sup> “Judaism,” and “Jewishness” changed over time, the very understanding of what it means to adhere to Judaism was formulated in about the first century. In Lee Levin’s words:

A web of common views, practices, and loyalties began crystallizing among Jews [in the first century] that gradually created a common foundation upon which Jewish cultural and communal creativity continued to develop, despite the ongoing challenges and vicissitudes.<sup>4</sup>

The web of common views was shaped and codified by rabbinic Judaism, which became the dominant force in mainstream Judaism. One of those views maintained that adherence to the Jewish collective meant the official acceptance of the Jewish religion and of Halacha as the codex of Jewish life.<sup>5</sup> Without being an essentialist regarding Judaism as a concept and worldview, it is clear that an essential *feature* of Judaism according to Halacha that crystallized in Late Antiquity is that religious and ethnic belonging were considered to be intertwined and inseparable. In the spirit of Ruth the Moabite’s answer to Naomi in the Scroll

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<sup>3</sup> On the very beginnings and emergence of “Israel,” see A. Faust, *Israel’s Ethnogenesis: Settlement, Interaction, Expansion and Resistance* (London: Equinox, 2006); A. Faust, “The Emergence of Israel and Theories of Ethnogenesis,” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Ancient Israel*, ed. S. Niditch (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 155–73.

<sup>4</sup> L. I. Levine, “Introduction,” in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, ed. L. I. Levine and D. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), xvi.

<sup>5</sup> On the development of “Jewish” identity in Antiquity, see the entire volume by Levine and Schwartz, *Jewish Identities in Antiquity*; M. D. Herr, “Zehuto Shel Am Yisrael Lifnei Habayit Ul’ahar Hurbano: Retzef ‘o Shinuy? Megamot Beheker Toledot Yisrael Besof Yemei Bayit Sheni Uvitkufat Hamishna Vehatalmud” [“The Identity of the Jewish People before and after the Destruction of the Temple: Continuity or Change? The Various Directions in Research on the History of the Jewish People at the End of the Second Temple Period and in the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period”] *Cathedra* 137 (2009): 27–62 [Hebrew]; E. S. Gruen, *Constructs of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

of Ruth, “*Amech ami veElohayich Elohai*” (“Your people shall be my people, and your God my God”).<sup>6</sup> In fact, the term “*am*” in Hebrew, which is usually translated as people, is semantically not identical with people in the ethnic sense but rather with a collective (as, for instance, in the original meaning of the term “*am ha’aretz*”). However, within later contexts it also acquired the ethnic meaning of people. According to Halacha, the Jewish collective encompasses those who are born to a Jewish mother or who went through a halachically dictated and defined conversion process, which includes recognition of the One God of Israel and acceptance of the *mitzvot* (religious ordinances).

Basically, the union of religion and national belonging to *Am Israel*—the Jewish collective—should not be surprising. In the world of antiquity, each collective had its own deity or deities, and thus, from that perspective, Judaism was not different from other religions regarding its self-understanding, except for its idea of monotheism, which implied the non-recognition of the power and equality, or even the existence, of other deities. That is, the Jewish idea of deity was universalist but belonging to the Jewish entity, which demanded more than this recognition alone, was particularist. The fact that religion and ethnicity, or nationhood, are inseparable in Judaism is well-expressed by the Hebrew language, which has no word for “religion.” The Hebrew word “*dat*,” which has been used since the nineteenth century for “religion,” is originally a Persian word that actually means “law.” It was introduced in modern Hebrew to indicate the concept of “religion,” as a result of the secularization process.

Christianity, and later Islam, introduced a major change in the ancient view of religion. Both were monotheist, like Judaism, yet they perceived their religions as being universal umbrellas for believers, standing above and apart from local ethnic identities and belonging. Thus, a separation between religious and ethnic belonging emerged (this was already expressed in the very early stages of the Christian critique of Judaism in the argument that Old Testament Judaism, as a redemptive faith, is exclusivist and not open to all human beings).

In the Medieval European world, the unique nature of Judaism and Jewish identity was not a problem for the political systems. From the perspective of the Christian reigning faith in Europe and the clear social and legal boundaries between religions, Jews were the “other.” According to the formal principle teachings, Jews could and were tolerated (they were expected to recognize the truth of Christianity and accept Jesus’ teachings at the end of days). Their pres-

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<sup>6</sup> Ruth 1:16–17 (English Standard Version).

<sup>7</sup> A. Oppenheimer, *The ‘Am Ha-Aretz: A Study in the Social History of the Jewish People in the Hellenistic-Roman Period*, trans. I. H. Levine (Leiden: Brill, 1977).

ence in Christian milieus as a tolerated entity was negotiated through “privileges” that were extended by the rulers. However, there was an additional, important aspect: Throughout the Middle Ages, European societies were fragmented, linguistic identity was local, and social identity was shaped by the individual’s belonging to class and—in the cities—to corporations. Within this mosaic structure of society, the Jews were almost always an urban group that fitted in as one of these corporations. As such, the fact that Jewish identity was both religious and ethnic posed no problem to the existing norms.

## Jewish Identity vis-à-vis Modern European Political Concepts

This situation changed in the early modern period with the gradual emergence of modern centralized states;<sup>8</sup> the principle of sovereignty of the people, based on the idea of the autonomous authority of the individual;<sup>9</sup> the idea that society is founded on a “social contract” between individuals; and modern national concepts (which in recent historiography are described as “imagined communities”<sup>10</sup>). The democratic “social contract” principle put an emphasis on the state as a tool for achieving material benefits and security for the individual, a tool that should avoid intervening in spiritual affairs. It also put an emphasis on the individuals as being the basis of social entities. The centralized states, even when still in the form of kingdoms, often supported the enlightened idea of individualism, which embraced and legitimized the direct relationship between the state and its subjects. This new non-mediated relationship between the central power and the individuals became instrumental in crushing premodern, established corporate and class structures, and in enabling the central authority to amass more power incrementally.

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**8** Historians have long been debating what a (modern) state is exactly. The American medievalist Joseph Strayer defined the rise of the state as “the appearance of political units persisting in time and fixed in space, the development of permanent, impersonal institutions, agreement on the need for authority, which can give final judgments, and acceptance of the idea that this authority should receive the basic loyalty of its subjects.” See J. R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 10.

**9** Shmuel Feiner, *’Et Hadasha: Yehudim Be’Eropa Bame’ah Hashemoneh ’Esreh, 1700–1750 [A New Period: Jews in Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1700–1750]* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2017) [Hebrew].

**10** B. R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

These developments began to affect the question of the Jews' status in the newly conceived form of states that developed in Central and Western Europe. From the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century, enlightened thinkers advocated the naturalization and acceptance of Jews into society on an individual basis, although some of these thinkers harshly condemned "Judaism." The other side of the coin of the gradual implementation of the legal emancipation of the Jews, beginning with the French revolution in 1789, was the abolishment of the former legal status of the Jewish communities as corporations, which had been anchored in privileges and the demand from the Jews to redefine their identity as citizens of the new states. This was well expressed in the famous statement by Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre during the French National Assembly's debate on the emancipation of the Jews on December 23, 1789: "*Il faut tout refuser aux Juifs comme nation; il faut tout leur accorder comme individus*" ["We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals"].<sup>11</sup>

This idea was similarly expressed in the emancipation debates in France, the Netherlands, Westphalia, and elsewhere at the end of the eighteenth century and in the following decades. While the Western European liberal concept of the state allowed for the integration of the individual Jew, it would no longer tolerate a Jewish ethnic or national identity. If Jews wanted to be a nation, they could not demand equal rights as citizens in the state. On the other hand, the emerging centralized states, which elevated the status of the state above all other institutions, and the new conceptualization of nations made it necessary to cope with the fact that these states and nations contained adherents of different religious streams: Catholics and Protestants of many colors. As religious belonging was now perceived as a voluntary choice of individuals, that is, as secondary to national belonging, religion by itself was not seen as an obstacle to that belonging (although regarding Catholicism, there was a problem with the fact that it has a supreme authority seated in Rome, which gave rise to the accusation of Catholics as "ultra-montanists"). In the same spirit, Judaism could be accepted but *only* as a religion. There was an additional dimension to this development: as a result of centuries-long, anti-Jewish images stemming from the marginal state of the Jews

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<sup>11</sup> Assemblée nationale session of Wednesday, December 23, 1789, *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, collectif (Librairie administrative de Paul Dupont, 1867), 10:75, <http://www.laculturegenerale.com/clermont-tonnerre-il-faut-tout-refuser-aux-juifs-comme-nation-et-tout-accorder-aux-juifs-comme-individus/>; see the English translation as quoted in L. Hunt, ed., *The French Revolution and Human Rights: A Brief Documentary History* (Boston: Bedford and St. Martin's, 1996), 88.

and the limited scope of professions that they were allowed to profess, the terms “Judaism” and “Jew” were tainted and had a negative association.

Consequently, the states developed the attitude that Judaism could be treated like the other faiths and that the Jews as individuals had to be educated and adapted. This was reflected in their coercive policies, whose aim was the inclusion and the integration of the Jews who were living on their territories. “*Faire des juifs des citoyens utiles, concilier leurs croyances avec les devoirs des Français, éloigner les reproches qu’on leur a faits et remédier aux maux qui les ont occasionnés...*” [“turn the Jews into useful citizens, reconcile their beliefs with the duties of the French, remove the reproaches that were expressed regarding them, and remedy the harm that has been done to them”]—that was Napoleon’s vision when he ordered convening the Assembly of Notables in 1806<sup>12</sup> and the ensuing Grand Sanhedrin, and the establishment of an umbrella organization for all Jews, the *Consistoire centrale des israélites de France* (Central Consistory of the Jews of France). As for Jews who wanted to embrace the new opportunity, they too had to cope with the dilemma from the perspective that the centuries-old nature of Judaism could not be maintained in the present situation; it had to be redefined as a religion.

The result was the invention of new terms for Judaism, as a religion, and for Jews, as belonging to that Jewish *religion*. In France, the new imposed organization (decreed on March 17, 1808) was named *Consistoire israélite*; the Jews were turned into *israélites*, a term that linked them to the Bible (apparently separating them from the linkage to the despised Talmud), and the religion was concurrently given the name *Culte mosaïque* (Mosaic religion).<sup>13</sup> It is not yet clear who invented the term *israélite*, but it is clear that the term was officially introduced when the consistory system in France and in its satellite states, the Netherlands and Westphalia, was established, all in 1808 (although the term was used already in the preceding one-to-two years in the French governmental bureaucracy’s internal correspondence). All these consistories already included in their title the term *israélites*, while at the same time, the term “Jew” was still in use, often when relating to the Jews’ assumed negative traits. Such was the case

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from the French Minister of the Interior on behalf of the Emperor (Napoleon) ordering the convening of an assembly of Jewish representatives, July 23, 1806; Centre Historique des Archives Nationales F/19/11004 et 11005.

<sup>13</sup> For the background, see S. Schwarzfuchs, *Napoleon, the Jews and the Sanhedrin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), 120–27; see also the extract from L. Berman, *Histoire des juifs de France des origines à nos jours* (Paris: Librairie Lipschutz, 1937), L. Berman, “Napoléon et la Question Juive,” Le site du Judaïsme d’Alsace et de Lorraine, accessed April 6, 2020, <http://judaisme.sdv.fr/histoire/historiq/consisto/berman.htm>.

with the so-called Infamous Decree that was issued by the Napoleonic regime on the very same day (!) as the issuance of the aforementioned Consistory Decree, where only the term “Jew” was used.<sup>14</sup> Within a decade, *israélite/Israelit/israëliet* would become the official term for Jews in all these states, and from there it apparently spread all over the German *Sprachbereich* (area in which the German language is spoken).<sup>15</sup> This was accompanied by the important administrative

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14 R. Anchel, *Napoléon et les Juifs* (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1928), 285–304. For easy access to the full text of the decree, see <http://www.juif.org/blogs/7026,le-decret-infame-du-17-mars-1808.php>.

15 In Westphalia, the *Königlich Westfälische Konsistorium der Israeliten* (Royal Westphalian Consistory of Israelites) was established by King Jérôme-Napoléon Bonaparte, Napoleon’s youngest brother, on March 31, 1808; it existed until the downfall of the Napoleonic Empire in 1813. The living spirit among the Jewish fore-fighters for emancipation and religious reform in Westphalia was Israel Jacobson. Several weeks before the establishment of the consistory, of which he would become chairman, he held a speech thanking the new king for granting “citizenship rights to the subjects of the Jewish nation,” without using the term Israelites; see I. Jacobson, *Rede am Dankfeste wegen des von Seiner Majestät dem Könige von Westphalen den Unterthanen jüdischer Nation ertheilten Bürgerrechts, gehalten in der Synagoge zu Cassel den 11. Februar 1808 von den Geheimen Finanz-Rathe Israel Jacobsohn aus Braunschweig* (Kassel: Hampe, 1808). Regarding the Netherlands, we have more information. Until 1796, Jews were considered as belonging to “*Joodsche Naties*” (Jewish Nations), a corporative term for ethno-religious strangers. After the September 2, 1796, “*gelykstaat der Joden*” (equality status of the Jews, i.e., the emancipation) decree of the Batavian Republic, the terms used were “Jewish communities” (resp. *Hoogduytsche Joodsche Gemeente en Portugeesche Joodsche Gemeente*), which meant that the term “nation” was abandoned. With the establishment of the “*Opperconsistorie*” (Supreme Consistory) in 1808 by King Louis Napoleon, the decrees and statutes used the terminology “*Joodsche of Israëlietische Gemeenten*,” that is, both terms. With the collapse of Napoleonic France and the establishment of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Dutch Jewry was placed under a successor organization of the Supreme Consistory, the “*Israëlitisch Kerkgenootschap*” (Israelite Church Association), headed by the “*Commissie tot de zaken der Israëlieten*” (Commission for the Affairs of the Israelites) in 1814; it was renamed “*Hoofdcommissie tot de zaken der Israëlieten*” (Supreme Commission for Israelite Affairs) in 1817. This committee systematically would avoid the use of the term Jews and would fight it, perceiving it as an expression of non-acceptance of the Jews as equal citizens, although the term would live on in daily discourse, both among Jews and non-Jews. In an anonymous article—“*Jets over den naam van Israëliet en Jood*”—published in the periodical *Jaarboeken voor de Israëlieten* IV (1838), 360–64 (which was actually written by the editor Jozef Justus Belinfante), the author explains that “*Joden*” (Jews) indicates a *Volk* (People) while “*Israëlieten*” points to the “*inwendige beginselen*” (internal principles), that is, the religion; according to him one can use the term “Jews” only when a national, separate existence of a people is meant, yet “*Israëlieten*” always means “religious” and that is the proper concept for “this [i.e., the nineteenth century] era.” I thank Dr. Bart Wallet (Amsterdam University) for providing me with these data.

step of placing the handling of the Jewish community organizations under the control of the Ministries of Cults (religions).<sup>16</sup>

From the perspectives of education, language, professions, and politics, this major change undoubtedly served as an important vehicle that paved the way for the gradual integration of Jews into Western European societies. It was also the rationale behind the initiatives for Jewish religious reform undertaken within the Jewish population. Yet, in spite of the pressure from the outside and the initiatives from within, the ethnic component of Jewish identity did not fully disappear. It continued to play a role as an important social undercurrent—the tendency to continue marrying within the Jewish communal borders, the maintaining of contacts with Jewish communities in other countries in various ways (including exchanges on halachic issues between rabbis), and more.<sup>17</sup>

This ethnic nature of Judaism was a major argument raised in the emancipation debates at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries by those who opposed Jewish emancipation and even by those who were not antisemitic, that is, those who did not talk about negative Jewish traits.<sup>18</sup> It was, of course, emphatically emphasized by the outspoken antisemi-

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**16** A note regarding Czarist Russia is required here. With the first partition of Poland (1772), when Russia annexed the Byelorussian guberniyas of Vitebsk and Mogilev, which included areas with a considerable Jewish population, a similar change of terminology regarding the Jews occurred. In a proclamation by the governor general of Byelorussia, Count Zakhar Chernyshev, he used the term *yevreskiye*, derived from *yevrei* (Hebrews) instead of *zhidy*. According to Richard Pipes, this expressed the view that Jews were “an ordinary religious minority rather than a special nation-caste.” Though the policies of Catherine II were in no way similar to the enlightened emancipatory approach in Western Europe, the idea of redefining the Jews as belonging to a religious denomination only was similar. See J. D. Klier, “*Zhid*: Biography of a Russian Epithet,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 60, no. 1 (1982): 2–3 (the quote from Pipes is on p. 3). See also M. Wolf, *Žid, Kritik einer Wortverbannung: Imagologie Israels zwischen staatspolitischem Kalkül und künstlerischer Verfremdung* (Munich: Sagner, 2005).

**17** See, for instance, D. Michman, “Migration versus ‘Species Hollandia Judaica.’ The Role of Migration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in Preserving Ties between Dutch and World Jewry,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* (1989): 54–76.

**18** As was the case, for instance, with Abbé Grégoire in the emancipation discussions in the French assembly and with some parliamentarians in the Dutch emancipation discussions in the Batavian (i. e., Dutch) assembly. See A. Goldstein Sepinwall, “Les paradoxes de la régénération révolutionnaire. Le cas de l’abbé Grégoire,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 321 (2000): 69–90; J. Michman, *Dutch Jewry during the Emancipation Period 1787–1815: Gothic Towers on a Corinthian Building* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995).



tes, whose arguments included a plethora of derogatory remarks.<sup>19</sup> However, all continued to use the term *Juden/juifs/joden*.

A different process regarding Jewish identity occurred in Eastern Europe, in Czarist Russia, and in its successor states after World War I. Here there was no emancipatory trajectory like the one in Central and Western Europe. In these mostly Christian and multi-ethnic states, the ethno-religious nature of Judaism remained dominant, both in the eyes of the Gentiles—the authorities, as well as the population—and the Jews themselves, until the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> However, since then, Jewish society underwent a considerable secularization process. Due to the Russian context, which included not only multi-ethnicity but also widespread popular and state-sanctioned anti-Jewishness, those secularized Jews tended now to interpret their Jewishness in national terms, thus adapting themselves to the multi-national norms, which were embraced also by the general, non-Jewish, secular revolutionary movements. As is well known, Zionism, Jewish Autonomism, and Jewish Territorialism, sprouted on this ground. After World War I, Jewish communities in Eastern Europe would be treated by the new successor states (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and the USSR) as national minorities. In post-World War I Poland, the Jewish religious communities officially became the legal structure of the Jews as a minority, including all Jewish parties, even the anti-religious socialist Bundist party.

Nevertheless, a multi-ethnic political system, whether in Czarist Russia or in Austro-Hungary before World War I, and in some East European countries after it, did not always embrace a clear national interpretation of Jewish identity. As the proportional dimensions of the nations and minorities were constantly moni-

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**19** The literature on this is extensive, although mostly to be found within the larger context of the historiography on emancipation struggles in the different European countries. See E. Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte* (Munich: Albert Langen, 1921); S. Ragins, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870–1914: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1980), 1–22; P. Birnbaum and I. Katznelson, eds., *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); M. Brenner, S. Jersch-Wenzel, and M. A. Meyer, eds., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Volume 2: Emancipation and Acculturation, 1780–1871* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Sh. Volkov, “Antisemitismus als kultureller Code,” in *Jüdisches Leben und Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990), 13–36; G. Miron and A. Szalai, eds., *Yehudim 'al Parashat Derachim: Siah Hazehut Hayehudit Behungariya Bein Mashber Lehithaddeshut, 1908–1926 [Jews at the Crossroads: The Jewish Identity Discourse in Hungary Between Crisis and Renewal, 1908–1926]* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2008) [Hebrew].

**20** In spite of the introduction of the term *yevreskiye* in Czarist Russia, as pointed out in note 17, the ethnic component remained central, due to the fact that in the multi-ethnic context, the different ethnicities also had different faiths and, thus, religion was identified by the ethnic factor.

tored for a variety of purposes (political representation, education, and more), the standards used to define Jewish national belonging were often contested. At times, the official yardstick was the language spoken by the Jews (Yiddish), which then could result in counting German-speaking or Polish-speaking Jews as Germans or Poles. Sometimes religious adherence served as the definition, which would then exclude converts and partners in mixed marriages. Occasionally, it was left to the Jews themselves to state their national belonging, according to their own self-definition.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, toward the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, Jews and Judaism were formally defined in opposing ways in different political settings in Europe—as a religion in the West, as a nation (or ethnic group) in the East. Yet even then, it was not so simple. Due to secularization, non-religious Western European *israélites* were defined according to the religion to which they did not want to adhere. In Eastern Europe, where being religious was still considered by the authorities and many of the masses to be a yardstick for being a decent person, secularized Jews who expressed their anti-religiousness toward Judaism, as well as toward Christianity, were perceived as an undermining element. Additionally, the authorities sometimes defined Jewish national belonging very differently than did many Jews.

## Jews Are Mysterious

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, because of the deep changes in political thought and the various and even opposing realities on the ground to which Jews had to adapt, there was no longer a clear Jewish identity or a definition thereof. The integral ethno-religious identity of the past could not be maintained, and no single broadly accepted new type of identity had emerged. Instead, Jewishness appeared in many, sometimes opposing forms. Due to the emancipation and democratization processes, and the new capitalist economy that developed, Jews entered a broad array of professions, mostly those that emerged in the new economy. Moreover, there were Jews—such as Heinrich Heine—who converted to Christianity simply in order to have an “*entrée billet* to European culture,”<sup>22</sup> only to pronounce their “Jewishness” even more thereafter. The chameleon picture of Jewish identity was unparalleled

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<sup>21</sup> This is one of the reasons that it is impossible to provide an accurate count of the Jews in Europe on the eve of the Holocaust.

<sup>22</sup> “*Entree Billet zur Europäischen Kultur*”; see the expression in M. Windfuhr, *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1993), 10:313.

by any other group in Europe and made the Jews even more mysterious and ungraspable than in the past: there were Jews throughout Europe, and they could not be put in one conceptual box. Adolf Stoecker, the court chaplain to Emperor Wilhelm I in Germany, stated that Orthodox Jewry “is a dead religious form,” and Reform Judaism “has even less religious significance. It is neither Judaism nor Christianity.” He added, “Thanks to Marx and Lassalle, the Jews have their friends among the Social Democrats. Some of the nihilists in Russia are also Jews.”<sup>23</sup> And Wilhelm Marr explained that:

Up until 1848, the Jews in Germany were predominantly democratically inclined, or at least pretended to be. Later, Jewry dispersed into the parliamentary parties. [...] Two-thirds of our semi-official literature is produced by Jews. [...] The daily press is overwhelmingly in the hands of Jews [...] Three-quarters of the drama and art criticism are in Jewish hands.<sup>24</sup>

There are countless more expressions regarding the Jews—statements, writings, cartoons—that point to their many disparate appearances, which supposedly hide that they are essentially one collective that is alien and has a common undermining goal.<sup>25</sup>

This is precisely the situation to which modern antisemitism tried to provide an answer, while using trivialized scientific concepts—and, in fact, it is at this stage of antisemitism that the very term “antisemitism” was coined. The various forms of modern antisemitism were essentialist—Jewish identity was not something circumstantial, resulting from the Jews’ religion or their long-standing separation from “normal” society, or from proper education, which could be changed, improved and healed but something biological, internal, inherent to all Jews, in spite of the many disguises and masks that Jews wear. Bruno Bauer claimed in 1843, that the emancipation of the Jew resembles the attempt to wash a “negro [the term used at the time, mostly negatively, for black people]

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**23** A. Stoecker, “Unsere Forderungen an das moderne Judentum (1879),” in *Christlich-Sozial: Reden und Aufsätze* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: 1885), 143–54; see the English translation in R. S. Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World. An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington and Toronto: D. C. Heath, 1991), 58–66.

**24** W. Marr, *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum—Vom nichtconfessionellen Standpunkt aus betrachtet* (Bern: Costenoble, 1879); see the English translation in Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World*, 85.

**25** For Jews remaining as the “other” after emancipation, see also D. Aberbach, “The Patriotism of Gentlemen with Red Hair: European Jews and the Liberal State, 1789–1939,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (2017), [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69566/1/Aberbach\\_The%20patriotism%20of%20gentlemen%20with%20red%20hair\\_published\\_2017%20LSERO.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69566/1/Aberbach_The%20patriotism%20of%20gentlemen%20with%20red%20hair_published_2017%20LSERO.pdf).

in order to turn him into a white person.”<sup>26</sup> The new racial theories provided antisemites with a tool that could put all the different Jews into one basket—the Jews as a race, or better, as a counter-race. Racial antisemitism rationalized the “otherness” of the Jews, tackling also the problem of the “non-Jewish Jew.” As Eugen Dühring said:

A Jewish Question will continue to exist even if all Jews would turn their backs on their [own] religion and convert to one of our leading churches. Indeed, I argue that in such a case the argument between us and the Jews would make itself perceptible as an even more urgent necessity than it is the case without that. Precisely the baptized Jews are those who penetrate without obstacles in the broadest way into all channels of society and into common political life. They provided themselves with a *passé-partout* [passkey] and push their tribe also to places where Jews belonging to the [Jewish] religion cannot follow them.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the racial idea did not have to be taken too strictly in the biological sense. Racial terminology was used also by religious Christians, such as Adolf Stoecker,<sup>28</sup> or liberal nationalists, such as the historian Heinrich von Treitschke.<sup>29</sup> Other thinkers, such as Houston Stewart Chamberlain,<sup>30</sup> and, later, intellectuals

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26 “Wer den Juden als Juden emanzipiert wissen will, nimmt sich nicht nur dieselbe unnütze Mühe, als wenn er einen Mohren weiß waschen wollte, sondern er täuscht sich selbst bei seiner unnützen Quälerei: indem er den Mohren einzuseifen meint, wäscht er ihn mit einem trockenen Schwämme. Er macht ihn nicht einmal naß.” B. Bauer, *Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu sein: einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz* (Zürich u. Winterthur: Georg Herwegh, 1843), 71, reprinted in B. Bauer, *Feldzüge der reinen Kritik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), 175–95.

27 “Eine Judenfrage wurde daher auch existiren, wenn alle Juden ihrer Religion den Rücken gekehrt und zu einer der bei uns vorherrschenden Kirchen übergetreten waren. Ja ich behaupte, dass in diesem Falle die Auseinandersetzung zwischen uns und den Juden sich als ein noch weit dringenderes Bedürfniss fühlbar machen würde, als auch schon ohnedies der Fall ist. Grade die getauften Juden sind diejenigen, die ohne Hindernisse am weitesten in alle Canale der Gesellschaft und des politischen Gemeinlebens eindringen. Sie haben sich gleichsam mit einem Passepartout versehen und schieben ihren Stamm auch dahin vor, wohin ihnen die Religionsjuden nicht folgen können.” E. Dühring, *Die Judenfrage als Racen-, Sitten- und Culturfrage. Mit einer weltgeschichtlichen Antwort* (Karlsruhe and Leipzig: H. Reuther, 1881), 3.

28 Stoecker, *Unsere Forderungen an das modern Judentum*, 143–54.

29 H. von Treitschke, *Ein Wort über unser Judentum* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 3rd unaltered edition: 1880).

30 H. S. Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1899).

in the Weimar period, would develop the idea of cultural or psychological racism.<sup>31</sup>

In this context it is not surprising that antisemites, whether racists or not, insisted on using the term “Jew,” and not *israélite* (in French)/*Israelit* (in German)/*israeliet* (in Dutch), because the latter was perceived as a disguise. What emerges in the new antisemitic discourse is not just the return from *israélite/Israelit/israeliet* to “Jew” but the constant use of the *generalizing* term of “the Jew” (*le juif/der Jude/de jood*), which conceptualized Jewish identity in an abstract way and, at the same time, allowed for the caricatured presentation of the Jews in one image with the assumed typical characteristics of “the Jews.”<sup>32</sup> To counter this, the complexity of Jewish modern reality was simplified through pseudo-scientific concepts and pronounced visual representations. This happened, of course, against the background of the rapid economic and social changes that were accompanied by extreme tensions and in the context of democratization and politicization, which demanded the mobilization of the masses. Thus, modern antisemitism provided an answer to a situation in which modern political concepts had to cope with the (apparently) unsolvable “problem” of the nature of Jewish identity. In spite of the metamorphosis of the political structures in the modern period, which to a certain extent *were* favorable to Jews, Jewish identity once again turned Jewishness into a “problem.”

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31 A. Varshizky, “Between Science and Metaphysics: Fritz Lenz and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Germany,” *Intellectual History Review* 27, no. 2 (2017): 247–72.

32 Fuchs, *Die Juden in der Karikatur*; M. A. Matard-Bonucci, ed., *ANTISÉmythes. L'image des juifs entre culture et politique (1848–1939)* (Paris: Nouvea-Monde, 2005); G. Silvain and J. Kotek, *La carte postale antisémite de l'affaire Dreyfus à la Shoah* (Paris: Berg, 2005).

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Jan Rathje

# “Money Rules the World, but Who Rules the Money?” Antisemitism in post-Holocaust Conspiracy Ideologies

Current conspiracy narratives initially appear to exhibit no connection with antisemitism. “1%,” “Vaccination-lie,” “Chemtrails,” or the “Flat Earth Conspiracy” do not overtly invoke the “Jewish World Conspiracy.” This study focusses on the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies under the premise of “detour-communication.” The first part demonstrates that antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies share common structures and functions, which impede a clear distinction. This distinction is further complicated by “detour-communication”: An implicit way to express antisemitic statements via codes and ciphers after the Holocaust since overt and explicit expressions of antisemitism were tabooed in Western states. The second part focuses on the historical dynamics of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” myth from Christian medieval allegations to those of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In a qualitative analysis of 200 posts from German conspiracy-ideological Facebook pages, this study demonstrates the ways in which antisemitic codes are used to direct non-antisemitic expressions to the myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy.” Therefore, this study illustrates that elements of the Protocols are still being used in conspiracy-ideological communications on the internet.

## Introduction

Since the Islamist terror attacks of September 11, 2001, conspiracy ideologies are clearly discernable. At that time, the available technological possibilities of the internet, regarding production and distribution of information and propaganda, played right into the hands of their dissemination. Since then conspiracy ideologies have increasingly penetrated public discourse and are even disseminated by heads of states, themselves, such as Donald Trump in the USA or Viktor Orbán in Hungary.<sup>1</sup> The latter case especially shows that these statements are accompanied by an antisemitic connotation.<sup>2</sup> This is no coincidence.

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1 See, e.g., R. Cohen, “Trump Clings to Conspiracy Theories—and Strengthens the Case for his Removal,” *The Washington Post*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/>

This essay considers the question of what kind of relation exists between antisemitism and modern conspiracy ideologies. To this end, on the basis of theoretical reflection, the study points out that antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies command the same structures and functions. Thus, they cannot simply be separated from one another. The fact that since the Holocaust this relation is concealed via the communicative strategy of detour-communication (“Umwegkommunikation”) in which antisemitic attitudes are no longer expressed explicitly but instead implicitly, by means of codes and ciphers, additionally complicates this matter.

The second part of this essay traces the development history of the myth of “Jewish World Conspiracy” in order to illustrate that Jews assume a special role regarding the construction of enemy images. Associated with the anti-Christ during Christian medieval times, they became the epitome of enlightenment and modernity since the French Revolution. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the myth was eventually condensed into the plagiarism of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* by actors who, as yet, have not been unequivocally identified. This document constitutes a central element for both antisemitism and modern conspiracy ideologies that are still being disseminated, despite—or maybe even because of—its early refutation.<sup>3</sup>

The third part traces the ways in which the myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” is disseminated on the internet via the *Protocols* and under consideration of detour-communication by means of a short qualitative study. For this purpose, 200 posts on Facebook were analyzed that were published by the ten largest German-language conspiracy-ideological pages on the platform.

## I Antisemitism and Conspiracy Ideologies

To analyze the connection between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies, first of all, the field of research and the central terms need to be isolated. The analysis is bound to the time period after the atrocious crime against humanity, the Hol-

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post-partisan/wp/2017/11/29/trump-clings-to-conspiracy-theories-and-strengthens-the-case-for-his-removal/.

<sup>2</sup> See L. Bayer and L. Cohler-Esses, “Evil Soros: Dog Whistling Anti-Semitism in Viktor Orbán’s Hungary,” *Forward*, May 30, 2017, <https://forward.com/news/world/373162/evil-soros-dog-whistling-anti-semitism-in-viktor-orbans-hungary/>.

<sup>3</sup> Scans of original editions of the *Protocols* besides antisemitic-conspiracy-ideological reinterpretations and commentaries, for example, can be found in the digital library of the project *Internet Archive*, [archive.org](http://archive.org).

ocaust, as new manifestations of antisemitism formed in its succession which need to be regarded with special consideration. Antisemitism is understood, following Lars Rensmann,

as a special, modern, politically and culturally situated form of stereotype-formation, as also [...] an ensemble of prejudices, clichés, fixed collective images, binary codes and categorical attributions, and discriminating practices against Jews, which can be condensed into a political ideology and into a worldview. Although criteria for capturing these can be systematically accounted for, antisemitic patterns of prejudice and ideologemes, thus, in the ideology-historical process do not manifest themselves in a rigid and identical manner, but instead, they are to be interpreted as dependent of the political constellation and the political and cultural structure. In the democratic context, they often appear in coded, indirect, and symbolic forms, which aim toward the winking “knowledge” and approval of the addressed electorate.<sup>4</sup>

To define the term conspiracy ideology, I refer to the important preliminary works of Armin Pfahl-Traughber. In 2002 he criticized the analytical unsuitability of the term “conspiracy theory” and countered it with the following four terms as alternative. *Conspiracies*, whose existence he does not deny, are the starting point. They are understood as a secret agreement of a small group, with a relatively short-term horizon for planning to achieve a certain objective. The existence of conspiracies then legitimates the *conspiracy hypothesis*, hence the assumption that a certain event is the result of a conspiracy. The *conspiracy ideology*, on the other hand, is distinguished by Pfahl-Traughber as a hypothesis, immunized against criticism, in which the conspiracy has become a dogmatic basic premise. Whereas a conspiracy ideology is still bound to real groups, like for example Mossad, CIA, and Freemasons, the *conspiracy myth*, as an ideal typically distinguished variant of the conspiracy ideology, is directed against fictional, mythical groups, for example, the “elders of Zion,” the Illuminati, or aliens.<sup>5</sup> In accordance with this definition, the following analysis is applied to the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies and myths.

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<sup>4</sup> L. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild: Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2005), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. A. Pfahl-Traughber, “‘Bausteine’ zu einer Theorie über ‘Verschwörungstheorien’: Definitionen, Erscheinungsformen, Funktionen und Ursachen,” in *Verschwörungstheorien: Theorie—Geschichte—Wirkung*, ed. H. Reinalter (Innsbruck: Studien-Verlag, 2002), 31 f.

## Structure, Function, and Detour-Communication

In her article “Verschwörungstheorien” (“Conspiracy Theories”) of the *Handbuch des Antisemitismus (Handbook of Antisemitism)*, Juliane Wetzel describes the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies as follows:

Conspiracy theories do not always, but often have an antisemitic connotation, because Jews have become a classical scapegoat throughout past centuries, and there exists a manifold repertoire of stereotypes from which reasons can be construed all too easily, for events and developments that are, in fact, difficult to be explained.<sup>6</sup>

Wetzel distinguishes between non-antisemitically connotated “conspiracy theories” and those “often” encountered antisemitically connotated ones. In a historical-functional manner, she regards the scapegoat-function of Jews and the existent anti-Jewish stereotypes which possess an explanatory function for those facts that are hard to explain as the reason for the correlation. Furthermore, in his analysis of the current conspiracy-campaign of German right-wing extremism, Samuel Salzborn establishes that “the motive of conspiracy [...] is historically and systematically antisemitic.”<sup>7</sup> In accordance with these determinations, the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideology can be analyzed from two perspectives, that of antisemitism research and that of the studies regarding conspiracy ideologies.

More recent antisemitism research, regarding the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies, refers to Thomas Haury’s studies which state a structural correlation.<sup>8</sup> As the basis of his analysis of left-wing antisemitism, Haury describes three structural principles of the antisemitic worldview: Personification, Manichaeism, as well as the construction of identitary collectives. With-

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<sup>6</sup> J. Wetzel, “Verschwörungstheorien,” in *Begriffe, Theorien, Ideologien*, vol. 3 of *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2010), 335.

<sup>7</sup> S. Salzborn, “Vom rechten Wahn: ‘Lügenpresse,’ ‘USrael,’ ‘Die da oben’ und ‘Überfremdung,’” in *Stolz und Vorurteile*, ed. M. Bauer, K. Malowitz, and S. Mörchen, *Mittelweg 36: Zeitschrift des Hamburger Instituts für Sozialforschung* 6 (2016/2017): 83. See also T. D. Uhlig, “Abgründe der Aufklärung: Über Verschwörungstheorien als antisemitisches Zerbild der Ideologiekritik,” in *Populismus, Paranoia, Pogrom: Affekterbschaften des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. K. Grünberg, W. Leuschner, and Initiative 9. November (Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2017), 156.

<sup>8</sup> See, e. g., S. Munnes, N. Lege, and C. Harsch, “Zum Antisemitismus in der neuen Friedensbewegung: Eine Weltanschauungsanalyse der ersten bundesweiten Mahnwachen für den Frieden,” in *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 25, ed. S. Schüler-Springorum (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2016), 222f.

in the structural principle of *Personification*, Jews are understood as the epitome of abstract and mediated processes of modern societies and conceived as the originators of these. These images are united in the myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy”—the conspiracy theory is, therefore, part of the personification. In turn, the second structural principle of *Manichaeism* is characterized by a radical dualistic division of the world into Good and Evil, the identification of the enemy as something life-threateningly Evil and an eschatological main feature. *Identitary collectives* form the last structural principle of antisemitism, which can only analytically be distinguished from Manichaeism. Within this structural principle, it is not individuals but only collectives who are granted a subject status, which are determined by a specific, unalterable—therefore identitary—being.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis of the structural principles of conspiracy ideologies requires further analytical sharpening of the term. Kurt Lenk’s historical-genetical typology extends the Pfahl-Traugherian understanding of conspiracy ideologies. As the starting point of his research, Lenk states that the “Hochideologien” (high-ranking ideologies) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were subjected to a decay process—especially in the twentieth century. As a result, forms of ideologies emerged which were intended to make those defects of “Hochideologien” bearable, which were becoming more and more obvious. *Complementary ideologies* acknowledge the contradictory and antagonistic conditions of modern societies. However, they do not legitimize these on a rational basis as the best of all possible options but deliver explanations for the unpleasant sides of capitalism. These are not blamed on capitalism as being systematically inherent to capitalist societies, but, instead, they are reduced to ontologically determined laws of human existence. This way societal conditions are indirectly affirmed because the societal defect resulting from them is withdrawn from all criticism. Religions are an example of complementary ideologies but also conservatism. They postulate value-bound ideal spheres to compensate for the real defect and, thus, serve their adherents as a kind of counseling. A *concealment ideology* is what Lenk defines as an imagination syndrome that may appear on its own or in concert with other ideologies. Its function is—especially in times of crisis—to distract from criticism of societal conditions by providing minority groups as objects of aggression. The antisemitism of the last third of the nineteenth century, according to Lenk, is to be understood as a form of concealment ideology: The anti-Jewish stereotypes of the “Jewish banker” or the “Jewish finance capital” conceal the socio-economic conditions of those crises. Lenk designates the last type of the

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links: kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS, 2002), 105–16.

decay ideologies *expression ideologies*.<sup>10</sup> The structure of expression ideologies is formed by a “conglomerate of myths”<sup>11</sup> that, on a functional level, provides a promise of salvation in mythical communal structures, as opposed to the contradictory conditions of late capitalist societies. A rational reference within the myth conglomerate no longer exists, the emotional addressing of drive shifts is more important than the argument. Empirical data and scientific theories are only of use when they verify the mythological basic assumptions: “At this point arguing and justifying no longer takes place, but it must be believed.”<sup>12</sup> To achieve their objective as soon as possible, expression ideologies push toward political action. They utilize, complementary to the community-myth, a Manichaeic friend-enemy-thinking,<sup>13</sup> which presets the impact direction of the actions. A (world-) conspiracy ideology, in this sense, is a (world-) conspiracy centered expression ideology.

A comparison of the structural features of antisemitism according to Haury and the conspiracy ideology following Lenk shows a high level of compliance: Personification of abstract processes of modernization, which are regarded as a global malady, Manichaeism and mythical-identitary images of collectives as promises of salvation.<sup>14</sup> These commonalities can also be observed on the *functional* level. In their description of the function of antisemitism for German right-wing extremism, Rainer Erb and Michael Kohlstruck refer to Pfahl-Traughber’s work for conspiracy ideologies: identity, world explanation, manipulation, and legitimization.<sup>15</sup> Within the Manichaeic worldview, antisemitism and conspiracy

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**10** In his studies, Lenk considered the question of whether national socialism can even be designated as an ideology. In his 1954 article Theodor W. Adorno initially refuted this due to lack of rationality and consistency but, then, in later publications did assign it this quality. See T. W. Adorno, “Beitrag zur Ideologienlehre,” in *Soziologische Schriften I. Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, ed. R. Tiedemann, (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997). Lenk considered national socialism as a form of an expression ideology.

**11** K. Lenk, *Volk und Staat: Strukturwandel polit. Ideologien im 19. u. 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 31.

**12** *Ibid.*

**13** Cf. *ibid.*, 143.

**14** The relation to anti-Americanism also becomes apparent by means of the structural principles. As such, Tobias Jaecker identifies: dualism, projection, self-appreciation, and conspiracy-thinking. However, Jaecker points out that these parallels merely exist on the discursive level. In practice antisemitism is singular. Cf. T. Jaecker, *Hass, Neid, Wahn: Antiamerikanismus in den deutschen Medien* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus-Verlag, 2014), 363f.

**15** Cf. Pfahl-Traughber, “‘Bausteine,’” 36–39; R. Erb and M. Kohlstruck, “Die Funktionen von Antisemitismus und Fremdenfeindschaft für die rechtsextreme Bewegung,” in *Strategien der extremen Rechten: Hintergründe—Analysen—Antworten*, edited by S. Braun, A. Geisler, and M. Gerster (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2016), 244f.

ideologies provide an identity as oppressed fighters for all good, and by the means of personification of the “evil Jew,” they are able to explain all maladies in the world and point out the guilty that need to be fought.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, both legitimize their own actions.

Parallels between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies also become apparent amongst the causes, from the perspective of Critical Theory. In *Elements of Antisemitism* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno invoke the concept of *projection* from Freudian psychoanalysis. Simplified, Freud describes projection as a defensive behavior, in which repressed individual drives are projected onto other people to be indicted. Antisemitism is ultimately defined by Horkheimer and Adorno as a “*pathische Projektion*” (*pathological projection*), which implies a projection without reflection of the Self within the object of consideration; antisemitic conspiracy ideologies and myths are a part of this process. By means of accusing Jews of world conspiracy, the desire for power and for a better life of those powerless, who experience this promise of liberalism as a lie and a mockery, becomes apparent: “instead of going into himself in order to record the protocol of the own lust for power, he [the subject] ascribes the protocols of the elders of Zion to the others.”<sup>17</sup> In *The Authoritarian Personality*, the pathological projection was operationalized into quantitative and qualitative social-research as a variable of *projectivity*.<sup>18</sup> In recent social-psychological research of conspiracy ideologies, it ultimately informs—independent from the explicit antisemitic items of the original study—the analysis of a *conspiracy mentality*,<sup>19</sup> which is considered an individual psychological cause for conspiracy thinking.<sup>20</sup>

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16 Eva Horn also identifies these three functions in her structural analysis of “conspiracy-theoretical thinking” of the nineteenth century; cf. E. Horn, “Das Gespenst der Arkana: Verschwörungsfiktion und Textstruktur der ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’,” in *Die Fiktion von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung: Zu Text und Kontext der ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’*, ed. E. Horn and M. Hagemester (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 7f.

17 M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2003), 199.

18 Cf. T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 239f.

19 Cf. S. Moscovici, “The Conspiracy Mentality,” in *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy*, ed. C. F. Graumann and S. Moscovici (New York: Springer, 1987), 151–69.

20 Cf. Pfahl-Traughber, “Bausteine,”; R. Imhoff and M. Bruder, “Speaking (Un-)Truth to Power: Conspiracy Mentality as a Generalised Political Attitude,” *European Journal of Personality* 28, no. 1 (2014): 25–43; R. Imhoff, “Beyond (Right-wing) Authoritarianism: Conspiracy Mentality as an Incremental Predictor of Prejudice,” in *The Psychology of Conspiracy: A Festschrift for Mirosław Kořta*, ed. M. Bilewicz et al. (London: Routledge, 2015), 122–41.



One further factor is of relevance for the analysis of the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies. Since the Holocaust, new manifestations of antisemitism can be discerned which are designated “secondary” or *Post-Holocaust-Antisemitism*.<sup>21</sup> Since the crime against humanity contradicts a positive identification of Antisemites as good (and German), a defense against memory and guilt takes place within this type of antisemitism that in extreme cases can result in the denial of the Holocaust—which in some countries is a criminal offense. This also occurs in combination with a perpetrator-victim reversal, for example when Jews are accused of benefitting from the Holocaust, or when Israel is compared to national socialist Germany. Because explicit antisemitic statements and actions are publicly tabooed and sanctioned, according to Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, a *detour-communication* has taken shape in which latent antisemitism is articulated in another, ostensibly non-problematic manner, for example via criticism of Israel.<sup>22</sup> The attribute “Jewish” is purposely omitted from this communication and the single stereotypes only appear as codes and ciphers, yet, used in the certainty that the informed audience will be able to decode the intended information.<sup>23</sup> “Anti-Jewish contents were and are (with the exception of right-wing extremist spheres) mediated as indirect acts of speech (and realized as ‘detour-communication’ [...]),” as Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz establish in their study of the language of Jew-Hatred in the twenty-first century.<sup>24</sup> The antisemitic implicature must be regarded in the analysis of conspiracy-ideological statements, in order to not mistake the appearance for the essence.

Tom David Uhlig puts the findings of this paragraph in a nutshell:

Structurally the conspiracy theory is the expression of antisemitic resentments. Since the breach of civilization of the Shoah hatred toward Jews, in the so-called Western countries, can no longer be articulated in an unchanged manner, if it does not want to risk being excluded from public discourse. On the one hand, detour-communication is enclosed by information on its motives, if one follows the history of antisemitic forms of articulation. To this day many of the antisemitic images are passed on with only a few minor modifications, and can therefore easily be decoded [...]. On the other hand, the conspiracy theory reveals

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21 Cf. T. W. Adorno, “Zur Bekämpfung des Antisemitismus heute,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. R. Tiedemann (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 20.1:360–83; M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft im 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 26.

22 Cf. W. Bergmann and R. Erb, “Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung: Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland,” *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 38, no. 2 (1986): 231.

23 Cf. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 78f.; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft*, 37f.

24 Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft*, 97.

its antisemitic descent via the function which it fulfills: the conspiracy-theoretical reductionism complies with the same societal and psychological needs, as the overt hatred towards Jews.<sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, the relation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideology seems to be so tight that a distinction appears difficult—if not even impossible.<sup>26</sup> Antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies permeate each other reciprocally: The conspiracy ideological enables antisemitism to function as a total world explanation;<sup>27</sup> and, by means of the Jewish enemy image, antisemitism provides conspiracy ideology with an extendable “complex stereotype-linkage,” which has been passed on for centuries.<sup>28</sup> The synthesis of both forms the myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy.”<sup>29</sup>

## II The Myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy”

The emergence of the myth has been reconstructed with respect to various points. Ugo Volli notices anti-Jewish conspiracy accusations already as of the first millennium B.C.E., for example regarding the conspiracy accusations against the Israelites in Egypt which led to their exodus, or with reference to those made at the Persian court based on the biblical book Esther.<sup>30</sup> Hannes Stein traces the origin of the myth back to the year 200 CE, to a statement made by the poet Lucius Flavius Philostratus, according to which the Jews had conspired against all humankind, what Philostratus considered verified by pointing out the isolation of the Jews.<sup>31</sup> The reference to the myth’s medieval origin is more frequent.<sup>32</sup> To that end, the historiographical applied discourse anal-

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25 Uhlig, “Abgründe der Aufklärung,” 156.

26 This may be due to the fact that the first analyses of conspiracy ideologies emerged from the fields of antisemitism and right-wing extremism research (Horkheimer, Adorno) or highlighted the anti-modern ideological core.

27 Cf. Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 150.

28 Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft*, 107.

29 Cf., e.g., E. Piper, “Achstes Bild: ‘Die jüdische Weltverschwörung,’” in *Antisemitismus: Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. J. H. Schoeps and J. Schlör (Munich: Piper, 1996), 127–35.

30 Cf. U. Volli, “Anti-Semitism (and Now Anti-Zionism) as Prototype of Conspiracy Theory: A Theoretical and Textual Approach,” *Lexia: Journal of Semiotics* 23–24 (2016): 23–24.

31 Cf. H. Stein, “Hoch die Weisen von Zion!” in *Verschwörungstheorien: Kursbuch, Heft 124*, ed. G. S. Freyermuth and I. Karsunke (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1996), 36.

32 Cf., e.g., N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Serif, 1996); A. Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifrey-maurerische Verschwörungsmythos in der Weimarer Republik und im NS-Staat* (Wien: Braumüller,

ysis by historian Johannes Heil deserves special notice.<sup>33</sup> He clarifies in detail that the narrative of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” did not merely originate as a consequence of modern antisemitism and *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* but had already been disseminated since the thirteenth century. Jews were, besides other religiously motivated anti-Jewish stereotypes, depicted as allies of the anti-Christ during the apocalyptic end of time. Although this accusation was also made against other groups, such as the Tatars, witches, or lepers, the one against the Jews prevailed throughout the passage of centuries—even after the accusations became worldlier, due to the secularization of Christian societies, and the narratives along with the actions combined with these, began to change. The process of desacralization had, in many ways, proven problematic for the conspiracy narratives. The Christian, pre-modern apocalyptic conspiracy imagination yet beheld a historical, theological element: According to this, the end of time was immediately followed by the absolution of the Christians and the conversion of the Jews (or their extermination). Without the theological bond to the anti-Christ and apocalypse, the possibility to convert Jews, the power of the Jews limited by the anti-Christ, and the termination of the expected enslavement of the subjugated societies via divine intervention were omitted as a consequence of the process of secularization, as was also the historical-theological promise of salvation. In this context, the figure of the no longer religiously conceptualized “savior” became all the more important, who had to prevent the secular hell of eternal enslavement by the Jews.<sup>34</sup> The conspiracy no longer necessarily led to the gateways of heaven but, instead, admonished action against the alleged conspirators, in order to evade enslavement. Furthermore, Heil notices that the desacralization of the “Jewish conspiracy” may cover the apocalyptic end of time; however, it has not left it behind itself.

Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein thematically follows Heil’s researches in his dissertation text *Die These von der Verschwörung 1776–1945 (The Thesis of the Conspiracy 1776–1945)*.<sup>35</sup> Therein the historian researches the counter-revolu-

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1993), 9; Piper, “Achtes Bild,” 127; D. Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where it Comes From* (New York: Free Press, 1997); A. Pfahl-Traughber, *Antisemitismus in der deutschen Geschichte* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich; VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2002), 31; T. Jaecker, *Antisemitische Verschwörungstheorien nach dem 11. September: Neue Varianten eines alten Deutungsmusters* (Münster: Lit, 2005), 43; W. Wippermann, *Agenten des Bösen: Verschwörungstheorien von Luther bis heute* (Berlin: be.bra-Verlag, 2007), 20–32.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. J. Heil, “Gottesfeinde”–“Menschenfeinde”: *Die Vorstellung von jüdischer Weltverschwörung (13. bis 16. Jahrhundert)* (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 536.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. J. Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung 1776–1945: Philosophen, Freimaurer, Juden, Liberale und Sozialisten als Verschwörer gegen die Sozialordnung* (Flensburg:

tionary conspiracy thesis in the environment of the French Revolution, which, besides philosophers, Freemasons, liberals, and socialists, also identified Jews as conspirators. Rogalla von Bieberstein refers to the socio-economic dimension of anti-Jewish hostility, which occurred as a consequence of forcing Jews into petty trade, money exchange, and lending in the Middle Ages. In this way, the Christian anti-Judaism was accompanied by a secular counterpart, and both were utilized in the counter-revolutionary conspiracy accusations against Jews. According to Rogalla von Bieberstein, Jews were initially only called “useful tools.”<sup>36</sup> However, their role would continuously solidify, with the result that soon, especially regarding the relation to Freemasonry, no distinction was made anymore, which brought about the very stable narrative of the “Judeo-Masonic World Conspiracy”: United in the ostensible struggle against Christianity, promoting enlightenment within the non-French nations, supported by Jewish influence and money.<sup>37</sup>

Because “the Jews” could be displayed as symbols of modernity and they, nonetheless, due to the continuous Christian-medieval demonology, were conceived by many as beings with mysterious features, they were in a special way suited for a role in the midst of an anti-modernist and anti-liberal conspiracy-thesis.<sup>38</sup>

As of the nineteenth century, Christian counter-revolutionary positions within the world conspiracy narrative, paralleled by the rise of socialist and democratic movements, were accompanied by anti-socialist, anti-pluralist, and anti-democratic positions.<sup>39</sup> The banking family Rothschild became a synonym for the anti-capitalist moment within the antisemitic world conspiracy narrative.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, the newspaper was established as a mass medium that, as of

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Flensburger-Hefte-Verlag, 1992). Rogalla von Bieberstein’s relation to Judaism must be examined critically. In the year 2002, he published the book “Jewish Bolshevism”—Myth and Reality in the “new-right” publishing house Antaios. Therein he regards the actions of those communists identified as Jews as a material foundation for “conspirator theories.” However, he ignores the societal contexts of national, antisemitic formations of identity, that were decisive for the socialist and communist engagement of Jews. Cf. Rogalla von Bieberstein, “*Jüdischer Bolschewismus*”—*Mythos und Realität* (Schnellroda: Ed. Antaios, 2004). Criticism on the topic by K.-P. Friedrich, review of “*Jüdischer Bolschewismus*”: *Mythos & Realität*, by Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 52, no. 3 (2003): 425–26.

<sup>36</sup> Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 107.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. also Pfahl-Traugher, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos*; Pipes, *Conspiracy*, 129–53.

<sup>38</sup> Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschwörung*, 114.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 127.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Piper, “Achtes Bild,” 128.

the second half of the nineteenth century, was conceived as a “fourth power,” and perceived as a threat by the conservative governments. The antisemitic stereotype of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” was solidified and extended, accordingly, by the notion of control over the media.<sup>41</sup> Regarding the dissemination of the myth, the works of Hermann Goedsche, aka Sir John Retcliffe (1868), deserve special attention. The literary process of solidification culminated in the plagiarism of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, first published around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century, of which the content was also compiled from Goedsche’s antisemitic novel *Biarritz*.<sup>42</sup> Regarding the global dissemination of antisemitic conspiracy myths, the *Protocols* play a crucial role.<sup>43</sup> Yehuda Bauer aptly summarizes this:

The devil myth, inspired by medieval Christianity, led to another very basic antisemitic stereotype, that of the Jewish world conspiracy, translated into the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

The *Protocols* serve as a starting point for the following analysis of the relation between conspiracy ideologies and antisemitism on the internet, since they are held true to be “the most significant document for propagating the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy”<sup>45</sup> or “an archetype or ‘ideal type’ of modern, 20th-century anti-Semitism.”<sup>46</sup> Ugo Volli even designates antisemitism itself a “prototypical conspiracy theory,” because of its long tradition and transformability.<sup>47</sup> On the basis of structural, functional, and historical commonalities, the question

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 129; J. D. Seidler, *Die Verschwörung der Massenmedien: Eine Kulturgeschichte vom Buchhändler-Komplotz bis zur Lügenpresse* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 233–37.

<sup>42</sup> For the history of origin, cf., e.g., Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*; J. L. Sammons, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion: Die Grundlage des modernen Antisemitismus—Eine Fälschung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998); M. Hagemeyer, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion: Between History and Fiction,” *New German Critique* 35, no. 103 (2008): 83–95; W. Benz, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion: Die Legende von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (Munich: Beck, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos*, 11, 35; Benz, *Die Protokolle der Weisen von Zion*, 7f.; M. Hagemeyer, “Protokolle der Weisen von Zion,” in *Ereignisse, Dekrete, Kontroverse, vol. 4 of Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. W. Benz (Berlin: De Gruyter Saur, 2011), 321–25.

<sup>44</sup> Y. Bauer, “Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism—New and Old,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. R. S. Wistrich (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 197.

<sup>45</sup> Pfahl-Traughber, *Der antisemitisch-antifreimaurerische Verschwörungsmythos*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> J. Heil, “Thomas of Monmouth and the *Protocols of the Sages of Narbonne*,” in *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ed. R. Landes and S. T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 56.

<sup>47</sup> Volli, “Anti-Semitism,” 33.

under consideration is whether the explicitly antisemitic *Protocols*—taking into account the concept of detour-communication—are indeed “the prototype of all world conspiracy theories.”<sup>48</sup> Chip Berlet refers to such conspiracy ideologies as “analogs,”<sup>49</sup> that he on the one hand distinguishes into explicit antisemitic conspiracy ideologies, which structurally replicate the *Protocols* without explicitly mentioning them, and on the other hand into ostensibly non-antisemitic conspiracy ideologies that operate with codes (e.g., “Rothschild,” “Zionists”). Regarding the USA in the year 2012, Berlet notices that the most frequent conspiracy ideologies mention other world conspirators, without consciously or overtly mentioning Jews.<sup>50</sup>

### III Antisemitism and post-Holocaust Conspiracy Ideologies on Facebook

The study is restricted to the “supply-side”<sup>51</sup> of conspiracy ideologies on the internet. The focus is on posts by certain Facebook pages, not on comments by users or page administrators/moderators. This medium has led to a democratization of the means of communication of modern societies, especially since the expansion of publishing possibilities for general users. Also, those discourses ex-

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**48** W. Benz, “Die mächtigste aller Lügen,” *ZEIT Geschichte*, October 24, 2017, <http://www.zeit.de/zeit-geschichte/2017/03/protokolle-weisen-zion-antisemitismus-faelschung/komplettansicht>. However, the questions, if the *Protocols* constituted a warrant for genocide, and if the content of the *Protocols* were only interpreted as antisemitic because of their paratexts and therefore merely a “pure projection surface,” shall not be considered at this point. For the debate on the link of the *Protocols* and Holocaust see Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*; M. Kuzmick, “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” in *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, ed. P. Knight (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003), 595–97; critical perspectives on the other hand by R. S. Levy, “Die ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’ und ihre Entlarvung: Ein vergebliches Unterfangen?” in *Die Fiktion von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung: Zu Text und Kontext der ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion’*, ed. E. Horn and M. Hagemeister (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 208–30. As an argument for the pure projection surface, see E. Horn, “Das Gespenst der Arkana: Verschwörungsfiktion und Textstruktur der ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion,’” in *Die Fiktion von der jüdischen Weltverschwörung: Zu Text und Kontext der ‘Protokolle der Weisen von Zion,’* ed. E. Horn and M. Hagemeister (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2012), 1–25.

**49** The term was originally used by Stephen Eric Bronner. Cf. C. Berlet, “Protocols to the Left, Protocols to the Right: Conspiracism in American Political Discourse at the Turn of the Second Millennium,” in *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ed. R. Landes and S. T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 189.

**50** Cf. *ibid.*, 189f.

**51** Rensmann, *Demokratie und Judenbild*, 78.

cluded in the past due to quality standards became publicly discernable via the internet. Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.) that enabled individuals to informally organize and connect themselves based on their interests also contributed to this development. With respect to antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies, this means that the internet in general, and social media, in particular, provides a space that resists a reflection process of their own ideological and/or delusional worldview but instead enforces these worldviews reciprocally. As Mark Weitzman described these processes at the beginning of this century:

A single extremist, who had up until now been isolated, can now connect with similar minded people, in different locations, and thus create the empowering illusion that their movement is indeed international and growing.<sup>52</sup>

In order to answer the questions of whether the *Protocols* are still present on the internet as “analogs,” and how the relation to antisemitism is expressed in these, a qualitative analysis of postings of German language Facebook pages which are assigned to the conspiracy-ideological milieu was conducted. For one thing, this examination intended to establish whether the mediated content constitutes “analogs,” and furthermore determine whether antisemitism is explicitly or implicitly implied, or not at all. To operationalize the “analogs,” Chip Berlet’s compiled accusations against the Jews from the *Protocols* was used, which can be expressed explicitly, however, without referring to the *Protocols*, or implicitly via codes. Because single Facebook posts do not reach the scope of the *Protocols*, the accusations compiled by Berlet are conceptualized as “analog”-elements:

1. Conspirators/Jews are behind a plan for global conquest.
2. Conspirators/Jews work through Masonic lodges.
3. Conspirators/Jews use liberalism to weaken church and state.
4. Conspirators/Jews control the press.
5. Conspirators/Jews work through radicals and revolutionaries.
6. Conspirators/Jews manipulate the economy, especially through banking monopolies and the power of gold.
7. Conspirators/Jews encourage issuing paper currency not tied to the gold standard.
8. Conspirators/Jews promote financial speculation and use of credit.

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<sup>52</sup> M. Weitzman, “‘The Internet is our Sword’: Aspects of Online Antisemitism,” in *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide*, ed. J. K. Roth and E. Maxwell (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 921.

9. Conspirators/Jews replace traditional educational curriculum to discourage independent thinking.
10. Conspirators/Jews encourage immorality among Christian youth.
11. Conspirators/Jews use intellectuals to confuse people.
12. Conspirators/Jews control “puppet” governments both through secret allies and by blackmailing elected officials.
13. Conspirators/Jews weaken laws through liberal interpretations.
14. Conspirators/Jews will suspend civil liberties during an emergency and then make the measures permanent.<sup>53</sup>

The Facebook pages were selected based on the bachelor’s thesis of Josef Holnburger and Andreas Hartkamp from 2017. In this work, they analyze the network and user behavior of 84 conspiracy-ideological Facebook pages that have over 5000 Likes at their disposal in the German-speaking area. The pages were categorized as conspiracy-ideological due to the fact that in their posts, they disseminated the narrative of a secret conspiracy of a small elite, aiming to attain power and to disclose this conspiracy concealed by lies and propaganda.<sup>54</sup> Within the scope of the following research, a sample of 200 postings was examined, consisting of the respective twenty posts with the highest level of reader engagement, on the ten most far-reaching German-language conspiracy-ideological Facebook pages during the time period from January 1, until June 30, 2017.<sup>55</sup> The engagement was measured based on the sum of likes, comments, likes of comments, and shares. The data was aggregated and extracted with the tool *Netvizz*,<sup>56</sup> to subsequently be processed by means of the software for qualitative data-analysis, MAXQDA.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Berlet, “Protocols to the Left,” 188.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. J. Holnburger and A. Hartkamp, “Verschwörungstheorien und soziale Netzwerke: Gegenöffentlichkeit 2.0?” (BA thesis, University of Hamburg, 2017), 33–37.

<sup>55</sup> The analyzed Facebook pages are *Killuminati*, *KenFM*, *RT Deutsch* (Russia Today German), *Freie Medien* (Free Media, not publicly accessible any more after November 2017), *Zentrum der Gesundheit* (Center for Health), *Der Wächter* (The Guardian), *Gegen den Strom* (Countercurrent), *Anti BILD*, *Frieden rockt* (peace rocks) and *Christoph Hörstel* (leader of a German conspiracy ideologically party, *Neue Mitte*/New Center). Since the page *Zentrum der Gesundheit* posted no content except links to their website, the eleventh Facebook page from the Holnburger/Hartkamp ranking, *COMPACT-Magazin* (deplatformed in 2020), had been added additionally.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. B. Rieder, “Studying Facebook via Data Extraction: The Netvizz Application,” *WebSci’13* (2013): [http://thepoliticsofsystems.net/permafiles/rieder\\_websci.pdf](http://thepoliticsofsystems.net/permafiles/rieder_websci.pdf).



## Analysis

On the basis of their immediate Facebook content (post, picture/meme, video, article-link-preview) the 200 posts were assigned to operationalized codes which were drawn from the match with Chip Berlet's "analog"-elements. A subsequent examination should, then, determine if the elements of the "analog" in the single posts exhibit an explicit, implicit, or even no antisemitic reference at all.

It can be ascertained that on the formal level, the posts within the examined samples contain various different text content, links, pictures/memes, and videos in different combinations, created specifically for Facebook. The links refer to different Facebook pages, YouTube, their own website, or certain articles of the "mainstream media," to underline their own statements. Posts on the Facebook pages *RT Deutsch* and *COMPACT-Magazin*, in most cases, share links to their own website and publish pieces of the linked text as post content with a minimum of modifications made. The length of the posts varies by comparison of the different pages but also within the individual pages. It ranges from one post with a linked meme, which consists solely of one emoticon, to long posts with several paragraphs and additional links. In cases of short posts, for the most part, an affirmative reference to the shared content (picture/meme, video) can be established, which can immediately be consumed on the Facebook pages.

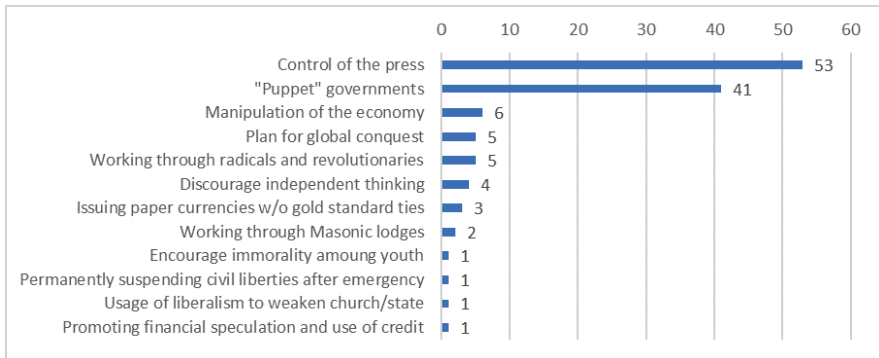


Fig. 1: Frequency of "Analog"-Elements in Number of Postings

In 78 posts (39%) of the examined sample, a total of 123 uses of "analog"-elements could be determined. As illustrated in the image above, the accusations that were made most frequently within these were *Conspirators/Jews control the*

*press and Conspirators/Jews control “puppet” governments both through secret allies and by blackmailing elected officials.*<sup>57</sup> On that note the Facebook page *Frieden rockt* (peace rocks) ended almost all posts, inter alia, with this addition:

Our principle: Education and knowledge should always be accessible to everyone. Today, more than ever, it is important to form one’s own opinion and to not simply let the media take over this task! Discover further exciting articles & videos on our website [...] (e.g., Frieden rockt, May 7, 2017, 5:21 pm)

The control of the government is expressed in simple posts,

“Don’t let yourselves be manipulated by the hypocritical politicians!!!” [...] (Anti Bild, March 14, 2017, 10:52pm)

but can also be formulated in a more complex manner:

Qatar threatened by its neighbors! Crisis intensifying!! [...] The incredible conditions laid down by the dear Arabic brothers amount to an incapacitation of the government, Qatar would practically lose its sovereignty, these conditions are PURPOSEFULLY designed unacceptably! And if Qatar accepts the conditions THE WAR WILL COME ANYWAY! Because Washington wants to have Iran attacked! Hopefully, Russia and China will get involved and pledge assistance to Doha. That is the only way to stabilize the situation! Setting the globe on fire must become expensive for Washington. (Christoph Hörstel, June 23, 2017, 10:17 pm)

Furthermore, it can be established that most of the posts with “analog”-elements (72 posts; 92%) do not exhibit direct antisemitic content, as is the case with the examples already mentioned.<sup>58</sup> No post of the examined Facebook pages exhibits explicit antisemitism. Within the posts, antisemitism is expressed implicitly via codes (6 posts; 8%). Evidence of antisemitism was provided on the basis of the *entire* content of posts as antisemitic references are not, in every case, directly oriented toward the “analog”-elements. Stereotypes and codes are not exclusively placed within the post but in some cases expressed within the linked videos or pictures/memes. In four cases, Jewish names (Rothschild, George Soros) were used as antisemitic codes in combination with antisemitic stereo-

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<sup>57</sup> Only the accusation “Conspirators/Jews encourage issuing paper currency not tied to the gold standard” has experienced modernization that is now directed against the abolition of cash, in favor of electronic means of payment.

<sup>58</sup> These posts, accordingly, exhibit conspiracy-ideological narratives, which either vaguely state the allegation of manipulation of politics and media, pretend to be critical of capitalism, or, in essence, are anti-American or positioned against “the West.”

types to describe conspirators. For example, to point out the alleged Jewish influence on French politics:

Macron before election victory: Bankster-candidate from out of nowhere Unbelievable; the French example shows at what point we have arrived: A former financier of the Rothschild-area becomes the minister of finance – and then takes over the presidential election because all of the cartel-media like him – as ordered by their masters. THAT is the condition of democracy in Europe today. Macron is a disease symptom – no more and no less, his election victory seals our fate. [...]

(Christoph Hörstel, May 4, 2017, 6:39 pm)

In another case, a video montage of two interviews with German cabaret artists concerning the topic of censorship by the media was posted. As a cabaret artist speaks of “Rotstift” (red pen) in order to express censorship, a picture of Jacob Rothschild with the logo “Rotschild [sic]” is inserted into the video for a few seconds.<sup>59</sup>

The concluding two cases contain implicit antisemitism. The first case concerns the use of the caricature “Gangsters” by the antisemitic illustrator David Dees, in a video that criticizes Barack Obama’s politics and that, inter alia, depicts Alan Greenspan as part of the money- and interest-critical FED-conspiracy.<sup>60</sup> The second case is a post that refers positively to the antisemitically connotated accusation of the former chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Martin Schulz, implying that Israel deprives the Palestinians of water.<sup>61</sup>

[...] Unlike Merkel and Gabriel Martin Schulz also has positive sides. For instance, his agency against unchecked per diems, and also his criticism of Israel’s water-distribution. [...]

(Gegen den Strom, January 27, 2017, 8:40pm)

## “Analog”-Elements and Antisemitism

The special feature of the implicitly antisemitic posts is not portrayed by its quantity but can be illustrated by its position within the overall context. In

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Frieden rockt*, April 3, 2017, 2:32pm, Min 03:11.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Gegen den Strom*, January 23, 2017, 10:34pm. For the original, cf. D. Dees, *The Political Art of David Dees: Volume One, 2006–2013* (Leipzig: Der Schelm, 2016), 88.

<sup>61</sup> On Schulz’s remarks, cf. M. Newman, “Netanyahu: EU Parliament Head Has ‘Selective Hearing’,” *The Times of Israel*, February 12, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-eu-parliament-head-has-selective-hearing/>.

line with the function of perception, they operate as the highest conspiracy-ideological category. On a small scale, this can be demonstrated within a post, and, on a large scale, by linking posts to an all-encompassing ideological world-explanatory system. Very extensive posts, in particular, be they text or video, use antisemitic codes in this way. In such a manner, a longer post initially deals with the end of the 500 € note thematically:

[...] Does organized crime really need the 500 Euro-note? Every child knows that this is not the case. It also knows that multi-billions that are scammed in an organized manner end up on the accounts of the large providers of financial services. It is the bank money, the digital money, that is used to commit the large capital crimes today.

Money rules the world but who rules the money?

‘Give me the control over the currency of a nation, then it doesn’t matter to me who makes the laws.’ – Mayer Amschel Rothschild. [...]

(KenFM, January 26, 2017, 8:50pm)

First of all, the “analog”-element *Conspirators/Jews encourage issuing paper currency not tied to the gold standard* is used in its modernized form in order to draw attention to the quote assigned to Mayer Amschel Rothschild (*Conspirators/Jews control “puppet” governments both through secret allies and by blackmailing elected officials*) via the systematical integrating of the accusation of having control over money (*Conspirators/Jews manipulate the economy, especially through banking monopolies and the power of gold*).

The systematical connection through several posts of the page is revealed by the following example. The Facebook page “Christoph Hörstel” initially describes the media as being controlled by a cartel,

HYPE over the SPD-candidate for the chancellorship?!?—sure: in cartel-media!

(Christoph Hörstel, April 12, 2017, 7:02pm)

which, in another post, was already determined as a cartel of banks:

‘All banks worldwide form ONE cartel.’ Quick: Who said that?—The Left?—Hörstel?—University study (answer below) Fact is: One who doesn’t want to reform our interest- and tuition-system, cannot bring anything new into the world. [...]

(Christoph Hörstel, April 5, 2017 10:54 pm)

As the force behind the banks, the page ultimately presents the “Rothschild-area,” as already quoted above.

This analysis was restricted to the use of “analog”-elements by certain Facebook pages within a certain time period. However, it is to be expected that the function of perception also proves to be efficient beyond the analyzed area.

The pages link to a network of other pages and platforms where antisemitism need not be expressed implicitly. Websites or videos that disseminate the myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” can be reached with only a few clicks.

The function of world explanation of antisemitism can also be activated in another way. Decoding of the antisemitic potential of a post by users on Facebook in the comments is an aspect that was not illuminated in this study. Further studies are necessary to trace the decoding process on the side of the recipients. On that note, two users made the following comments under an article of *Compact Magazin* in which George Soros was called the “puppet master behind various colorful revolutions” in an article-preview:<sup>62</sup>

Rockefeller and Rothschild also need to be disposed of.  
(February 21, 2017, 4:43pm)

Those are but two of the many others that also need to be disposed of. Those two mentioned are merely the most prominent.  
(February 21, 2017, 10:09pm)

## Conclusion

As pointed out, a structural and a functional correlation exists between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies. Under consideration of the possibility of detour-communication, the short qualitative study illustrates how conspiracy-ideological content—regarding the “analog”-elements of the *Protocols* or not—can be traced back to the old myth of the “Jewish World Conspiracy” via antisemitic codes. The passed on stock of knowledge of the myth facilitates the implementation of “Jews” as the highest category of knowledge within conspiracy-ideological contexts.

However, the result of the study merely illuminates one aspect of the correlation between antisemitism and conspiracy ideologies—that of the explanation of the world. This can be considered a starting point for further research. A further analysis of those identity constructions inherent to the posts but also and especially to the comments would greatly promote the state of knowledge, regarding, for example, the expression of guilt- and memory-resistance by trivialization of national socialism in the context of conspiracy ideologies. One example made this clear:

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62 *COMPACT-Magazin*, February 21, 2017, 3:55 pm.

The largest pharma-conspiracy of all times is uncovered. [...] Rockefeller discredited all medicine by prohibiting colloidal silver (nano-silver) with unjust methods. [...] Hence, every year millions of human beings die because of Rockefeller who murders more human beings in just one year than Hitler did during the entire Second World War. (Freie Medien, February 16, 2017, 08:00 am; post no longer publicly accessible since November 2017)

Finally, we can conclude that the *Protocols*, as “analogs” are still relevant for conspiracy-ideological discourses. On this matter Deborah Lipstadt’s assessments are also valid for the German context, especially regarding the international internet-based network of the milieu:

In truth, with the growth of the Internet, it is difficult and somewhat anachronistic to speak of national borders. The words of an imam in Cairo or a preacher in Idaho can be heard in real time in Dearborn or Dubai, as well as in an array of other places. [...] I would argue that, while the conspiracy theories promulgated by the *Protocols* have had but a limited impact in the United States, we who worry about such things must remain alert not so much for the *Protocols* itself as for what Chip Berlet calls their analogs. It is too easy for people to have their *weltanschauung* colored by these myths.<sup>63</sup>

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**63** D. Lipstadt, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion on the Contemporary American Scene: Historical Artifact or Current Threat?” in *The Paranoid Apocalypse: A Hundred-Year Retrospective on The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, ed. R. Landes and S. T. Katz (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 183.

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Karin Stögner

# Antisemitism and Intersectional Feminism: Strange Alliances

In recent years, intersectionality—an analytical concept and political agenda that is widely known as the interrelation of race, class, and gender—has become prevalent in political and academic discourse and also increasingly contested, as it seems to be prone to disregard or even advocate antisemitism. In this essay, I will focus on the strange alliances that occur between queer and intersectional feminism on the one hand and global antisemitism on the other hand. I will elaborate on different traditions and the broad variety of approaches to intersectionality and thus analyze the reasons for intersectionality being instrumentalized for a latent or manifest antisemitism. Thereby I will also refer to pinkwashing<sup>1</sup> allegations. At the same time, I will emphasize that there are indeed intersectional approaches that do not have an open flank on antisemitism. In doing so, I will outline a new concept of intersectionality as an analytical tool to analyze the connection between antisemitism and other ideologies—what I shall call intersectionality of ideologies.<sup>2</sup>

## Intersectionality and Antisemitism in Political Praxis: Some Examples

I want to start with a few examples that illustrate the problematic relationship between intersectionality and antisemitism that has recently become apparent in the political practice of certain queer and feminist activists—the so-called Queer International.<sup>3</sup> This was seen, for example, in June 2017, on the occasion of the Lesbian “Chicago Dyke March” from which two participants were excluded

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1 Pinkwashing is a term coined similar to the term whitewashing, denoting an identification of certain products, people, countries, and organizations with the LGBTIQ+ movement, thereby constituting them as tolerant, modern, and progressive. With relations to Israel, the term is often used to denote the practice of shifting the focus away from the Israeli-Palestine conflict to Israel’s exemplary tolerance of LGBTIQ+ people.

2 Cf. K. Stögner, “‘Intersektionalität von Ideologien’—Antisemitismus, Sexismus und das Verhältnis von Gesellschaft und Natur,” *Psychologie & Gesellschaftskritik* 41, no. 2 (2017): 25–45.

3 Cf. S. Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

for carrying a rainbow flag with a Star of David. This was deemed a symbol of Zionism that made other participants feel uncomfortable. Here Jewish specificity was sweepingly identified with Israel and the specific intersection of Jewishness and Lesbianism expelled from the community. Jews were welcome on the march as long as they espoused anti-Zionism, according to the organizers. No other form of nationalism suffered such a ban. In the “Chicago Dyke March Official Statement on 2017 March and Solidarity with Palestine” the organizers explicitly equate Zionism with racism:

Zionism is an inherently white-supremacist ideology. It is based on the premise that Jewish people have a God-given entitlement to the lands of historic Palestine and the surrounding areas.<sup>4</sup>

Completely ignoring the real historic conditions of Zionism as well as the history of the Jewish population in Israel/Palestine, Jews are viewed as alien to the region and juxtaposed to a purportedly autochthonous first nation Palestinian population. While Jewish nationalism is vilified as “white-supremacist,” a nationalism based on the political-ideological construction of the “lands of historic Palestine” is worshipped. During the online discussion that followed the March, activists used the antisemitic expression “Zio” first popularized by the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>5</sup>

A similar thing happened at the Women’s March on Washington in the winter of 2017, where one of the organizers, Linda Sarsour, announced that feminism and Zionism were incompatible.<sup>6</sup> While Zionism as a political movement was excluded, the Muslim headscarf was actively adopted as a political symbol of resis-

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<sup>4</sup> Chicago Dyke March Collective, “Chicago Dyke March Official Statement on 2017 March and Solidarity with Palestine,” accessed January 15, 2018, <https://chicagodykemarchcollective.org/2017/06/27/chicago-dyke-march-official-statement-on-2017-march-and-solidarity-with-palestine/> [no longer available].

<sup>5</sup> For this incident, the Simon Wiesenthal Center listed the group among the perpetrators of the “2017 Top Ten Worst Global Anti-Semitic/Anti-Israel Incidents,” accessed January 15, 2018, [http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/TOP\\_TENANTI-SEMITIC2017.PDF](http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/TOP_TENANTI-SEMITIC2017.PDF) [no longer available]; see also Y. Rosenberg, “Chicago Dyke March Drops Pretense, Deploys Anti-Semitic Term Popularized by Neo-Nazis,” *The Tablet Magazine*, July 14, 2017, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/chicago-dyke-march-drops-pretense-deploys-anti-semitic-term-popularized-by-neo-nazis>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. C. Meyerson, “Can You Be a Zionist Feminist? Linda Sarsour Says No,” *The Nation*, March 13, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/can-you-be-a-zionist-feminist-linda-sarsour-says-no/>.

tance: the official poster of the Women's March, "Greater Than Fear" by Shepard Fairey, shows a woman wearing the Stars and Stripes as a headscarf.<sup>7</sup>

Another incident occurred in March 2018, when Tamika Mallory, at that time Women's March co-chair, was present at an outspokenly antisemitic and homophobic speech given by Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, and received public acknowledgement from him.<sup>8</sup> Already before that she and Carmen Perez, another prominent figure of the Women's March, had posted laudatory pictures of Farrakhan on Instagram. While acknowledging a common fight of "historically oppressed people, Blacks, Jews, Muslims and all people must stand together to fight racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia,"<sup>9</sup> Mallory failed to explicitly condemn Farrakhan's antisemitism and homophobia.<sup>10</sup> In May 2018, upon returning from a journey to Israel and the West Bank, she said at an event hosted by the Center for Constitutional Rights and the Justice Delegation that the creation of the state of Israel was a "human rights crime."<sup>11</sup>

These are examples of a disturbing development within global feminist and queer movements. Likewise, we observe a growing international popularity of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions campaign particularly in feminist and queer groups. Thus, in 2015 the National Women Studies Association (NWSA), the biggest feminist academic organization in North America, endorsed BDS.<sup>12</sup>

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7 The image can be seen and obtained for free via <https://obeygiant.com/people-art-avail-download-free/>, accessed April 10, 2020.

8 Cf. Anti-Defamation League, "Farrakhan Rails Against Jews, Israel and the U.S. Government in Wide-Ranging Saviours' Day Speech," issued February 26, 2018, accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/blog/farrakhan-rails-against-jews-israel-and-the-us-government-in-wide-ranging-saviours-day-speech>.

9 T. Mallory, "Tamika Mallory Speaks: 'Wherever My People Are Is Where I Must Be'," *Newsone*, March 7, 2018, <https://newsone.com/3779389/tamika-mallory-saviours-day/>.

10 Cf. A. Kaplan Sommer, "Women's March Faces Crisis as Jewish Activists Lose Faith Amid Farrakhan Firestorm," *Haaretz*, March 11, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/jewish-activists-lose-faith-in-women-s-march-amid-farrakhan-firestorm-1.5890356>; D. J. Roth, "Women's March Leaders Refuse to Condemn Farrakhan after Antisemitic Speech," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 3, 2018, <http://www.jpost.com/printarticle.aspx?id=544074>.

11 H. Mazzig, "As a Queer Jew of Color, I Find Tamika Mallory's Latest Comments Particularly Heartbreaking," *The Tablet Magazine*, June 8, 2018, <https://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/263721/as-a-queer-jew-of-color-i-find-tamika-mallorys-latest-comments-particularly-heart-breaking>; T. Krupkin, "Tamika Mallory Slams Founding Of Israel As 'Human Rights Crime'," *Forward*, June 2, 2018, <https://forward.com/news/402315/tamika-mallory-slams-founding-of-israel-as-human-rights-crime/>.

12 Issued November 27, 2015, accessed February 15, 2018, <https://www.nwsa.org/content.asp?contentid=105> [no longer available]; cf. also E. Redden, "Another Association Backs Israel Boy-

Such incidents are routinely justified by reference to an alleged intersectional principle forbidding feminists and queer people from closing their eyes to other forms of oppression and exclusion. However, such incidents also strikingly contradict intersectionality that, with its search for similarities and intersections between different forms of oppression and resistance, undoubtedly has an inclusive aspect. Here, however, we also find a starkly exclusionary aspect: at the same time as promoting international solidarity, intersectionality as a political slogan has increasingly excluded Jewish experience in an openly anti-Zionist drift.<sup>13</sup> In order to adequately situate and assess the alliance between queer/intersectional feminism and BDS, it is necessary to briefly elaborate on the history of intersectionality and its different traditions and approaches.

## Intersectionality: Different Approaches

Intersectionality is probably one of the most important and influential analytical concepts of the new left. It embraces the multidimensionality of social processes and enquires into the intertwining operation of different forms of oppression and discrimination, in particular in terms of the categories of *race*, *gender*, and *class*. Intersectionality seeks to permeate this multi-dimensional structure of domination and to understand the various ways individuals are entangled in the totality of society. Thus, it is very much about rearticulating categories that had been ideologically set apart but which in reality are connected. Intersectionality realizes that the categories intermingle, that race cannot be viewed independent of gender and class, and that categories are not unitary but variable, that the female gender group, for instance, is not homogeneous. But at the same time, the categories themselves and the categorizing process itself require scrutiny: While the fact that race, gender, and class are not independent of one another

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cott," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 1, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/12/01/national-womens-studies-association-joins-israel-boycott-movement>.

**13** Besides the public statements by, among others, the organizers of the Women's March and of Chicago Dyke March, academic discourse is also prone to this development. See, e.g., A. Davis, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016); J. Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," *International Journal for Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 336–39; critically on this development, see C. Nelson, "The Intersectionality Muddle," *Insight Higher Ed*, February 15, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/02/15/concept-intersectionality-mutating-and-becoming-corrupted-essay>; K. Stögner, "New Challenges in Feminism: Intersectionality, Critical Theory, and Anti-Zionism," in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism: The Dynamics of Delegitimization*, ed. A. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 84–111.

is recognized, categorization as an act of power has yet to be subjected to critique.<sup>14</sup> Thus, intersectionality clearly reveals the connection between epistemology and social criticism.<sup>15</sup> But from the outset it has also been associated with political activism, in particular in the wake of the Civil Rights Movements and Black Feminism in the USA.<sup>16</sup> However, a demand for empowerment on the part of marginalized groups has led to ever more talk about identities and less and less about supra-personal power relations.<sup>17</sup> Thus we observe that at times in the name of intersectionality, categorization is rather reinforced and hardened in identity politics that sometimes authoritatively subsume individuals to communities and collectivities.

Intersectionality is commonly understood as a struggle of special interests and particularities against the universal, whereas the universal itself is deciphered as a hegemonic particularity, namely a manifestation of a white, male, and heterosexual supremacy. Since the understanding of the universal is restricted to the concept of hegemony,<sup>18</sup> the struggle of special interests and particularities involves a dismissal of universal concepts altogether as manifestations of existing power relations. Angela Davis, for example, refers to this as the “tyranny of the universal.”<sup>19</sup> Jasbir Puar’s argument is similar.<sup>20</sup> Thus, a profound anti-universalism can be observed in many intersectional approaches. And it is indeed true that universal concepts like the individual, the human, equality, freedom, etc. that all these universal concepts originate historically in European Enlightenment and are thus particularities. Furthermore, they have been openly or clan-

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14 This question is also raised in R. A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

15 Cf. G.-A. Knapp, “Zu Produktivität und Grenzen intersektioneller Perspektiven,” *Erwägen Wissen Ethik* 24, no. 3 (2013): 468–501.

16 Cf. The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement (1978),” *Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42, nos. 3–4 (2014): 271–80; K. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence against Women of Colour,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99; A. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); P. H. Collins, “Intersectionality’s Definitional Dilemmas,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 41, no. 1 (2015): 1–20.

17 Critically on this, see N. Fraser, “Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice,” in *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (London: Verso, 2013), 159–73.

18 Cf. E. Laclau and Ch. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); J. Butler, “Contingent Foundations,” in *Feminist Contentions. A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. S. Benhabib, J. Butler, N. Fraser and D. Cornell (New York: Routledge, 1995), 35–58.

19 Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

20 Cf. J. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

destinely racialized and gendered, which finds expression in racially marginalized people or women being excluded from these universals. It was simply not about them when Enlightenment philosophers and politicians talked about the universal rights of man; they were excluded from the universal concept of the human, which was bound to reason, autonomy, subjectivity, or with Hannah Arendt to the right to have rights.<sup>21</sup>

But what shall we do with the universal, knowing that it stems from a particularity and knowing that the majority of people were or still are excluded? To give up universalism and universality would imply to abandon also the demand for a universal validity of human rights for all. Hence, the universal has to be viewed as going beyond the mere hegemonic particularity. The specificity is in the negativity, which it also entails—a demand for universality and a promise of a common goal that has not yet become hegemonic but which, to the contrary, exists beneath the surface of and contrary to the actual power relations. It is not possible to legitimize and to debate this form of universality but negatively: without insisting on a concept of universality we would also lose the basis to claim equal rights for all. The universal term humanity—however restricted it certainly is in reality—negatively makes evident the humanity of those who were and are excluded. We need to normatively stick to an idea of universality conceived of as a framework for—to say it with Adorno—“the better state as one in which people could be different without fear.”<sup>22</sup> Understood as a critical framework, universalism might reconcile the competing particularities without leveling them. Without such an idea of universality, we constantly end up in a hegemonic struggle of particularities. And those particularities that are the most powerful will continue to win this struggle. A common goal that embraces all can be formulated only on the basis of a reflected and dialectical concept of the universal that does not deny but that rather strengthens the particular.<sup>23</sup>

Intersectionality acknowledges particularities and seeks to promote special interests. But because the universal is strictly denied, the social reality disintegrates into a plurality of particularities or special interests that compete for recognition—without a common frame of recognition. In this situation, the particu-

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21 Cf. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 177.

22 Th. W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), 103.

23 On the broad discussion on the relationship between the universal and the particular and on how to think about the universal in a different way see, e.g., S. Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009); S. Benhabib, “Arendt and Adorno: The Elusiveness of the Particular and the Benjaminian Moment,” in *Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations*, ed. L. Rensmann and S. Gandesha (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 31–55.

larities can rather arbitrarily be summed up into what Angela Davis calls “intersectionality of movements and struggles”<sup>24</sup>—which is a breeding ground for the strange alliances between the international queer movement and BDS. Those alliances are hardly grounded on a common goal but rather on a common foe. This is evident in Queer BDS. For example, what might motivate the Brazilian queer activist and artist Linn da Quebrada to boycott a queer film festival in Tel Aviv in order to declare her solidarity not with Palestinian queers in particular but much more generally with Palestine, which by implication centrally includes the Palestinian leadership, Hamas and Fatah, which are outspokenly homophobic?<sup>25</sup> Wouldn’t one expect a queer activist who fights for LGBTIQ+ rights worldwide to show solidarity with the organizers of a queer film festival in particular rather than with Palestine in general?

These strange alliances provide evidence that it is hardly about the common goal or interest but about a common foe—in this case Israel. Against that background we understand that when certain strands of intersectionality, the ones that I am talking about here which are advocated, among others, by Angela Davis, Jasbir Puar, or Sarah Schulman, acknowledge and promote particularities and special interests, they do not mean Jewish particularity. Rather, Jewish special interests are subsumed to the universal that is deemed tyrannical of the particular. Here we see the ideological basis for identifying Zionism or even Judaism with white supremacy.

But the question remains how it can happen that intersectionality, a concept that wants to be inclusive, excludes Jews and the Jewish experience with antisemitism. And here I should mention that there are indeed different traditions of intersectionality and different approaches to the intertwining of oppression.

Given the historical significance of antisemitism for post-Nazi societies, a critical approach to intersectionality and the use of the category of gender, therefore, gained a hearing by critical feminists in the German-speaking countries. Responding to the second women’s movement and feminist discourses, the question of what was actually meant by talk about “the woman” in society was increasingly raised with regard to women’s role in National Socialism. This happened in the form of an explicit feminist critique of certain pseudo-feminist discourses which granted women *per se*, as a gender group, collective victim status: Nazism was depicted as the apogee of patriarchy, allowing women in general to

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<sup>24</sup> Davis, *Freedom*, 16.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. L. da Quebrada, “Boicote a Israel e Carta de Angela Davis Oi gente, Linn aqui. Semanas atrás, quando divulgamos as datas e cidades da #TravaTour3, recebi muitos comentários,” Facebook, May 29, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/mclinndaquebrada/posts/boicote-a-israel-e-carta-de-angela-davisoi-gente-linn-aquisemanas-atrás-quando-d/2063352900569938/>.



be presented as victims of Nazism. This was associated with antisemitic tendencies, since patriarchy was seen as rooted in Judaism. In this way, responsibility for Nazism could surreptitiously be transferred to the Jews.<sup>26</sup> Feminist critics took issue with such antisemitic and pseudo-feminist guilt-deflection operations and investigated female participation in Nazism.<sup>27</sup> The many levels of this involvement were analyzed, for example the role of non-Jewish women in antisemitic settings and the various forms of participation by women as activists, profiteers, and collaborators in the Nazi system, which indeed thereby provided “Aryan” women with a certain “emancipation bonus.” Analysis of these matters deconstructed the often simplistic understanding of the category of gender in relation to antisemitism and racism in Nazism, while at the same time bringing to light the hidden meaning of gender. Jewish women were, it is true, not murdered because they were women but because they were Jews. Their gender was nevertheless instrumentalized in Nazi genocidal propaganda: Heinrich Himmler, leader of the SS (Protection Squadron) in Nazi Germany, justified the murder of Jewish women on the bio-political grounds that they were the natural resource for the constant renewal of the “Jewish race.”<sup>28</sup> So here we see a feminist approach to intersectionality that developed against the background of National Socialism and took antisemitism as its starting point. It thus did not exclude Jews and their experience with antisemitism.

In the USA, by contrast, the problem situation was different. The background for developing intersectionality was not the experience of National Socialism but of slavery and systematic racism. Here, Black Feminism demonstrated that gender and race discrimination could not be separated. Individual identities and social positioning are viewed as a struggle of different special interests. Against that background it is understandable that intersectionality has widely been restricted to a particular notion of “race” or ethnicity connected to the social differentiation between white and Black. This makes sense in view of massive racist discrimination against Blacks and Persons of Color. However, the classical triad race-class-gender, if understood exclusively, is not capable of analytically grasp-

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26 Cf. e. g., G. Weiler, *Ich verwerfe im Lande die Kriege: Das verborgene Matriarchat im Alten Testament* (Munich: Verlag Frauenoffensive, 1984).

27 Cf. Ch. Kohn-Ley and I. Korotin, eds., *Der feministische ‘Sündenfall’? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung* (Vienna: Picus, 1994); S. Heschel, “From the Bible to Nazism: German Feminists on the Jewish Origins of Patriarchy,” *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 21 (1992): 319–33; J. Gehmacher, ed., *Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte des Nationalsozialismus: Fragestellungen, Perspektiven, neue Forschungen* (Innsbruck/Vienna: Studienverlag, 2007).

28 A. Messerschmidt, *Bildung als Kritik der Erinnerung: Lernprozesse in Geschlechterdiskursen zum Holocaust-Gedächtnis* (Frankfurt/Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2003), 157.

ing the complex phenomenon of hatred against Jews in global antisemitism. Implicitly, Jews are viewed as representatives of whiteness.<sup>29</sup>

This becomes evident in Black Lives Matter, a platform fighting for antiracism and antidiscrimination. Angela Davis, philosopher, civil and women's rights activist, and former leader of the Black Panther movement, has become a mouthpiece of this very diverse platform. She points to the meaning of the slogan "Black Lives Matter" in contrast to "All Lives Matter:"

If indeed all lives mattered we would not need to emphatically proclaim that "Black Lives Matter." Or, as we discover on the BLM website: Black Women Matter, Black Girls Matter, Black Gay Lives Matter, Black Bi Lives Matter, Black Boys Matter, Black Queer Lives Matter, Black Men Matter, Black Lesbians Matter, Black Trans Lives Matter, Black Immigrants Matter, Black Incarcerated Lives Matter. Black Differently Abled Lives Matter. Yes, Black Lives Matter, Latino/Asian American/Native American/Muslim/Poor and Working-Class White People's Lives Matter. There are many more specific instances we would have to name before we can ethically and comfortably claim that All Lives Matter.<sup>30</sup>

Jewish lives are not mentioned once. This is also noticeable because Black Lives Matter was a very diverse movement in the beginning, in which Jewish women also played a leading role in the fight for civil rights, but gradually withdrew with the growing tendencies of antisemitism within the campaign.<sup>31</sup> By implication they seem to be included in the All Lives—that is, the universal that is coined white and male. Not by mere coincidence parts of the Black Lives Matter movement also support BDS. This blinding out of Jews and Israel-related antisemitism bears specific consequences regarding the acknowledgement of global antisemitism and its genocidal history: intersectionality systematically fails to include the Jewish struggle for self-determination both cultural and political—intersectional identity politics fails when it comes to Jewish identity.

## Intersectional Exclusions: Race—Class—Gender

One reason for this development is the widespread restriction of intersectionality to the trinity of race, class, and gender. This framework cannot include the particular experience of Jews with antisemitism. In intersectionality, the construc-

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. D. Schraub, "White Jews: An Intersectional Approach," *Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Review* 43, no. 2 (2019): 379–407.

<sup>30</sup> Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. Isaacs, "How the Black Lives Matter & Palestinian Movements Converged," *Moments Magazine*, March/April 2016: 44–67.

tion of the racialized other is restricted to the distinction of white on the one hand and Black or Brown on the other hand—and this othering is historicized only in relation to colonialism and imperialism, while the history of antisemitism within the colonialist and imperialist societies and finally the Shoah are left out. Jewishness is conflated with whiteness, with the bizarre results of the Shoah being described at times as a “white on white” crime.<sup>32</sup> And with this it is no longer a point of reference for an intersectional analysis or activism that solely focuses on the distinction of Black/Brown and white.

Antisemitism itself is not only a form of racism, and its stereotypes do not correspond to the unambiguous image of an inferior, racially marginalized alien exploited in colonialism. Antisemitism is a projection of a non-identifiable, ubiquitous, universal power that destroys any identity. In antisemitism, modernity is being fought off, and the Jews are hated for representing modernity. In contrast to antisemites, racists claim modernity for themselves and turn it against the racialized other that is denigrated as primitive and backward. This difference between racism and antisemitism must be taken into account in order to recognize forms of antisemitism that do not operate in a racist manner but which become manifest, for example, in the hatred against Israel.

That antisemitism does not correspond to the clear-cut division between Black/Brown and white and hence to the category of race/ethnicity is one reason why it is difficult to analyze it within the mainstream intersectional framework. Likewise, Jews are not clearly assignable to the category of class, yet antisemitism itself views Jews as representing both: capitalism (in the first place finance capitalism) and communism or bolshevism. In antisemitism, Jews are basically blamed for disloyalty, inauthenticity, and hypocrisy—also with regard to the class they respectively belong to or speak for. They are depicted as ultimately disconnected and not-belonging: as bourgeois, Jews are regarded as “misfit bourgeois”;<sup>33</sup> and as speaking for the cause of the working class, they are regarded as hypocrites. In both cases, their image is that of the artificial and inauthentic, the “parasite” that would sneak in and betray the “real people.”<sup>34</sup>

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32 Cf. G. Cousin and R. Fine, “A Common Cause: Reconnecting the Study of Racism and Antisemitism,” *European Societies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 166–85.

33 This is a finding of the broad Studies in the Authoritarian Personality, carried out by the exiled Frankfurt Institute of Social Research during the 1940s and 1950s in the USA. Cf. Th. W. Adorno, “Studies in the Authoritarian Personality,” in *Gesammelte Schriften* 9.1 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 311.

34 K. Stögner and R. Wodak, “‘The Man Who Hated Britain’—The Discursive Construction of National Unity in the *Daily Mail*,” *Critical Discourse Studies* 13, no. 2 (2016): 193–209.

Finally, the history of antisemitism also shows that with regard to the category of gender and sexuality, Jews are not assignable: they were commonly viewed as neither male nor female but rather as challenging heteronormativity. Modern antisemitism centrally operated with images of effeminate Jews and masculinized Jewesses.<sup>35</sup>

Hence: In antisemitism Jews are not clearly assigned to the very categories with which intersectionality operates but rather positioned in between: they are rather drawn as anti-categorical, hence as questioning the validity of these categories. Correspondingly they do not represent an alien identity but rather an anti-identity that threatens any identity—be it gender, be it culture or ethnicity, be it class. So, an approach to intersectionality that is restricted to the trinity of race, class, and gender systematically fails to acknowledge Jews and their experience with antisemitism. This might be responsible for intersectionality's broad blindness toward antisemitism.

## Down with the Universal?

Then there is another conceptual problem with intersectionality that I mentioned already: its undialectical view of the tension between the universal and the particular that results in a profound anti-universalism and an uncritical stance toward particularity. “For most of our history, the very category of the human has not embraced Black people or women,” says Angela Davis, in support of Black Lives Matter.<sup>36</sup> What she does not mention, however, is that also Jews were not embraced by these concepts for most of our history. Nonetheless Jews are hardly viewed as a particularity worthy of protection but as representatives of the universal.<sup>37</sup>

Here, the old “Jewish question” reemerges in a reversed shape. In the Enlightenment period, the Jews were excluded from the universal and associated with an undesired particularity. Thus, the Jewish question targeted Jewish particularity—Jews would not suffice for the criteria of the universal. Jews were forced to give up their particularity in order to be included into the universal, which means to be granted civil rights. In certain strands of intersectionality that im-

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<sup>35</sup> For a detailed analysis of the relationship between antisemitism and sexism, see K. Stögner, *Antisemitismus und Sexismus: Historisch-gesellschaftliche Konstellationen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Davis, *Freedom*, 87.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. R. Fine and P. Spencer, *Antisemitism and the Left: On the Return of the Jewish Question* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

plicitly identify Jews with the universal in the shape of white privilege and hegemony, this relationship is reversed. Now Jews do not represent a particularity that should be erased but rather the universal that is deemed tyrannical and that is the target. It is indeed a characteristic of antisemitism that eventually Jews can personify whatever is abhorred, be it the particular, the false universal (sometimes equated with cosmopolitanism), or even universalism itself when it is deemed tyrannical and repressive of the particular.

But the universal is not merely a tyrannical manifestation of existing power relations but implicitly also their denunciation. Universal categories like freedom, equality, the idea of civil rights, the universal idea of the human; these concepts accuse a society that does not satisfy its own universal claim. While in intersectionality, the universal is discarded altogether in order to promote the particular, I would rather suggest a different manner to deal with it. Critically, the universal terms can be read as combat terms against unequal, iniquitous, and oppressing social relationships. Simply to deny the universal concepts will not change the subjugation of minorities within society. Basing politics on group marginalization fractures the civil polity, and therefore works against creating real opportunities for ending marginalization. Special interests need to be promoted, but they need to be sublated in the universal, in an idea of universal interest and of a common goal. So, to put it briefly: the universal is capable of criticizing itself, it fails not only because it is universal or tyrannical but also because it is not universal enough.

Critically, the universal is indeed an idea, an ideal that has not yet been fulfilled in praxis. Today, the false universal is a desired particularity that has become hegemonic due to the power structures in society. What is perceived as particular, on the other hand, is an undesired particularity that is forced to adapt to the desired one. So in an unequal society, universalism may reinforce inequality while aiming at equality. This is a dilemma owed to the structure of unfree society. The question is what we do about that. Intersectionality has realized the false universal's origin in hegemonic particularity and universalism's failure to come up to its potential—and reacts by discarding it altogether. I would suggest a different manner of thinking about the relationship between the universal and the particular though.

The universal is an expression of hegemony, but at the same time it is more. As an idea it contains the historical notion of the struggle and hope for freedom and emancipation. So it is more than just an empty space that is hegemonically filled by whatever is dominant at the moment. In the universal there also lies the idea of the universal human, that is historically developed, but that does not hegemonically assert itself but rather lies in the dark and persists negatively against what actually asserts itself hegemonically.

To promote the particular, the special interests, necessitates a common framework— universality—within which it can develop without fear. In an unfree society, however, the universal is as damaged as the particular. And this is why the latter cannot simply be leached from this entanglement and rescued as the good part. It shows itself all the traits of domination. Thus a blunt anti-universalism and pro-particularism both blind out the dialectical relationship and will not solve the problem of particularities being unrecognized.

## Queer BDS – A Common Foe instead of a Common Goal

Another disturbing development is the alliance between international feminist and queer movements and BDS. This alliance goes far beyond solidarity with Palestine. In the pinkwashing allegations, the struggle is turned into a feminist and queer issue. The allegation of pinkwashing means that the liberal Israeli legislation in regard of LGBTIQ+ rights would be instrumentalized and abused by the official Israel in order to distract from human rights violations and the occupation of the West Bank. The outrage is evidently not connected to LGBTIQ+ persons being denied fundamental rights—because then the Arab and Islamic states and societies would have to be severely criticized for not protecting the rights of LGBTIQ+ and threatening and punishing individuals who openly live a sexuality other than the one that is heteronormatively prescribed. Queer BDS, instead, directs its outrage to Israel’s alleged cynicism to grant fundamental rights to LGBTIQ+ and thus portray herself as a liberal society, while at the same time maintaining the occupation of the West Bank. The occupation itself is being viewed as mere harassment and as a manifestation of colonialism of the worst kind. The threat of terrorism emanating from the West Bank, on the other hand, is either not taken seriously or seen as an understandable reaction to Israel’s so-called state terrorism. The same ignorance can be observed with regard to the demand of some BDS activists to have the state of Israel dismantled in a Greater Palestine “from the River to the Sea.”<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, Israel’s LGBTIQ+ policy is understood as an imperialist agenda with the aim to impose Western liberal ideas on the Arab communities in order to devalue these very communities as homophobic since they do not adhere to the same standards of liberal legislation toward LGBTIQ+. This is also referred

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<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., O. Barghouti, “Strategies for Change,” filmed 2014, video, 15:58, <https://vimeo.com/75201955>; cf. also D. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2018).

to as homonationalism, an argument in the center of current queer theories and global solidarity activities.<sup>39</sup> In order to repel the universalist concept of individual rights, adherents of this discourse evoke the very *Kulturkampf*, the very cultural struggle, of which they blame their opponents. They draw an Occidental image of the West as uniquely narrow and materialistic. Here it becomes evident that Queer BDS is as anti-universalist as it is anti-liberal—both is expressed in collectivizing tendencies and in the vilification of individualism solely as a result of neo-liberal policies and economy.

Correspondingly, Angela Davis calls universalism, and connected to this individualism, a tyranny that needs to be opposed by the anti-colonial struggle for the liberation of Palestine.<sup>40</sup> She postulates quite abruptly that the liberation of Palestine must be the primary objective of an international queer movement. But she does not go into detail about how the interests of an international LGBTIQ+ movement and those of the Palestinian Liberation Movement actually merge, what they have in common, what the shared interest should be. We can only guess—it is the common foe, Zionism and Israel. On the other hand, Davis is quite clear on what the struggle is not about: it is not about supporting queer individuals in Palestine who refuse to see what she calls the contemptuousness behind Israel's pro-gay image. Queer BDS, according to Davis, is about directing its message at anyone who is a potential supporter of BDS—so it is about anti-Zionism and not about fighting for individual rights of LGBTIQ+.<sup>41</sup>

Oddly enough this open confession does not lead to an outcry by those Palestinian queers who openly support BDS. They seem to have accepted that the struggle is not about them and their rights but that they have to subordinate their special interests to the construct of a purportedly homogenous Palestinian people—in terms of identity formation culture seems to weigh more heavily than sexual orientation. Activists from the group alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society view themselves as part of Palestinian society. The shared enemy stereotype—Israel and Zionism—covers over the real conflicts within Palestinian society and makes it impossible for these activists to identify with Israel's LGBTIQ+ culture. This ambiguity is not surprising—but can perhaps be explained against the background of the experience of multiple discriminations of Palestinian queers.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*; Schulman, *Israel/Palestine*.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. Davis, "What Is Queer BDS? Pinkwashing, Intersections, Struggles, Politics," filmed 2013, video, 11:57, <https://vimeo.com/55886232>.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*.

What is noticeable, however, is that neither BDS nor Queer BDS are Palestinian inventions. David Hirsh makes that quite clear in his new book: BDS was initiated by British academics in 2002.<sup>42</sup> Correspondingly, Queer BDS was initiated by US feminist and queer intellectuals, first of all Naomi Klein and Sarah Schulman. So, anti-Zionism and BDS also count as the angry cry of the oppressed not so much in Palestine itself but in the postcolonial West, from where BDS was exported to Palestine. It might be due to this projection that queers worldwide devote themselves so enthusiastically to the Palestinian cause. A regional conflict for territory and religion is being mythicized into a global conflict whose solution would determine world peace.<sup>43</sup> In this exaggeration, the diffuse and subversive power that in antisemitism is ascribed to the Jews reemerges in regard to Israel. Therein the antisemitic, homophobic, and sexist drift of a purported pro-Palestinian argumentation by Western intellectuals becomes apparent: in the name of intersectionality and the postcolonial and anti-imperialist struggle, they subordinate the fight for women's and LGBTIQ+ rights to the general hatred of Israel.

## Prospects: Intersectionality of Ideologies

In view of such tendencies, many scholars of antisemitism see intersectionality merely as a political slogan that should be dismissed altogether. In contrast to this I would like to emphasize the analytical strength of an approach to intersectionality for a dialectical analysis of contemporary societies. Why is intersectionality important, why not dismiss it altogether? I think it is the structure of antisemitism itself that indeed demands an intersectional approach. It enables us to recognize antisemitism as a particular ideology that links moments of racism, sexism, homophobia, and nationalism. Antisemitism is furthermore a distorted reflection of class antagonism, it views Jews simultaneously as Bolsheviks and capitalists. Antisemitism is permeated by gendered, racialized, ethnicized, sexualized, economic, and nationalistic moments. And it is precisely this entanglement of ideologies that makes much for the specific effectiveness of antisemitism as an ideology covering over real social conflicts and antagonisms. In view of this I shall call antisemitism the intersectional ideology par excellence.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism*, 100–101.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. A. Davis, "Race et impérialisme, intervention lors des 10 ans de la Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR)," (speech, Paris, May 8, 2016), <http://indigenes-republique.fr/race-et-imperialisme-intervention-dangela-davis-race-et-imperialisme-lors-des-10-ans-du-pir/>.



Antisemitism can hardly be analyzed in isolation. To recognize its manifold sources and forms requires an intersectional approach that regards ideologies as constellations and as tenacious but flexible moments within a comprehensive, anti-emancipatory ideological syndrome. According to political convenience, one ideology may come to the fore, covering over another but without the other fully losing its effectiveness. Indeed, it would be truer to say that individual ideologies gain and renew their specificity precisely from their interaction with other ideologies. One of the most important questions is why and how antisemitism persists through social change, that is, how and why antisemitism can be so flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. By using an intersectional approach, we are able to see that this might be due to the special structure of antisemitism as an ideology: it is not a unitary thing, but it is interrelated with other ideologies and intermingles with them. It may also be covered over by other ideologies that are structurally related. Thus, a nationalism can cover over an antisemitism that may not be expressed openly any more in public due to a taboo after 1945. Similarly, also anti-nationalism can cover over antisemitism, like an anti-Zionism that goes far beyond a mere critique of Israeli politics. Antisemitism may also be covered over by anti-feminism and sexism as we can see in the anti-gender discourses led by right-wing populist parties all over Europe and the US.<sup>44</sup>

In view of the special structure of antisemitism—its effectiveness through moments of racism, ethnocentrism, nationalism, sexism, and homophobia—I should like to speak of antisemitism as a paradigm of intersectionality and thus as the intersectional ideology par excellence.

To put it the other way round, for intersectionality a focus on ideologies also implies an additional effort of self-reflection to counter signs of terminological and conceptual stagnation and identity-political contractions. An intersectional approach must not restrict itself to the idea that society is structured by specific categories but expose, in a critique of domination, the social grounds and conditions of these categories. Likewise, the very process of constant categorization needs to be criticized. The approach proposed here, therefore, takes a critical stand where intersectionality supports an identitarian and cultural relativistic discourse that may, under the cover of antiracism, tilt toward antisemitism and homophobia. The aim of such criticism is to ensure the approach remains

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. K. Stögner, "Angst vor dem 'neuen Menschen'—Zur Verschränkung von Antisemitismus, Antifeminismus und Nationalismus in der FPÖ," in *AfD und FPÖ: Antisemitismus, Nationalismus und Geschlechterverhältnisse*, ed. S. Grigat (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 137–61.

viable for a comprehensively critical and feminist theoretical activity and available for an emancipatory practice.

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Andreas Benl

# **Cultural Relativism and Antisemitism: History, Encounters, and Consequences of Ethno-Religious Identity Politics in the Orient and the West**

Right-wing populist identity politicians and left-liberal multiculturalists seem to agree on one thing: the chaos in the Middle East and religious-political struggles in Western migration societies are essentially a clash between static cultures. While the former see restrictions on Muslim immigration as a magic cure against Islamist terrorism, the latter define political Islam as the identity of all Muslims and the headscarf for women as its main and most important symbol. Since the revolution in Iran in 1979, political Islam has become a global political power factor. It was more successful than other ethno-religious movements—such as European fascism and National Socialism—in presenting itself as an authentic expression of the values of certain societies, their so-called “cultural difference.”

In this essay I argue that this relative “success” is not just a result of the victory of political Islam in Iran but that it is also related to the emergence of a new ideological trend in the West. I will outline the history of this development and its determinants—the interconnection between Western cultural relativism and its eastern counterparts: Islamism and its identitarian intellectual predecessors and fellow travelers.

Particularly interesting as a vanishing point is the transformation of traditional European antisemitism tabooed in the Cold War that took place in this development and the role played by anti-Zionism as a common denominator of cultural relativism and Islamism.

Finally, an outlook will shed light on the current constellation between the West and the Orient as well as Iran, Israel, and its Arab neighbors. This outlook will also allude to present and future conflict lines and possible alliances in the confrontation with Islamism and despotism.

## **“Islam Is Desirable ... for other People”**

Cultural relativism is the antithesis to ethical, political, and sociological universalism. According to this concept, cultures are to be understood only from their own values and their own history. The eighteenth-century German philosopher

Johann Gottfried Herder could be seen as one of its founding fathers, opposing the universalism of the enlightenment by stressing the cultural particularities of every nation. Herder refused the evolving theories of races and their differences, but his approach served as a basis for conservative cultural theories.

After World War II, the cultural relativist approach was defined as opposed to German and European ethnocentrism and racism. In 1952, Claude Lévi-Strauss wrote the book *Race and History* for UNESCO. In this book he rejected the idea of different races but at the same time condemned the self-understanding of the European Enlightenment, which in his eyes looked down on other cultures:

Modern man [...] [attempts] 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>1</sup>

Since then, cultural relativist theories have evolved mainly within the academic sphere of post-modern theories in cultural and gender studies and within the new social movements since the 1970s. Though opposed to biological determinism, cultural relativism tends to transform the discourse of race into a cultural determinism, legitimizing contested cultural practices like for example the Islamic burka as authentic expressions of the diversity of cultures.<sup>2</sup> Thinkers of the extreme right, like the French writer Alain de Benoist, have tried to capitalize on cultural relativism, coining the term “ethnopluralism” and legitimize ethno-religious segregation of different cultures with supposed equal rights.<sup>3</sup>

The political constellation which I try to depict here is unique and complex: While Islamists and other ethno-religious fundamentalists speak in their own name and that of their supposed culture, Western cultural relativists are speaking in the name of “the Other,” even if the “Others” protest against being subsumed under a certain culture or identity.

A controversy from the late 1970s can serve as an illustration of this constellation: In 1978 a polemic broke out between Michel Foucault and an Iranian writ-

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<sup>1</sup> C. Lévi-Strauss, *Race and History* (Paris: UNESCO, 1952), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Butler, for example, stated: “the burka can be a way of negotiating shame and sexuality in a public sphere, or preserving a woman’s honor, and even a way of resisting certain western modes of dress that signify a full encroachment of fashion and commodity dress that signifies the cultural efforts to efface Islamic practice.” J. Butler, “Feminism Should not Resign in the Face of such Instrumentalization,” interview by R. Solbach, *IABLIS: Jahrbuch für europäische Prozesse* 5 (2006): [https://www.iablis.de/iablis\\_t/2006/butler06.html](https://www.iablis.de/iablis_t/2006/butler06.html).

<sup>3</sup> T. Bar-On, “Alain de Benoist: Neo-fascism with a Human Face?” conference paper, conference “Entgrenzter Rechtsextremismus? Internationale Perspektiven und Gegenstrategien,” Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Munich, February 9–10, 2015, [https://m.bpb.de/system/files/dokument\\_pdf/Bar-On-DeBenoist-Fascismwithhumanface-2015.pdf](https://m.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/Bar-On-DeBenoist-Fascismwithhumanface-2015.pdf).

er living in Paris—the first of many following controversies in which oriental free-thinkers were and are criticized by Western liberals or leftists for a supposed hatred of Islam. Foucault had just written a series of articles about the nascent revolution in Iran, in which he strongly favored the Islamist current of the revolutionaries. An Iranian woman with the pseudonym Atoussa H. wrote in response to Foucault’s enthusiasm for the perspective of a future Islamic government in Iran and life under Sharia law:

It seems that for the Western Left, which lacks humanism, Islam is desirable ... for other people. 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 wrote in a short reply published in the magazine *Nouvel Observateur* a week later that the “intolerable” in 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 may seem familiar from the current debates on so-called Islamophobia and would hardly produce public outcry today. However, following the revolution in Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s terror campaign against women, homosexuals, and political opponents in 1979 mobilized prominent figures such as Simone de Beauvoir against the new regime in Iran and brought harsh criticism from other leftist intellectuals against Foucault.

The renowned Marxist orientalist Maxime Rodinson warned of Islamism as a kind of “archaic fascism” and compared Khomeini’s concept of an Islamic government with the Spanish Inquisition. Without mentioning Foucault, he spoke of “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>6</sup> Former Mao-

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<sup>4</sup> A. H., “An Iranian Woman Writes,” in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, ed. J. Afary and K. B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 209–10.

<sup>5</sup> M. Foucault, “Foucault’s Response to Atoussa H.,” in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, ed. J. Afary and K. B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 210.

<sup>6</sup> M. Rodinson, “Islam resurgent?,” in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, ed. J. Afary and K. B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 233, 236.



ists Jacques and Claudie Broyelle accused Foucault of honoring a murderous regime.<sup>7</sup>

During the remaining years of the Cold War and in part in the following decade, the attitude of many Western intellectuals toward Islamist terror and the Iranian regime remained critical. In 1989, the so-called Rushdie Affair—Khomeini's Death Fatwa against the British writer for his book *Satanic Verses*—sent shock waves through European capitals. This event marks a turning point. Initially, many liberal and leftist intellectuals showed their solidarity with Salman Rushdie, while mainstream media and institutions often hesitated and imposed state realpolitik over freedom of speech.<sup>8</sup>

But Khomeini's fatwa also challenged the leftist self-image. During the Cold War, the Western New Left had declared its solidarity even with the most regressive national liberation movements—but always in the name of universal values. The particular should only be the form of universalistic content. Now Khomeini formulated an attack on freedom of expression in the name of Islamic particularism: the form became the content. With the collapse of so-called “real socialism” in Eastern Europe, Islamism began its ideological expansion in the West, fusing a particularist ideology with the remnants of anti-imperialism: anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism.

## From Oriental Cultural Relativism to Islamism as a Form of Antimodern Modernity

In many societies shaped by the religion of Islam, attempts were made in the first decades of the twentieth century to separate religion and state. Especially in Turkey and Iran, secularism was practiced as a state mission from above. In Iran after 1905, there had even been a liberal-bourgeois revolution that demanded the separation of religion and state.

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7 Cf. C. and J. Broyelle, “What Are the Philosophers Dreaming About? Was Michel Foucault Mistaken about the Iranian Revolution?,” in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, ed. J. Afary and K. B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 247–49. For a defense of Foucault's writings on Iran, see T. Lemke, “Die verrückteste Form der Revolte’—Michel Foucault und die Iranische Revolution,” accessed August 25, 2018, <http://www.thomaslemkeweb.de/publikationen/Iran%20II.pdf>; and B. Bargu: “Foucault and Iran,” accessed August 25, 2018, <http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/uprising1313/banu-bargu-on-behrooz-ghamari-tabrizis-foucault-in-iran/>.

8 Cf. K. Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad: The Rushdie Affair and Its Legacy* (London: Atlantic Books, 2009).

At that time, religious figures who resisted secularization were clearly in retreat. The Islamic clergy proved to be flexible in order to preserve its influence. The prominent Shiite cleric Ayatollah Abol-Ghasem Kashani first allied with the modernist monarch Reza Shah Pahlavi, was arrested by the British occupying forces in World War II as an enemy of the anti-Hitler coalition, briefly supported the reformist anti-imperialist Mohammad Mossadegh in the early 1950s, then forged an alliance with Reza Pahlavi's son Mohammed Reza to overthrow Mossadegh.<sup>9</sup> His political foster son Ruhollah Khomeini only broke with Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi in the early 1960s, when the monarch introduced a land reform and women's suffrage.

Khomeini never shared the modernist goals of the Shah's liberal and left-wing opponents in Persia, but he eventually gained a reputation among the secular anti-imperialists who were frustrated with the failure of Mossadegh. These intellectuals had barely done a thorough and critical analysis of the role of religion in Iranian history and were thus vulnerable to the idea of an Islamic reformulation of their agenda.

Khomeini also introduced antisemitism and anti-Zionism as religious-political propaganda tools. In the 1960s and 70s, he did not endorse the propagandistic distinction later made by him and many Islamists, between Jews and Zionists.<sup>10</sup> He speculated whether the Shah was a Jew because of the good relations between Iran and Israel. In the introduction to his most important work, *The Islamic State* from 1970, he presents the Jews as conspirators against Islam.<sup>11</sup>

While Khomeini eventually became the charismatic leader of Islamism, two Iranian intellectuals built bridges for the transformation from secular to religious anti-imperialism and cultural relativism in the 1960s and 1970s: One of them was the ex-member of the Communist Tudeh Party Jalal Al-e Ahmad with his essay *Gharbzadegi* from 1962. *Gharbzadegi* has been translated as "Westoxification," "Occidentosis" or "Plague from the West."

In this essay, Jalal Al-e Ahmad condemns an alleged cultural colonization of Iranian society by Western capitalism, which he sees as the soulless culture of

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. M. Küntzel, *Die Deutschen und der Iran: Geschichte und Gegenwart einer verhängnisvollen Freundschaft* (Berlin: Wolf Jobst Siedler Jr., 2009), 106–9; A. Milani, *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941–1979* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), 343–49.

<sup>10</sup> For this shift, see a speech held after the revolution and distributed by Iranian state broadcast PressTV, "Imam Khomeini on Jews and Zionists," filmed August 20, 2012, YouTube video, 0:28, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fhF\\_UuiSq8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fhF_UuiSq8).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. H. Algar (Berkeley: Mizan, 1981), 180, 27.

the machine. Islam is being introduced as a possible means of resisting this development, albeit less at a theological or spiritual level but rather instrumentally as part of a cultural empowerment for modernizing the East, in concert with other emerging eastern countries to counter Western capitalism. Cultural relativism serves here as a kind of metapolitical foundation of an oriental, anti-universalist anti-imperialism.

In the foreword of the book, he refers to the German nationalist revolutionary writer Ernst Jünger. Al-e Ahmad apparently saw the German pre-fascist writer as a soulmate for an oriental conservative revolution because of his anti-liberal and anti-Western writings.<sup>12</sup>

It may come as a surprise that Al-e Ahmad traveled to Israel in 1963 and wrote an enthusiastic report.<sup>13</sup> The re-release of excerpts in the run-up to the nuclear deal with the Islamic Republic caused quite a stir.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the work has been interpreted as the glimpse of a possible understanding between Iranian reformist Islamists and the State of Israel.<sup>15</sup> Others saw in Al-e Ahmad's admiration of the State of Israel a symptom of Persian anti-Arab nationalism and evidence of the similarity of the Israeli state to the Iranian theocracy.<sup>16</sup>

But for Al-e Ahmad, Israel was above all an ideological projection surface for a supposed entry into modernity with no or reduced Western influence—a similar fantasy product as Islam as a vehicle for an autonomous development. Supposedly a religious guardian state and at the same time a socialist utopia: this was an image that the real State of Israel could never match. This is why Al-e Ahmad, after the Six-Day War of 1967, changed fronts in favor of the “Palestinian cause” with equal ease as many intellectuals in Western Germany. The travelogue was published in 1984 by Al-e Ahmad's brother Shams in the Islamic Republic of Iran. At the end of the report, there is an anonymous anti-Zionist ti-

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**12** Cf. J. Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis: A Plague from the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan, 1983), 25.

**13** Cf. J. Al-e Ahmad, *The Israeli Republic: An Iranian Revolutionary's Journey to the Jewish State* (New York: Restless Books, 2017).

**14** See, for example, B. Avishai, “Among the Believers: What Jalal Al-e Ahmad Thought Iranian Islamism Could Learn From Zionism,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2014, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iran/2014-02-12/among-believers>.

**15** Cf. E. Shuman, “The Israeli Republic of Iran: On a Book by a Persian Writer who Viewed the Jewish State as Entirely Harmonious with the Islamic Republic,” *The Times of Israel*, April 10, 2014, <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-israeli-republic-of-iran/>.

**16** Cf. A. Shams, “Next Year in Tehran: An Iranian Intellectual's Trip to Israel in the 1960s Revealed the Strange Appeal of Secular Republicanism to Religious Ethno-Supremacists,” *The New Enquiry*, February 20, 2014, <http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/next-year-in-tehran/>.

rade with antisemitic undertones from 1967, according to Shams a text by Jalal Al-e Ahmad.

Al-e Ahmad's quest for meaning is in some ways reminiscent of the tourism of revolutionaries by Western Leftists to Third World countries. The difference being that his writings were the forerunner of the Islamist future of Iranian society, not only a reflection of the "culture of the Other" enjoyed from a distance by Western intellectuals. The political price of ideological fantasies in Iran was much higher than in the West.

The sociologist Ali Shariati added anti-imperialist dynamic to the cultural critique of Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Shariati criticized the conservative, quietist tradition of Islam and offered a social-revolutionary reinterpretation of Islamic history. From his studies in Paris, he knew Jean-Paul 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 culmination of humanist "Western Fallacies."<sup>17</sup> While Jalal Al-e Ahmad used Islam as a tool for the alleged return to oriental cultural heritage, Shariati, on the other hand, defined the desire for "authentic cultural values" as a bridge to Islam, which he saw as the only possible savior of these values.

His work *Hajj* defines sacrifice and martyrdom as central values of a revolutionary Islam that is opposed to the "alienation of mankind" through consumerism and worldly rationalist thinking.<sup>18</sup> In his essay *Fatima is Fatima* from 1971, he criticizes the traditional role of women at home and hearth on the one hand, and feminist, individual, "Western" emancipation on the other hand. Instead, women should have the opportunity to be active members of society—but only if they are willing to do so as female soldiers of Islam and join the fight against an imagined Western cultural invasion.<sup>19</sup>

Khomeini had more specific problems as the practitioner of the Islamic Revolution, since he had to prove that an Islamic state based on the religious laws of the Koran was a possibility of the twentieth century. He mocked the idea of secular Iranians that Islamists are opposed to the technological achievements of modernity—on the contrary, they should rather be used for the establishment of Islamic theocracy.

While the Nazis re-enacted the dynamics of capital as a social Darwinist racial war and antisemitic rage, Islamism at first sight seems to mean a total stagnation and rejection of history since the era of Muhammad. But with the concept

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17 A. Shariati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies: An Islamic Critique*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan, 1980).

18 Cf. A. Shariati, *Hajj (The Pilgrimage)* (Nottingham: Jubilee, 1993).

19 Cf. A. Shariati, *Fatima Is Fatima* (Tehran: The Shariati Foundation, 1971).

of Velayat-e faqih, the guardianship of the Islamic jurist, Khomeini introduced a major innovation: centrality shifts from sacred texts to religious leaders as mediators between God and the masses. In a Machiavellian turn, Khomeini said that in the event of a state of emergency, the religious leader could even suspend religious tradition and Sharia law.<sup>20</sup>

Here Islam is less a term of a religious and more of political theology, reminiscent of the terms of the Crown Jurist of the Third Reich, Carl Schmitt. Schmitt had defined the political sphere as a distinction between friend and enemy and sovereign power as the authority that decides on the state of emergency.<sup>21</sup> In the Islamic Republic, this is the religious leader commissioned by God. Even more important than the religious laws or the definition of the content of a particular religious orthodoxy is the identification of metaphysical enemies—on top of the list are Jews, Zionism, and the State of Israel.

Only a few months after taking power in the summer of 1979, Khomeini introduced the Quds / Jerusalem Day and declared:

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 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

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**20** “In a letter to then president Khamenei, Khomeini stated, ‘the government has the right to unilaterally terminate its religious contracts with the people, if those contracts are against the interests of the country and Islam. 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. The hajj [pilgrimage], which is one of the important religious tasks, can be prevented temporally by the government if it regards it against the expediency of the Islamic Republic.’ He emphasized that if a ruling jurist had to make decisions based only on Islamic law, the religious government and his absolute authority would be meaningless. Therefore, the ruling jurist is not necessarily the jurist who understands Islamic law better than others, but he is the jurist who has the ability and authority to understand the interests of Islam and the Islamic Republic beyond the sacred text of Islamic law.” M. Khalaji, *Apocalyptic Politics: On the Rationality of Iranian Policy*, Policy Focus 79 (Washington: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2008), 27–28, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus79Final.pdf>.

**21** Cf. C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen: Text von 1932. Mit einem Vorwort und drei Corollarien* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963), 26 ff.; and Schmitt, *Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2004), 13.

with the superpowers and are friends of Israel, are either indifferent on this day or do not allow the people to hold demonstrations.<sup>22</sup>

Khomeini tried to establish a global Muslim duty to gather against Israel and the West, merging anti-imperialist oppressor versus oppressed rhetoric with Islamist anti-Zionism. In this way, he wanted to create a clear-cut separation between the “true Muslims” who rise up against Israel and those who have been denounced as infidels and traitors in the Muslim world. Anti-Zionism has a similar importance as a guideline for the definition of friends and enemies in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic as antisemitism had as guiding principle for the enemy of Nazi Germany against Western democracies and the Soviet Union.

## Dynamics of Cultural Relativism and anti-Zionism during and after the End of the Cold War

In the 1960s, thinkers of anti-colonialism, such as Frantz Fanon, attempted to create a revolutionary culture of the oppressed against the colonial oppressors. In his essay *The Defeat of the Mind* in 1987, the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut criticized Fanon, claiming that his attempt to escape European philosophy had failed and had only led him to German national romanticism, as advocated by Johann Gottfried Herder, who thought in closed, unchanging national-cultural units.<sup>23</sup>

It is important to note that cultural relativist and anti-universalist postures remained controversial within the global left during the Cold War. Edward Said introduced the “linguistic turn” to anti-imperialism in 1978 with his book *Orientalism*.<sup>24</sup> When he condemned Marx’s writings on the Orient as part of Western imperialist “Orientalism,” he was, for example, criticized by the left-wing Syrian thinker Sadik al-Azm for an “Orientalism in Reverse.” Al-Azm accused Said of turning negative Western stereotypes about the Orient into an affirmed entity of “the Other.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> R. Khomeini, “Quds Day is the Day for the Weak and Oppressed to Confront the Oppressors,” issued August 7, 1979, accessed May 3, 2020, [https://web.archive.org/web/20041204224048/http://www.irib.ir/worldservice/imam/palestin\\_E/10.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20041204224048/http://www.irib.ir/worldservice/imam/palestin_E/10.htm).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. A. Finkielkraut, *The Defeat of the Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. E. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. S. J. Al-Azm, “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse,” *Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle-East* 8 (1980): <https://libcom.org/library/orientalism-orientalism-reverse-sadik-jalal-al-%E2%80%9999azm>.

Since the attacks of 9/11, the panorama has changed: we are hardly talking anymore about a plurality of cultures seen as static entities but of a dualism—the West against Islam or 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 more conceivable after 1989 and even less after 9/11.

The competition is no more between two secular, universalist alliances competing around 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 challenging Europe and the United States. The focus of political competition between the Great Powers has shifted away from Latin America and Asia to the Middle East. In the past, it was the Soviet Union which 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>26</sup>

Within this political-ideological dynamic, anti-Zionism gets to the center of the stage. An anti-Zionist attitude was not always prevalent in the Left. Socialist Labor Zionism once was the strongest current within the Jewish national movement. Lenin and the Bolsheviks saw the Zionists initially as competitors within the orbit of the workers movement.<sup>27</sup> In 1947, the Soviet Union was even very supportive of the creation of a Jewish state,<sup>28</sup> hoping it would form an alliance with the USSR.<sup>29</sup>

That attitude changed dramatically once Stalin's hopes to gain a new satellite state in the Middle East proved futile. Soviet anti-Zionist agitation now adopted a paranoid, antisemitic tone. Zionism was no more seen as a political adversary but as an international Jewish conspiracy against the "Socialist camp"—with deadly consequences for the victims, who were persecuted in show trials in communist

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**26** Cf. J. Humire, "Iran Propping up Venezuela's Repressive Militias," *The Washington Times*, March 17, 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/17/humire-irans-basij-props-up-venezuelas-repressive-/?page=all#pagebreak>.

**27** Cf. L. Poliakov, *Vom Antizionismus zum Antisemitismus* (Freiburg: Ca ira, 1992).

**28** Cf. A. Gromyko, "Remarks by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to the UN Special Committee on Palestine (14 May 1947)," United Nations, General Assembly, issued May 14, 1947, accessed April 13, 2020, <https://israeled.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/19475.14-Gromyko-Speech.pdf>.

**29** Cf. M. Kramer, "Who Saved Israel in 1947?" *Mosaic Magazine*, November 6, 2017, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/israel-zionism/2017/11/who-saved-israel-in-1947/>.

Eastern Europe in the 1950s.<sup>30</sup> The Soviet Union flooded the Middle East and other countries with anti-Zionist propaganda, this attitude did not change until its dissolution in 1991.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, among the post-war Western New Left there were intense feelings of solidarity for the Jewish state, whose creation was seen in the context of the struggle against Nazism, and this Left “regarded Great Britain and the feudal Arab monarchies as the imperialists and the reactionaries of the Middle East.”<sup>32</sup>

Especially in Western Germany, initially there were strong sympathies among leftist students for the Jewish state, which was seen as a consequence of the Nazi past. That changed with the Six-Day War in 1967, when Western leftists discovered the Palestinians as part of the international anti-Imperialist struggle in the framework of their opposition to the Vietnam War.<sup>33</sup>

A deep hostility toward Israel was the least consequence, leftist terrorist groups like the “Tupamaros West Berlin,”<sup>34</sup> the “Revolutionary Cells” but also the Japanese “Red Army Faction”<sup>35</sup> even perpetrated deadly attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets on their own or alongside Palestinian armed groups.<sup>36</sup>

After the end of the Soviet Bloc 1989/91, for a significant part of the global radical left, anti-Zionism is a kind of surrogate of the former global contention between Western capitalism and so-called real socialism. For liberal multi-culturalists, the conflict between Israel and Palestine embodies all the perceived in-

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30 Cf. M. Palomino, “‘Soviet Union’: The Doctors’ Plot 1953—Stalin’s Last Purge Plan,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 6 (1971), [http://www.geschichteinchronologie.com/SU/EncJudaica\\_doktorverschwoerung-1953-ENGL.html](http://www.geschichteinchronologie.com/SU/EncJudaica_doktorverschwoerung-1953-ENGL.html).

31 Cf. I. Tabarovsky, “Understanding the Real Origin of that New York Times Cartoon: How anti-Semitic Soviet Propaganda Informs Contemporary Left anti-Zionism,” *The Tablet Magazine*, June 6, 2019, <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/285781/soviet-anti-semitic-cartoons>.

32 S. Linfield, “Zionism and the Left: An Interview with Susie Linfield,” interview by A. Johnson, *Fathom Journal*, June 2019, <http://fathomjournal.org/zionism-and-the-left-an-interview-with-susie-linfield/>.

33 Cf. M. W. Kloke, *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses* (Hanau: Haag & Herchen, 1990).

34 T. Fichter, “The anti-Semitism of the 68ers. Philipp Gessler and Stefan Reinecke talk with Tilman Fichter about the bomb planted in Berlin’s Jewish Community Centre in 1969,” <http://www.signandsight.com/features/434.html>; original in T. Fichter, “‘Wir haben das nicht ernst genommen,’” interview by P. Gessler and S. Reinecke, *taz*, October 25, 2005, <https://taz.de/!527391/>.

35 “Wanted Japanese Red Army Member Maintains 1972 Airport Attack Wasn’t Terrorism,” *The Mainichi*, May 31, 2017, <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20170531/p2a/00m/Ona/011000c>.

36 Cf. J. Herf, *Undeclared Wars with Israel: East Germany and the West German Far Left, 1967–1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).



justices committed by the West against the oriental “Other.” A closer look makes it possible to identify a history within the history dating back to before the Cold War and beyond the orbit of the left. The solidarity with the Palestinian struggle in Western European societies is formulated in relation to the colonial or fascist past of the respective countries.

While in France and in Britain, anti-Zionism rose in the realm of anti-imperialist and post-colonial concepts, in Germany and Austria it has been regularly associated with the German past: To overcome the Nazi past is seen as an obligation—not for solidarity with the Jewish state but with the Palestinian anti-Zionism<sup>37</sup> of the alleged “victims of the victims.”<sup>38</sup>

The British conservative historian Arnold J. Toynbee got to the heart of these attitudes, when he accused the Jews of perpetrating political sins that the Europeans supposedly had left behind them after 1945. He claimed that acts of violence committed by Zionists in the Israeli War of Independence resembled Nazi crimes<sup>39</sup> and that the

East European Zionists have been practising Colonialism in Palestine [...] at the very time when the West European peoples have been renouncing their temporary rule over non-European peoples.<sup>40</sup>

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**37** 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 toward 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.” C. Brunner and U. von Seltmann, *Schweigen die Täter reden die Enkel* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 2011), 82f.

**38** J. Joffe, “Wir Wiedergutgewordenen,” *Zeit Online*, August 22, 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/2018/35/gute-deutsche-josef-joffe-israel/komplettansicht>.

**39** Cf. Y. Rosenberg, “When an Israeli Ambassador Debated a British Historian on Israel’s Legitimacy—and Won,” *The Table Magazine*, January 31, 2014, <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/herzog-toynbee-1961>.

**40** A. J. Toynbee, *Experiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 266.

## The Transformation of the Role of Antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East

It seems easy to refute the absurdity of the anti-colonialist, anti-racist, and anti-fascist attitudes of academics or politicians who are trying to whitewash Islamism and anti-Zionism. In fact, the godfather of Palestinian anti-Zionism, the Mufti of Jerusalem, was not a classic anti-colonialist, much less an antifascist. Amin al-Husseini was first appointed by the British Mandate for Palestine, and later on, he lived in Nazi Germany, where he was a fanatic supporter of Nazi antisemitism. After 1945 there was Western cooperation with Islamists in the Cold War.<sup>41</sup> But these facts, suppressed by post-fascist and post-colonial anti-Zionism, lead to another question: what has changed in antisemitic articulations since the pre-Nazi era and why?

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno in the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* analyzed antisemitism as a blind and murderous ritual of the masses, a psychological compensation for the deprivations suffered by the underprivileged in a class society and as a tool of cynical manipulation in the interest of the ruler.<sup>42</sup> But the genocide committed by the Nazi national community transcends the traditional political and class boundaries. After Auschwitz, antisemitism in the West had lost its “good reputation.” At the same time however, the political panorama that had formed in the Dreyfus Affair—the dichotomy of right-wing extremist antisemites and liberal and left-wing enemies of antisemitism—was put into question.

After 1945, when it became clear that antisemitism was a destructive force without borders, it became a taboo at least in Western Europe and the US to affirm eliminationist antisemitism. A complicated political-ideological division of labor emerged. Anti-Jewish Western intellectuals and politicians expressed understanding of genocidal ideologies as expressions of Palestinian or Muslim victims. Such an approach poses a much smaller political risk to its protagonists than if they had presented these ideologies and the inherent antisemitism in their own name. For decades, the idea that Israel-Palestine is the mother of all conflicts has been so engrained, that the bloodbath of Assad and his backers

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. D. Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); K. Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem und die Nationalsozialisten: Eine politische Biographie Amin El-Husseinis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 137–72.

in Syria from 2011 on and the ascent of the “Islamic State” came as a surprise to many.

Barack Obama’s Cairo speech of June 2009,<sup>43</sup> can serve as the culmination of a cultural relativism, that under his presidency became a state program. In this speech, he lamented headscarf bans but not the compulsion to wear the headscarf; he emphasized the freedom of religion but nowhere the right to be left in peace by religion. In addition, he defined American interventions and Israeli settlements as the main problems of the so-called Islamic world.

It is therefore logical that Obama’s dialogue with the Islamic world during his presidency narrowed to one with the Islamic Republic of Iran—to the profound horror of almost all of their neighbors. The Iranian regime is the only relevant state actor that ideologically accelerates as well as violently enforces anti-civilizational resentment, antisemitism, and religious community terror on a global level as state doctrine. In modern times, the Islamic World that Obama wanted to see acknowledged in its supposed cultural essence had never been unified beyond some shared anti-Western resentments, which today are enshrined in Teheran’s slogans against the US and Israel.

The speech from Cairo was put to the test just a week later, when an uprising in Iran started against the rulers of the Islamic Republic, the defenders of the compulsory hijab. The American president had equated the Iranian people and the leaders of the Islamic Republic. A conflict of life and death between the two was not foreseen. Against this background, both the US government and the governments of the European Union denied any substantial political or even moral support for the democratic protest movement in Iran, which brought millions to the streets. It appeared as a threat to the envisioned nuclear deal with the mullahs.<sup>44</sup>

In the Middle East, modernist political movements after World War II and Israel’s War of Independence almost immediately had shown a hybrid character that crossed left-wing anti-imperialism with an antisemitism, which was formerly associated with the extreme Right. Anti-Zionism and antisemitism became the common denominator and power instrument for Oriental despotisms of all kinds. The destruction of Israel was a central success parameter of pan-Arabism and other post-colonial movements in the region. When this goal was not achieved, the rise of the Islamists was logical: they accused even the most inade-

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. B. Obama, “Text: Obama’s Speech in Cairo,” *The New York Times*, June 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/04/us/politics/04obama.text.html>.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. E. Lake, “Why Obama Let Iran’s Green Revolution Fail: The President Wanted a Nuclear Deal, Not Regime Change,” *Bloomberg*, August 24, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2016-08-24/why-obama-let-iran-s-green-revolution-fail>.

quate and poorly organized advocacy of secular revolutionaries for social progress as a distraction from the war against the Jews and the West. The result was the preservation of the backwardness and devastation of the whole region.<sup>45</sup>

But this constellation has become precarious. For years, the most explicit and loudest critics of Islamism have been intellectuals in the Middle East or immigrants with an oriental family background who had first-hand experience of Islamism. On the other hand, Islamism, which fused Islamic history with Western technology and elements of the anti-modern modernity of fascism and Nazism, has made the passage to Europe. There is no geographical separation between what is politically associated with the Orient and what is associated with the West anymore. The “War of Ideas” no longer runs along but on both sides of the borders.<sup>46</sup>

The catastrophic consequences of Western collaboration with the Iranian regime in recent years, the war in Syria, and the rise of the “Islamic State” have led to a new situation. Abandoned by the West, things are not looking good for Democrats and real moderates in the region, to say the least. However, this situation has increased enormously the pressure to challenge old dogmas on those who do not share the goals of the Islamists. While in the past anti-Zionism was treated as a regional folklore independent of all other political differences, its centrality is now clearly linked to the Iranian regime and its Sunni-Islamist counterparts. Unfortunately, they have enough economic and military resources to continue their expansion. But their ideological hegemony over the region under the flag of a Muslim-Arab struggle against Israel has been put into question.

To understand this, we must bear in mind: In order to preserve the reign of the “Axis of Resistance” against Israel between Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria, half a million Syrians had to die, and millions have been displaced. In the Middle East, therefore, there are even moments in which the self-destructive character of anti-Zionism comes to consciousness. Be it among Syrian or Iraqi Opposition figures, Middle Eastern free thinkers or even within the leadership of Saudi-

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<sup>45</sup> Hisham Melhem, Washington bureau chief of *Al Arabiya News* writes: “My generation of Arabs was told by both the Arab nationalists and the Islamists that we should man the proverbial ramparts to defend the ‘Arab World’ against the numerous barbarians (imperialists, Zionists, Soviets) massing at the gates. Little did we know that the barbarians were already inside the gates, that they spoke our language and were already very well entrenched in the city.” H. Melhem, “The Barbarians Within Our Gates: Arab Civilization Has Collapsed. It Won’t Recover in My Lifetime,” *Politico Magazine*, September 18, 2014, [https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/09/the-barbarians-within-our-gates-111116\\_full.html](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/09/the-barbarians-within-our-gates-111116_full.html).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. S. Harris, “Winning the War of Ideas,” Real Time with Bill Maher (HBO), filmed February 3, 2017, YouTube video, 12:48, <https://www.youtube.com/shared?ci=FpNwlcePwug>.

Arabia. As an Iraqi TV presenter put it in a furious exchange with a Shiite militiaman: “Palestine is not the cause of the Iraqis, we don’t want that Iranian rhetoric.”<sup>47</sup>

Today one must decide whether one wants to help the Islamists to accomplish their work of destruction in the Middle East or whether one wants to preserve what remains of the civilizational remnants of the societies in the region. Making Israel responsible for upheavals, with which the Jewish state obviously has nothing to do, is more difficult now than ever before.

This development has culminated in the recent uprisings in Iran since New Year’s Eve 2017/2018: Its slogans against all the currents of the regime have been much more radical than in 2009. While at that time apologists of the regime claimed that the Iranian countryside is with the rulers, the protest against the regime’s terrorist expansion has now been all over with chants like “No to Gaza, no to Lebanon, my life only for Iran”<sup>48</sup> or “Let go of Syria, think of us.”<sup>49</sup> The religious cities of Mashhad and Qom<sup>50</sup> became the focus of demonstrations against the Islamic Republic. Even the most holy slogans of the Iranian theocracy against the United States and Israel have been countered in the protests.<sup>51</sup> In 2019, the protests in Iran were echoed by huge and enduring demonstrations in Lebanon and Iraq against the corruption of the ruling elite and the influence of the Islamic Republic on these societies.<sup>52</sup>

In summary, the political frontlines have become much clearer in the last five to ten years, and what Marx and Engels once described as a result of the his-

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**47** “Sunni and Shiite Commentators Clash on TV over Military Campaign in Tikrit,” MEMRI TV, issued March 13, 2015, video, 14:15, <https://www.memri.org/tv/sunni-and-shiite-commentators-clash-tv-over-military-campaign-tikrit>.

**48** A. Nader (@AlirezaNader), “‘No Gaza, No Lebanon, my life is for Iran.’ Shiraz, #Iran,” Twitter, August 2, 2018, <https://twitter.com/AlirezaNader/status/1025017775331442689>.

**49** A. Nader (@AlirezaNader), “Cell phone merchants protest in #Tehran and shout ‘Let go of Syria, think of us.’,” Twitter, June 24, 2018, <https://twitter.com/AlirezaNader/status/1010893744944701440>.

**50** H. Dagres (@hdagres), “Chants in the holy city of Qom tonight, the spiritual center of #Iran: ‘We don’t want an Islamic Republic!’,” Twitter, December 29, 2017, <https://twitter.com/hdagres/status/946824612238823424>.

**51** H. Alavi (@HeshmatAlavi), “April 20 – Kazerun, southern #Iran Protesters turn Friday prayer into a major anti-regime rally. ‘Our enemy is right here, they always say its America.’,” Twitter, April 20, 2018, <https://twitter.com/heshmatalavi/status/986213693980643328>; “Protesters In Tehran, Iran Shout ‘Death To Palestine’ In Anti-Government Rally,” filmed June 25, 2018, YouTube video, 0:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukhrobSFnUA&feature=youtu.be>.

**52** Cf. J. Spyer, “Behind the Lines: Revolt against Iran’s ‘System’ in Iraq and Lebanon,” *The Jerusalem Post*, October 31, 2019. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/behind-the-lines-revolt-against-irans-system-in-iraq-and-lebanon-606497>.

torical-ideological triumph of the European bourgeoisie now applies to a very different, dramatic context—the disillusionment created by the chaos in the Middle East: “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.”<sup>53</sup> Thus the category of interest as a heroic driving force of the theory of revolution of Marx and Engels has been transformed into something else—a categorical imperative to prevent the worst.

In the Middle East, the abyss between Islamists and other political forces is growing, but resources are lacking to successfully fight the Islamists. The paradoxical complement is the constellation in Germany, Europe, and to a certain degree also in the USA. The technologically most advanced societies of the Western world seem unable or unwilling to consider their own situation and their relationship with their southern neighbors soberly.

It is increasingly difficult for Europeans to maintain the phantasm of the centrality of the Israel-Palestine conflict. But there is still no significant awareness of the fatal consequences to democracy and security in Europe of the creation of an oriental fantasy world for the purpose of delegating antisemitic resentment.

## **From the European Civil War to the Betrayal of Solidarity and Enlightenment in the Name of the Other—Conflict Lines and Possible Alliances**

Between 1922 and 1945 bourgeois liberalism, socialism/communism, and fascism/Nazism constituted three political currents in changing mutual alliance constellations, which, however, ideologically represented only themselves. The identitarian self-image of the right-wing extremists to represent Europe’s cultural heritage was only put forward by themselves. Attempts to forge alliances with them from the left and from the political center were easily identifiable as political opportunism.

But the transformation of the Cold War confrontation into the masquerade ball of identities of recent decades has fundamentally changed traditional ideological constellations. While tough anti-imperialists defend Islamists as long as they serve their own anti-American and anti-Zionist needs, the academic left

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53 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm#007>.

in particular has devised huge theoretical constructs in order to prove what the radical right also claims to know: it is the cultural fate of the Muslim “Other” to feel offended by the West and to sympathize with the Islamists. Anyone from a Muslim family background who thinks differently, even vehemently opposes Islamic fascism, is seen as a traitor to his or her culture—not only by Islamists but also by the advocates of identity politics in the West.

Such positions are represented by intellectuals who themselves do not live under Sharia law or want to wear the headscarf. They do not even receive praise from the Islamists for their ideological advocacy. Western advertising for religious coercion appears as a free gift to the Jihadists. When Judith Butler honored Hamas and Hezbollah in 2006 as part of the progressive left,<sup>54</sup> there was no jubilation to be heard in Gaza or Beirut. Of course Hamas and Hezbollah are happy about any propagandistic support, but the one who loves the betrayal, does not necessarily love the traitor.

For the societies of the Middle East from Tel Aviv to Tehran, between Tunis and Islamabad, the appropriate political positioning today means a matter of life and death, at least on this many people in the region would certainly agree. Nobody can afford a policy “in the name of the other,” as it is advanced by Western cultural relativism.

Western democracies in the twentieth century have only once relatively spontaneously formed an alliance in a joint ideological opposition: in the dispute with the Soviet Union about the heritage of secular enlightenment. Hitler, on the other hand, forced the West into an anti-fascist alliance, which Europe would have liked to avoid as it does today concerning a confrontation with Islamism.

The biggest question marks lay therefore today in Europe. In case a reversal of the so-called cultural dialogue and collaboration with Islamism would be possible, the question of alliances is almost self-evident: it is not about a struggle between ethno-religiously defined cultures but about a confrontation with identity politics. And that is why the first and most-experienced partners of any willing political forces in the West for an alliance against barbarism are not politicians who want to contain Islamism only within its supposedly ancestral region. Instead, any meaningful and enduring partnership for a better future in the Middle East and the West should be built with the dissidents of Islamist

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. “Judith Butler on Hamas, Hezbollah & the Israel Lobby (2006),” issued March 28, 2010, accessed August 25, 2018, <https://radicalarchives.org/2010/03/28/jbutler-on-hamas-hezbollah-israel-lobby/>.

identity politics on the one hand, and the Jews and Israelis affected by their antisemitic consequences on the other hand.

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Ljiljana Radonić

## New Antisemitism and New Media: Leftist Derealization of Islamist “Emancipation”

Jean Améry referred to leftist anti-Zionists as “ehrbare Antisemiten”—virtuous antisemites.<sup>1</sup> While far-right antisemitism had been delegitimized after the defeat of the Nazis, and its proponents now communicate in codes, directing their resentment, for instance, at “the East coast,” leftist antisemites present themselves as antifascists.<sup>2</sup> This paper—presented as part of the “Internet and Antisemitism” panel—argues that this distinction also influences the logic of how leftist antisemites use the new media. Before I elaborate on this theory-driven hypothesis with regard to “Antisemitism 2.0,” it must be clarified that leftist antisemitism is best understood as one variant of modern antisemitism in its post-Holocaust transformation.<sup>3</sup> I will then introduce the term “new antisemitism” to describe a far-reaching ideological convergence of antisemitism since 9/11 and the “Second Intifada” across a range of ideologies and milieus that traditionally had precious little in common.<sup>4</sup> At its heart lies a form of antisemitic anti-Zionism that unites Islamists with many on the Far Right and the Left.

The second, empirical part of my contribution analyzes the impact of this new antisemitism on discussions in leftist new media. I will focus specifically on the reactions to the Hamas policy paper of 2017, which some erroneously understood as a new Hamas Charter. The portrayal of Hamas, by parts of the Left, as the moderate variant of political Islam willing to integrate, as an emancipatory movement struggling for political freedom is almost as old as the original Hamas Charter. When in 2017 various leftists suddenly acknowledged Hamas’s antisemitism of the past, they did so only in order to assure us that, with this

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1 J. Améry, “Der ehrbare Antisemitismus: Rede zur Woche der Brüderlichkeit,” in *Weiterleben—aber wie? Essays 1968–1978* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 151–75.

2 C. Kohn-Ley, “Antisemitische Mütter—antizionistische Töchter?,” in *Der feministische “Sündenfall”? Antisemitische Vorurteile in der Frauenbewegung*, ed. C. Kohn-Ley and I. Korotin (Wien: Picus, 1994), 209–30; D. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

3 Cf. T. Haury, *Antisemitismus von links: Kommunistische Ideologie, Nationalismus und Antizionismus in der frühen DDR* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002). Of course the “left” is a very un-specific term; here it applies to a broad spectrum from center-left positions to the lunatic fringe in post-national socialist Germany and Austria.

4 Cf. D. Rabinovici et al., eds., *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004).

new policy paper, the Islamist terror organization *really* had now repudiated the antisemitic parts of the 1988 Charter. This speaks to a high level of “derealization,” whitewashing Hamas’s Islamist antisemitism in the wake of its ostensible change of heart, which, as I will show, can be witnessed in various new media.

Given that antisemitism has increased considerably over the last ten years not only in the social media,<sup>5</sup> but also in the online comment sections of quality media,<sup>6</sup> in the final part of the essay, I present relevant posts to the discussion forum of the Austrian center-left daily *Der Standard* in the wake of the publication of the Hamas policy paper, demonstrating, not least, that the denial of Islamist antisemitism can go hand in hand with the portrayal of Muslims as the new Jews.<sup>7</sup>

## From Modern to New Antisemitism

That antisemitism is not some marginal phenomenon found only among far-right activists or Neo-Nazis should go without saying by now. If one wants to explain its various guises in general, and leftist and “new” antisemitism in particular, one needs to understand what antisemitism is and why antisemitic explanations play to people’s needs. Some authors stress the continuities between religious anti-Judaism before the Spanish inquisition and Martin Luther’s late conviction that Jews cannot become true Christians through baptism, on the one hand, and modern antisemitism, on the other. By contrast, I stress both the continuities *and* the rupture, which went hand in hand with the transformation from pre-modern to modern, capitalist society. I will first address the conditions under which modern antisemitism developed, surveying how it can be explained in social, economic, and psychological terms. I will then discuss the transformation of antisemitism after the Holocaust, the emergence of so-called secondary, post-Holocaust antisemitism, and its expression on the political Left. Finally, I will touch on the so-called “new antisemitism,” the convergence,

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5 Cf. World Jewish Congress and Vigo Social Intelligence, *The Rise of Antisemitism on Social Media: Summary of 2016* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 2016), 8.

6 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate: Hostility towards Jews as a Cultural Constant and Collective Emotional Value in the Digital Age (Short Version)* (Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 2018), 7, [https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism\\_2.0\\_short\\_version\\_final2.pdf](https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism_2.0_short_version_final2.pdf).

7 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel and E. Friesel, “‘Gestern die Juden, heute die Muslime...’? Von den Gefahren falscher Analogien,” in *Islamophobie und Antisemitismus—ein umstrittener Vergleich*, ed. G. Botsch et al. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 29–50.

since 9/11, of far right, Muslim, and left-wing antisemitism on the basis of their shared anti-Zionism.

## Modern Antisemitism

The Frankfurt School in general and Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer in particular did not want to acquire expert knowledge on political extremism but analyze society as a whole through the prism of the most terrible consequence generated by the principles of its formation. Antisemitism takes centre stage in the development of this critique because it facilitated the relapse into barbarism and unites all the destructive traits generated by the unfree society. The relapse into barbarism is analyzed as a potentiality of the modern world that culminated in Auschwitz and the other sites of annihilation, yet whose prerequisites persist.

The point of departure is the assumption that modern antisemitism developed in tandem with bourgeois-capitalist society. It followed on from pre-modern forms of anti-Jewish sentiment and took over the object of their hatred. In Europe, the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism was of particular significance in this context. Modern antisemitism was originally a response to the emergence of capitalism and the dramatic social changes it brought with it. The direct relations of dependence in feudal society ceded to indirect and abstract forms of rule, characterized by Marx as the silent compulsion of economic relations.<sup>8</sup> The new societies nailed the values of freedom and equality to their mast. These were concepts which, though diametrically opposed to domination and exploitation in formal terms, were in fact their indispensable complement and ideological representation.

Emancipation from the barriers of feudalism in general encompassed the emancipation of the Jews after centuries of exclusion and discrimination. Jews gained access to social spheres from which they had long been excluded and were able to gain a footing in new professions, especially in the cities. The Christian majority populations who were traditionally ill-disposed toward the Jews encountered them as “colonizers of modernity.”<sup>9</sup> The connection between the emancipation of the Jews and the apparent threat of modernization seemed self-evident. It was in particular all those changes that contradicted the tradi-

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. K. Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993), 1:765.

<sup>9</sup> M. Horkheimer and T. W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 184.

tional feudal way of life with all its rigid rules that were experienced as threatening. Large parts of the population rightly assumed that they would lose out when confronted with the dynamics of modern society that had been unleashed by the dictates of the accumulation of capital. Henceforth, not the coherent set of traditional rules would determine one's life but one's success or lack thereof on the market. Discontent with the uncomprehended mechanisms of a commodified society was targeted at the Jews. Modern antisemitism essentially results from the personalization of social relations under the rule of capital and the state. In ideological disputes, the "Jewish question" was stylized as the core of all social antagonisms. In the imagination of the antisemites, all the contradictions within their distorted image of "the Jews" were resolved through the myth of an alleged Jewish world conspiracy. Thus, it was possible to associate everything negative with one superior enemy.

Modern antisemitism is a particularly perfidious fetish. The supposedly "abstract" aspects of capitalism (value, capital, interest, etc.) are juxtaposed to its supposedly "concrete" dimensions (the use value of the commodity, labour, production, etc.). The antisemite distinguishes between good, "productive" and bad, "exploitative" capital. Antisemitism thus emerges as a form of reductionist "anti-capitalism." Because it targets only the abstract side of capitalism, antisemitism is highly compatible with continued domination. Far from formulating a radical critique of the existing order, it perpetuates and consolidates the submission of the individual to the laws of modern society enforced by state and capital. The antisemites are only too familiar with the characteristics they project on to the Jews, since they in fact reflect their own repressed wishes and desires. Whatever contradicts the necessary self-denial of the subjects, whatever they cannot or may not admit to themselves, is ascribed to the Jews, in order then to affirm one's self-denial by persecuting it in them.

Antisemitism is therefore an authoritarian rebellion. An impulse that potentially points toward a radical critique of society, both in theoretical and practical terms, is neutralized, mutilated, and transformed into its opposite. In a society of domination and unfreedom, the sense that things might be different has to be persecuted. The Jews thus fall prey to a ritual that one could describe as a modern form of exorcism. By attacking the Jews, the antisemites reassure themselves of their belonging to an ostensibly natural national collective that is meant to protect its members from the sometimes catastrophic consequences of life in capitalist society. As the subjects realize how little substance underpins their subjectivity, they flee into the imagined protective community of the nation. "Na-

tional mobilizations,” in Horkheimer’s words, “are the permitted alternative to revolution.”<sup>10</sup>

For the overwhelming majority, the successful constitution of the subject is possible only if they manage to realize the sole commodity, which they still have at their disposal once they have been freed from the previous social relations and face each other as atomized individuals: their labour. Yet their success or lack of success in realizing this commodity lies beyond the individual subject’s sphere of influence. Consequently, subjectivity is an ideological construct in bourgeois society. Horkheimer and Adorno are referring to this thwarted liberation when they write that the antisemitic reaction is triggered in situations in which “deceived human beings who have been robbed of their subjectivity are set loose as subjects”<sup>11</sup>

We are dealing, then, with a damaged subject. It is damaged because, in the interest of self-preservation, it has to place demands on itself, which it cannot actually meet by itself. In psychoanalytic terms: the subject is forced to hypostatize itself in a narcissistic fashion, which, in turn, inevitably sets it up for narcissistic injury. The “specific motives” underlying antisemitism Freud identified as those that spring “from secret sources.”<sup>12</sup> Yet, it should not be forgotten that the psychology of the individual is socially grounded. While the laws of society cannot be derived from the psychological profiles of individuals, the individual is

not merely an individual and the substratum of psychology but always also ... a carrier of the social regulations that shape it. ... Even the vulgar materialism that explains individual responses with tangible profit interests is right when compared to the psychologist who derives the economic behavior of adults that conforms to objective economic laws from their childhood.<sup>13</sup>

The studies on *The Authoritarian Personality*<sup>14</sup> revealed that antisemitism is complemented by various other character traits, all of which together constitute the authoritarian personality. It is interpreted as the outcome of an upbringing in a

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**10** M. Horkheimer, “Die Juden und Europa,” in *Wirtschaft, Recht und Staat im Nationalsozialismus: Analysen des Instituts für Sozialforschung 1939–1942 von Max Horkheimer*, ed. H. Dubiel and A. Söllner (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 44. This and all the following quotes from German texts were translated by the author.

**11** Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 180.

**12** S. Freud, “Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion,” [1939] in *Studienausgabe IX* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2000), 139.

**13** T. W. Adorno, “Zum Verhältnis von Soziologie und Psychologie,” [1955] in *Soziologische Schriften 1* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 49–50.

**14** Cf. T. W. Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1950).



patriarchal family with a dominant father figure that is characterized by a lack of affection, strict discipline, the trivialization of inward processes, and a rigid orientation toward external conventions. This sort of upbringing obstructs a successful integration of the super ego. Children are unable to develop a stable ego capable of creating an equilibrium between the urges of the id and the social norms and constraints established in the super ego. The resulting weakness of the ego creates a predisposition in the individual to follow external authorities and conventions in their thoughts and actions rather than their own judgments and to avoid making judgments of their own in the first place. Typical traits of this authoritarian syndrome are “rigid conventionality as well as unreflective adherence to social norms and regulations”<sup>15</sup> and a conformism that “expresses alarm whenever social deviation occurs.”<sup>16</sup>

Since the experience of impotence cannot be admitted, it is psychologized into the “feeling of impotence.” Individuals “are incapable of experiencing their impotence and looking it into the eye.” Hence, “they have to process their impotence into a ‘feeling’ and turn it into a psychological sediment.”<sup>17</sup> This sense of impotence contradicts the narcissistic hypostatization of the self and as long as the actual causes of this constellation remain opaque for the individual it is likely to look for somebody to blame. The only thing it knows for sure is that it is definitely not to blame.

A rigid, moralizing upbringing leads to the repression of illicit feelings and the constant need to prevent them from becoming conscious again. Since this absorbs a considerable amount of energy, it represents a great relief if one can project the illicit feelings on to “alien” others. In other words, one of the means of resistance against the efforts of unconscious wishes and desires to resurface consists in seeing those wishes and desires in others while refusing to acknowledge them in oneself. Arbitrary projections are facilitated by an insufficient ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality. Those who can only see in the victims of their delusion those traits that they have repressed or cannot admit to themselves, are essentially impervious to experience. Borrowing from Kant, one could say that for an antisemite, antisemitism forms the a priori of all possible experience. All objects of experience are always already shaped in a particular way, as a result of which contradictory perceptions are rendered entirely impossible.

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15 L. Rensmann, *Kritische Theorie über den Antisemitismus: Studien zu Struktur, Erklärungspotential und Aktualität* (Berlin/Hamburg: Argument, 1998), 39.

16 A. Silbermann, *Der ungeliebte Jude: Zur Soziologie des Antisemitismus* (Zürich: Interfrom, 1981), 40.

17 Adorno, “Zum Verhältnis,” 74.

The authoritarian personality “feels challenged and threatened by those people who deviate from the irrational and authoritarian structure of repression.”<sup>18</sup> Qualities such as freedom, equality, and emancipation, which bourgeois society has been unable to realize, are attributed to “the Jews.” Individuals find their narcissism constantly injured as they are forced to sell themselves day by day on the labour market, painfully aware of their replaceability. They have hundreds of wishes and understand the system well enough to know they will never be fulfilled. Yet buried deep down within them, they suspect that there might be more, they sense the possibility of “happiness without power, reward without work, a homeland without frontiers.”<sup>19</sup>

The timeless antisemitic notion that Jews are greedy and exploitative shrouds the unconscious envy of those who supposedly do not need to work and receive everything for free and without having to make an effort. Above and beyond the racist projection that hates and envies Black people because of their imagined hyper-sexuality and foreigners because they supposedly do not have to work, antisemitism also encompasses the alleged omnipotence of the Jews. While racists may envy individual foreigners because of their apparent “right to laziness,” the latter nevertheless remains as powerless *vis-à-vis* the system as the former. The ostensibly powerful “Jew,” by contrast, is also hated and envied because of his omnipotence. Against this backdrop, “the quotidian religion of antisemitism offers guilty victims suited as objects of the conformist rebellion.”<sup>20</sup> In contrast to the victim of racism who is supposedly inferior, “the Jew” makes for an apt personification of negative authority because of his alleged intention to dominate the planet and his omnipotence. This is the crucial distinction between racism and (modern) antisemitism. Above and beyond all the benefits of racist projection, antisemitism offers the opportunity to act out not against the actual authorities but against others who are supposedly in a position of authority, and thus to rebel without harming one’s own collective.

## Secondary, Post-Holocaust Antisemitism—Rightwing and Leftwing

Secondary antisemitism is a particular form of modern antisemitism that has been shaped by the Holocaust. It seems inevitable that the attempt to annihilate

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<sup>18</sup> Rensmann, *Kritische Theorie*, 74.

<sup>19</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, 225.

<sup>20</sup> W. Bohleber and J. S. Kafka, eds., *Antisemitismus* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1992), 168.

European Jewry, which nearly succeeded, has had an effect on the concept and manifestation of antisemitism. In Germany and Austria, it is certainly impossible to analyze antisemitism, be it as a social or individual phenomenon, without considering the transformed circumstances following the genocide. The situation has changed insofar as an unreserved affirmation of the nation was no longer possible once the crimes had become public knowledge. In Germany and Austria, Auschwitz has become synonymous with an injury to the collective narcissism. Its recollection is affectively charged in a strong way and triggers public responses that clearly reveal the desire to deny, forget, keep secret, and relativize. Leaving to one sense a core of inveterate Jew haters, antisemitism after Auschwitz is antisemitism because of Auschwitz. Against this backdrop the contentions of modern antisemitism are recycled and modified.

Adorno already analyzed numerous evasion strategies of this kind in the 1950s.<sup>21</sup> Take the example of the call that a line should finally be drawn beneath the past that is constantly raised in public debate as though it broke a major taboo for the first time. In fact, this has been a constant feature of “coming to terms with the past” in Germany and Austria since the late 1940s.

Austria has made its own original contribution in this context by styling herself as the first victim of National Socialism. To be sure, self-victimization is not unknown in the Berlin Republic either. The annual commemoration of the Allied bombing of Dresden is an obvious case in point. Even so, the current German state, as the successor state to Nazi Germany, has not been able to evade the past in quite the same way as Austria.

Secondary antisemitism is particularly dangerous insofar as it allows its proponents to see themselves as the innocent victim acting in self-defense. Modern antisemitism’s paranoid conspiracy theories are rarely still propagated openly. The notion that an international Jewish community is working in a clandestine manner to destroy and subjugate the non-Jewish peoples may still enthuse a surprisingly large audience but, currently at least, it does not resonate with the broad masses. The contention that Jews are globally instrumentalising the Holocaust for their ends, on the other hand, seems very popular. By thinking of oneself as an individual who merely wants to be left in peace to lead a decent life but is prevented from doing so by “certain circles” who are, in fact, seeking revenge, anti-Jewish aggression appears simply as a form of self-defense.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. T. W. Adorno, “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit,” in *Gesammelte Schriften 10.2. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft II: Eingriffe. Stichworte* (Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main, 1977), 555–72.

While secondary antisemitism draws its momentum from the confrontation with the past, it is not merely backward-directed. It does not differ in principle from modern antisemitism but adapts it to the circumstances of post-Holocaust society.<sup>22</sup> Secondary antisemitism thrives not *despite* but *because* of Auschwitz. At its heart is the desire to forget the National Socialist crimes and rid oneself of related negative feelings. This paradoxical constellation has aptly been summarized in the contention that the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz.

In contrast to that, antisemitism on the Left springs not so much from the desire to engage in unreserved affirmation of one's own nation but has more to do with prevalent left-wing concepts of capitalism and imperialism, state and nation, fascism and National Socialism. Many on the Left have reduced National Socialism to a particular heinous form of class domination by the most aggressive parts of the bourgeoisie.<sup>23</sup> For the longest time the annihilatory antisemitism of the Nazis was largely ignored or understood functionally as a means of domination and distraction deployed in the interest of goals other than the annihilation of European Jewry.

The traditional Left conceptualizes capitalism not as fetishized social totality that should be criticized for its reification of social relations but rather as the total sum of all capitalists with whom the working class finds itself in constant irreconcilable conflict. This inevitably generates a binary, reifying, personalizing, and moralizing imaginary, which hinges on the notion of a clique of evil rulers who rely on direct repression and blunt propaganda and who corrupt the working class with social policy, in order to dominate the ruled.

Critique and activism are thus directed not against a particular set of social relations but against the people who actually or allegedly represent one side of these social relations, and herein lies the structural analogy to antisemitism. Consequently, many on the Left also subscribe to a reductionist concept of imperialism that identifies it with foreign rule and exploitation by foreign capital. The uncritical identification with movements of national liberation in the developing world has led to the affirmation of categories such as state, nation, and people. This kind of anti-imperialism, which cannot distinguish between the critique of imperialism and unreserved partisanship for the victims of imperialism almost

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. L. Rensmann, "Guilt, Resentment, and Post-Holocaust Democracy: The Frankfurt School's Analysis of 'Secondary Antisemitism' in the Group Experiment and Beyond," *Antisemitism Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 4–37.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. T. Haury, "Die Ideologie, die nicht vergehen will: 35 Jahre antisemitischer Antizionismus in der Neuen deutschen Linken," in *Trotz und wegen Auschwitz*, ed. AG Antifa/Antra im StuRa der Uni Halle (Münster: Unrast, 2004), 111.

inevitably leads to collaboration with dictators, völkisch nationalists, and antisemites.<sup>24</sup>

After the Six-Day War in 1967, leftist antisemites have come to depict Israel as an imperialist Goliath who should know better—given his experience of the Shoah—than to behave like the new Nazis and make Arabs in their country the new Jews of today. In contrast to the right-wing antisemites, who try to cover their antisemitism through the use of codes as “the East coast,” leftist, “reputable antisemites” (Améry) are proud of their alleged anti-fascist engagement against Israel.

## New Antisemitism

Especially since 9/11, a far-reaching ideological convergence of antisemitism has taken place across a range of ideologies and milieu that traditionally have precious little in common. At its heart lies a form of antisemitic anti-Zionism on which Islamists and many on the Far Right and the Left can agree. All of them see themselves and the world as the victims of some kind of Jewish-Zionist-capitalist conspiracy that is being played out in politics, the economy, and the media.<sup>25</sup> This notion tends to merge closely with anti-Americanism, the critique of globalization, and anti-modernism.

In addition to Natan Sharansky’s 3 Ds which help us pinpoint when the so called “Israel critique” is antisemitic—demonization, double standards, and delegitimization<sup>26</sup>—Monika Schwarz-Friesel and Jehuda Reinharz have introduced an overarching category: derealization. Derealizing linguistic utterances do not portray reality as it in fact is, but language is rather instrumentalized by the language-generators to verbalize aspects of the world as they view them.<sup>27</sup> This leads to the derealization of current antisemitism, of the existing threats and attacks against Israel. This way “state terrorism” of the evil Goliath always appears disproportional.

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24 Cf. S. Grigat, “Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der Linken,” *Hagalil.com*, April 18, 2002, <http://www.hagalil.com/antisemitismus/europa/linker-antisemitismus.htm>.

25 Cf. O. Bartov, “Der alte und der neue Antisemitismus,” in *Neuer Antisemitismus? Eine globale Debatte*, ed. D. Rabinovici et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004), 26–43.

26 Cf. N. Sharansky, “3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3–4 (2004), <http://jcpa.org/article/3d-test-of-antisemitism-demonization-double-standards-delegitimization/>.

27 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2017), 157.

As the global anti-Zionist struggle that is being conducted on a daily basis by right-wing extremists, left-wing opponents of globalization, Arab fighters, and those motivated by radical Islam unfolds, the book market is being flooded with publications whose authors tend to wear their hearts on their sleeves but also seek to distance themselves from the card-carrying antisemites. It is no longer a secret that left-wing anti-imperialism and the anti-globalization movement have a problem with antisemitism. On the one hand, there is the rampant anti-Zionism that turns various European and Social Justice forums into festivals of multi-cultural hatred against Israel. On the other hand, there is a form of critique of the global economic order, which has repeatedly been accused of arguing in a manner that is “structurally antisemitic.” The ensuing controversy tends to hinge not on matters of substance but on the issue of correct terminology. Given that very few proponents of this agenda want to be classified as antisemites, the more sophisticated among them appropriate theories of antisemitism in order to develop modes of expression that have not been delegitimized by Adorno’s critique. Some of them have understood that it is not opportune to display images that show the world in the arms of a repulsive octopus (though this imagery remains exceptionally popular among anti-globalization activists). Yet their underlying assumptions about the state and the economy remain the same, and they fail to critique the social phenomena which crystallize into antisemitism.

Even worse are the debates regarding Arab/Muslim antisemitism which, for the most part, simply fail to address the issue and principally focus on questions of terminology. Usually the first question raised is that of whether an antisemitic tradition existed in the Arab world or antisemitism was in fact imported from the West. The disparagement and contempt that the Islamic tradition displayed toward Jews doubtless influenced the ideologue of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb.<sup>28</sup> Horkheimer, Adorno, and their colleagues insisted that modern antisemitism, while not divorced from its religiously motivated precursors, was nevertheless distinct from them due to the emergence of abstract forms of domination as capitalism transformed the world in its image. This same process has also taken place in the Arab world, though with a certain delay and under economically and politically less advanced circumstances. Traditional Catholic anti-Judaism may have influenced Hitler, but it is not central to an understanding of his antisemitism.

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**28** Cf. M. Küntzel, “National Socialism and Anti-Semitism in the Arab World,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 17, no. 1–2 (2005): 99–118.

In this process anti-Jewish hatred there has been transformed into murderous modern antisemitism as well. Whether, in the past, Jews were persecuted in the same way in the Arab realm as they were in Europe is therefore not all too important. More important are the ideological processes that accompanied the capitalist transformation, and it is clear that in this context modern antisemitism has proven to be as successful in the Middle East as it was in Central and Eastern Europe.

The focus on pre-modern traditions thus signifies a fundamental lack of interest in the phenomenon of modern antisemitism from the outset and prevents a critique of the social conditions that allow antisemitism to enthuse the masses in Cairo as much as it inspires the Iranian regime. Even people who know about secondary antisemitism and may well have heard of “antisemitism without Jews” can suddenly account for antisemitism in the Middle East in no other way than by blaming the Jews.<sup>29</sup>

Insofar as social causes come into play at all, they are conceptualized as the ostensible consequences of European colonialism, once again turning the problem into one ultimately created by Europe. Those unwilling to tackle rigid sexual morals, genital mutilation, and the aggressively repressed homoeroticism of the Muslim *ummah* can obviously muster little more than a shrug of the shoulders when confronted with the suggestions that antisemitism has something to do with the repression of wishes and desires in an oppressive society.

As Omer Bartov has shown, a central element of “new antisemitism” is the belittlement of Islamist antisemitism in the western Left. The example he discusses is the speech of the Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir in 2003 at the Islamic Conference—in front of fifty-seven heads of states and two thousand journalists:

Today the Jews rule this world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them. They, this tiny community, have become a world power. ... We cannot fight them through brawn alone. We must use our brains also. ... 1.3 billion Muslims cannot be defeated by a few million Jews. There must be a way. And we can only find a way if we stop to think, to assess our weaknesses and our strength, to plan, to strategise and then to counter attack. As Muslims we must seek guidance from the Al-Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. F. Markl, “Beschädigtes Leben und Judenhaß: Kritik des Antisemitismus als Gesellschaftskritik,” in *Feindaufklärung und Reeducation: Kritische Theorie gegen Postnazismus und Islamismus*, ed. S. Grigat (Freiburg: Ça ira, 2006), 147.

<sup>30</sup> “Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad at the opening of the tenth session of the Islamic Summit conference at Putrajaya Convention Centre,” issued October 16, 2003, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/mahathirs-full-speech-20031022-gdhmg3.html>.

In reaction to that, Paul Krugman wrote in the *New York Times* that the

remarks were inexcusable. But they were also calculated – for Mr. Mahathir is a cagey politician, who is neither ignorant nor foolish. ... Mahathir is ... about as forward-looking a Muslim leader as we're likely to find. ... So what's with the anti-Semitism? Almost surely it's part of Mr. Mahathir's domestic balancing act ... Now Mr. Mahathir thinks that to cover his domestic flank, he must insert hateful words into a speech mainly about Muslim reform.<sup>31</sup>

Krugman belittles Mahathir's antisemitism as a domestic strategy of a forward-looking statesman and blames the US for antisemitism in the Muslim world. This derealization of Islamist antisemitism and anti-Zionism in the western Left has become a dominant part of a new, global antisemitism.

## New Antisemitism and New Media

Against this theoretical background I argue that there is one significant distinction between the function of the new media for right-wing as opposed to left-wing users: the frequently discussed anonymity of the internet allows right-wing users to express antisemitic opinions more openly than they otherwise might.<sup>32</sup> Left-wing users, by contrast, feel no urge to hide behind pseudonyms in the first place, since they are, after all, “virtuous antisemites.” Many of them see themselves as antifascist activists, so why the need for anonymity? In this case, the problem lies elsewhere: left-wing and center-left new media platforms and forums claim that they ban not only racist and sexist but antisemitic content too. Yet anti-Zionism and the derealization of Islamist antisemitism turn out to be a blind spot—and thus the codes of conduct turn out to be a toothless tiger when it comes to leftist antisemitism.

In the following, I will analyze reactions to Hamas's new policy paper from May 2017 on leftist internet platforms and in the forum of the Austrian daily *Der Standard*. In scholarly literature that does not turn a blind eye toward Islamist

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31 D. J. Goldhagen, “The Globalization of Antisemitism,” *Forward*, May 2, 2003, <https://forward.com/opinion/8736/the-globalization-of-antisemitism/>.

32 Cf. R. Cohen-Almagor, “Countering Hate on the Internet,” *Annual Review of Law and Ethics* 22 (2014): 431–43; S. Rohlfing, “Hate on the Internet,” in *The Routledge International Handbook on Hate Crime*, ed. N. Hall et al. (London: Routledge, 2015), 296; for anonymity as a “new and effective” opportunity for relativising the Holocaust, see W. Benz, “Holocaust Denial: Anti-Semitism as a Refusal to Accept Reality,” *Historiein* 11 (2011): 78.



antisemitism, the Hamas Charter of 1988 is often presented as an example of blatant antisemitism.<sup>33</sup> It claims:

Our struggle against the Jews is very great and very serious. ... The Movement is but one squadron that should be supported by more and more squadrons from this vast Arab and Islamic world, until the enemy is vanquished and Allah's victory is realised. ... The Zionist Nazi activities against our people will not last for long. ... The Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, has said: "The Day of Judgement will not come about until Moslems kill the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."<sup>34</sup>

In 2017 Hamas sought to widen its international appeal at a time when the group faced "multiple challenges, including a dismal economic situation in Gaza—most recently underscored by the energy crisis in Gaza—and strained relations with Egypt, which is at war with Hamas's parent organization, the Muslim Brotherhood."<sup>35</sup> The relationship with the Iranian regime too had become tenuous.<sup>36</sup> Its new policy paper of May 1, 2017, demonstrated the group's desire to appear more moderate and gain broader support: Hamas's

goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. ... Palestine, which extends from the River Jordan in the east to the Mediterranean in the west and from Ras Al-Naqurah in the north to Umm Al-Rashrash in the south, is an integral territorial unit. ... Hamas affirms that its conflict is with the Zionist project not with the Jews because of their religion. Yet, it is the Zionists who constantly identify Judaism and the Jews with their own colonial project and illegal entity. ... The Zionist movement, which was able with the help of Western powers to occupy Palestine, is the most dangerous form of settlement occupation which

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**33** Cf. B. Tibi, "From Sayyid Qutb to Hamas: The Middle East Conflict and the Islamization of Antisemitism," in *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, ed. C. A. Small (New York: Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy, 2015), 457–83; M. Litvak, "The Anti-Semitism of Hamas," *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 12, no. 2–3 (2005): 41–46; A. Pfahl-Traughber, "Antisemitismus und Antizionismus in der Charta der Hamas: Eine Fallstudie zur Judenfeindschaft im islamistischen Diskurs," in *Dossier: Antisemitismus*, ed. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Bonn: bpb, 2011), 113–16.

**34** Translation from [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp), accessed April 27, 2020.

**35** M. Levitt and M. Rich, "Hamas's Moderate Rhetoric Belies Militant Activities," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, issued May 1, 2017, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/hamass-moderate-rhetoric-belies-militant-activities>.

**36** Cf. F. Markl, "Hamas-Angebot: Ergebnis der internationalen Isolation," *Mena-watch*, September 18, 2017, <https://www.mena-watch.com/mena-analysen-beitraege/hamas-angebot-ergebnis-der-internationalen-isolierung/>.

has already disappeared from much of the world and must disappear from Palestine. ... Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus. ... There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital.<sup>37</sup>

Hamas claims, then, that its conflict is with the Zionist project and “not with the Jews,” yet it still demands that the Zionist project should “disappear from Palestine,” which should be liberated “from the river to the sea.” It refers to a “national consensus” calling for a return to the status quo ante, that is, the status prior to the Six-Day War of 1967, yet at the same time demands a Palestinian state “on the entire Palestinian soil.”

Rather than discuss Hamas’s claim that its conflict is not with the Jews but only with Zionism, I want to analyze reactions to the policy paper on the German-speaking Left. Needless to say, “the Left” in the post-Nazi German and Austrian context encompasses a broad range of positions.

Representative for the lunatic fringe of the discourse on Hamas, Israel, and the Middle East is “The Palestine Portal. Never again—No one—Nowhere.” Its section on antisemitism bears the heading “No to antisemitism – no to its instrumentalization,” which already indicates that the portal focuses on the denunciation of the critique of anti-Zionism. Before Hamas published its policy paper in 2017, the portal provided a link to a site, which presented Hamas as “not radical in its entirety” and “not the Taliban.” Hamas was a group comparable to the PLO in the 1980s with which the Israelis and the US should negotiate. To exclude it from talks just because “the military arm of Hamas has carried out assassinations” would be “unfair.”<sup>38</sup> In 2009, the portal claimed that continued reference to the 1988 Charter “completely ignores Hamas’ development in the last ten years”<sup>39</sup> from a resistance and activist group to a political party that relies on democratic means:

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37 The Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas,” “A Document of General Principles and Policies,” issued May 1 2017, accessed April 27, 2020, <http://hamas.ps/en/post/678/a-document-of-general-principles-and-policies>.

38 “Allgemein zum Sieg der Hamas,” *Frieden für Palästina* 2006, issued 2006, accessed April 27, 2020, <http://members.aon.at/friedenfuerpalaestina/aktuell/wahlen2006.htm>.

39 “Hamas,” Das Palästina Portal, issued January 26, 2009, accessed April 27, 2020, [http://www.palaestina-portal.eu/Stimmen\\_deutsch/palaestina\\_heute\\_hamas.htm](http://www.palaestina-portal.eu/Stimmen_deutsch/palaestina_heute_hamas.htm).

The use of excerpts from the Charter as proof of Hamas's anti-Zionist militancy turns out to be rather embarrassing for those who quote them as soon as one makes the effort of putting those quotations back into the context from which they were torn.<sup>40</sup>

So even before the policy paper was published in 2017, the Palestine portal denied Hamas's antisemitism—only to clarify after its publication that while the Charter may have been radical,

the new [Hamas] document merely lends expression to forms of politics that have been undergoing a process of “moderation” for the past decade anyway. But because Hamas does now agree to a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967 (the two-state solution), Netanyahu needed to denounce Hamas as “rejectionist” on the grounds that it does not recognize Israel.<sup>41</sup>

No mention was made of the continued call to wipe Israel off the map. The Israeli reaction was immediately identified as the real problem: Netanyahu had argued that Hamas “brainwashes kids inside suicide camps,” hence, the text's author suggested, “it would be interesting to look at some examples of the violent brainwashing of children by Israel” instead. It is worth mentioning that the equation of Israeli policies with those of the Nazis is standard fare for the portal's founder Erhard Arendt: “It was shocking for me to realize that those who used to be the victims have now become the perpetrators,” he wrote on one occasion.<sup>42</sup>

More mainstream center-left media do not imply that the Israelis are the new Nazis, but they too pursue a similar derealization strategy, readily misinterpreting the Hamas Charter of 2017. In the German *taz*, Susanne Knaul claimed that

for the first time in its history Hamas has officially accepted the foundation of a Palestinian state only in the territories occupied by Israel. This paper no longer includes the explicit demand for the annihilation of Israel found in the Hamas Charter of 1988. The military wing has had to agree to turn its back on its founding fathers.<sup>43</sup>

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40 Ibid.

41 J. Ofir, “Warum werden israelische Kinder einer Gehirnwäsche unterzogen, damit sie hasen?,” Das Palästina Portal, issued May 10, 2017, accessed April 27, 2020, <http://palaestina-portal.eu/texte/texte-7.htm>.

42 “ProMosaik e.V. interviewt Herrn Erhard Arendt vom Palästinaportal,” ProMosaik e.V., issued March 16, 2015, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://promosaik.blogspot.com/2015/03/promosaik-ev-interviewt-herrn-erhard.html>.

43 S. Knaul, “Die Hamas gibt sich versöhnlicher,” *taz*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.taz.de/Archiv-Suche/15405601&s=hamas/>.

Leaving to one side that the areas still under Israeli occupation would make for a rather limited Palestinian state, as we saw, Hamas's continued demand for the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea explicitly calls for Israel's annihilation. Moreover, Hamas officials have made very clear that the paper does not in fact replace the Charter.<sup>44</sup> In contrast to Leftist newspapers, the liberal German newspapers *Die Zeit* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* do mention both of these points.<sup>45</sup> In the liberal-conservative monthly *Cicero*, Michael Wolffsohn explicitly called the Hamas paper a new façade for an old building designed to hide Hamas' antisemitism. All too many, he lamented, were falling for this ruse.<sup>46</sup>

The Austrian center-left quality newspaper *Der Standard* reported on the Hamas policy paper on May 1, 2017, and on Netanyahu's response the following day. I will briefly mention the points raised in these two reports and then analyze the reactions to them in the *Standard Online* forum. Typical of center-left media, *Standard Online* wrongly referred to the Hamas paper as "a document in which Hamas accepts the establishment of a Palestinian state in the borders of 1967."<sup>47</sup> A small minority of those posting responses to this article (four out of fifty-six) resorted to derealizing arguments. "Maynard52," for example, claimed that "Hamas never wanted to kill Jews because they are Jews, but to resist the Zionist occupiers. Have you actually realized that there is a brutal occupation regime in place?" Here, Hamas's crude antisemitism was simply denied altogether.

Another user posted under the name "Shitty little country," thus alluding to the infamous utterance of the then French ambassador in London, Daniel Bernard, three months after the attacks on 9/11. At a dinner party at the house of the then proprietor of *The Telegraph*, Conrad Black, and his wife, Barbara Amiel, Bernard had referred to Israel as a "shitty little country." On Amiel's account he had gone on to ask why the world should be "in danger of World War Three because of those people?"<sup>48</sup> "I am only allowed to criticize Israel if the sit-

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44 Cf. "New Hamas Policy Document 'Aims to Soften Image,'" *BBC News*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39744551>.

45 Cf. "Hamas ändert ihre politischen Positionen," *Zeit online*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2017-05/nahostkonflikt-hamas-aenderung-politisches-programm-israel>; "Hamas ändert erstmals seit Gründung vor 30 Jahren ihr politisches Programm," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 2, 2017, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/palaestinenorganisation-hamas-aendert-erstmals-seit-gruendung-ihr-politisches-programm-1.3486326>.

46 Cf. M. Wolffsohn, "Neue Fassade, altes Haus," *Cicero. Magazin für politische Kultur*, May 8, 2017, <https://www.cicero.de/aussenpolitik/hamas-paper-neue-fassade-altes-haus>.

47 "Hamas will womöglich Grenzen von 1967 akzeptieren," *Standard Online*, May 1, 2017, <https://derstandard.at/2000056825376/Hamas-will-womoeglich-Grenzen-von-1967-akzeptieren>.

48 "Daniel Bernard (obituary)," *The Telegraph*, May 3, 2004, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1460855/Daniel-Bernard.html>.

uation has changed???” the user who had chosen to post under this name asked indignantly and went on: “But the current system in which everyone who criticizes Israel is an antisemite actually works quite well.” The claim that one is not allowed to criticize Israel and that any and every critique of Israel is automatically considered antisemitic is, of course, a central plank of the anti-Zionist “critique of Israel,” even though there is a clear and obvious distinction between criticisms of specific policies or actions of the Israeli government or military and the comprehensive delegitimization of Israel.<sup>49</sup> Another user, “Jtiberius,” wrote: “Don’t worry, Israel will continue to receive more money for its illegal policy than Hamas.” “Which one?”, another user asked. “The illegal settlement policy. The illegal policy of defense. The illegal human rights policy,” “Jtiberius” responded. In the world of conspiracy theories, it seems self-evident that Israel is receiving money from non-specified outside forces. The policy of defense is tied together with the debatable settlement policy so that both can be portrayed as illegal in the same way.

A second report published by the *Standard Online* dealt with the reaction of the Israeli government to the Hamas paper and wrongly claimed, yet again, that “Hamas has dropped the call for the destruction of Israel.”<sup>50</sup> Since the main topic of this second article was Israel, the tone of the responses became much harsher. “Hellene Kurz” resorted to one of the most common demonization strategies when she asked: “what do you expect from the war mongers netanjahu & co.” “Der\_wiedergänger” meanwhile was sure that “the Palestinians can try whatever they want – it will never be enough for Israel. Q.E.D.—it becomes clear once again who is standing in the way of peace.” “Callimachus,” who regularly takes issue with this narrative in the *Standard* forum, summed up the anti-Zionist derealization in the following way: “Self defense is war. Terror is resistance. Peace is the destruction of Israel.” Taken out of context, his remark might even be mistaken for a particularly drastic antisemitic comment.

Alongside the identification of Israeli war-mongering as the sole source of conflict, equating Israel with Apartheid South Africa is another popular delegitimization strategy. The user “Minced Meat” wrote: “I call Israel’s policy Apartheid, and I am absolutely right.” Note the absence of an actual argument and the self-assuredness. That a coalition of four Arab-dominated parties, the “Joint list,”

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. for examples of obviously not antisemitic criticism of Israeli policies, see M. Schwarz-Friesel and J. Reinharz, *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft im 21. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 200–202.

<sup>50</sup> “Israel nennt neue Hamas-Richtlinien ‘Täuschungsmanöver’,” *Standard online*, May 2, 2017, <https://derstandard.at/2000056844305/Israel-nennt-neue-Hamas-Richtlinien-Taeuschungsmanoe-ver>.

is currently the third largest party in the Israeli parliament or that Salim Joubran served as the country's first Arab Supreme Court justice from 2003 to 2017, facts like these are simply ignored.<sup>51</sup> "My soul slides away" was sure that "over 95% of schools are segregated. In my eyes this is racial segregation!" On similar grounds "Tiefgang\*" claimed that Israel was not a democratic state: "today's Greater Israel is a product of robbery and will never be accepted in this form. But Israel does not care about this either. Israel prefers to stay an exclusively Jewish state, a theocracy, instead of constituting itself as a democratic state."

A user calling himself "Staatsvertrag,"<sup>52</sup> finally, implied that Israel was doing to the Palestinians what the Nazis had done to the Jews. Responding to a user who had pointed out that Israel had withdrawn from the Gaza Strip in order to obtain peace for land and that Hamas was entirely to blame for the comprehensive Egyptian and partial Israeli blockades, "Staatsvertrag" asked: "Which 'land' was given [back]? Definitely not Gaza: Gaza is still under siege and an open-air prison. A ghetto." The depiction of the Israelis as the new Nazis who keep the Palestinians in a ghetto is a well-established trope in "anti-fascist antisemitism."

It is important to note that *Standard Online* is the *moderated* forum of arguably the most respectable quality newspaper in Austria. According to its code of conduct, "no racist, sexist, misogynic, homophobic, antisemitic or other misanthropic posts"<sup>53</sup> are allowed. Yet anti-Zionism and denial of Israel's right to exist are evidently not considered problematic. Not even the equation implied by referring to Gaza as a ghetto is identified and censored as antisemitic.

As opposed to right-wing antisemitism, left-wing antisemitism does not blossom under the protection of anonymity. It is self-assured and forthright. It is high time that new media platforms and forums firmly incorporate anti-Zionism into their definitions of antisemitism. They need to ban postings, which claim that Israel is an Apartheid state, imply or openly demand that it must be destroyed or dismantled, or suggest that Gaza is a ghetto and thus imply that the Israelis are the new Nazis. None of this has anything to do with censoring criticism of Israeli

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51 Cf. Y. J. Bob, "The Legacy of Israel's First Arab Supreme Court Judge," *The Jerusalem Post*, August 4, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/International/The-legacy-of-Israelis-first-Arab-Supreme-Court-judge-501567>.

52 In the Austrian context, the name "Staatsvertrag" alludes to the Treaty for the Re-Establishment of an Independent and Democratic Austria. Signed by the Allied occupying powers and the Austrian government in Vienna in 1955, it re-established Austria as a sovereign state in 1955, ending ten years of Allied occupation.

53 "Community-Richtlinien," *Standard Online*, <https://derstandard.at/2934632/Forenregeln-Community-Richtlinien>.

policies or actions. Nor does the critique of leftist anti-Zionism and the leftist tendency to whitewash Islamist antisemitism amount to the claim that “the Left” is antisemitic. Yet neither, given its prevalence in centrist and center-left media, can one dismiss the problem of secondary, post-Holocaust antisemitism simply as a problem of the extreme right and a few activists on the loony left.

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Meir Litvak

# Islamic Radical Movements and Antisemitism: Between Old and New

Islamist antisemitism in the past decades is exceptional in three major categories: It is more virulent than any other public expression of antisemitism in the world today. It is also the most openly genocidal form of existing antisemitism as the various Islamist spokesmen do not mince words about their aspirations regarding the intended fate of the Jews, which is total annihilation. Finally, it is probably the most widespread brand of antisemitism as it unifies numerous Islamists from a broad range of countries and movements, both Sunnis and Shi'is, mainstream and radicals alike.

## Modern Islamist Antisemitism and Traditional Anti-Judaism

Antisemitism is inherent to Islamism as it is intertwined with two crucial conflicts that shape the ideology and psychology of all Islamist movements. The first is the clash with the cultural and political entity defined as the “West,” the ultimate threatening other in modern Islamist worldview. The second concerns the fights that the Prophet Muhammad had waged against the Jewish tribes of Medina. The two confrontations do not only represent two extremely opposite time periods but two completely contradictory historical experiences of the Muslim community: predicament and distress vis-à-vis the West in the present period and the rise of Islam from a persecuted minority into a victorious community during the Prophet’s lifetime.

Islamism is a modern reaction among Muslim communities to a deep sense of vulnerability and humiliation by modern Western-dominated global culture and the perceived threat it poses to Islamic identity. Judaism and Jews became popular targets of Islamist polemics or attacks, not because they may attract Muslims in the same manner as popular Western culture and ideologies. Rather, they are associated with the threat posed by the abhorred Western-dominated modernity and the dichotomy between the West and Islam. Since the basic idea of modern Islamism is to restore the power and glory of Islam, particularly as it had existed in the time of the Prophet Muhammad, it entails by definition a struggle against the enemies of Islam and of the Prophet, who are often lumped

together. As the Jews of Medina were among the Prophet's major targets, they received special hostile attention in the Qur'an, much more than the Christians.

Zionism and the conflict with Israel are major factors in the emergence and evolution of Islamist antisemitism but not its cause, as they represent a powerful manifestation of the failures and predicaments of the Muslims in the modern period. Since Islamists tend to view or judge historical phenomena through the religious prism, they regard the struggle with Zionism as inherently religious, that is between Judaism and Islam. Thus they do not distinguish between Judaism and Zionism since they see the latter as the practical manifestation of the former and regard Jews everywhere as Israel's co-conspirators in a plot against Islam. In addition, since Islamists review the past and present as fully intertwined, they view the current struggle against Israel and Zionism as the continuation of the conflict between the Prophet and the Jews. Finally, like all other anti-Western, or Occidental, worldviews, it associates the Jews with Western modernity and views them as the carriers of the universalist virus, as the flag-bearers of capitalism and as the manifestation of "rootless cosmopolitanism."<sup>1</sup> This truth is epitomized by the motto of the Houthi movement in Yemen: "Death to America, death to Israel, curse on the Jews, victory to Islam." One should bear in mind that most Houthis had never seen a Jew in their life, as only a few hundred Jews remained there, and the country is situated some 2,220 km away from Israel and suffers from a bloody war among Muslims.

Like other fundamentalist movements, Islamism is a modern phenomenon, which combines pre-modern and modern characteristics. Modern Islamist antisemitism draws on the Qur'an and early Islamic traditions (*Hadith*). The Qur'an contains harsh passages against Jews in view of the conflict of the Prophet Muhammad with the Jewish tribes of Medina. But, as Martin Kramer has observed, pre-modern Islamic tradition did not hold up those Jews who supposedly practiced treachery against Muhammad as archetypes—as the embodiment of Jews in all times and places. This makes for a striking contrast with a certain Christian concept of the eternal Jew, who forever bears the mark of the betrayer of Jesus. The Qur'an also includes certain verses which attest to the Prophet's amicable relations with some Jews, and while religious supremacism always colored the traditional Islamic view of the Jews, it also colored the Islamic view of Christians and all other non-Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

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1 I. Buruma, "The Origins of Occidentalism," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 6, 2004, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Origins-of-Occidentalism/30792>.

2 M. Kramer, "The Saliency of Islamic Antisemitism," *Institute of Jewish Affairs in London "Reports" series 2* (1995).

During centuries of Muslim rule, up to the modern period, Jews never enjoyed equality with Muslims, as they were always subject to discriminatory laws, and there was always latent pressure to convert to Islam. Yet, Jews were entitled to the protection (*dhimma*) of Islam as “People of the Book” and enjoyed religious autonomy. Moreover, this anti-Judaism had never been as central and relentless as its Christian counterpart in the Middle Ages. Unlike Europe, where Jews were often singled out as a demonic and destructive force, Islamic doctrines did not attribute satanic powers to them. When Jews were discriminated against, it was mostly because they belonged to the subordinate non-Muslim class, rather than to the Jewish religion in particular. In addition, Muslim rulers did not always implement these discriminatory laws. Furthermore, during this period Jews were not perceived as a threat to Islam, unlike the Christians, who, as members of the opposing imperial forces, were seen as an imminent danger to Islamic dominance. Forced conversions were extremely rare, and there were far fewer persecutions under Islam than under Christian Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike the past, the modern Islamists adopted a one-dimensional view of Jews drawn from a selective reading of scriptures instead of the more complex one in the past. Moreover, they have turned this Jew-hatred into a major theological construct of modern Islamist ideology. These developments reflected a shift from traditional anti-Judaism to modern antisemitism. Anti-Judaism refers to disdain for Jews and hostile attitudes toward Judaism and aims primarily at undermining Judaism’s religious validity. Primarily, it blamed the Jews for rejecting the teaching of the Prophet Muhammad, for distorting and falsifying the true scriptures given to them by Moses, and for a host of immoral activities. The shift to antisemitism is evident in the growing demonization of the Jews as an active threat to Islam and the reliance on conspiracy theories, the use of terminology borrowed from European antisemitism, and the incorporation of genocidal themes. Here, it can be said that they are following a similar pattern of medieval Christianity which regards all Jews at all times as diabolic. The heavy political component of the new discourse, shown by linking the Jews to other modern political enemies of Islam similarly marks this transition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For analyses of Islamic attitudes toward the Jews, see B. Lewis, *The Jews of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); M. R. Cohen, *Under Crescent and Cross: The Jews in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Y. Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For a critical view of Islamic attitudes, see B. Ye’or, *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> For the difference between anti-Judaism and antisemitism, see G. I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), particularly 57–99; S. He-

Like all fundamentalist movements, Islamism maintains an exclusivist claim to the truth. Therefore, they view other religions not simply as mistaken but at best as sinful and at worst as enemies of the one true God and message. Consequently, their attitude toward other religions is usually more exclusionary and hostile than among more mainstream religious trends. Fundamentalists view the world and history in dialectical terms as a permanent battle that takes place everywhere and all times, part of a great cosmic and spiritual confrontation between God's forces of good and Satan's forces of evil.<sup>5</sup> If the world is a battlefield, and if personal or collective salvation or damnation is at stake, then the opponent or the infidel becomes ipso facto an enemy. Since fundamentalists believe that they are fighting for God and represent his true divine message, then their opponents become the enemies of God himself. Thus if the Islamists represent the "party of God" (*Hizballah*), then their enemies represent the "party of Satan" (*hizb al-shaytan*).<sup>6</sup> Not surprisingly, most Islamists describe the Jews as the "enemies of God and humanity."

## The Uniqueness of Islamist Antisemitism

Overall, among all modern fundamentalist movements, the Islamist response to the perceived external threat is much stronger and more virulent than other religions due to several reasons. The first is the wide gap between Muslim self-perception of the proper place of Islam in the world, expressed in the popular saying "*al-Islam ya'lu wala yu'la alayhi*" ("Islam should be on top, and nothing shall be above it") and the gloomy reality of the Islamic world's weakness and lagging behind most other regions in the world. Added to this is the gap between Islam's past glory and present-day weakness, particularly when this worldly power and glory served as a proof of Islam's right cause and theological superiority over other religions. These two gaps create a major cognitive dissonance among Islamists which threaten the foundation of Islamic theology. That is, the need to explain why is God's chosen religion is in such a bad state while the infidels

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schel, "Historiography of Antisemitism Versus Anti-Judaism: A Response to Robert Morgan," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 33, no. 3 (2011): 257–79.

<sup>5</sup> D. Zeidan, "The Islamic Fundamentalist View of Life as a Perennial Battle," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 5, no. 4 (2001), <https://myislam.dk/articles/en/zeidan%20the-islamic-fundamentalist-view-of-life-as-a-perennial-battle.php>.

<sup>6</sup> "Hiwar shamil ma'a qiyadat Hamas," *Filastin al-Muslima*, April 1990.

thrive.<sup>7</sup> Article Nine of the Hamas Charter reflects this predicament vividly, when it states:

The Islamic Resistance Movement found itself at a time when Islam has disappeared from life. Thus rules shook, concepts were upset, values changed and evil people took control, oppression and darkness prevailed, cowards became like tigers: homelands were usurped, people were scattered and were caused to wander all over the world, the state of justice disappeared and the state of falsehood replaced it. Nothing remained in its right place. Thus, when Islam is absent from the arena, everything changes.<sup>8</sup>

Modern antisemitism in Muslim societies predated Zionism, but the most problematic and painful manifestations of the modern Muslim predicament are the emergence of Zionism, the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, and Arab failure to defeat Israel ever since. The predicament is worsened by the belief that Jews carry God's wrath upon them (*al-maghdub 'alayhim*) because they had opposed the Prophet Muhammad and therefore they had been destined by God to be humiliated and dispersed among the nations. For centuries, Jews had been subordinated to Muslims and therefore the modern reality when they prevail over Muslims is particularly painful. Put differently, Israel is a daily reminder of Arab-Muslim failure in the modern era.

The second cause is the quest to return to the spirit and purity of the period of the Prophet Muhammad and for Sunnis also of the following three generations. All religions pay great attention to the past, but with Islamism this phenomenon is stronger, as both Sunnis and Shi'is view the first period of Islamic history as the major if not exclusive frame of reference for understanding and interpreting every historical phenomenon. Thus, for Islamists the conflict of the Prophet Muhammad with the Jews serves as the model that must be reenacted in order to restore history to its proper course. In addition, Muhammad's struggle serves as a source of inspiration and encouragement to his followers. He started his mission as a persecuted prophet but eventually defeated all his enemies and died as the ruler of Arabia. So today, the Muslims may be weaker than their enemies, but they too will be victorious at the end.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the way the Prophet had dealt with the Jews after defeating them, from expulsion to wholesale massacre, serves as model to follow. The resort to the past intensified the literalist, uncritical, and totalistic reading of earlier Is-

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7 B. Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990): 47–60.

8 *The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement*, issued August 18, 1988, accessed February 21, 2020, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).

9 M. Litvak, "The Islamization of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: The Case of Hamas," *Middle Eastern Studies* 34, no. 1 (1988): 157.

lamic history. Such a reading led to the reopening, and the need to settle, various so-called “historical accounts,” which Islam had with other religions and ideologies. This reading revived medieval polemics with non-Muslims, in this case the Jews, and highlighted the sins and evil they had committed against Muslims since the early days of Islam.

The return to the past revived the old image of Judaism as a harsh and excessively restrictive religion as opposed to the more tolerant and humane Islam. Traditional Islamic libel emanating from religious texts has typified the Jews as deceitful, bloodthirsty, hateful, money-loving and conniving, and accused them of falsifying historical and religious legacies, and of extreme hostility toward Muslims.<sup>10</sup> A new theme which appeared in the modern age regarded the Jews as the cause of all the disasters that have befallen upon Arab and Muslim societies, as the driving force behind the present negative image of Islam in the world and of the wars launched by the West against it.<sup>11</sup>

The third cause, to use the words of the Syrian scholar Bassam Tibi, is the clash of universalism, since Islamism like Western civilization has a claim to universality as it explicitly seeks to extend its doctrine throughout the world and establish a new world order. For Islamic fundamentalists the West is evil incarnate because the expansion of the Western civilization has led to the denial of Islam’s universalist claim. Moreover, this clash is a premeditated conspiracy devised by the Jews and crusaders against Islam.<sup>12</sup> Ironically, the Islamists who oppose every aspect of Western culture have no problem whatsoever to borrow anti-Jewish myths and ideas from the same West.

Since Islamists tend to conflate the past and the present, the link between the past and present conflict with the Jews could not be more obvious. In the words of the prominent Saudi cleric Muhammad Saleh al-Munajjid in May 2015:

The Jews today are the Jews of the past. This requires no proof ... and the Prophet Muhammad clarified that our war with them will continue until the end of time.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the Jews employ today the same tactics they had used against the Prophet such as unjustly shedding the blood of the Palestinians, just as they

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**10** H. Ben-Shammai, “Jew-hatred in the Islamic Tradition and the Koranic Exegesis,” in *Antisemitism Through the Ages*, ed. Sh. Almog (Oxford: Pergamon, 1988), 161–69; G. Vajda, “Juifs et musulmans selon le hadith,” *Journal Asiatique* 229 (1937): 57–127.

**11** M. Kramer, “The Jihad Against the Jews,” *Commentary* (October 1994): 38–42.

**12** B. Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

**13** MEMRI TV, Clip No. 5502, issued May 15, 2016, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/saudi-cleric-muhammad-al-munajjid-our-war-jews-plague-history-will-continue-end-time>.

had wrongfully shed the blood of the (biblical) prophets in the past.<sup>14</sup> Another projection of the past to the present, which has become widespread in recent years is the depiction of the Jews as “Brothers of Apes and Pigs,” based on a number of Qur’anic passages that state that some Jews were turned into apes and pigs by God, as a punishment for violating the Sabbath.

## The Jewish Threat to Islam

These practices point to another characteristic of Islamist antisemitism that is psychological projection, where one side attributes to the “other” the harmful or problematic aspects of the self. In the Islamist case it transforms the Jews into active historical enemies who are motivated by hatred against Islam and the Muslims from the inception of Islam to the present. The Jews thus wage a war on Islam on a broad front, ranging from brutal murders through economic investments to cultural raids. According to this narrative, they play a key role in disseminating Islamophobia (*Islam setizi*) all over the world; as one writer explained, wherever there is injustice and oppression against Muslims, there are Jews standing behind it.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, the Shi’i Iranian Khomeini spoke of the Jewish enmity toward Islam from the time of the Prophet Muhammad but charged that in the modern period the Jews and Christians conspired against Islam in order to undermine its most important feature as a comprehensive and total system of law that governs society and state. In addition, the West, consisting of Jewish and Christian elements, resists the righteous cause of Islam to expand to the “four corners of the globe.”<sup>16</sup> On the other end of the Islamist spectrum, Osama bin Laden founder

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14 ‘A. al-‘Aziz al-Rantisi, “Idha malaka al-sahayina quwa qatalu al-abriya li-tahqiq mukhattatihim al-khabith,” in [www.rantisi.net](http://www.rantisi.net).

15 Kramer, “The Jihad Against the Jews”; Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, January 25, 2010, [http://www.terrorisminfo.org.il/malam\\_multimedia/English/eng\\_n/html/iran\\_e048.htm](http://www.terrorisminfo.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_e048.htm) [no longer available]; “Head of Iranian Think-Tank Advising Khamenei: The Jews Want Nuclear Bomb to Kill Muslims and Achieve World Domination,” MEMRI TV, Clip No. 4042, issued February 1, 2013, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/head-iranian-think-tank-advising-khamenei-jews-want-nuclear-bomb-kill-muslims-and-achieve-world>; “Sheikh of Al-Azhar on Jewish-Muslim Animosity: The Jews Started It,” MEMRI TV, Clip No. 6019, issued May 4, 2017, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/sheikh-al-azhar-jewish-muslim-animosity-jews-started-it>.

16 R. Khumayni, *Al-hukuma al-islamiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali’a, 1979), 7; R. Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. and annot. H. Algar (Berkeley: Mizan, 1981), 27, 47.



of al-Qaida spoke about the “Jews and Crusaders,” who were waging a war against Islam.<sup>17</sup>

If the three causes are taken together, the Jews represent in many ways the most problematic, frustrating, and frightening aspects of Western-dominated modernity, that is so harmful to Islam. Thus, the Egyptian cleric ‘Ala Sa‘id in a TV sermon in January 2009 charged that the “Jews are behind the spreading of corruption and calamities worldwide,” and attributed to them the major responsibility for “the bestial tendencies and the lust that are evident in the age of ‘progress,’ ‘enlightenment,’ and ‘development’”:

Who did this, publicized it, supported it, and was behind it? It was Freud the Jew. Homosexuality—may God forgive me—who spread it? It was Jean-Paul [Sartre] the Jew. Who spread atheism in the world? It was Karl Marx, who was also a Jew.<sup>18</sup>

The Saudi Islamist Nabil Hamad pursued the same line of associating the Jews with modernity, particularly the enlightenment, which undermined the foundations of the traditional religious societies of the past, when he explained that the “Zionist-Jewish den of iniquity began operating in the early 18th century. Who was Durkheim? Westerners view him as the father of modern sociology,” he asked and responded,

Durkheim was a Jewish Zionist, who sowed destruction with the information he provided. Who was Darwin, who said that human beings descended from apes? He was one of the founders of Western thought. Who was Freud? He was the founder of modern psychology, and he emphasized sex as the primal impulse in human beings. Who was Nietzsche? He spoke of a blonde, blue-eyed Western “superman.” Who was Sartre? They were all Zionist Jews, except for Nietzsche, who was a Christian Zionist.<sup>19</sup>

Significantly, these statements are almost verbatim quotes from the writings from the early 1950s of Sayyid Qutb, one of founders of modern Islamism, thereby reflecting the continuity of themes of Islamist antisemitism. Needless to say, neither Darwin nor Sartre nor Nietzsche were Jews.

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<sup>17</sup> “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders,” World Islamic Front Statement, <https://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> MEMRI TV, Clip No. 2036, issued January 2, 2009, accessed August 7, 2020, [http://www.memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/2036.htm](http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2036.htm).

<sup>19</sup> MEMRI TV, Clip No. 4302, issued May 15, 2014, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/saudi-scholar-mickey-mouse-sesame-street-characters-part-jewish-plot-destroy-humanity>; S. Qutb, “Ma‘arakatuna ma‘a al-yahud,” cited in S. G. Haim, “Sayyid Qutb,” *Asian and African Studies* 16 (1982): 155–56.

Similarly, reflecting a sense of weakness and vulnerability vis-à-vis modernity, the Saudi cleric Abdullah Ba Neema lamented that “the Jews conspire while we are in a slumber.” He not only attributed many of the most advanced technological inventions associated with modernity to the Jews but described them as a devious weapon which appeals to what the Muslims crave in order to dominate them. Accordingly, “the Jews decided to use TV—that false idol—as a tool [in their schemes],” and he added, “WhatsApp is Jewish, Twitter is Jewish, Facebook is Jewish, Instagram is Jewish, and Snapshot is Jewish. All the social networks are Jewish. All our information is in their hands.” The Jews have used all of these technologies in order to poison the hearts and minds of Muslims, and he concluded, “as a result of WhatsApp and Twitter, women’s honor has been violated, men have divorced women, and men and women have committed adultery.”<sup>20</sup>

## The Prevalence of Conspiracy Theories

Societies in crisis are often attracted to conspiracy theories which reduce complex and incomprehensible reality to seductive patterns of orderliness. They define dangers and bring a welcome rational order to unpleasant and erratic events. They relieve groups or individuals in “stress situations” from the pressure of reality, since they provide an explanation for their suffering. Even more comforting is that they exempt the aggrieved societies from responsibility for their predicament by blaming external forces for their perceived intolerable situation. The central role of the Jews in European conspiracy theories served as a source of inspiration and a “factual basis” for applying conspiracy theories to the Jews and Zionism in the context of the Middle East conflict.<sup>21</sup>

Conspiracy theories are rife in Middle Eastern societies because of the deep crisis they suffer from, their difficulty in coping with the challenges of the modern age. Another possible reason for their popularity is the historical legacy of political domination by military elites, which promoted a culture that discourages political activism and the assumption of personal and collective responsibility

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**20** MEMRI TV, Clip No. 4898, issued May 3, 2015, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/saudi-islamist-preacher-jews-poison-muslims-hearts-and-minds-whatsapp-twitter-and-facebook>.

**21** For an analysis of conspiracy theories as a theme of social psychology, see C. F. Graumann and S. Moscovici, eds. *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy* (London: Springer, 1987). On the role attributed to Jews, see H. Zukier, “The Conspiratorial Imperative: Medieval Jewry in Western Europe,” in *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy*, 87–105.

for the social and economic ills of society and blamed them on others. Not surprisingly the most notorious modern conspiracy theory in modern history, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, has been extremely popular in the Muslim world where 59 editions have been published since the 1920s and are extensively quoted by all Islamist leaders and movements.

Another manifestation of widespread resort to conspiracy theories and the tendency of Arabs and Islamists to absolve their societies of responsibility to their problems has been the attribution of Jewish origins to unpopular political leaders. Islamic tradition in the past traced most religious heresies to Jewish originators, the most famous being ‘Abdullah ibn Saba, who was supposedly responsible for instigating the “Sunni-Shi‘i split.”<sup>22</sup> Modern Islamists go much further. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk had long been held as a Jew thus providing an explanation for the 1924 abolition of the Caliphate. But once the Arab upheaval began in 2011, the conspiracy theories went to greater extremes than ever before. Each camp, whether revolutionary or old regime, has not only accused the other of conspiring with Zionism and the Jews but has actually exposed them as “being Jewish.” Thus, a host of leaders from Gamal Abdel Nasser and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Bashar al-Assad of Syria, the Saudi royal family and even Islamist figures such as Hasan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and Muhammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhab, founder of the puritanical eighteenth-century Wahhabiyya sect, are awarded Jewish ancestry.<sup>23</sup>

The scope of this practice demonstrates two phenomena: the first, which Esther Webman has written about, is the evolution of the Jew into a metaphor for evil. It serves to define non-Jewish adversaries by Judaizing them and attributing to them certain supposed features of Jews, while denouncing them for their actions.<sup>24</sup>

The other point is that such widespread charges are in fact an admission of failure, helplessness, and incompetence of Muslim-Arab societies, if their enemies manage to manipulate and dominate them to such an extent. At the same time, such perceptions absolve the Muslims of any responsibility to their failures by attributing them to foreign machinations. In other words, the Islamist

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22 S. Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 157.

23 <http://www.shabkh.com/view1thread.php?id=5188> [no longer available]; <http://www.ejaaba.com/208390>; <https://www.ejaaba.com/214359>; S. Tadros, “The Sources of Egyptian Anti-Semitism,” *American Interest*, April 21, 2014, <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/04/21/the-sources-of-egyptian-anti-semitism/>.

24 E. Webman, “The ‘Jew’ as a Metaphor for Evil in Arab Public Discourse,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 6, nos. 3–4 (2015): 275–92.

case, like all other types of antisemitism, prevents Muslim society from confronting its own weaknesses and failings by blaming outsiders and preclude the possibility of actually addressing and solving these problems. Jews are the targets of this hatred, but Muslims pay the cost of its negative effect on their society.

The inclination to adopt conspiracy theories produces internal contradictions, which are typical of many antisemitic movements. Thus, Islamists deny Jewish nationalism and they describe the Jews as an amalgam of totally disparate groups with nothing in common among them except their religion. Concurrently, they insist that all Jews throughout the world share the same eternal characteristics and aspirations, and they all strived to attain their goals throughout the centuries under a unified leadership. Similarly, they often deny the Holocaust but justify Hitler's extermination of the Jews as the proper punishment for their sins and crimes.<sup>25</sup>

## Genocide as Divine Punishment

An important theme, which demonstrates the evolution from traditional anti-Judaism to modern conspiratorial antisemitism is the issue of Jewish corruption. The Qur'an and early Islamic traditions charged that the Jews "strive throughout the land [causing] corruption" (5:64) and described it as a major reason for their punishment by God. Modern Islamist antisemitism expands this charge to accuse the Jews of exerting concerted and widespread efforts to corrupt all non-Jewish societies. The ultimate proof of their activities is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which Islamists quote widely. Specifically, the Jews are behind the major corrupt manifestations of modern Western societies, especially the spread of pornography.<sup>26</sup> The obvious conclusion is that the "Jews are the true source of

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<sup>25</sup> For such phenomena, see E. Webman, "The Challenge of Assessing Arab/Islamic Antisemitism," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010): 683; M. Litvak and E. Webman, *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 381.

<sup>26</sup> For a few examples among many, see Muhammad Saleh al-Munajjid, "Ifsad al-yahud fi al-ard," <https://almunajjid.com/speeches/lessons/383>; "Egyptian Cleric Abd Al-Fattah Abu Zayd: The Jews Use Internet Porn To Corrupt The Muslims—As Per 'The Protocols'," MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 5073, issued December 1, 2012, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-cleric-abd-al-fattah-abu-zayd-jews-use-internet-porn-corrupt-muslims-%E2%80%93-protocols>; "Al-Jazeera's Midan Voice Internet Channel: Jews Created And Control The Porn Industry In Order To Pollute American And Christian Values," MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 8344, issued November 1, 2019, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/al-jazeeras-midan-voice-internet-channel-jews-created-and-control-porn-industry-order>; H. Sharab, "al-Fasad fi al-ard wal-simma al-ta'rikhiyya al-yahudiyya," issued February 24, 2011.

the corruption of this world and its ruin,” or according to Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, the grey eminence behind the ultra-conservative faction in Iranian politics “the majority of centers of corruption in the world belong to Jews and Zionists,” and added that “the Jews are the most corrupt in the world. You don’t find such a tribe in any other nation, country or region.”<sup>27</sup>

The charges of spreading corruption on earth and of being the enemies of God carry with them fateful ramifications. In the Iranian penal system, for example, the indictment of spreading corruption on earth carries with it capital punishment of execution.<sup>28</sup> In general Islamic parlance it carries divine punishment as stated by the Qur’an to be meted on the Jews as a whole.

The deserving punishment of the Jews according to numerous Islamist spokesmen is annihilation, making modern Islamism the only mass movement after the Holocaust which openly and unequivocally calls for the elimination of an entire people.

According to this perception, the Jews—by insisting on maintaining the State of Israel and by rejecting the idea of living as a protected minority under Islamic rule are in fact waging a war against Islam and against God. Consequently, they have forfeited their right to exist under the historical Pact of ‘Umar, and their elimination is their only deserving punishment. Their immoral conduct and criminal activities serve as further justification for their annihilation. Some Islamist spokesmen such as the Jordanian Professor of Islamic Jurisprudence Salah Al-Khalidi take comfort that with the establishment of the State of Israel “God brought His filthiest creatures, the Jews” so that the Palestinians can “finish off” the Jews and “rid the world” of them.<sup>29</sup> Islamist calls during Friday sermons for the elimination of the Jews were so prevalent that in 2002 the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments, possibly to stave off foreign criticism after the September 11 attacks, exerted pressure on preachers to put an end to them.<sup>30</sup>

A prominent demonstration of this genocidal approach from the early 1950s to the present is the justification of the Holocaust as a deserving punishment for

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27 S. al-Shawadhfi, *al-Yahud nashatan wa-ta’rikhan* (Cairo: Dar al-Taqwa, n.d.), 5; <http://www.aqsaonline.org/news.aspx?id=4526>; MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 855, issued January 28, 2005; <http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/en/article/18156>.

28 “On Mofsed fel-Arz—Spreading Corruption on Earth,” Iran Press Watch, May 15, 2009, <http://iranpresswatch.org/post/2737/>.

29 MEMRI TV, Clip No. 5260, issued December 29, 2015, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/jordanian-professor-salah-al-khalidi-palestinians-will-rid-world-jews>.

30 “Debate regarding the calls over Mosque Pulpits to Exterminate Jews and Christians,” MEMRI, issued December 31, 2002, [http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=875141\\_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=1421](http://www.memri.org.il/cgi-webaxy/sal/sal.pl?lang=he&ID=875141_memri&act=show&dbid=articles&dataid=1421) [Hebrew; no longer available].

the Jews, which is far more prevalent among Islamists than among writers from other political and ideological camps in the Arab world. Thus, Shaykh Muhammad Jami'a, the representative of al-Azhar University, the highest religious institution in the Muslim world in New York during the September 11 terrorist attack, justified Hitler and argued that had the Americans been aware of the extent of Jewish domination in their country, they would have done to the Jews what Hitler had done in his time.<sup>31</sup>

Alongside the justification of the Holocaust, Islamists accuse the Jews of instigating the outbreak of the Second World War as part of the old Jewish trait to foment wars as a means of enriching themselves. Another unique Islamic motif presented Hitler as a victim of Jewish machinations. This line of argument reflected a deep resentment toward “the West” by presenting the US and not Nazi Germany as the state that had committed the worst atrocities in the war. ‘Abdallah ‘Azzam, a leading ideologue of the radical jihadi-Salafi camp, accused the Jews of declaring an economic war against Hitler and of inciting Britain and France to declare war on Germany under the pretext of defending Poland. Later, the Jews who surrounded President Roosevelt, who had been a Jew too, pushed the US to an imperialist war against Germany.<sup>32</sup>

While most Sunni Islamist movements relegated the messianic elements of Islam to a secondary level, many of them endow eschatological meaning to the elimination of the Jews when they have resorted to the “Promise of the Tree and Stone” tradition (*wa‘d al-shajar wal-hajr*). Accordingly, the Day of Judgment will not come until the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them all. On that day, all the trees and stones would speak and say: “Oh Muslim, oh slave of Allah, there is a Jew behind me. Come and kill him.” According to this tradition, the world must be cleansed from Jews before the coming of the Hour. Historically, this tradition did not hold a central place in Islamic literature and was not regarded as very reliable according to Islamic legal procedures. However, with the rise of modern Islamist antisemitism, it was resurrected and given an important place in the Islamist repertoire throughout the region. Thus, some preachers explain the planting of trees in Israel as an indication that Israel acknowledges

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31 [www.lailatalqadr.com](http://www.lailatalqadr.com), October 4, 2001 [no longer available]; MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 288, issued October 19, 2001. For an elaborate analysis of justification of the Holocaust and the difference between Islamists and others, see Litvak and Webman, *From Empathy to Denial*, 193–214.

32 ‘A. ‘Azzam, “Tujjar al-hurub,” [www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77](http://www.tawhed.ws/a?i=77) [no longer available].

the validity of this tradition and prepares the trees for the Jews to hide behind them when the Muslims would come to annihilate them.<sup>33</sup>

The anti-Jewish element has entered the Shi'i eschatological literature as well since the beginning of the twenty-first century, where heretofore it had played an insignificant role. Accordingly, the supposed Jewish animosity against Shi'ism culminates in their efforts to prevent the future apparition (*zuhur*) of the Twelfth Imam as the Mahdi (Messiah), who will redeem the Shi'is.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Nouri-Hamedani concluded that "one should fight the Jews and vanquish them so that the conditions for the advent of the Hidden Imam are met."<sup>35</sup> The Mahdi, according to this new approach, will fight the Jews and defeat them and will severely punish them for their corruption, with some writers predicting that he would annihilate them and "purify the world from the filth of their existence."<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the issue of reception of Islamist antisemitism among ordinary Muslims deserves attention. Studies of intellectual history or public discourse in the Middle East face a serious methodological problem of ascertaining reception due to the difficulty of acquiring data on public opinion particularly among the "silent classes." Yet, various indicators do exist. According to Pew research surveys carried out in 2005 and 2011, "anti-Jewish sentiment" is endemic in the Muslim world.<sup>37</sup> The authors of the 2011 PEW report concluded that "one can-

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**33** For numerous references of this tradition by Islamist preachers, see "Antisemitic Hadith: 'The Prophecy of The Rock And The Tree'," MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 7587, issued July 25, 2018, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/antisemitic-hadith-prophecy-rock-and-tree-%E2%80%93-memri-clips-and-reports>.

**34** "Du'ay-e Ayat Allah Qarahi baraye na-budi masihiyat va-yahudiyat," August 22, 2016, <http://ashnaie.com/6318/>; "Khamenei Associate Mehdi Taeb," MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 6759. Some writers describe the Zionists as actively working against the Mahdi and seeking to undermine Shi'i belief in him, see R. Zamani Musavi, "Iqdamat va-barnamaha-ye sahyunism dar taqabol amuzeh-ye mahdaviyat dar howzeh-ye farhang," <http://www.mahdi313.com/index.php?pg=articles&id=1634>.

**35** A. Nouri-Hamedani, "Fight the Jews and Vanquish Them so as to Hasten the Coming of the 'Hidden Imam'," MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 897, issued April 22, 2005, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/ayatollah-nouri-hamedani-%E2%80%98fight-jews-and-vanquish-them-so-hasten-coming-hidden-imam%E2%80%99>.

**36** "Nabudi-ye qawm-e yahud dar douran-e akhar al-zaman," January 13, 2009, <http://www.shia-news.com/fa/news/11981>; A. 'Ali Kurani, *Asr al-zuhur* (Qom: mu'assasat al-ma'arif al-Islamiyya, 2006), 23–24; A. Reza, *Asrar Yahud va-akhar-e zaman* (electronic edition, no publisher, 2018), 669.

**37** "Support for Terror Wanes Among Muslim Publics," Pew Global Attitudes Project, July 14, 2005, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2005/07/14/islamic-extremism-common-concern-for-muslim-and-western-publics/>.

not understand mass politics in the Arab world without admitting the role of antisemitism.”<sup>38</sup> While the exact figures which these studies bring may be imprecise, the scale of this phenomenon can hardly be disputed.

Islamist antisemitism enjoys wide reception because it draws its themes from the deeply rooted religious tradition of Islam, thereby making it difficult to challenge its claims. The situation of conflict with Israel and continued crisis of Muslim societies ensure its continued popularity because it responds to deep psychological and political needs of large segments of society. It stems from deep conviction and is therefore regarded as more credible and immune from manipulations as might be the case of government-sponsored antisemitism. It occupies a central place in the overall ideology of the Islamist movements, and therefore refuting it requires the challenging of the overall Islamist ideology, and it is disseminated by broad based political and social movements in a wide variety of media. Put differently, Islamist antisemitism is a grassroots phenomenon rather than a state ideology that comes from above, and as such it is likely to remain with us for quite a few years in the future.

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<sup>38</sup> Cited in E. Webman, “Arab Antisemitic Discourse: Importation, Internalisation, and Recycling,” in *The Medieval Roots of Antisemitism: Continuities and Discontinuities from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. J. Adams and C. Hess (New York: Routledge, 2018), 161–80.



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Stephan Grigat

# Antisemitic Anti-Zionism: Muslim Brotherhood, Iran, and Hezbollah

As a preacher on *Al Jazeera* and head of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, Yusuf al-Qaradawi is one of Sunni Islam's most influential intellectuals. Al-Qaradawi has gone beyond denying the Holocaust to presenting it as an example to be followed: according to him, Hitler was the "ultimate punishment" for the Jews, inflicted on them by Allah for their depravity. In the future, he believes, the Muslims must take on the task. In 2009, he stated that, "God willing, the next time this punishment will be inflicted by the hand of the Faithful."<sup>1</sup> The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in which Al-Qaradawi has his roots shaped all the later currents of radical Islam, including the Iranian regime and Hezbollah. While these latter are, of course, in some respects in competition with Brotherhood groups and parties, they can also cooperate with them, especially when it comes to fighting Israel and with respect to a shared hostility to the rulers of Saudi Arabia,<sup>2</sup> considered by some supporters of the Iranian regime to be descendants of Jews.

The prototypical Islamist organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, was founded in 1928, in the same period as the rise of the fascist mass organizations in Europe. It also drew inspiration from the writings of the Iranian Islamists of the nineteenth century. The Nazis actively supported the establishment of the Brotherhood materially and ideologically. After 1945, it became the "biggest antisemitic organization in the world," with around a million members.<sup>3</sup> The rapid rise in its membership at the beginning of the 1930s—like the support for European fascism and Nazism but in a different religious context—resulted from a massive and delusional projective reaction to the crisis-ridden onslaught of capitalist modernity. This reaction against the ambivalences and emancipatory potential of modernity was also one of the main grounds for the mass support of Khomeini from the 1960s onwards in Iran.

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1 J. Cáceres, "'An den Teufel verkauft,'" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 22, 2010, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/sport/neuer-sponsor-beim-fc-barcelona-an-den-teufel-verkauft-1.1039090-0#seite-2>.

2 See J. Risen, "A Secret Summit. Iran's Quds Force and the Muslim Brotherhood Considered an Alliance Against Saudi Arabia," *The Intercept*, November 18, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/11/18/iran-muslim-brotherhood-quds-force/>.

3 M. Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten: Wie der islamische Antisemitismus entstand* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019), 120.

While the political programme of the Muslim Brotherhood was legitimated by reference to the religious texts of Islam, resulting in clear differences from fascism and Nazism in spheres such as sexual morality and gender politics, it closely resembled and still closely resembles the radical right in Europe in crucial politico-economic respects: rejection of parliamentarianism and multi-party democracy, the struggle against liberalism and Marxism, demonization of interest and proclamation of a community of interest between capital and labour, which has to be defended against the allegedly destructive forces of an abstraction identified as Jewish.

In their advocacy of sacrifice, their death cult and their antisemitism, texts such as *Industry of Death*, issued by the Brotherhood's founder Hassan al-Banna in 1938, or Sayyid Qutb's 1950 tract, *Our Struggle with the Jews*, recall Nazism, despite their Islamic orientation. And these were and are not the pamphlets of isolated cranks but have been and are still being disseminated in millions of copies in some Islamic countries. Before the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Sayyid Qutb's writings were translated into Farsi by Iran's current Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and continue to form one of the central ideological reference points of the Iranian Islamists.<sup>4</sup>

Just like the Nazis, even if less successfully, the Sunni jihadists and Iranian Islamists are concerned not only with the enlistment of a people for the purposes of exploitation and domination but with the formation of a society of martyrs, in which individuals sacrifice themselves for the *umma*, the community of all Muslims.

Despite all the real and significant differences in historic context, legitimating references, economic and political structures and military capability, the hate objects of the Islamic Jihadists resemble those of Nazism: communism and materialism, liberalism and Western "plutocracy," individualism, emancipation, and Zionism.

After 1946, Hassan al-Banna showered praise on Amin el-Husseini, the rabidly antisemitic Mufti of Jerusalem, who had collaborated with the Nazis and resided in Berlin after 1941. He managed to evade prosecution by the Allies after the Second World War by fleeing to Cairo, where, in 1946, al-Banna, today still a revered figure, declared of him:

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<sup>4</sup> See Y. Ünal, "Sayyid Qutb in Iran: Translating the Islamist Ideologue in the Islamic Republic," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016): 35–60.

What a hero, what a miracle of a man [...] who defied an empire with the help of Hitler and Germany and fought against Zionism. Germany and Hitler are no more, but Amin Al-Husseini will pursue the struggle.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, the German-Egyptian writer Hamed Abdel-Samad has brought the term “Islamic fascism” back into the discussion,<sup>6</sup> emphasizing the links between Islamism in general and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular with fascism and Nazism, albeit on the basis of a dubious religious exegesis rather than an ideological-critical understanding of antisemitism in which modern Islamic Jew-hatred is decoded as a projective repudiation of a new, ambivalent and potentially emancipatory form of society: as a form of modern anti-modernism. Moreover, the specific quality of the Islamic antisemitism characteristic of the Brotherhood and Iranian regime needs to be emphasized, since “only here do we find the degrading anti-Judaism of early Islam fused with modern conspiracy-theorizing antisemitism.”<sup>7</sup>

Today, use of the term Islamic fascism excites kneejerk reactions, particularly in parts of the Left. However, it is virtually unavoidable when it comes to dealing with authoritarian antisemitic mass movements with a leader cult and martyrdom ideology, that wage permanent campaigns against groups deemed threatening to the unity of the *umma*, use unrestrained brute force against political opponents, and advocate a “third way” between capitalism and socialism, East and West.

A more serious question is whether the fixation on the term fascism does not tend to underplay the antisemitic dimension, since the centrality of antisemitism in all variants of the Islamist discourse make it far closer to Nazism, despite all the differences in other spheres, than to classical fascism of the Italian variety. This centrality is especially clear in the case of the Islamist ideology of the regime that has ruled Iran since 1979 and its allies such as Hezbollah, which today present one of the main threats to Israel.

## The Government of the Gangs and Antisemitism

Three main points need to be addressed in relation to the Iranian regime’s antisemitism: firstly, the traditional Jew-hatred that is especially apparent in, but

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5 J. Herf, “Hitlers Dschihad. Nationalsozialistische Rundfunkpropaganda für Nordafrika und den Nahen Osten,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 58, no. 2 (2010): 285.

6 H. Abdel-Samad, *Der islamische Faschismus: Eine Analyse* (Munich: Droemer, 2014).

7 Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten*, 34.

not confined to its founder, Khomeini, who is still revered by the regime's supporters; secondly, the denial and relativization of the Holocaust; thirdly, the explicit threats to destroy Israel and the regional policies that result from it. While all these aspects are present at all stages of the history of the Islamic Republic, at certain times particular ones have come to the forefront.

Explicit Jew-hatred is especially marked in Khomeini's pre-revolutionary writings, but even after 1979 it continually breaks through and today determines, alongside traditional Islamic laws, discriminatory practices against Iran's Jewish minority. Verbal attacks on Israel and the support for anti-Israel terrorist groups have been a constant feature of the Iranian regime's ideology and practice and have been voiced and translated into action since 1979 by all factions of the regime. Hatred of the Jewish state is one of the core elements of the Islamist ideology and is by no means only a "means to an end."<sup>8</sup> The heyday of Holocaust denial came during the presidency of Ahmadinejad, who placed it at the centre of his policy and rhetoric, but both his predecessors, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammed Khatami, were also Holocaust deniers, as is the current Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei. Since 2013, the current president and his foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, have toned down the Holocaust denial somewhat, but even under Hassan Rouhani, Iranian official bodies have been involved in Holocaust denial events.

The relativization of Nazi crimes has been promoted by the Rouhani administration itself—an example being Zarif's statement that, "we condemn the Nazis' massacre of the Jews. And we also condemn the massacres of Palestinians committed by the Zionists."<sup>9</sup> Here he not only downgrades the Shoah to a massacre but also declares the Israelis to be the Nazis of today. Many international observers chose to interpret this statement as a clear break with Holocaust denial. In fact, it represents a modernization of antisemitism by adapting it to international anti-Israel custom and practice.

Finally, it must be remembered that the official line on such matters is set not by the president or foreign minister but by the clerical supreme leader whose powers include the right of appointment to over one hundred leading positions in the political, judicial, administrative, military, media, and religious in-

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<sup>8</sup> G. Schweizer, *Iran verstehen: Geschichte, Gesellschaft und Religion* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2017), 613.

<sup>9</sup> "Irans Außenminister verurteilt 'Massaker an Juden,'" *Der Standard*, September 6, 2013, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/1378248269034/ashton-trifft-iranischen-aussenminister-ende-september>.

stitutions.<sup>10</sup> “Holocaust denial is the official position of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and no Iranian official can do anything against it.”<sup>11</sup>

The Iranian regime was quick to condemn the clearly antisemitic attack by a competing Islamist faction on 9/11,<sup>12</sup> despite the instances of technical cooperation with Al Qaeda.<sup>13</sup> This reinforced the already evident tendency of the Western media and experts to downplay and relativize the antisemitic and state-terrorist character of the Iranian regime.<sup>14</sup>

Then, a few years later, during the Presidency of Mahmud Ahmadinejad after 2005, the strident rhetoric of this former Revolutionary Guards officer brought the regime’s Holocaust denial and threats to annihilate Israel to the attention of a wider global public. However, both before, during, and after that presidency, the Iranian regime of Ayatollahs and Revolutionary Guards has throughout remained a religiously legitimated dictatorship characterized by an interplay of state and “revolutionary” institutions, with an ideology that is both antisemitic and anti-Western and state-terrorist and martyrdom-orientated.

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 Shiite 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>15</sup> *Vilayat-e Faqih*, the “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

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10 See M. Boroujerdi and K. Rahimkhani, *Postrevolutionary Iran: A Political Handbook* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2018), 46–49.

11 M. Mohammadi, *Iranian Holocaust Cartoon Competitions and Exhibitions: Goals, Sponsors, and Themes* (Washington: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2016), 12.

12 H. Hartenstein, *Deutsche Außenpolitik gegenüber Amerika nach 9/11: Eine kontrafaktische Außenpolitikanalyse* (Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2015), 95.

13 J. I. Lieberman, “Remember Iran’s Role in 9/11,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 7, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/remember-irans-role-in-9-11-1473290470>.

14 See S. Grigat, “Delegitimizing Israel in Germany and Austria: Past Politics, the Iranian Threat, and Post-national Anti-Zionism,” in *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, ed. A. H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 463–68.

15 See Y. Özuguz, ed., *Verfassung der Islamischen Republik Iran: Erläuterte Übersetzung* (Bremen: m-haditec, 2007), 5.

of the writings of the regime's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, is quite enough.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Ali Khamenei, who has described Israel as a “cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut,”<sup>17</sup> has also made clear statements in this respect.<sup>18</sup>

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 of the Iranian regime, 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 in 2013, it has once again become operational. One expression of this restoration has been the composition of Rouhani's first 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 to 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>19</sup> were not represented in Rouhani's first cabinet. However, the fact that Khamenei has appointed Ahmadinejad a member of the influential Expediency Council shows that even this faction,

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**16** See R. Chomeini, “Reden des Ayatollah Chomeini und Staatspräsidenten Bani Sadr,” in *Teheran: Eine Revolution wird hingerichtet: Dokumente und Reportagen aus DIE ZEIT*, ed. M. Naumann and J. Joffe (Hamburg: Heyne, 1980), 242.

**17** “Iranian MP Lauds Hezbollah's Anti-Israel Stance,” Fars News, May 20, 2012, available at <https://english.khabaronline.ir/news/185076/Senior-Iranian-MP-Lauds-Hezbollah-s-Anti-Israel-Stance>.

**18** See A. Khamenei, “Grundzüge der islamischen Ideologie dargestellt in zehn Punkten,” in *Der islamische Fundamentalismus: Grundzüge der islamischen Ideologie im Iran*, ed. M. Djassemi (Sylt: Djassemi 2001), 17.

**19** Quoted by M. Litvak, “Anti-Semitism in Iran: Continuities and Changes,” issued 2010, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://haitiholocaustsurvivors.wordpress.com/anti-semitism/yale-anti-semitism-conference-papers/anti-semitism-in-iran-continuities-and-changes-by-meir-litvak-2/>.

which stands for an especially radical interpretation of the Mahdi doctrine, continues to play a role. This still holds true after Ahmadinejad was disqualified from the presidential race in 2017 by the Guardian Council. In October 2019, during the second term of President Rouhani, Iranian cleric Ebad Mohammadtabar declared, “God willing, when the Hidden Imam arrives, all us Muslims will, under his leadership, confront the biggest enemy of Islam—the Jews. According to a Quranic verse, the Jews are the greatest enemy of Islam.”<sup>20</sup>

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. Since 2013, the various factions must 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.

Khamenei himself was clearly determined to reign 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 anymore and whether the theocracy might turn into an open military dictatorship. As a result, there were only three Pasdaran ministers in Rouhani’s first government whereas over half of the members of Ahmadinejad’s first cabinet were recruited from either 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 centres, in this case toward the traditional security apparatus, which is in competition with the Pasdaran, and in particular in favour of the VEVAK security service, which was more strongly represented in Rouhani’s first government than in any since 1979.<sup>21</sup>

The Iranian regime’s aggressive foreign policy, which is characterized simultaneously by pragmatism and a mania for annihilation, corresponds domestically with a social form of organization that is characterized by the rule of competing gangs or “rackets.” Drawing on Max Horkheimer’s theory of a racket and Franz Neumann’s study *Behemoth*, Gerhard Scheit analyzed the Islamic Republic

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**20** “Iranian Cleric Ebad Mohammadtabar: When the Hidden Imam Arrives, The Whole World Will Convert to Islam or Die; We Will Confront, Defeat the Jews, Zionism,” MEMRI TV, Clip no. 7517, issued October 7, 2019, accessed August 07, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/iranian-cleric-mohammadtabar-hidden-imam-jews-world-convert-defeat-confront-zionism>.

**21** See A. Alfoneh, “President Rouhani’s Cabinet: MOIS vs. IRGC?” *FDD Policy Brief*, August 7, 2013, <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/media-hit/president-rouhanis-cabinet-mois-vs-irgc/>.



as a “non-state.” According to his analysis, the Islamist revolution of 1979 represents

the opposite of the bourgeois revolution, which triumphed in France. Both revolutions lifted the state’s monopoly on the use of force and replaced it with the power of terrorist groups. However, in one case, the terror results in the rule of law that is guaranteed for the sake of capital’s realization by a new monopoly on violence. And in the other case, terror continues undiminished in the different forms of Sharia and sees itself shielded by the name of Allah and oil revenues.<sup>22</sup>

Since Khomeini’s accession, the Iranian regime has been characterized by a rivalry of rackets hostile to each other while the supreme religious leader reigns above all. In this way, the whole Iranian constitution cannot be understood as a form of bourgeois law:

The complex structure of the constitution is merely there to provide room for the disparate activities of these rackets, who declaredly prefer the state of emergency.<sup>23</sup>

Since 1979, parallel to the state’s organs, additional institutions have been formed in Iran. The influence of the regular courts of justice is restricted through the existence of numerous special courts. Beyond those military tribunals that are common in other countries, there exist so-called “Revolutionary Courts,” the “Court for the Justice of Bureaucracy,” the “Special Court for the Clergy,” and “Press Courts.” Besides the national army, the *Pasdaran* has been established as an alternative revolutionary military force, which today is one of the most influential and probably the most dangerous racket within the regime’s power structure. The Revolutionary Guards not only represent the regime’s military elite unit but also one of the most important economic conglomerates in Iran, which provides its members with economic and social gains. For several years now, the *Pasdaran* have used their military power to gain control of crucial branches of Iran’s economy, particularly in the realm of foreign trade.

Similar to German National Socialism but in a different way, the Islamic “non-state” of Iran is capitalist and anti-capitalist at the same time:

Its position on ownership of the means of production is different in the respect that in the form of an industrialized mode of production this kind of ownership only exists to a min-

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<sup>22</sup> G. Scheit, “Der neue Vernichtungswahn und seine internationalen Voraussetzungen: Wodurch sich Ahmadinejads Islamische Republik von Hitlerdeutschland unterscheidet,” in *Der Iran: Analyse einer islamischen Diktatur und ihrer europäischen Förderer*, ed. S. Grigat and S. D. Hartmann (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2008), 60.

<sup>23</sup> Scheit, “Der neue Vernichtungswahn,” 63.

imal extent. Universal law and contract have disappeared here as well, replaced by the rackets' arbitrary course of actions.<sup>24</sup>

A central difference to National Socialism, however, is its position on labour. The affiliation with the Islamist collective, different from Nazi Germany, has almost nothing to do with labour as a commodity:

In such a collective, even somebody, who does not have any prospect for a job, can feel useful and not superfluous, even when he does not expect the *umma* to provide him with one. Everything beyond the racket system that threatens and exposes the individual to superfluousness, the individual projects on a total enemy, the *Gegen-Volk* ("counter-nation").<sup>25</sup>

These projections culminate in a suicidal desire for annihilation that concentrates on the State of Israel, that includes self-sacrifice, and that is virtually invoked by the Iranian Islamists' ideology of martyrdom.

## Traditional Antisemitism in Iran

In the latter part of the 1930s, the future revolutionary leader Khomeini was a regular listener to the National Socialist shortwave radio station, Radio Zeesen, which disseminated antisemitic Nazi propaganda in the Middle East.<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that Khomeini identified totally with Hitler's ideology, about which he is said sometimes to have made disparaging remarks.<sup>27</sup> Other religious notables, such as Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Kashani, among whose pupils Khomeini must be reckoned, and who in the 1940s was interned in Iran because of his "pro-fascist" attitude,<sup>28</sup> however, took an explicitly positive stance toward Nazism. In relation to antisemitism, the current Iranian regime is a classic example of the continued impact of Nazism after its military defeat.

Khomeini's ideology was not directed solely against the Israeli state, but, particularly pre-1979, was open about its antagonism to the Jews. In this respect, the future revolutionary leader could draw on the tradition of nineteenth-century

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<sup>24</sup> Scheit, "Der neue Vernichtungswahn," 68.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>26</sup> See Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten*, 108.

<sup>27</sup> D. Motadel, *Für Prophet und Führer: Die Islamische Welt und das Dritte Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2017), 136.

<sup>28</sup> H.-G. Ebert, H. Fürtig, and H.-G. Müller, *Die islamische Republik Iran: Historische Herkunft—ökonomische Grundlagen—staatsrechtlich Struktur* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987), 42.

Persian-Islamic antisemitism.<sup>29</sup> On several occasions, Khomeini attacked his main political target, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, as a “Jew” who took his orders from Israel.<sup>30</sup> The linkage of his fantasies about a “Jewish world-state” that had to be fought, through which he projected his own megalomania onto its prospective Jewish victims, with traditional anti-Jewish attitudes, is a classic example of the fusion of Islamic anti-Judaism and modern antisemitism that characterizes Islamic antisemitism.<sup>31</sup>

The continuing presence of Jewish communities in Iran is often used to call into question the antisemitic character of the regime. It is indeed true that at present Jews in Iran are not persecuted to the same extent as other religious minorities such as the Baha’i that are not recognized as “religions of the book.” However, this argument overlooks the fact that Iran’s Jews do not enjoy equal civil rights. The Jewish minority faces systematic discrimination and is obliged constantly to distance itself from Israel. Even authors who otherwise downplay Khomeini’s explicitly anti-Jewish statements as “polemic” admit that Jews are considered *dhimmis*, who are subject to many special rules and restrictions and have to accept Islamic domination.<sup>32</sup> Jews—like most of the other “recognized” minorities—cannot be, for example, ministers, judges, or teachers in regular schools.<sup>33</sup> All the recognized minorities are subject to discriminatory rules, for example, regarding inheritance, giving evidence in court, and in the operation of the “blood money” system—the financial compensation paid to the family of someone who has been killed or to the victim who has been injured through negligence—which discriminates between Muslims and non-Muslims and between men and women.<sup>34</sup> In the circumstances, it is not surprising that about

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29 See R. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 830–37, and N. Weinstock, *Der zerrissene Faden: Wie die arabische Welt ihre Juden verlor: 1947–1967* (Freiburg: ça ira, 2019), 52–70.

30 M. Küntzel, “Tehran’s Efforts to Mobilize Antisemitism: The Global Impact,” in *Deciphering the New Antisemitism*, ed. A. H. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 509.

31 See Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten*, 108.

32 K. Amirpur, “Licht und Schatten. Antisemitismus im Iran,” in *Neuer Antisemitismus? Fortsetzung einer globalen Debatte*, ed. C. Heilbronn, D. Rabinovici, and N. Sznajder (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2019), 229.

33 See H. Fürtig, *Großmacht Iran: Der Gottesstaat wird Global Player* (Cologne: Quadriga, 2016), 157.

34 See W. Posch, “Juden im Iran: Anmerkungen zu einem antizionistischen Brief an Mahmoud Ahmadinejad: Teil I,” *David: Jüdische Kulturzeitschrift* 83 (2010): 30.

90 percent of the estimated 100–150,000 Jews who lived in the country before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 have since departed.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the fact that, since the revolution, Khomeini, Khamenei, and other leading figures in the regime have publicly stated on several occasions that their policy and ideology is not directed against Jews, as long as they distance themselves from Zionism and accept Islamic rule, there have also been explicitly anti-Jewish statements from by no means marginal figures that pay no heed to this rhetorical distinction. It is common to find the terms Jew and Zionist or Jewry and Zionism used interchangeably in Iranian official propaganda.<sup>36</sup>

## Holocaust Denial Competitions, Conferences, and Films

The first international competition for “Holocaust cartoons” took place in 2005 shortly after Ahmadinejad became President. The competition, in which “artists” from sixty-three countries took part, was organized by the Hamshahri Institute, which produces the popular magazine of the same name on behalf of the Tehran city authorities. A selection from the almost 1,200 entries went on public display in August 2006.

In December 2006, under the title, “Review of the Holocaust: Global Vision,” the most representative Holocaust denial conference to date took place in Iran, organized by the Institute for Political and International Studies, which is attached to the Iranian Foreign Ministry. It was opened by the Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, and President Ahmadinejad attended the closing ceremony.

The event brought together the *Who’s Who* of the international Holocaust denial scene. Among those present were the former head of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke, Bradley Smith from the “Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust,” the German-Australian right-wing extremist Frederick Toeben, Georges Theil and Robert Faurisson from France, and Herbert Schaller and Wolfgang Fröhlich from Austria. In the years following this conference, the Iranian official

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<sup>35</sup> See R. Hakakian, “Juden im Iran und die iranische Linke. Persönliche Reflexionen, die notgedrungen politisch sind,” in *Iran—Israel—Deutschland: Antisemitismus, Außenhandel und Atomprogramm*, ed. S. Grigat (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2017), 149.

<sup>36</sup> See R. Jaspal, “Delegitimizing Jews and Israel in Iran’s International Holocaust Cartoon Contest,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 13, no. 2 (2014): 168.

media played a crucial role in the discussions among and networking within the international Holocaust denial movement.<sup>37</sup>

In 2012 the Iranian regime stepped up its antisemitic agitation when, on April 19, the Israeli day of commemoration of the Shoah, the state broadcaster showed ten animated films that denied the Holocaust in a form otherwise found only among declared old and neo-Nazis. All the animations are based on the book *Holocartoons*, illustrated by Maziar Bijani and written by Omid Meh-dinejad, which was presented by the Iranian Minister of Education, Alireza Ali Ahmadi, in 2008 and was in subsequent years globally disseminated over the internet in several languages. To get an impression of the nauseating character of this explicitly antisemitic effort, it is sufficient to describe the opening scene, which appears in all ten of the films:

We see a Nazi—recognizable from the swastika on his armband—holding a large spray can with “gas” written on it. He activates it. As soon as the screen is totally obscured by the gas, a hook-nosed worm, giggling loudly and marked as Jewish by a kippah, appears and eagerly sucks in the Nazi gas with relish. Finally, he loudly belches out two little clouds of gas that form the word “Holocaust.”

The episodes that follow this introduction are on the same level:

One of the films concerns a strange steel contraption displaying the words “gas chamber.” The same ten Jews enter from the front and exit from the back of the chamber, while a meter counts the number of through-passages and at the number “six million” rings loudly. Then the ten Jews fall laughing hysterically into one another’s arms, having perfectly simulated the murder of six million, although not a single one has died.<sup>38</sup>

Matthias Küntzel notes that these films reveal the global significance of the Iranian regime’s Holocaust denial: the use of animation in itself indicates that they are aimed at a global audience. Whatever speech and text there is, is in English. And indeed these pieces were disseminated worldwide, including on YouTube.

In 2014—after Rouhani had become President—the Iranian regime once again provided a platform in Tehran for the international community of conspiracy theorists and antisemites with the “2nd New Horizon Conference of Independent Thinkers.” This time, alongside the traditional Holocaust deniers, the

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37 H. Schiedel, “Heiliger Hass: Zur rechtsextrem-iranischen Freundschaft,” in *Iran im Weltsystem: Bündnisse des Regimes und Perspektiven der Freiheitsbewegung*, ed. S. Grigat and S. D. Hartmann (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2010), 168.

38 M. Küntzel, “Iranische Holocaust-Leugnung und das Internet,” *Tribüne: Zeitschrift zum Verständnis des Judentums* 202, no. 51 (2012): 151.

bulk of the guests were “9/11 Truthers.” The left-liberal Israeli daily *Haaretz* has described the New Horizon conferences as networking meetings for

Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Russian imperialists, Ukrainian fascists, Chinese spies, Qaddafi devotees, Corbyn fans, Assad apologists, neo-Nazis, Trump devotees, French Holocaust deniers, Western anti-war feminists, African American separatists, Venezuelan socialists and anti-Semites of every conceivable form and type.<sup>39</sup>

In 2015, the second international Holocaust cartoons competition took place under the auspices of the Iran House of Cartoon and the Sarcheshmeh Cultural Complex with participants from over fifty countries. In May 2016 a selection of cartoons went on show at the 11th International Cartoon Biennial and in the Palestine Contemporary Art Museum in Tehran.

In the West, Foreign Minister Zarif claimed that such events were organized by bodies without ties to the state. According to Majid Mohammadi, however, there is no doubt about the responsibility of Rouhani’s government for the Holocaust cartoon contest and similar events:

The expenses of these activities are totally paid by governmental institutions, whether military, cultural, municipal, or religious. These institutions, their pseudo branches, and seemingly private affiliates [...] may have misleading titles, but they are all organized, financed, and managed under the Supreme Guide’s office, his appointed bodies, and the executive branch headed by the President.<sup>40</sup>

On *leader.ir*, Khamenei’s official English-language website, it has continued to be possible, under Rouhani’s Presidency, to read about the “myth” of the Holocaust. Moreover, other prominent figures in the regime have repeatedly spoken in the same vein. Thus Rafsanjani declared on Iranian state radio that his personal research had led him to the conclusion that Hitler murdered no more than 20,000 Jews.<sup>41</sup> The former President, who, until his death in 2017 was Chairman of the influential Expediency Council, stated, during a visit by the Minister-President of Lower Saxony, Stephan Weil, that before the Second World War, the Zionists had destabilized Europe with money and media. Germany had wished to take re-

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<sup>39</sup> A. Reid Ross, “The anti-Semitism Fest Where Russian Spies, Code Pink, David Duke and the Nation of Islam Make Friends and Influence People,” *Haaretz*, March 14, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/world-news/.premium-russia-s-role-in-an-anti-semitism-fest-for-fascists-feminists-spies-and-neo-nazi-1.7003563>.

<sup>40</sup> Mohammadi, *Iranian Holocaust Cartoon Competitions*, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Anti Defamation League, *Holocaust Denial in the Middle East: The Latest Anti-Israel Propaganda Theme* (New York: ADL, 2001), 8.

venge and “send these people to Palestine,” leading to the establishment of the State of Israel. In contrast to his earlier statements, in this case Rafsanjani was ready to admit to at least the possibility that six million Jews might have died in the war. However, according to him, this was nothing in comparison with his delusional claim of twenty million deaths and eight million refugees after the foundation of Israel.<sup>42</sup> His successor, Khatami, meanwhile, who to this day is often presented as the model of a “reformist Islamist,” became one of the most passionate defenders of the French Holocaust denier, Roger Garaudy and arranged for him to have an audience with Khamenei.<sup>43</sup> At the end of 2019, Khamenei on Twitter praised Garaudy’s “bravery and tirelessness.”<sup>44</sup>

In an interview on CNN in 2013, when asked a direct question about the Holocaust, Rouhani answered that he was a politician and not a historian and could not therefore say anything about the “dimensions of historical events.” In May 2019, Mostafa Pourmohammadi, Interior Minister under Ahmadinejad, then Justice Minister in Rouhani’s first cabinet and now an advisor to the Head of the Iranian judiciary, aggressively challenged the reality of the “so-called Holocaust,” declaring, that, “if we are fighting the Jews—Zionism—then we are fighting the contemporary invasive civilization of arrogance.”<sup>45</sup>

Majid Mohammadi succinctly summarizes the different approaches to Holocaust denial of the Iranian regime’s various factions—which differ not about the basic aims of the Islamic Republic but how to achieve them:

The only difference between the reformists [...] and nonreformists [...] is their tactics: reformists believe that denying the Holocaust is not a priority [...], while the nonreformists believe that hatred against Israel and Jews will increase the Islamic Republic’s influence in the region. They believe that exhibitions of Holocaust cartoons help the Islamic Republic to promote its objectives and strategies to be a force in global issues.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> A. Will, “Iran-Besuch von Stephan Weil. Herzlicher Empfang mit abruptem Ende,” NWZ Online, April 18, 2016, [http://mobil.nwzonline.de/politik/niedersachsen/herzlicher-empfang-mit-abruptem-ende\\_a\\_6,1,2390575300.html](http://mobil.nwzonline.de/politik/niedersachsen/herzlicher-empfang-mit-abruptem-ende_a_6,1,2390575300.html).

<sup>43</sup> D. Menashri, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 279.

<sup>44</sup> Sayyid Ali Khamenei (@khamenei\_ir), “Bravery and tirelessness of Roger #Garaudy in the work he initiated is praiseworthy,” Twitter, December 16, 2019, [https://twitter.com/khamenei\\_ir/status/1206615232451403777](https://twitter.com/khamenei_ir/status/1206615232451403777).

<sup>45</sup> “Kerman Friday Sermon By Former Iranian Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi: Narrative Of ‘So-Called Holocaust’ Should Be Researched; The Jews, Zionism Constitute An Invasive Civilization Of Arrogance,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch no. 8253, August 29, 2019, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/kerman-friday-sermon-former-iranian-minister-mostafa-pourmohammadi-narrative-so-called>.

<sup>46</sup> Mohammadi, *Holocaust*, 13.

## Threats to Destroy Israel

The purpose of the Iranian regime's Holocaust denial and relativization is, firstly, the retrospective delegitimation of the foundation of Israel and, secondly, the prospective legitimization of its destruction. In Iran, the relativization and denial of Nazi crimes serve the regime's eliminatory anti-Zionism.<sup>47</sup>

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. In early 2018, during his second term, the Iranian regime issued an invitation to the "First International Hourglass Festival," whose website *israelhourglass.com* attacks the "fake regime" named Israel. The Festival's symbol was a Star of David dissolving through an hourglass. The Festival organizer, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, is an aide to the President of the Iranian pseudo-Parliament, Ali Larijani, and General Secretary of the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Intifada. He served as a Deputy Foreign Minister under both Ahmadinejad and Rouhani.

For several months, submissions were accepted that illustrated the hoped-for end of Israel in the next twenty-five years and the malicious, "bestial" and "inhuman" character of Zionism and its supporters. The motto of the Festival refers to speeches by Khamenei from 2015 and 2016 in which he proclaimed that the "Zionist regime" would be wiped out by 2040 at the latest.<sup>48</sup> In 2017 the ruling Ayatollahs had a large digital clock erected in Tehran that is counting down the days until the final victory over the Jewish state.

## Hezbollah's Antisemitism

All factions of the regime are also at one when it comes to supporting the antisemitic terrorist organizations on Israel's borders. At the beginning of 2019, Foreign Minister Zarif, considered a "moderate" in Europe, met with Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine in Beirut to discuss future common

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47 Abundant quotations by leading representatives and religious figures of the Iranian regime regarding the destruction of Israel and Holocaust denial can be found in S. Grigat, "The Fight against Antisemitism and the Iranian Regime: *Challenges and Contradictions in the Light of Adorno's Categorical Imperative*," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 448–54.

48 A. Khamenei, "There Will Be No such Thing as Israel in 25 Years," issued July 7, 2016, accessed March 23, 2020, <http://english.khamenei.ir/news/3969/There-will-be-no-such-thing-as-Israel-in-25-years-Ayatollah>.



action, while in Tehran Rouhani held a high-profile meeting with Ziyad al-Nakhalah, the new General Secretary of Islamic Jihad. Al-Nakhalah has significantly stepped up the Islamic Jihad's cooperation with Tehran in comparison with his predecessor, Ramadan Shalah, so that it has overtaken Hamas as Iran's main ally in Gaza.<sup>49</sup>

The alliance with the Lebanese terrorist militia Hezbollah has also been maintained under Rouhani, gaining crucial importance in relation to the war in Syria. Moreover, support for the Houthi rebels in Yemen has also been increased in recent years. The Houthi rebels have long had close contacts with Hezbollah, and the Pasdaran and has drawn ideologically closer to the Iranian regime since 2015.<sup>50</sup> The slogans of Tehran's Yemeni allies leave no doubt as to their ideological priorities: "God is great!"; "Death to the USA!"; "Death to Israel!"; "Curse on the Jews"; and "Victory to Islam."<sup>51</sup>

In 2015, Qasem Soleimani, whose influence within the Iranian power structure has grown enormously as a consequence of the Pasdaran's involvement in Iraq and Syria, declared that Iran might soon control Jordan in the same way as it now controls Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.<sup>52</sup>

Until he was killed by the US military in 2020, Soleimani was the Commander of the Pasdaran's Quds Force, which is responsible for extraterritorial interventions. The name of this force—Al-Quds is the Arabic for Jerusalem—indicates the goal of all their efforts. At the end of 2018, Mohammad Reza Naqdi, Deputy Commander of the *Pasdaran* and Commander of the Basiji militia, announced that Israel "must be destroyed and wiped out" and "Zionists must be annihilated."<sup>53</sup> Major General Hossein Salami, the commander of Iran's Revolutionary

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<sup>49</sup> See M. Shehada, "Iran Is Declaring War on Israel—From Gaza," *Haaretz*, May 29, 2019, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/.premium-iran-is-declaring-war-on-israel-from-gaza-1.7065348>.

<sup>50</sup> See E. Karmon, "Yemen's Houthis: New Members of Iran's Anti-Israeli/Anti-American Axis," issued May 25, accessed March 23, 2020, 2017, <https://www.ict.org.il/Article/2017/yemens-houthis-new-members-of-irans-anti-israeli-anti-american-axis>.

<sup>51</sup> Quoted by A. Taylor, "The History of 'Death to America'," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/18/the-history-of-death-to-america/?utm\\_term=.0937e5ff77d7](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/02/18/the-history-of-death-to-america/?utm_term=.0937e5ff77d7).

<sup>52</sup> See J. Khoury, "Iranian Commander: Today Iraq and Lebanon, Tomorrow Jordan," *Haaretz*, March 23, 2015, <https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-today-iraq-and-lebanon-tomorrow-jordan-1.5341518>.

<sup>53</sup> "IRGC Deputy Commander Mohammed Reza Naqdi: Israel Must Be Wiped Out, Zionists Annihilated; We Can Destroy KSA, U.S. Bases in the Region," MEMRI TV, Clip no. 6917, issued December 28, 2018, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/tv/irgc-deputy-commander-reza-naqdi-israel-must-annihilated-destroy-saudi-arabia-american-bases>.

Guards, said in September 2019 that destroying Israel has become an “achievable goal” thanks to his country’s technological advances: “This sinister regime must be wiped off the map” and “this is no longer a dream [...]. We have managed to obtain the capacity to destroy the imposter Zionist regime.”<sup>54</sup>

Deeds have matched words so that now Israel faces on its borders not only the Iranian regime’s allies but the regime itself. The incursion by an Iranian drone into Israeli airspace in February 2018, represented a dangerous escalation of the situation as did the Iranian rocket attacks on the Golan Heights in May 2018. In particular, Hezbollah’s massive military build-up in Lebanon and the Iranian presence in Syria present Israel with huge problems. Hezbollah, Tehran’s most important and powerful ally in the region, today possesses over 130,000 rockets aimed exclusively at the Jewish state. How seriously the threat from a Hezbollah armed to the teeth by Tehran is taken in Israel can be seen inter alia from the fact that the liberal daily *Haaretz* has criticized the right-wing Netanyahu government for not intervening to destroy the Lebanese terrorist militia’s arsenal.<sup>55</sup>

The Lebanese Shiite militia has been involved in many attacks such as the bombing of the Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires in 1994 that killed eighty-five people. Its General Secretary, Hassan Nasrallah, echoes Khamenei and Rouhani in calling Israel a “cancerous, tyrannical entity”<sup>56</sup> and has described Zionist Jews in classically dehumanizing antisemitic terms as “the descendants of apes and pigs.”<sup>57</sup> Back in the early 1990s, the movement’s longstanding spiritual leader, Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, declared the “struggle against the Jewish state” as the “continuation of the struggle of the Muslims against the Jews’ conspiracy against Islam.”<sup>58</sup>

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54 AFP, “Top Iran general says destroying Israel ‘achievable goal’,” *Al-Monitor*, issued September 30, 2019, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/afp/2019/10/iran-israel-military-diplomacy.html#ixzz61B8LVycz>.

55 I. Harel, “A War of No Choice for Israel in Lebanon,” *Haaretz*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/a-war-of-no-choice-for-israel-in-lebanon-1.5784461>.

56 Quoted by E. Webman, “Die Rhetorik der Hisbollah: die Weiterführung eines antisemitischen Diskurses,” *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 12 (2003): 44.

57 N. Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (London: Verso, 2007), 187.

58 Quoted by H. Meyer, *Hamas und Hizbollah: Eine Analyse ihres Politischen Denkens* (Zürich: LIT, 2010), 187. Regarding Fadlallah’s relationship to Hezbollah, of which he was not officially a member, see J. Sankari, *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shi’ite Leader* (London: Saqi Books, 2005).

Nasrallah more or less exalts over the fact that Jews come from all over the world to Israel, where the “axis of resistance” of Iran and Hezbollah can more easily fight them:

the Jews from the entire world will come to occupied Palestine. But this will not be done for their antichrist to rule. God Almighty wanted to save you the trouble of finding them all over the world.<sup>59</sup>

In 1997 he stated in a speech that

If we search the entire globe for a more cowardly, lowly, weak and frail individual in his spirit, mind, ideology, and religion, we will never find anyone like the Jew—and I am not saying the Israeli: we have to know the enemy we are fighting.<sup>60</sup>

According to the Hezbollah TV station *Al-Manar*:

Judaism is a project against all humanity. It's about time the world understands this. Those who are fighting Israel are not just defending themselves; they are defending the whole world [...] There is no such thing as Zionism [...] There is only Judaism.<sup>61</sup>

Nasrallah's deputy, Naim Qassem has declared: “The history of Jews has proven that, regardless of the Zionist proposal, they are people who are evil in their ideas.”<sup>62</sup> In the same way as the Iranian regime, Hezbollah denies or relativizes the Holocaust and defends Holocaust deniers such as Roger Garaudy.<sup>63</sup> In 2000 *Al-Manar* proclaimed that, “The Jews have invented the fairy tale of the Nazi massacre against the Jews [...]”<sup>64</sup>

In 2003 *Al-Manar* broadcast a twenty-six-part series that, it explained, would show how “Jews do not shrink from committing the worst crimes in order to realize their Jewish dream.”<sup>65</sup> The whole series, in which Jews are accused of responsibility for both the First and Second World Wars, must be seen as a mod-

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59 N. Noe, “[CORRECTION to:] PM Netanyahu used a quote from Nasrallah that was likely fabricated,” issued March 3, 2015, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://mideastwire.wordpress.com/2015/03/03/pm-netanyahu-used-a-quote-from-nasrallah-that-was-likely-fabricated>.

60 Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah*, 171.

61 Quoted by Wistrich, *Lethal Obsession*, 775.

62 A. Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Politics and Religion* (London/New York: Pluto, 2002), 174.

63 See *ibid.*, 184–85.

64 G. Ben-Ari, *Die Saat des Hasses: Juden und Israel in den arabischen Medien* (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2002), 29.

65 Quoted by C. Bruck, “Hitler war in Ordnung,” *DIE WELT*, November 18, 2003.

ernized dramatization and illustration of the antisemitic classic, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Remko Leemhuis, Director of the American Jewish Committee in Berlin and today one of Germany's leading experts on Hezbollah, has succinctly summed up the central role of antisemitism for the Lebanese Shiite militia. It is "not only a basic reference point in Hezbollah's ideology, it is its core." An analysis of the movement's antisemitic propaganda shows that the conflict with Israel "again and again serves as the vehicle for the various antisemitic lines of argument." The battle with the Jewish state "is, therefore, only a catalyst that provides imagery that constantly serves to revitalise and update antisemitic ideologies."<sup>66</sup>

## The Necessity of a New Policy toward Iran

The Iranian regime is today one of the main promoters of global antisemitism. With its ongoing effort to obtain the technology of mass destruction and its pursuit of the related missile programme, its regional expansion to the borders of Israel, and the massive arming of its equally antisemitic allies such as Hezbollah, it currently presents the main danger to the security of the Jewish state. This is reflected in the official military strategy of the Israeli defence forces.<sup>67</sup> It is hard to over-estimate the contribution that the fall of the regime of the Ayatollahs and *Pasdaran* would make to the fight against global antisemitism and for the defence of Israel.

In these circumstances, it is necessary to break a taboo in the European discussion of Iran and envisage as a both realistic and desirable prospect that scenario that the German Social Democratic Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas, can imagine only as a nightmare:<sup>68</sup> a future for Iran beyond the rule of the Ayatollahs and Revolutionary Guards.

To help bring this about, the EU must abandon its cooperation and appeasement policy toward Tehran. The nuclear agreement of 2015, to which the EU still

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<sup>66</sup> R. Leemhuis, "Antisemitismus in der arabisch-islamischen Welt unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der schiitisch-libanesischen Hisbollah" (BA thesis, University of Marburg, 2009), 51–52.

<sup>67</sup> N. Fuhrig and K. Kälker, *Israel und das Szenario eines Präventivschlags gegen den Iran* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017), 12.

<sup>68</sup> See AFP, "Heiko Maas warnt vor Versuchen zur Destabilisierung des Iran," *Der Tagesspiegel*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/bundesaussenminister-heiko-maas-warnt-vor-versuchen-zur-destabilisierung-des-iran/22892416.html>.

clings, did not lead to the end of the Iranian nuclear and missile programmes but to their institutionalization. The Ayatollahs' missile programme, which is an essential component of its bid for a nuclear weapons capability, was excluded from the agreement. The entire infrastructure of the nuclear programme remains intact: while the nuclear facilities have been modified and subjected to conditions, the structures themselves are still there. The permanent and unrestricted monitoring that supporters of the agreement for a long time considered essential has not happened, especially with respect to the military structures that the International Atomic Energy Agency suspects of having been used for testing nuclear warheads. It is, therefore, not surprising that the regime has been found to have broadly adhered to the agreement. With the expiry of the absolutely inadequate restrictions in a few years' time, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action will have paved the way to the bomb, instead of blocking it.

The deal was a gamble on the future. The agreement's supporters hoped to persuade the Iranian regime to moderate its behaviour. Developments over the past few years, however, have been in the opposite direction. The regime has been encouraged by the deal to pursue an extremely aggressive foreign policy financed by the billions that have flowed in as a result of the deal itself.

The seven hundred rockets that were fired at Israel from Gaza in May 2019, once again showed that cooperation with the Iranian regime has not brought about the stability the EU hoped for but fostered war and terror. When Iranian-backed terrorist groups attack Israel, more than merely verbal solidarity is required from Europe. If the commitment to Israel's security is to be more than empty words, then the European countries and above all Germany, as the successor state to National Socialism, must immediately impose stringent sanctions on the Holocaust-denier regime in Tehran that facilitates the attacks of both Hamas and Islamic Jihad on the state of the Shoah's survivors.

However, to this end, the EU must also free itself from the blackmail to which it exposed itself as a result of the negotiations over the Iranian nuclear programme. The idea of moderating the regime through integrating it into international trade has proved totally illusory. A 180-degree turn in German and European policy toward Iran is urgently needed. There must be no more support for the antisemitic regime and full support for the democratic and secular opposition in Iran and in exile.

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## **Comprehending Contemporary Manifestations of Antisemitism**



Marc Neugröschel

# Redemption Online: Antisemitism and Anti-Americanism in Social Media

Examining an often-observed convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism, the following essay presents an analysis of social media content that combines anti-Jewish and anti-American prejudices. It will be shown that conspiracy fantasies represent a common denominator of both forms of bias. In the reviewed content, Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America are portrayed as collaborators in- or interchangeable representations of an evil, powerful conspiracy controlling humanity and wreaking havoc on the world. This view goes hand in hand with a cynical inversion of hate speech and enlightenment, framing anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. In that context, conventional media outlets such as newspapers and TV networks are framed as censored propaganda tools, employed by the hallucinated Jewish-American control regime to deceive and manipulate the masses. In contrast, internet and social media are portrayed as a means of communication that can be used to sideline and oppose the imagined Jewish-American control regime—an act often portrayed as a redemptive battle for the emancipation of humanity.

## I Introduction

The present essay examines an often-observed convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism by reviewing social media content that combines both forms of prejudice. Analyzing contemporary, authentic digital communications adds to the understanding of this phenomenon that has largely been investigated by analyses of historical writings,<sup>1</sup> political debate,<sup>2</sup> surveys and attitude measurements.<sup>3</sup> Unlike survey or interview data that represent responses to researchers' interventions, social media content has been generated by their authors'

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1 Cf. A. S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

2 Cf. A. H. Rosenfeld, *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: A New Frontier of Bigotry* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 2003); J. Joffe, "The Demons of Europe," *Commentary* 117, no. 1 (2004): 29–34.

3 Cf. H. Beyer, *Soziologie des Antiamerikanismus: Zur Theorie und Wirkmächtigkeit spätmodernen Unbehagens* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2014).

own initiative and is therefore practically free of reactive effects, as has been pointed out by Monika Schwarz-Friesel.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to traditional historical sources such as published books or newspaper articles, social media data allows us to access grassroots voices that are not always reflected in dominant discourse. By studying this form of internet discourse, this essay also offers insights into how authors of the herein reviewed content reflect upon the means of online communication which they use to disseminate antisemitic and anti-American hate speech. Hence, we shall not only see how the internet is used as a tool to disseminate defamatory worldviews but also how it is framed by those worldviews.

It will be shown that conspiracy fantasies provide a crucial common denominator of antisemitic and anti-American narratives. Indeed, the content reviewed here frames the USA, Israel, Zionism, and Jews as collaborators in- or interchangeable representations of a disruptive world conspiracy that intentionally wreaks havoc on the world in order control and exploit humanity. They thereby associate the USA and Judaism—the latter directly, or indirectly by blaming Israel or Zionism—with a narrative, highly evocative of, if not identical with, the traditional paranoid antisemitic fantasy of a world Jewish conspiracy, conspicuously (but certainly not exclusively) laid out in the notorious forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The substitution of Israel and Zionism for Jews in antisemitic narrations has been extensively discussed.<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the present arti-

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4 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, “‘Antisemitism 2.0’—The Spreading of Jew-hatred on the World Wide Web,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, vol. 1 of *An End to Antisemitism!*, ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat and L. H. Schiffman (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 317; idem, “Educated Anti-Semitism in the Middle of German Society,” in *Being Jewish in 21st-Century Germany*, ed. O. Glöckner and H. Fireberg (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 170–71.

5 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate: Hostility towards Jews as a Cultural Constant and Collective Emotional Value in the Digital Age (Short Version)* (Berlin: Technical University of Berlin, 2018), 5; idem, “Destroy Israel: Jews are the Evil of the World!”, lecture at the Inter-parliamentary Coalition for Combating Antisemitism (ICCA), Bundestag, Berlin, March 14, 2016, [https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/GIF/Schwarz-Friesel\\_Speech\\_ICCA\\_14.03.2016\\_Destroy\\_Israel\\_-\\_Jews\\_are\\_the\\_Evil\\_of\\_the\\_World\\_.pdf](https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/GIF/Schwarz-Friesel_Speech_ICCA_14.03.2016_Destroy_Israel_-_Jews_are_the_Evil_of_the_World_.pdf); M. Schwarz-Friesel, and J. Reinharz, “The Israelization of Antisemitism,” *Jerusalem Post*, February 16, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/The-Israelization-of-antisemitism-481835>; Y. Bauer, “Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism,” in *Anti-Zionism and Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. R. S. Wistrich (London: Macmillan, 1990), 206; R. S. Wistrich, *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad* (New York: Random House, 2010), 494–514; idem, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews and Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 511; P. A. Taguieff, *Rising from the Muck: The New Anti-Semitism in Europe*, trans. P. Camiller

cle, it suffices to point out that in the content reviewed here, Israel and Zionism, like the USA, are blamed for the same hallucinated evildoings and identified with the same kind of imagined oppressive conspiracy that traditional expressions of antisemitism have been attributing to Jews.

In line with traditional antisemitic narratives, the content reviewed here extends a redemptive message, framing their anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. They often symbolize this idea by featuring motives from the 1999 sci-fi movie *The Matrix*. This movie narrates a dystopic fantasy in which humanity is enslaved by extraterrestrial monsters that use a sophisticated computer program, called “the Matrix,” to manipulate the awareness of all human beings. In that way, humans live in an illusionary dream world unaware of their actual state of enslavement. A small resistance movement, however, fights the monsters to free humanity. In one particularly famous scene of the picture, its hero, a character called Neo, is offered a choice between a blue pill and a red pill. The blue pill stands for the choice to remain in the convenient but imaginary dream world of the Matrix constructed by the monsters to distract humans from the fact that they are slaves. By taking the red pill, however, Neo decides to be disconnected from the Matrix, to face the disturbing “truth,” and to join the resistance against the monsters. The herein reviewed content often presents itself as “red pills,” designed to “wake up” a supposedly ignorant humanity, making people aware that they are manipulated by a hidden totalitarian regime. By the same token, the authors of that content claim to struggle for the redemption of humanity from its alleged oppressors, associated with Jews and America. The red-pill-blue-pill allegory has long become an established code in online conspiracy discourse<sup>6</sup> and is certainly not confined to explicitly antisemitic or anti-American content. In the context of antisemitic communications, however, it functions to extend traditional antisemitic fantasies equating Jews with a metaphysical evil and oppressive force that deceives, manipulates, exploits, and devastates humanity. The interpretation of antisemitic and anti-American defamation as an emancipatory struggle against oppression, I propose, may explain in part why those prejudices not only exist among the political right where they may express opposition against modernity, globalism, and cosmopolitanism that come to be associated with Jews and America but also among self-declared liberals and progressives

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(Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004), 4; M. Küntzel, *Nazis und der Nahe Osten: Wie der islamische Antisemitismus entstand* (Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. J. Ebner, *Radikalisierungsmaschinen: Wie Extremisten die neuen Technologien nutzen und uns manipulieren* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 29–30.

from the political left who claim to be challenging oppression, discrimination, and inequality.

Based on this inversion of defamation and enlightenment, the internet, which facilitates an effective dissemination of hate speech, is portrayed as a weapon in a struggle for humanity's redemption. As such it is contrasted with traditional media outlets, that is, newspapers, TV, which are viewed as propaganda tools of the hallucinated control regime. The internet, then, is not only used to spread anti-antisemitism and anti-Americanism but also reflected up on in terms of these worldviews. To be sure, throughout my research I also came across a lot of communication which claims that the internet is being censored by the same imagined control-regime that also controls the rest of the media. Current efforts to restrict online hate speech are often viewed as an expression of Jewish control.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, disseminators of online hate speech often present their social media accounts as last bastions of "enlightenment" and "truth" in the face of an allegedly controlled "mainstream media." They often instruct their audiences to dismiss television and the press and to obtain "information" from fringe social media accounts and web sites, euphemistically presented as "alternative sources."

The present article expands on a multi-media presentation at the international conference "An End to Antisemitism," from February 2018, held at the University of Vienna. For obvious technical reasons, but also due to copyright restrictions, I cannot reproduce the screening of video sequences and images in this print version. Converting multimedia data into written descriptions can be tricky. Sometimes it takes very large amounts of text to present something that on the moving screen gets across in a second. What works as an effectual illustration in a multi-media presentation may thus put the reader to sleep in a written paper. Hence, in order to make this paper intelligible and concise it was unavoidable to divert a bit from the script of my conference presentation. I had to cut out some of the presented data items and replace them with others. At the same time, I added some background information and made some updates, considering recent developments that occurred after the conference. However, by and large, this article relies on the same data as my conference presentation and makes the same argument.

The following section reflects upon the debate about the convergence of antisemitism and anti-Americanism, while providing some relevant theoretical

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7 Cf. M. Neugröschel, "The Donald Trump Theodicy: Competing Views of Israel and Judaism among the American far right: An Analysis of Antisemitic Social Media Contents" (unpublished paper, 2020).

background. Section III reviews samples of the data that I analyzed for the purpose of my conference presentation and this paper. Section IV summarizes my conclusions.

## II The Convergence of Antisemitism and Anti-Americanism: Theoretical Background and Review of the Academic Debate

Antisemitic and anti-American stereotypes often appear in tandem. Andrei S. Markovits observes that “Anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism relate to each other and empirically are almost always in close proximity.”<sup>8</sup> Alvin H. Rosenfeld concludes that “anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism reveal certain structural similarities and often take recourse to a common vocabulary of defamation and denunciation.”<sup>9</sup> However, while Markovits sees contemporary antisemitism as an “epiphenomenon of anti-Americanism,”<sup>10</sup> the material reviewed here rather corroborates the opposite view, according to which anti-Americanism extends traditional antisemitic stereotypes. Monika Schwarz-Friesel has noted that America plays a major role in the construction of pejorative implications that are interpreted as significations of a conspiratorial Jewish world rule. Tropes such as “Jewish Bankers determine American election campaigns” recode the antisemitic paranoia that Jews have too much influence.<sup>11</sup> Consistent with this observation, Robert Wistrich concludes that: “today, rather than denouncing the ‘Jewish-Bolshevik’ alliance (as Hitler and the prewar fascists continually did), the extreme Right focuses on attacking the ‘American-Zionist axis’.”<sup>12</sup> Regarding the other side of the political map, Wistrich adds

When Leftists evoke America, nowadays they often mean ‘Jewish power’—‘domination’ of Hollywood, the media, high finance, the Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House

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<sup>8</sup> A. S. Markovits, “European Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism: Similarities and Differences,” interview by M. Gerstenfeld, *Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism* 16, January 1, 2014 (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs), <http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-16.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Rosenfeld, *Anti-Americanism and Anti-Semitism*.

<sup>10</sup> Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 151.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, “‘Juden sind zum Töten da’ (studivz.net, 2008): Hass via Internet—Zugänglichkeit und Verbreitung von Antisemitismen im World Wide Web,” in *Sprache und Kommunikation im technischen Zeitalter: Wieviel Internet (v)erträgt unsere Gesellschaft?*, ed. K. Marx and M. Schwarz-Friesel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 213–36.

<sup>12</sup> Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal*, xii.



by American Jewry. They are talking antisemitism, only now it is wrapped in the more politically correct euphemism of the ‘Zionist lobby.’ Even a ‘progressivist,’ more or less pro-Palestinian American president like Barack Obama, has not been able to escape the potency of such myths by which he, too, is judged. Anti-Americanism, like antisemitism, has truly become the ‘anti-imperialism’ of fools.<sup>13</sup>

### Josef Joffe sees a projection of traditional antisemitic stereotypes

onto two new targets: Israel and America. Indeed, the United States is an anti-Semitic fantasy come true: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in living color. Do not Jews, their first loyalty to Israel, control the Congress, the Pentagon, the banks, the universities, and the media? Having captured the ‘hyperpower,’ do they not finally rule the world? That at least seems to be the consensus of the Europeans, who in a recent EU poll declared Israel and the United States, in that order, to be the greatest threats to world peace.<sup>14</sup>

Joffe, apparently, refers to a 2003 Eurobarometer poll, in which Israel topped the list of countries seen by European citizens as a threat to world peace. Fifty-nine percent of respondents in this survey indicated that they see Israel as a threat. The second place in this ranking was shared by North Korea and Iran with the United States of America.<sup>15</sup> In the globally conducted WIN-Gallup 2013 “End of year survey,” it was the United States that headed the list of the countries that were seen as the biggest threat to world peace by a large margin. Twenty-four percent of the respondents in this poll believed that the USA was the most dangerous country, only distantly followed by Pakistan that was seen in such a way by merely 8 percent of respondents. China came in third with 6 percent and fourth place was shared by North Korea, Iran, and Israel, with 5 percent each.<sup>16</sup> In line with such sentiments, German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk contended in 2002 that “the two rogue states of contemporary world politics are (...) the USA and Israel.”<sup>17</sup>

The social media content reviewed here often echoes the idea that the USA and Israel are a major disruptive influence on world affairs. Promoting narratives

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>14</sup> Joffe, “The Demons of Europe,” 29.

<sup>15</sup> K. Ridderbusch, “Laut Umfrage sehen EU-Bürger in Israel die größte Gefahr für den Weltfrieden,” *Die Welt*, November 4, 2003, <https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article270732/Laut-Umfrage-sehen-EU-Buerger-in-Israel-die-groesste-Gefahr-fuer-den-Weltfrieden.html>.

<sup>16</sup> “WIN/Gallup International’s Annual Global End of Year Survey Shows a Brighter Outlook for 2014,” WIN/Gallup International, issued December 30, 2013, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.ilcambiamento.it/files/GallupInternational.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup> P. Sloterdijk, “Kohls Erbe wirkt bis heute nach,” interview by S. Gächter, *Profil*, September 23, 2002. Translation by the author of this essay.

evocative of the notorious antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, they suggest that social and political conflicts all over the world have been deliberately instigated by a Jewish-American conspiracy as a means to consolidate its alleged domination of humanity. This paranoid fantasy is frequently dressed as an enlightening recognition of what allegedly happens behind the scenes, appealing to their audience to wake up and face what is hypostatized as a “hidden truth.” The latter represents another conspicuous parallel to traditional antisemitism, which, as Ugo Volli notes, has been presenting itself “as the action of unmasking” a Jewish “conspiracy and fighting against it.”<sup>18</sup> Jeffery Herf observes that the Nazis “believed they had uncovered deep secrets of modern history and politics, secrets that the great mass of humanity, mired in events, failed to grasp. At the same time they entered an utterly mythic world, they convinced themselves and millions of others that their Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda) was educating the masses about the people behind the scenes and the realities that were the driving force behind events.”<sup>19</sup> This was the backdrop against which Jews in early twentieth-century Germany were framed as a concealed but dangerous enemy that would destroy the Germany nation and humanity if not eliminated, justifying the final solution.<sup>20</sup> As Norman Cohn concludes in his famous treatise, *Warrant for Genocide*

the deadliest kind of antisemitism, the kind that results in massacre and attempted genocide, has little to do with real conflicts of interest between living people, or even with racial prejudice as such. At its heart lies the belief that Jews—all Jews everywhere—form a conspiratorial body set on ruining and then dominating the rest of mankind. And this belief is simply a modernized, secularized version of the popular medieval view of Jews as a league of sorcerers employed by Satan for the spiritual and physical ruination of Christendom.<sup>21</sup>

The content reviewed in the following section replicates such antisemitic fantasies of an evil Jewish world-disrupting conspiracy, while associating it with the USA, Israel, and Zionism.

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**18** U. Volli, “Anti-Semitism (and Now Anti-Zionism) as Prototype of Conspiracy Theory: A Theoretical and Textual Approach,” *Lexia: Journal of Semiotics* 23–24 (2016): 27.

**19** J. Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 6.

**20** Herf, *The Jewish Enemy*, 5.

**21** N. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1967), 16.

### III Reviewing the Data

The first item analyzed here is a German hip-hop-style music video titled “Letzte Wa(h)rnung” that was uploaded to YouTube on April 24, 2014.<sup>22</sup> The title is a pun that translates as “last warning” if read without the “h” in brackets and that, arguably, could mean something like “last truth” if read with the “h” in brackets.<sup>23</sup> But even though the title is open to subjective interpretations, it does, as a matter of fact, fuse the terms “warning” and “truth.” This pun, as we shall see, is indeed indicative of the sequence’s broader narration, which warns its audience to “wake up” in order to recognize what is hypostatized as a hidden “truth,” explaining disruptive developments of world affairs. By October 26, 2020, the video had 741,533 views, 15,000 likes, and 1,885 comments. It was uploaded by a channel called “Revolutionz Muzik,” which, on the same date, had 58,700 subscribers.<sup>24</sup> The channel identifies “Shah Reza” as the content’s creator. Within the sequence of the video, the artist declares that he has adopted the name “Shah Reza,” a namesake of the former Iranian leader.<sup>25</sup> The video is introduced by the channel as including “detailed information that concerns every human being on this planet.” That description concludes with a call to viewers: “Take your time and think about it. Now the truth is in your hands.”<sup>26</sup> The appeal, “Now the truth is in your hands,” suggests that the viewers are being empowered by the information that is extended to them by the content, thereby underscoring the claim that it would reveal highly relevant and previously unknown affairs, “enlightening” its audience. The sequence starts out by featuring animated nature imagery, accompanied by instrumental sounds. An iconography of rising sunlight and buds transitioning into full blossoms, arguably, extends a sense of awakening. This notion of waking is vocalized a few seconds later, further to scenes of war that contrast the beauty of the previous nature imagery and that are accompanied by the vocals “I want you to understand that the time

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**22** Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung (Official Video) prod. by ULTIM8 BEATZ,” issued April 24, 2014, accessed November 11, 2020, YouTube video, 9:22, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcHMn8\\_gNvg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcHMn8_gNvg).

**23** There is no such German word as “Wahrnung.” The term rather is a freely invented nominalization of the adjective “wahr,” which means “truth.”

**24** Revolutionz Muzik, YouTube Channel, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYqTg5u1cIBbew9LEZgtMPA>.

**25** Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung ,” 8:20 – 8:32.

**26** Ibid. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of non-English YouTube videos and viewer comments are by the author of this essay.

we live in is a cruel one. So many see that the world is waking up.”<sup>27</sup> These vocals introduce the video’s redemptive-messianic narration of departure from mayhem for better times. Throughout the following 80 seconds, the United of America are accused of wreaking havoc on the world by instigating and drawing profits from major world conflicts, something which people would fail to see, because they would constantly be misled by manipulating media. After mentioning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict about Crimea, the vocals of the track continue:

The Americans draw so much profit from that situation ... Look at Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, and look at Egypt, Yemen, and then Libya. What happened? These people were so tired of the lies. That has been exploited by the USA, which are now leading their countries. You do not believe me? OK, I’ll explain: All the revolutions were planned by the Americans. Every single one of them. I also have the evidence for that ... I’m not a fake rapper. I call things by their names: like the Freemasons, Bilderberg or the Illuminati. I am not talking superficially but unveil what has remained secret. What I say and rap goes deep into the details ... They [Americans] cause the overthrow and replacement of governments and drive people ... to their limits; destabilize countries to an extent that America can take them over and determine in those places what’s good and what’s bad. Fact is, that’s all a well thought out tactic.<sup>28</sup>

Visually, these lines are accompanied by scenes of war and social unrest, alternating with imagery of former US president Barack Obama speaking at the White House. The imagination that America deliberately instigates political conflicts to consolidate its dominance is remarkably similar to the charges held against the Jews by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and similar preceding antisemitic fantasies. For example, the nineteenth-century German novel *Biarritz* by Hermann Goedsche alias John Retcliffe, which, according to Norman Cohn, served as a model for *The Protocols* contains a scene of a meeting between the devil and the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel in which one of the latter proposes to direct unrest and revolutions in a way that they increase the power of the Jews.<sup>29</sup> Also, the incorporation of other secret societies into imaginations of a meta- or super-conspiracy, as hypostatized by the herein reviewed track’s reference to the Freemasons and the Illuminati, echoes *The Protocols* and its predecessors. For example, the 1881 French volume, *Les Francs-Maçons et les Juifs* by Abbé Chabauty suggests “that Satan, through the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy, was preparing the way for the Jewish Antichrist and the world-dominion of the Jews.”<sup>30</sup> The anti-American charges in the quote above are dressed as the reve-

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 0:25–0:32.

<sup>28</sup> Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” 0:46–1:49.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 33–35.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 45.

lation of a secret, which the video's creator takes credit for ("I am not talking superficially but unveil what has remained secret. What I say and rap goes deep into the details"). Visually, the video further underscores its claim to enlighten its viewers about an allegedly hidden "truth," by featuring the iconic "blue-pill-red-pill" scene from *The Matrix*, an established code of online conspiracy discourse that I discussed in the introduction. The global mayhem, decried in the video, is presented as the result of a "Luciferian plan,"<sup>31</sup> associated with "gangsters" at "Wallstreet," "the Rothschilds" and "the Rockefellers,"<sup>32</sup> invoking established codes for ideas of Jewish and America domination.<sup>33</sup> This association of Jews and America with global mayhem is further underscored by the following lines:

While hundreds are freezing to death outside, you go to McDonald's and consume that shit and thereby support the war in Gaza, because the money goes to the States of Israel. Buy your burger at a shop that makes it fresh and that didn't suffocate the animals with an artificial gas. The same is true for Kentucky Fried Chicken and Burger King, because they are the same murderers. Most people don't listen and think I am joking, but why did Israel become so strong in the last years? Think about it: billions of revenues year by year. That pays for their weapons and for their protective gear. Make fun about it, yes, think about the screaming children there, the crying mothers there and the crying fathers there. Let's see if you are still capable of eating that Burger or if it gets stuck in your throat. You have to wake up.<sup>34</sup>

Rapping about the "States of Israel," funded by animal-gassing American fast food joints and abusing people in Gaza, Israel and the US are merged into one monolithic evil entity, blamed for people "freezing to death" and other cruelties occurring all over the world. This, according to the track, is the hidden reality that people must "wake up" to: a message visually underscored by a display of the previously mentioned blue-pill-red-pill-scene from *The Matrix*. Whether the line about animals being gassed for the benefit of the "States of Israel" invokes a Holocaust inversion cannot be determined with certainty. But it certainly lies within the array of possible interpretations. The imagination of a "States of Israel" as a hidden satanic force wreaking havoc over the world, embedded in a redemptive narrative that claims to enlighten its ignorant viewers about their alleged Jewish-American oppressors echoes pivotal tenets of traditional antisemit-

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**31** Revolutionz Muzik, "Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung," 3:14–3:16.

**32** Ibid., 3:48–3:54.

**33** Cf. Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal*, xii–xiii; Schwarz-Friesel, "Juden sind zum Töten da."

**34** Revolutionz Muzik, "Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung," 4:37–5:23.

ism. We may therefore conclude that the present content substitutes a constructed America-Israel-hybrid for Jews in a reproduction of a classic antisemitic conspiracy narrative. Even though the focus of the track is on America and only refers to Jews in terms of detour communications (Rothschilds, Wallstreet, Israel), viewers clearly decode it as an affirmation of their antisemitic beliefs. In the comment section under the video, viewer Springtoifel18 writes: “Who pulls the strings in world politics? Jewish Zionist banksters and their Freemason servants.” Describing “banksters” (a pun merging the terms “bankers” and “gangster,” assumption of author), “who pull the strings in world politics,” as both “Jewish” and “Zionist,” Springtoifel18 explicates the implicit association of the State of Israel’s national founding ethos (Zionism) with antisemitic fantasies of Jewish conspiracy. Viewer Topol Ak explicitly equates Zionism with “evil” per se: “Evil, that is the NWO Zionists and its thugs.” Projecting the traditional antisemitic fantasy that Jews destabilize the nations of the world on Zionism, Kamil A writes: “The Zionists will continue until all countries of the world will be broken. We, as humanity, have to be solidaric and annihilate Zionists everywhere in the world.” Note that Kamil A promotes a clearly eliminationist and redemptive form of antisemitism by calling to “annihilate Zionists everywhere in the world,” in order to rescue humanity. By the same token, this viewer hypostatizes a dichotomy between humanity on the one hand and Zionists as humanity’s enemy on the other. What Kamil A says, in other words, is that Zionists are not human. They are humanity’s enemy and therefore they need to be annihilated. This amounts to the substitution of Zionism for Jews in a replication of Nazi-like eliminationist and redemptive antisemitism. The track’s activation of Nazi-sentiments is further underscored by viewer Jay Jbg, who writes: “There is another very important topic that you should rap about, which is Adolf Hitler ... because he is not what the lies that we have been told for 70 years suggest.” Viewer hawa pato criticizes the video and writes that it is wrong to blame Israel and America. But Barrack Ollama objects: “No, America and Israel are the worst,” and follows up “The Zionists are behind everything that is bad in this world.”

The antisemitic and anti-American message of the above reviewed video is also echoed on the Facebook fan page of its creator. On April 6, 2013 the Facebook profile “Shah Reza Fan Site” posted a cartoon of caricatured evil-looking American political and economic leaders (among them former US presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Microsoft founder Bill Gates) participating in an occult ritual that involves the murdering of baby. The leaders form a half circle around a faceless figure in a red habit who is just about to bring down a stone dagger on the screaming toddler that lies on an altar, engraved with a pentagram, the logo of the Bohemian Club and a Star of David

that has the letter “Z” in its middle. The post is overwritten with the comment “The truth is ugly.”<sup>35</sup>

Shah Reza and his above reviewed video are not isolated cases. There is an entire subgenre of rap content, invoking conspiracy theories, messianic fantasies of redemption and antisemitism.<sup>36</sup> The recent anti-Jewish rants of widely known rappers such as Freeze Corleone (France),<sup>37</sup> Wiley (Britain),<sup>38</sup> Ice Cube (US),<sup>39</sup> and Kollegah (Germany)<sup>40</sup> are well known, because they have been covered in the international press. But they are only the tip of the iceberg. Below the radar of the general public’s attention, there are many antisemitic music videos by lesser known artists, like the above reviewed, circulating on social media channels.

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**35** Shah Reza Fan Site, “Die Wahrheit ist häßlich,” Facebook Post, April 6, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/10150131677985497/photos/a.10152719164220497/10152719164255497/>.

**36** Cf. J. Baier “‘Die Welt ist noch nicht gerettet ... Aber der Widerstand erstarbt!': Antisemitische Verschwörungsmymen in der Populärkultur am Beispiel des Musikvideos ‘Apokalypse’ (2016) des Rappers Kollegah,” in *Von Hinterzimmern und geheimen Machenschaften: Verschwörungstheorien in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. J. Kuber et al. (Stuttgart: Akademie der Diözese Rottenburg-Stuttgart, 2020), 171–87; WDR Doku, “Gibt es Antisemitismus im Deutschen Rap?,” issued March 29, 2018, YouTube video, 43:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXZCmXK9wWc>; D. Malik, “Hip Hop And Anti-Semitism: A Regrettable Duo,” *The Oxford Student*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2020/07/27/hip-hop-and-anti-semitism-a-regrettable-duo/>.

**37** Cf. “Dérive antisémite d’un rappeur français, la Licra réagit,” LICRA, issued September 17, 2020, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.licra.org/derive-antisemite-dun-rappeur-francais-la-licra-reagit>; B. Cohen, “French Rapper Freeze Corleone Facing Criminal Prosecution for Antisemitism, Holocaust Denial on Hit Debut Album,” *The Algemeiner*, September 17, 2020, <https://www.algemeiner.com/2020/09/17/french-rapper-freeze-corleone-facing-criminal-prosecution-for-antisemitism-holocaust-denial-on-hit-debut-album/>; C. Liphshiz, “Google, Apple, Spotify Called to Remove French Rapper’s Antisemitic Songs,” *Jerusalem Post*, September 23, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/google-apple-spotify-called-to-remove-french-rappers-antisemitic-songs-643211>.

**38** Cf. D. R. Edmunds, “Wiley Remains Defiantly Antisemitic: ‘I’m right, Jews Do Run the Earth’,” *Jerusalem Post*, August 23, 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/wiley-remains-defiantly-antisemitic-im-right-jews-do-run-the-earth-639639>.

**39** Cf. A. Feldman, “Rapper Ice Cube Posts Series of Anti-Semitic Memes on Twitter,” *Forward*, June 10, 2020, <https://forward.com/news/448548/ice-cube-twitter-memes-anti-semitic/>; A. Boucher, “Ice Cube under Fire for Tweeting Anti-Semitic Images and Conspiracy Theories,” *Entertainment Weekly*, June 11, 2020, <https://ew.com/celebrity/ice-cube-under-fire-tweeting-anti-semitic-images-conspiracy-theories/>; J. Alfonso, “Rapper Ice Cube Loses his Mind and Posts Wild Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theory on Twitter,” *brobible*, June 2020, <https://brobible.com/culture/article/rapper-ice-cube-black-cube-anti-semitic-conspiracy-theory/>; E. Bricks, “Rapper Ice Cube Receives Backlash for Tweeting Anti-Semitic Images,” *heavy*, June 10, 2020, <https://heavy.com/entertainment/2020/06/rapper-ice-cube-anti-semitic-twitter/>.

**40** Cf. J. Baier, “Die Echo-Debatte: Antisemitismus im Rap,” *Antisemitismus seit 9/11: Ereignisse, Debatten, Kontroversen*, ed. S. Salzborn (Baden Baden: Nomos, 2019), 109–32.

At least in the case of the here reviewed German language social media hip-hop videos, such messages of redemptive antisemitism are often linked with, embedded in, or coded as anti-American narratives.

America and Israel or Zionism, not only in German language rap videos, to be sure, are merged into a monolithic representation of a hallucinated satanic force. This is reflected, amongst others, in puns such “USRAEL” (merging “US” and “Israel” into one word) or “Zionjewmerican” (merging Zionism, Jews, and America). Responding on YouTube to two different music videos uploaded by the channel Ukvali TV,<sup>41</sup> viewer Jay Jbg writes “USRAEL has been worse than Hitler and still is” and “FUCK USRAEL!!! WARMONGER MURDERER THIEVES NO. 1 ON THIS WORLD.” The comment section under a YouTube video titled “A little Terror song” (Ein kleines Terrorlied)<sup>42</sup> features the comment by Cashman0712:

The real terrorists and enemies of ALL are ZIONISTS! ILLUMINATI / FREEMASON, BILDERBERGER! ..NWO .. (US\_RAE) AND CIA, ILLUMINATI 666 CONTROLLED; CONTROLLED, CENSORED FAKE LIES, PROPAGANDA HETZE BRAINWASH MASS MEDIA! ... GROUPS, BANKS, ORGANIZATIONS! , MILLIARY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX! WE ALWAYS WANT TO STAY WITH TRUTH AND FACTS! peace! make LOVE not WAR!

Under a YouTube video titled “Zionists rule America,”<sup>43</sup> (an English language sequence that has nothing to do with hip hop or music) we can read the comment by hal us: “the zionjewmerican empire attacking north Korea for financial takeover of the entire world by the israeli rothschilds banksters.”

This semiotic amalgamation of Jews and the US into a representation of a satanic force usually occurs within a mystical context, partially drawing on Muslim or Christian religious ideas. In a YouTube video titled “Killuminati 4.0,”<sup>44</sup> two performers named “Ukvali,” and “Cyrus” rap the following lines:

The end of the world is looming for you human being, Allah’s servant. God is great if you are righteous (...) The world is on fire under Sheytan’s spell. He forges his plan, the world peace treaty. Āyāt is sown, but Al Maut is reaped. Dajjal will speak, concealing his eye (...) Servants of the lord, slaves of the devil. In the center of the crisis, deep in the crater of the revolt. They are sent down, Al Mahdi Imam. Redeem us from all the burden, Al Massira has

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<sup>41</sup> Ukvali TV, YouTube channel, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3s\\_Ou4AQ7WozQkTCQxBgfQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC3s_Ou4AQ7WozQkTCQxBgfQ), accessed October 30, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Jasinna, “Ein kleines TERRORLIED,” issued May 15, 2013, video, 7:53, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktBZWzk\\_PEc&t=1s&has\\_verified=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ktBZWzk_PEc&t=1s&has_verified=1).

<sup>43</sup> Wake up call, “Zionists Rule America,” issued September 24, 2017, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iArfJdea0Wk> [no longer available].

<sup>44</sup> Ukvali TV, “Ukvali & Cyrez – Killuminati 4.0 (Prod. by Burimkosa),” issued September 20, 2015, YouTube video, 8:42, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ln0dNikwJhA>.



arrived (...) Fuck the Devil and face your enemy. Join in and don't think you are alone. When you hear that, you are part of the resistance, the children of wrath, condemned to victory. My enemies are people with a lot of money. Kill them because they wreak havoc on the world (...) Fuck the Rothschild and Rockefeller Family. Fuck the Masons. Fuck the satanists. Fuck the New World Order.<sup>45</sup>

In the present context, “Rothschild,” “Rockefeller” and possibly also “people with a lot of money” serve as codes for the concepts of Jewish and American power. This code evolves from the previous parts of the video which make the identification of humanity’s satanic oppressor with Jews and America explicit. The video starts out with animated 3-D closeups of a US dollar bill, underlined by a mystical tune and a speaking voice addressing its listeners as part of a resistance movement against some kind of force that has allegedly drawn humanity to the edge of an “abyss.”<sup>46</sup> The sequence then features imagery of former Israeli president Shimon Peres<sup>47</sup> and Israeli prime minister Benyamin Netanyahu at his official office in front of an Israeli flag and emblems of the state of Israel.<sup>48</sup> At timecode 4:31, we see a hand painted as an American flag. Each of its five fingers is topped by a finger puppet, conveying the message that America is controlling other actors as if they were puppets on its fingers. This image is accompanied by the voice over: “Open your eyes and wake up from your deep sleep. The devil wins, when he defeats the masses.”<sup>49</sup> At timecode 5:02 we see former US president Barack Obama at the White House in front of an American flag,<sup>50</sup> followed by imagery of protesters, burning an improvised Israeli flag.<sup>51</sup> Half a minute after that, the performers rap about the “heritage of the Rothschilds” in connection with secret society meetings that communicate with the dead, while we see an assembly of people in masonic attire with an American flag in the background.<sup>52</sup> Hence the video also represents another expression of the long-standing antisemitic concept that Jews recruit Freemasonry for their alleged evil plot to dominate the world that has already been discussed above. The clip, as its title, “Kulluminati 4.0,” suggests, also refers to yet another secret society that features prominently in conspiracy discourse, namely the Illuminati. Even though the factual eighteenth-century Bavarian secret society of the Illumi-

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45 Ukvali TV, “Kulluminati 4.0,” 5:17–6:09, 6:40–8:03.

46 Ibid., 00:07–01:10.

47 Ibid., 2:49–2:52.

48 Ibid., 2:56–2:58.

49 Ibid., 4:28–4:33.

50 Ibid., 5:02–5:04.

51 Ibid., 5:14–5:16.

52 Ibid., 5:48–5:59.

nati had barely existed for a decade or so,<sup>53</sup> it became the subject of wild conspiracy fantasies and has remained so until the present day. After having been blamed for the French revolution,<sup>54</sup> today the Illuminati are accused of plotting to create the so-called “New World Order,” a dystopic-apocalyptic vision of a totalitarian world government.<sup>55</sup> According to Michael Barkun, antisemitic conspiracy fantasies, relating Jews and Illuminati became popular in the twentieth-century interwar period, further to the writings by the English authors Nesta Webster and Edith, Lady Queenborough.<sup>56</sup> However, Norman Cohn points out that false claims according to which the Illuminati had been founded by Jews were already made in the early nineteenth century.<sup>57</sup> Merging the terms “kill” and “illuminati,” the pun “Killuminati” has been coined by rapper Tupac Amaru Shakur (1971–1996), featured in the artist’s 1996 album “The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory.” Apparently, there is some debate regarding what Shakur really meant when using the pun. Some claim that he actually opposed conspiracy theories.<sup>58</sup> However in the content that I reviewed, including the above reviewed clip “Killuminati 4.0,” by Ukvali and Cyzrus, the term is used as a battle cry against hallucinated conspiracies associated with the Illuminati: a call to *kill Illuminati* and those associated with them and their imagined ends. In the predecessor video “Killuminati 2.0,” Ukvali even fantasizes about wearing an explosive belt to commit a suicide attack against lodges: “If it would be up to me, I would blow up lodges, storm in, wearing an explosive belt.”<sup>59</sup>

Allusions to the Illuminati also play a role in the following reviewed content titled, “Inside this ‘Illuminati Temple’ will shock you! (R\$E).”<sup>60</sup> In contrast to the above reviewed “Killuminati 2.0” German language hip-hop track that invokes Islamic concepts, the following English language YouTube video invokes traditional Christian motives to underpin its antisemitic and anti-American message. Presenting itself as an investigative documentary, it mixes anti-Americanism and

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53 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 25–26; M. Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (London: University of California Press, 2003), 46–47.

54 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 25–26; Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 45–46.

55 Cf. *ibid.*, 39–46.

56 Cf. *ibid.*, 47–48.

57 Cf. Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 27.

58 “Killuminati,” *Slang Dictionary*, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.dictionary.com/slang/killuminati/>.

59 Ukvali TV, “Ukvali – Killuminati 2.0 (Official Video),” issued April 22, 2014, YouTube video, 3:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23A1S8fxhSw>, 1:57–2:02.

60 RISE, “Inside this “Illuminati Temple” will shock you! (R\$E),” issued October 9, 2016, YouTube video, 14:53, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuT\\_4XEIXOU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuT_4XEIXOU).

Christian anti-Judaism with conspiracy fantasies about Freemasonry and the planet Saturn. Occult antisemitic theories about worship of Saturn and its alleged expression in black cubes have recently gained some exposure, after famous American rapper Ice Cube promoted them on Twitter.<sup>61</sup> There does not seem to be much secondary literature systematically reviewing this strain of antisemitic mysticism in contemporary popular culture. But this mysticism seems to have been fueled by NASA's discovery of a hexagonal cloud pattern over the planet Saturn in the 1980s, which stirred fantasies about "a higher alien power [...] interfering with the planet [...]. Conspiracy theorists have suggested the hexagon [...] is an Illuminati structure, an alien spacecraft or even the gates to Hell."<sup>62</sup> This mystical interpretation of a scientific discovery apparently draws on a mixture of various ancient Roman and Greek religious, mythological, and astrological concepts, according to which Saturn is the name of a deity but also a malignant planet and a planet associated with Jews.<sup>63</sup> Based on the observation that the cross section of a cube amounts to a hexagon, the Saturn-conspiracy fantasy relates cubes of all sorts to the hexagonal cloud patterns over Saturn and the mystical meaning that they attribute to it. Cubes in various places and of all kinds are then interpreted as traces of the hallucinated Satanic Jewish power associated with Saturn. This, at least, appears to evolve from content that promote the Saturn conspiracy belief, including the here reviewed video, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'... ," which embeds the occult fantasy into an anti-American narrative. The picture starts out with a survey of Freemason sites in Washington, DC. It then develops into a narration that uses video sequences, iconography, animated geographical shapes, biblical quotations and mystical tunes to associate America, Freemasonry, Judaism, Saturn, and occult satanic forces. All this is connected to an anti-globalist message which equates the coexistence of different faiths with delusion and mayhem, visually represented by representations of the mythological Babylonian tower's demise.<sup>64</sup> In the end, the video leaves the viewer with the impression that the United States of America is the headquarter of a Jewish-Saturnian satanic force that uses Freemasonry as its executive arm to destroy the world by imposing coexistence. The picture heavily

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61 Cf. Bricks, "Rapper Ice Cube Receives Backlash."

62 P. Baldwin, "Alien Activity: What is this Huge Perfect HEXAGON on the Surface of Saturn?" *Express*, July 20, 2017, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/science/830627/Saturn-hexagon-aliens-rings-ufo-Voyager-Cassini>.

63 S. Sela, "Saturn and the Jews," Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, issued November 10, 2017, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://katz.sas.upenn.edu/resources/blog/saturn-and-jews>.

64 RISE, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'," 14:00 – 14:18.

relies on animations of symbols and geometrical shapes. Here, I can only describe a few key moments from the fifteen-minute clip. About three minutes into the video, we hear a voice announcing: “Washington D.C. is a masonic city [...]. It was laid out like a [...] tree of life in the Jewish Kabbalah or a masonic coffin. Freemasonry is Judaism for the gentiles.”<sup>65</sup> Approximately one minute later, the video features imagery from the Temple Room inside the landmark Scottish Rite Building in Washington, DC. We see the altar in its middle, which is engraved with the inscription of Genesis 1:3 “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” in Hebrew letters. The fact that the black marble platform has a cubical shape leads the speaker in the video to conclude that he would be standing in front of the “black cube of Saturn.”<sup>66</sup> This assertion is followed up by a voice from the off, quoting the altar’s inscription, emphasizing that the inscription is in Hebrew.<sup>67</sup> Then we are shown various black cubes, amongst others, the Kaaba of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.<sup>68</sup> A few seconds later we again see the altar in the Scottish Rite building as if to confirm its identity with the other previously shown black cubes.<sup>69</sup> The camera, then, zooms in on a Star of David, right next to a Freemason emblem at the Temple Room’s ceiling.<sup>70</sup> Now everything is about the Star of David. The viewer is shown three red stars of David in front of a white background. Each of the three stars frames the number “6,”<sup>71</sup> adding up to the figure “666,” often commonly associated with the “Beast of Revelation” in the Christian Bible (Rev 13:18) and with the “Anti-christ.” Furthermore, the three stars are underwritten with the lines “6 points, 6 triangles and 6 sides,” apparently suggesting a geometrical match of the Star of David with the Hexagon over Saturn, visualized in the following scene. Here the Star of David is projected into a satellite images of the hexagonal cloud over Saturn, as if to demonstrate that it fits perfectly in there.<sup>72</sup> Much of the remainder of the video relates the Star of David to the geometrical shape of the Saturn-hexagon and to (other) representations of satanic and evil forces. At minute 9:48 we see a Star of David framing the head of Baphomet,<sup>73</sup> the

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65 *Ibid.*, 3:14–3:31.

66 *Ibid.*, 4:08–4:25.

67 *Ibid.*, 4:25–4:44.

68 *Ibid.*, 4:44–4:48.

69 *Ibid.*, 4:48–4:56.

70 *Ibid.*, 4:56–5:07.

71 *Ibid.*, 5:07–5:12.

72 *Ibid.*, 5:12–5:27.

73 *Ibid.*, 9:48–10:01.

mythological creature that often is associated with Satan-worship.<sup>74</sup> In the preceding scene, the Star of David is framing a Swastika.<sup>75</sup> Before that the video features imagery of the 9/11 terror attack. The date of the attack is represented in the Roman numbers “IX XI” which then, in an animation of the numbers’ shapes are merged into a red Star of David, invoking a popular conspiracy fantasy that Jews are responsible for that terror attack.<sup>76</sup> In order to underpin its anti-Jewish narrative the video also makes repeated references to motives and quotes from the Bible, such as the verse from Titus 1:16: “They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him.” “They,” in the context of the full Bible quote, relates, among others, to “the circumcision group,” arguably denoting Jews.

Somewhere in between of all this, the video returns to the Scottish Rite Building as we hear the speaker declaring: “And I soon realized that this building is the Masonic Mecca of America.”<sup>77</sup> After some more cubes and Saturn images the video features an American flag covering a bird eyes view of the Scottish Rite Building.<sup>78</sup> At timecode 8:06, as we see are shown an image of the Seal of Salomon, we suddenly hear the voice from the off, quoting once more the Genesis 1:3 verse inscribed on the altar in the Scottish Rite Building’s Temple Room. As the voice speaks the words: “and the Hebrew writing in the middle says ‘god said “let there be light” and there was light’,” the video features the famous Columbia Pictures opening scene where the sun raises over the Columbia statue.<sup>79</sup> It thereby, once more, associates mystical allusions to Judaism with an icon representing America. Right after that, the video invokes “Sorcery,” followed by allusions to the Jewish mystical teachings of the Kabbalah and a display of the quote “them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie” from verse 3:9 in the New Testament’s book of Revelation.<sup>80</sup> The association of these three components is evocative of the concept of kabbalistic Satan-worshipping Jews, laid out in Gougenot des Mousseaux’s notorious late nineteenth-century antisemitic treatise “Le Juif, le judiasme et la judaïsation des people chrétiens.”<sup>81</sup>

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74 Cf. J. Morgan, “Decoding the symbols on Satan’s Statue,” *BBC News*, July 31, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-33682878>.

75 RISE, “Inside this ‘Illuminati Temple’,” 9:39–9:48.

76 *Ibid.*, 9:39–9:48.

77 *Ibid.*, 5:37–5:57.

78 *Ibid.*, 5:44–6:11.

79 *Ibid.*, 8:06–8:15.

80 *Ibid.*, 8:14–8:37.

81 Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, 41.

The video was uploaded to YouTube on October 9, 2016. By November 3, 2020 it had been viewed almost three million times (2,783,361 views to be exact). Obviously, its actual message is contingent upon what viewers make of it. Hence, we shall now turn to the 7,890 viewer comments that were written in response to the sequence,<sup>82</sup> and check whether the video indeed activates antisemitic and anti-American sentiments among its audience. The video's official description asserts that it would not be "attempting to affix prejudice upon any people group."<sup>83</sup> Yet considering the actual content of the video and the viewer comments written in response to it, this self-description sounds rather baseless if not outright cynical. I can only quote few of the many comments that echo and explicate the antisemitic and anti-American message coded in the sequence.

- Viewer *a* writes: "Israel is the capital of Satanism followed by America. The third temple will be the temple of the Anti Christ. The Anti Christ will have one eye [sic]."
- Angus heider suggests: "Freemasonry is a secular form of Judaism\_\_ Jew-merica must be destroyed\_\_ it will be [sic]."<sup>84</sup>
- Bcj writes: "Fight the real enemy. Jews [sic]."
- Frank Taglieri: "It's the same as a Jew Zionist temple they both love fucking Satan [sic]."
- *Sar Co*: "IT'S JEWS WORKS ALL ALONG !!! ISRAEL !!!! >:( [sic]."
- Al Hyde: " ...The Jews have historically subverted and perverted all religions [sic]."
- AllTheStuff: "Yupp i knew it. ISRAEL AND JEWS CONTROLS USA [sic]."
- John Doe: "... Jews/Israel, this is the synagogue of Satan ... [sic]."
- Amna Farooq: "USA and Christians have been used by the zionists to achieve their goal of making a secular world....I. e fake anti christ.....USA have been helping them out from decades and now isreal has used USA so much and achieved their results of complete power in every institution of world so now they will easily [sic]."
- Lovee titan: "Zionists control America and the whole world [sic]."
- Diana Lunkuse: "So many things happen in America, no no wonder they waship Lucifer [sic]."
- One day I will be big: "The devil is in America [sic]."

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<sup>82</sup> That was the number of comments on November 3, 2020.

<sup>83</sup> RISE, "Inside this 'Illuminati Temple'".

<sup>84</sup> Note here the pun "Jewmerica," merging "Judaism" and "America" into one term.

The examples quoted above represent only some of the many viewer responses that explicate the antisemitic and anti-American messages coded in the video.

Echoing a typical feature of antisemitism, many of the above reviewed content employ a cynical inversion of hate speech an enlightenment, framing their anti-Jewish and anti-American defamation as an act of enlightening humanity about its alleged hidden enslaver. This is often connected to calls upon the audience to join an active resistance against those hallucinated evil forces. At the final stage of the opening act of the previously reviewed “Killuminati 4.0” video, we hear the lines: “If you hear this, you are part of the resistance.”<sup>85</sup> In the video “Killuminati 2.0,” the performer raps towards the end: “I am a warrior of information. A war is going on. This is my struggle against those who are above us. Raise your fist to the revolution. My weapon is the microphone and my rap the ammunition.”<sup>86</sup> It might be taking it a bit too far to directly connect the rapper’s words “my struggle” with Adolf Hitler’s “my struggle.” And yet, in both cases the expression invokes redemptive struggle against an evil force associated or identified with Jews.

Despite increasing efforts to restrict the circulation of hate speech on social media, none of the herein quoted content, except for one, has been deleted or restricted to date (November 5, 2020). Hence, the internet and social media, after all, facilitates an effective dissemination of hate speech. Distorting their defamation as an educative act of enlightening humanity about its alleged enslavers, producers of antisemitic and anti-American content therefore often frame the internet as a weapon in what they view as an emancipatory struggle to liberate humanity from the hallucinated oppression of a powerful conspiracy that is also believed to control and censor conventional media outlets such as TV and newspapers. To be sure, throughout my research I also came across a lot of communication which claim that the internet is being censored by the same imagined secretive totalitarian regime that also controls the rest of the media. Current efforts to restrict online hate speech are often viewed as an expression of Jewish control.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, disseminators of online hate speech often present their social media content as bastions of “enlightenment” in the face of an allegedly controlled “mainstream” media. They often instruct their audiences to dismiss television and the quality press and to obtain “information” from fringe social media accounts and websites, euphemistically presented as “alternative sources.” In the initially reviewed hip-hop-video, “Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” the per-

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<sup>85</sup> Ukvali TV, “Kulluminati 4.0,” 1:08–1:14.

<sup>86</sup> Ukvali TV, “Ukvali – Killuminati 2.0 (Official Video),” 2:58–3:08.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Neugröschel, “The Donald Trump Theodicy.”

former raps: “Please do not believe anything anymore that you see on TV. Everything is a lie, everything is censored. Burn the newspapers the manipulate the masses. Throw away your TV and free yourself. Information is following, the truth is what I write.”<sup>88</sup> A German hip hop track on YouTube titled “info warrior song” (infokrieger-song)<sup>89</sup> includes the vocals:

The media censors (...) go to the internet, open pages, inform yourself independently. We are the warriors of information. We are the warriors of information. We don't have weapons. But we will get our information that we will disseminate, pass on, something is evolving. My weapon is a fact called W-Lan.<sup>90</sup>

Employing the previously introduced code of the “red-pill” from the movie *The Matrix*, to assert a struggle against alleged deception, the track starts out with a depiction of the “red pill” underwritten with the question “Are you ready?,”<sup>91</sup> promising revelations so powerful, that viewers should be prepared.

A documentary style German YouTube video titled “Conspiracy observations for beginners,”<sup>92</sup> remarkably posted by a channel called “Enlightenment channel” (Aufklärungskanal),<sup>93</sup> appeals to its viewers:

Inform yourself, inform yourself, inform yourself. The meanest weapons of the elites are the propaganda media. They use TV programs, radio channels and newspapers to tell you things that don't have to be true. Cancel your subscriptions and inform yourself in alternative and digital media und help your friends, neighbors and relatives to do the same. Don't spread fear, but rather ask questions. Questions that can be answered with the help of the internet and the right books.<sup>94</sup>

These are just some of many examples for content which frame the internet as a weapon in an imagined struggle to “redeem” humanity from alleged oppression by a hallucinated clandestine conspiracy that would also control the media and that is associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism and/or America.

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**88** Revolutionz Muzik, “Shah Reza – Letzte Wa(h)rnung,” 3:23–3:46.

**89** Jens B, “infokrieger-song,” issued August 20, 2010, YouTube video, 2:56, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrKVkX5BXM0>.

**90** *Ibid.*, 0:48–1:20.

**91** *Ibid.*, 0:11–0:18.

**92** Aufklärungskanal!, “Verschwörungsbeobachtungen für Einsteiger! (2014),” issued May 18, 2017, YouTube video, 2:59:21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUGCAcnQJ3Y>.

**93** Aufklärungskanal!, YouTube channel, accessed November 5, 2020, [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwi9Id\\_b15jzorJohf5\\_kW4\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwi9Id_b15jzorJohf5_kW4_A).

**94** Aufklärungskanal!, “Verschwörungsbeobachtungen,” 2:44:52–2:45:22.



## IV Conclusion

I have presented social media content that reflects an often-observed intersection of antisemitism and anti-Americanism. The reviewed material demonstrates that anti-Jewish and anti-American themes often converge around conspiracy beliefs that imagine the oppression and deception of humanity by a clandestine but powerful ruling circle. Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America, are portrayed as collaborators in or representations of such an alleged evil plot. The narratives that are promoted to underpin such claims often draw on long-standing antisemitic stereotypes, traditional religious concepts, and age-old mystical ideas. Hypostatizing hallucinated conspiracies as a hidden truth, the herein reviewed content makes the claim to enlighten ignorant audiences about a clandestine reality, in which an unwitting humanity would be enslaved by obscure forces, associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism, and America. By the same token, they present themselves as a redemptive effort to emancipate humanity from this imagined enslavement. This amounts to a cynical inversion of hate speech, an enlightenment, characteristic of antisemitism throughout the ages. Motives from the popular 1999 sci-fi movie *The Matrix*, which tells the story of a struggle for humanity's redemption from the enslavement and deception of mind-controlling extra-terrestrial monsters, are frequently invoked to symbolize a self-declared redemptive quest for humanity's liberation from hallucinated Jewish-American control and manipulation. Especially prevalent are invocations of the "red-pill-blue-pill" allegory from that movie. Depicting themselves as emancipators, liberators and "warriors of information," authors present their antisemitic and anti-American social media content as "red pills" that enlighten humanity about their alleged enslavement. The internet and social media are framed as a weapon in this imagined redemptive struggle. Facilitating the effective dissemination of defamatory hate speech, which is distorted as "enlightenment" about hallucinated oppressors, the internet is seen a weapon against an imagined Jewish-American control regime that is also accused of censoring conventional media such as newspapers and TV.

The right-wing may target Jews and America as symbols of modernity, globalism and multiculturalism, viewing those developments as adverse forces from which humanity must be freed. However, the portrayal of antisemitic and anti-American defamation as an emancipatory struggle is not limited to the right. It resonates particularly well among self-declared liberals and progressives from the political left who claim to be challenging oppression, discrimination, and inequality. Indeed, antisemitism has always featured as prominent among progressives as among opponents of modernity. Nineteenth-century antisemites such as Wilhelm Marr and Eugen Dühring disseminated their Jew-hatred in the

name of a progressive-liberal worldview.<sup>95</sup> Hence, if we want the struggle against antisemitism and anti-Americanism to be effective, it is not sufficient to make pleas to stand up against defamation, discrimination, injustice and oppression, for there are not few who, erroneously but genuinely, believe that they would be promoting all these noble ends by disseminating baseless, but apparently appealing, fantasies of evil oppressive conspiracies often associated with Jews, Israel, Zionism and America.

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. M. Neugröschel, "Antisemitism as a Civil Religion: Progressive Paradigms in the Anti-Semitic Construction of German National Identity," in *Comparative Perspectives on Civil Religion, Nationalism, and Political Influence*, ed. E. Lewin et al. (Hershey: IGI Global, 2017), 106–24.

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# The Online Trade and Consumption of Jewish Figurines and Pictures of Jewish Figures in Contemporary Poland: An Antisemitic Discourse?

The selling and buying of Jewish male figurines featured in traditional Orthodox clothes, made mostly of wood but also of metal, ceramics, and plastic, as talisman or souvenir, are widespread in contemporary Poland. Of interest is the way these figurines are depicted: presented with a coin or moneybag, which is supposed to usher in good luck and wealth to its owner. In this paper we investigate the trade of figurines and pictures of Jews on the internet, whereby producers are provided with a platform of direct communication with buyers. We pay particular attention to the tone and contents of the statements. We also examine relevant discussion forums and analyze the discourse presented.

Our findings show that the online communication evolves around comments, testimonials, and related data, mostly describing the potency of these artefacts and the treatment they require in order to deliver prosperity. The discourse surrounding this phenomena can and should be read in relation to the broader historical and contemporary socio-political context, which grounds its understanding and helps to uncover the undertow of what seems at first glance to be neutral or even positive disposition but altogether continues and enshrines the well trodden path of anti-Jewish sentiment.

## Introduction

The online trade company Jubileo.pl offers a description of the figurine as follows:

Presenting a Jew with a pouch or money as an amulet for financial success has become popular at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Image of the Jew is stereotyped—it's an older man, bearded, with side curls and a yarmulke, gabardine or pelisse, well groomed. The proverb "Jew in the hallway, money in the pocket" provides advice where the picture

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(or figurine) should be hanged, and there are numerous instructions for placing the image of a Jew at home. First of all, a Jew should be taken from someone, it is not good enough to buy a figurine. The second rule is hanging or putting it upside down once in a while, so that the money collected by the Jew pours out of his pouch and stays at home. Third, it is advantageous to have the Jew holding real money, in the frame (of the picture) or in the (figure's) hand. Adhering to these principles will bring financial wealth with the Jew.<sup>1</sup>

Jews in today's Poland comprise but a minuscule share of the population—less than 0.01%.<sup>2</sup> Hence the great majority of Poles have never met a Jew in their life. Jews, however, occupy a significant space in the Polish institutional, cultural, as well as popular psyche, validating Diana Pinto's observation that “the larger



**Fig. 1:** Figurine of Jew with a Pouch, Symbol of Fortune [Jubileo.pl, Figurka Żyd z skaiewką. Symbol fortuny.] Source: <https://www.jubileo.pl/figurka-zyd-z-sakiewka-942.html>. Accessed May 26, 2020.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.jubileo.pl/figurka-zyd-z-sakiewka-942.html>, accessed April 18, 2019. Translation by the authors of this article.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Sułek, “Ordinary Poles Look at the Jews,” *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* 26, no. 2 (2012): 425–44.

the ‘Jewish space,’ the smaller the number of actual Jews.”<sup>3</sup> Against a backdrop of rapid and genuine growth of interest in Jewish matters over the past thirty years,<sup>4</sup> as well as a gradual rise in neutral and positive sentiments toward Jews,<sup>5</sup> opposite developments stand out. For example, the 2018 controversial “memory law” radically restricting freedom of speech about Polish complicity in the Holocaust;<sup>6</sup> the recent avalanche of antisemitic discourse in the social media<sup>7</sup> and mass manifestations, such as the November 11 marches (Poland’s day of independence), rife with antisemitic displays, create a confusing picture. Recent data from the local Jewish population suggests a sharp increase in anti-semitism over the past six years.<sup>8</sup> This mixed picture may be indicative of the current situation in Poland whereby politics of the past have become entangled with politics of the present<sup>9</sup> in what Snyder calls the “eternity” orientation: past and present are enmeshed into a continuous present.<sup>10</sup> The inclination in Poland toward a narrow and negativistic nationalist public discourse has already been noted in a 2007 round table study<sup>11</sup> with an emphasis on exposing the “enemies” of Poland and the Polish nation. In this context, Jewish negative stereotyping may act as a national identity building cement.<sup>12</sup>

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3 D. Pinto, *A New Jewish Identity for post-1989 Europe* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 1996), 7.

4 Cf. R. E. Gruber, *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); and M. Waligórska, “The Framing of the Jew: Paradigms of Incorporation and Difference in the Jewish Heritage Revival in Poland,” in *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations*, ed. S. J. Bronner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 313–34.

5 Cf. Sulek, “Ordinary Poles.”

6 Cf. B. Cohen, “The Dark Return of Polish Anti-Semitism,” *Commentary* 145, no. 3 (2018): 17–20, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/ben-cohen/dark-return-polish-anti-semitism/>.

7 Cf. R. Pankowski, “The Resurgence of Antisemitic Discourse in Poland,” *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* (2018): 21–37.

8 Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Experiences and Perceptions of Anti-Semitism: Second Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in the EU* (Luxembourg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018), [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey_en.pdf).

9 Cf. K. Williams et al., “Explaining Lustration in Central Europe: A ‘Post-Communist Politics’ Approach,” *Democratization* 12, no. 1 (2005): 22–43.

10 Cf. T. D. Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (London: Harper, 2018).

11 Cf. D. Pinto, *Voices for the Res Publica: The Common Good in Europe—Round Table Reports* (London: Institute for Jewish Policy Research, 2009).

12 Cf. Waligórska, “The Framing of the Jew.”



## The Research Context

The first documented mention of trade in Jewish figurines in Poland was traced to Krakow's Emmaus market of 1874 (an annual fair that continues to this day) when Mikołaj Wilczyński, a young bricklayer, sold three kopa (kopa = sixty items) of handmade Jewish figurines.<sup>13</sup> Olga Goldberg-Mulkiewicz situates the carving of Jewish figurines in the eighteenth-century folk tradition of wood sculpturing, among which a Jewish figure in the shape of a beehive was not uncommon (placed in apiaries to garner a good yield).<sup>14</sup> By the late nineteenth century, demand had driven the manufacture of a variety of costumed Jewish figurines—praying and studying, donning musical instruments but also featured as the devil. In the aftermath of World War II, Jewish figurines were no longer made, sold, or displayed. But a 1977 Emmaus market competition organised by the Krakow History Museum jointly with the Millennium Association of Folk and Artistic Handicrafts Producers, featured at least one producer, a certain Zdzisław Dudzik, who offered Jewish figurines.<sup>15</sup>

The fall of communism brought with it a decisive material change to the motif of the Jewish figurine,<sup>16</sup> their most prominent attribute being a shiny one *grosz* coin—normally oversized compared to the size of the figurine, which is held by the figurine or is embedded in it. There are also pictures displaying a Jewish person seated behind a desk with a heap of gold coins, or absorbed in a book, carefully studying it. The figurine and the picture are believed to usher in “good luck,” money more specifically, to its keeper. The purchaser of these artefacts takes them home (unless, which is also customary, they are offered as gifts) to display, sometimes as part of a collection, serving as talisman, protector of the premises and its inhabitants, and bearer of good luck and ma-

13 Cf. B. Pilichowska, “Krakowskie zabawki odpustowe przedstawiające Żydów,” [“Krakow's Church Fair Toys Depicting Jews,”] *Polska Sztuka Ludowa* 43, nos. 1–2 (1989): 129–33.

14 Cf. O. Goldberg-Mulkiewicz, “Postać Żyda w polskiej rzeźbie ludowej,” [“The Figure of the Jew in Polish Sculpting,”] *Polska Sztuka Ludowa—Konteksty* 34, nos. 3–4 (1980): 219–26.

15 Cf. E. Duda, “Krakowskie odpusty Wielkanocne Krzysztofory,” [“Krakow's St. Christopher's Easter Church Fairs,”] *Krakow* 6 (1979): 88–95.

16 Cf. R. E. Gruber, “Beyond Virtually Jewish: Monuments to Jewish Experience in Eastern Europe.” in *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations*, ed. S. J. Bronner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 335–56; and E. T. Lehrer, “Niepokojące pamiątki: kurator i muzeum w strefie konfliktów kulturowych (tłum. E. Klekot)” [“Disturbing Souvenirs: Curator and Museum in the Cultural Conflict Zone, trans. E. Klekot”] *ZWAM: Zbiór Wiadomości Antropologii Muzealnej* 2 (2015): 175–200, <http://zwam.ptl.info.pl/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/21-Lehrer-2.pdf>.

terial wealth. Increasingly one finds these figurines displayed at work places, offices, and in shops too.<sup>17</sup> In Krakow, in addition to the Emmaus market held annually on the second day of Easter, featuring stalls specialising in Jewish figurines, one finds them in practically all the souvenir shops in town, as indeed elsewhere throughout Poland.

Recent years have evidenced a growing mass media interest in the wealth-generating Jewish figurine in Poland and abroad. However, it attracted less attention in academe.<sup>18</sup> Scholars' common depiction of these figurines is as a symbol of deeply nostalgic memorabilia, with the specter of past Jewish Poland and the Holocaust never far away.<sup>19</sup> Among scholarly accounts, Erica Lehrer's stands out.<sup>20</sup> Lehrer views the Jewish figurines sold in Kazimierz (Krakow's historical Jewish neighborhood) and throughout Poland as objects of post-Jewish culture production, to include post-Holocaust tourism, contemporary Jewish cultural festivals (notably in Krakow), and the general interest in the Jewish-Polish past (and present) pervading Polish intellectual and popular culture. While Ruth Ellen Gruber highlights the oft-grotesque depiction of Jewish materiality in comparison to the actual reality and the past,<sup>21</sup> for Lehrer this poses an opportunity to ask questions about identity, memory, and possible reconciliation. Jewish figurines, as well as other traces of Jewish culture production in contemporary Poland in Lehrer's view, are "everyday works of tolerance."<sup>22</sup> They transform nar-

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17 Cf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, "The Jew with the Coin: An Analysis of a Contemporary Folkloric Emblem," unpublished paper, accessed May 26, 2020, [https://www.academia.edu/8995968/The\\_Jew\\_with\\_a\\_Coin\\_Analysis\\_of\\_a\\_contemporary\\_folkloric\\_emblem](https://www.academia.edu/8995968/The_Jew_with_a_Coin_Analysis_of_a_contemporary_folkloric_emblem).

18 Cf. S. Epstein, "Imaging Hasidim in Wood and PVC: Hasidic Figurines Made Today in Poland, Ukraine and Israel," *Zutot* 6, no. 1 (2009): 131–40.

19 Cf. J. Marlow, review of *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places*, by Erica T. Lehrer, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 29, no. 2 (2015): 298–301; and J. D. Zimmerman, ed., *Contested Memories: Poles and Jews During the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

20 Cf. E. T. Lehrer, "Can there Be a Conciliatory Heritage?" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 16, nos. 4–5 (2010): 269–88; Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited: Heritage Tourism in Unquiet Places* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Lehrer, "Repopulating Jewish Poland—in Wood," *Polin* 16 (2003): 335–56; Lehrer, *Na szczęście to Żyd: Polskie figurki Żydów [Lucky Jews: Poland's Jewish Figurines]* (Kraków: Korporacja Haart, 2014); Lehrer, "Virtual, Virtuous, Vicarious, Vacuous? Towards a Vigilant Use of Labels," in *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations*, ed. S. J. Bronner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), 383–96; Lehrer, "Niepokojące pamiątki."

21 Cf. Gruber, "Beyond Virtually Jewish"; Gruber, "The Last Word," in *Framing Jewish Culture: Boundaries and Representations*, ed. S. J. Bronner (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014); 397–402; Gruber *Virtually Jewish*.

22 Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*, 17–18.

row interpretations of the complex Polish-Jewish relationship by showing “how historical wounds can be both perpetuated and transcended, how new bridges can be built over old fissures, and the unanticipated companionship sometimes involved in managing the past.”<sup>23</sup> Lehrer was also the curator of an exhibition that took the format of a public dialogue, named “Souvenir, Talisman, Toy” in Krakow in Summer 2013 and which triggered debate in the media. Other scholars contextualized the Jewish figurine phenomenon as fitting into a Slavic tradition whereby peace to the household and good fortune required interaction with domestic demons.<sup>24</sup> Hence the material object of the figurine embodies a magical demonic force that demands special ritualized treatments.<sup>25</sup>

Recent years have seen a drastic expansion of trade in business-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer online. It was estimated, based on a world-wide survey, that at least seventy percent of survey respondents were undertaking some form of online consumer goods shopping activity,<sup>26</sup> and user penetration in Poland is estimated to encompass two thirds of the population.<sup>27</sup> The internet has also emerged as a major opinion exchange and opinion-making forum, whether through generic platforms such as Facebook or Twitter or in dedicated platforms, with the number of postings counting in the hundreds of millions. And there is a dark side too, notably when it comes to Jewish matters. In a comprehensive study of antisemitic discourse on German online sites, Monika Schwarz-Friesel found a three-fold increase in anti-Jewish content in internet “traffic” over a ten-year period. She concludes, “Internet communication thus accelerates both the transmission as well as the acceptance and normalization of anti-Jewish content.”<sup>28</sup> In post-communist Poland, a heightened sensitivity around censorship and freedom of speech may have accelerated antisemitic online discourse due

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23 Ibid., 17.

24 Cf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, “Żyd z pieniążkiem podbija Polskę,” [“A Jew with a Coin Conquers Poland,”] *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 18, 2012, [https://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,11172689,Zyd\\_z\\_pieniazkiem\\_podbija\\_Polske.html?disableRedirects=true](https://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,11172689,Zyd_z_pieniazkiem_podbija_Polske.html?disableRedirects=true).

25 Cf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi: Antropologia przesądu [Blood Legends: An Anthropology of Exaggeration]* (Warsaw: W.A.B., 2008).

26 Cf. P. Roesler, “New Research Reveals More Consumers Are Shopping Online for Everyday Items,” *Inc.*, April 16, 2018, <https://www.inc.com/peter-roesler/new-research-reveals-more-consumers-are-shopping-online-for-everyday-items.html>.

27 Cf. “eCommerce,” Statista, issued 2019, accessed May 26, 2020. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/243/146/ecommerce/poland>.

28 M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate: Hostility towards Jews as a Cultural Constant and Collective Emotional Value in the Digital Age* (Short Version) (Berlin: Technical University of Berlin, 2018), [https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism\\_2.0\\_short\\_version\\_final2.pdf](https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism_2.0_short_version_final2.pdf), 11.

to the authorities' reluctance to mount a legal challenge against such expressions.<sup>29</sup>

While the extant literature describes and debates the meaning of the phenomenon of Jewish figurines, to date we have only anecdotal evidence from the protagonists themselves—those most intimately engaged with the subject: producers, sellers, buyers—as to their reasons for this engagement and the meanings they attach to its practice. With the exception of one study,<sup>30</sup> no other documented research comments on the online “presence” of the fortune-bearing figurine phenomenon, whether as a traded commodity or as a subject of public debate. We wish to rectify that in this paper and pose the following research questions:

- What aspects of wealth creation is the figurine endowed with?
- Why does the figurine hold these powers?
- How is the figurine activated (*its modus operandi*)?
- What are the artifacts' details, such as materials, size, and cost?

## Methods

We conducted two studies over an eighteen-month period, searching the internet for information about Jewish figurines. In each study there were two periods of data collection. The first period of data collection was conducted August–September 2017 with a follow up in February–April 2019.

The approach we took was of an inductive qualitative inquiry,<sup>31</sup> appropriate to an under-researched topic, anchored in an interpretative paradigm. We asked basic “what,” “how” and “why” questions, namely: what does the online statement say, and what is the logic for saying so (where such an inference could safely be made from the text), aiming to generate reflexivity.<sup>32</sup> In each website we examined all the relevant cases that came up in our search according to the key words employed (see below). We did not opt for pre-set categories so as to avoid bias and allow the phenomenon to reveal itself.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. K. Gebert, “Poland and the New Anti-semitism,” *Index on Censorship* 43, no. 1 (2014): 96–99.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Tokarska-Bakir, “The Jew with the Coin.”

<sup>31</sup> Cf. M. Saunders et al., *Research Methods for Business Students* (Harlow: Pearson, 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. D. Jemielniak and M. Ciesielska, “Qualitative Research in Organization Studies,” in *Qualitative Methods in Organization Studies* (New York: Springer, 2018), 1–5.

Each identified case was manually content-analyzed<sup>33</sup> for the identification of themes and patterns in the data.<sup>34</sup> Our analysis aimed to recognize patterns (what and how questions) and obtain explanations (why questions).

## Study 1: Figurine Trade on the Internet

The initial data collection was conducted from August 29, 2017 to September 3, 2017, examining the most relevant popular Polish online sites<sup>35</sup> offering figurines and paintings featuring Jews. These were: Allegro.pl, Olx.pl, Jubileo.pl, Caneo.pl, Pamiątki.pl, Doye!, Sprzedajemy.pl, rzezbazdrewna.republika.pl, dolinakultury.pl, and savaart.flog.pl. The aspects explored covered all products being offered on the website, their price, and advertising statements that appeared in the description of the items. Keywords searched: Żydek (Jew boy), Żyd (Jew), Żydki (Jews), Żyd figurka (Jewish figurine), Żyd obraz (Jew painting), Żyd i praca (Jew and work). The follow up data collection was carried out on three days between February 20, 2019 to April 10, 2019 applying the same key words to the same online sites.<sup>36</sup>

*Allegro.pl* is probably the most popular online marketplace. In the course of our investigation, we identified 35 paintings and 117 figurines. Prices varied widely from 2.99 zł to 550.00 zł. Typical accompanying statements include this detailed one:

“Jew in the hall—money in the pocket!”

“The picture with the image of a Jew is considered a symbol of fortune, prosperity or success. They are meant to bring happiness. In many forums and discussions, people who bought the picture confirm that after buying a picture with the image of a Jew, their fate has changed, they finally smiled happily, they got rid of troubles, worries or sorrows. So do not wait! Buy a picture of a Jew so you also will be happy in your home.” The same advert offers an incentive to buyers in the form of free adds-on:

“For all who buy the picture we have super gifts:

- 1) one NAIL IN GOLD COLOR—symbolizes the end of your problems<sup>37</sup>;
- 2) one GROSIK—the symbol of happiness;

33 Cf. K. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2004).

34 Cf. K. Locke, *Grounded Theory in Management Research* (London: Sage, 2001).

35 As per <https://www.similarweb.com/top-websites/poland/category/shopping>, last updated April 1, 2020, accessed May 26, 2020.

36 All preceding quotes were translated from Polish to English by the authors of this article.

37 In Polish—“gwóźdź do trumny”—“nail into the coffin” means doomed to failure.

3) one EUROCENT—same such coin in the European edition.”

There are several versions of the pictures, with headings such as: “Jew’s table,” “Jew with a lemon,” “Jew with a newspaper,” “Jew with a flashlight,” “Jew with a candle,” “Jew with a glass of wine.” These pictures are produced in wholesale quantities; their price is about 3 zł. Similar ads on Allegro.pl refer to the sale of figurines as “TALISMAN FOR WEALTH!!! Jew at home brings happiness and wealth.”

On *Pamiątki.pl* 24 items were examined (price range 6 zł, 10 zł, 17 zł), with an emphasis on gift giving, for example:

An excellent souvenir from Krakow in the form of a Jewish figurine with magnet; it can be put on the fridge door. The magnets are laser-cut in plywood which gives an impressive three-dimensional appearance of the model.

On *Doye!* 57 items were found. The manufacturers specialize in magnets or pendants of figurines holding a *grosz* (golden coin) or a musical instrument, with the slogans “For the money and all the good fortune,” “for luck and success” (price range 12.50 zł, to 30.00 zł). In its offer the company also includes standing figurines at a price of 6 zł to 125 zł.

*Sprzedajemy.pl* is the largest free classifieds site in Poland with a large section on handicrafts. On this selling platform, the search found a total of 53 listings in our first search in 2017 and 47 items 18 months later. About a third of these were secondhand items (mostly paintings), and the rest were new (a broad range of figurines and paintings). Jewish figurines were commonly made of wood, some of clay. A typical advert comprised information on the item’s aesthetic value and technical details (e. g., type of wood and dimensions), explanation of what could be expected as result of purchasing the product is also emphasized, and some ads suggest the best occasion to buy the item and how to display it:

Figurine made of clay, painted by hand with attention to every detail. A very impressive interior decoration for home or office. Jews’ wisdom (know-how) to get rich and be happy, is derived from the Torah. The Jew has always been a symbol of success in business and personal life. I recommend it as a perfect and original gift idea for a new home, for the opening of a new business or as a decoration for an office space.

The artisan-crafted Jewish figurines start at upwards of 90 zł. A typical advert runs:

Today for sale I have figurines made of linden wood. The figures depict Jews with bags, crates and barrels of money that bring success in finance. Perfect for a unique gift.

At the craftsman's own website *Firma Wood-World Michał Widziszewski* one reads:

Jewish figurines made in lime tree, painted, stained and pasted. They present various figures such as accountants, bankers, musicians. Possibility to order any quantity. Perfect gift idea. Figures endowed with good luck.<sup>38</sup>

The paintings on sale usually depict a Jewish man in traditional or business attire, counting money. An advert for a picture titled “Jew with money” states:

According to many people it really works. Superstition is very popular among financiers, bankers, brokers—anywhere where money matters. A Jew who counts money has positive associations as a symbol of a great businessman who wisely invests and wisely saves money. Jews have always been and are a financial elite, have multi-generational traditions of activity in the financial markets, associated with wise and cautious investment. A Jew whose money has only positive associations is a good superstition about a successful man who is specialized in trading and knows how to make money. This is a good example for us and a source of benefits. The figurine should be placed near the entrance door to the house; and in a business, located at the entrance.

This is the longest statement found online for selling a painting, echoing common arguments many other sellers use. It captures the tone and sentiment of the typical advertisement, aiming to capitalize on ingrained folkloric beliefs.

*Olx.pl* is a nationwide service for advertisements, where figurines and pictures of Jews for sale are placed in the category of “interior decorations” as well as under “hobbies/collections.” We found 35 items, mostly paintings, with a wide price range 5 zł to 900 zł. The *Jubileo.pl* website, which sells women's and men's jewelry, also features figurines. An example of an item for sale (the accompanying explanation is the opening paragraph of this article) is titled: “Figurine of Jew with Seal Symbol of Fortune.” The subtitle reads: “Standing Jewish figurine with pouch, made of base metal in the color of old gold” (see image 1.) *Dolina Kultury* is an online shop selling artistic handicrafts that also offers wooden figurines. The content of one of the ads reads:

Figurine of a Jew holding a violin carved from linden wood and waxed. It is said to bring fortune—as the old folk proverb says, “Who hasn't got a Jew at home—that person is awaiting poverty.”

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38 <http://rzezbazdrewna.republika.pl/> [no longer accessible].

The advertised figure sells for 350 zł.

*Ceneo.pl* is an online price comparison site where one can find shops offering, among other gadgets, Jewish figurines. For example, a figurine alongside a wooden box on the shop page “Stylish Souvenirs”<sup>39</sup> or on the website *sklepzupominkami.com.pl*: “Jewish figurine. Jew with *grosz*. For (gaining) a lot of money.”<sup>40</sup> On *Saavart.flog.pl*, ads can be found of figurines such as those sold at the time of Emmaus in Krakow:

Figurines of Jews (tradition of the Emmaus of Krakow). Figures about 25–35 cm. high. Moving on mysterious springs ;-) the effect of our work. Collector’s Edition.<sup>41</sup>

## In Summary

Figurines and related objects (pictures) are abundant in online Polish consumer sites. They are advertised primarily as objects that are to bring financial success and prevent financial failure or protect against unnecessary expenses. The figurines or pictures most commonly depict a Jewish man with a coin or another monetary/financial instrument (pouch, portfolio, accounting book). Aimed for indoor decoration or as a gift, also as a souvenir, with a wide price range reflecting the quality of the product and whether it is handmade or mass produced. Among the cheapest are magnet figurines costing a few zlotys; the most expensive are artistic handicrafts (several dozen to several hundred zlotys). The ads often advise on how and where to display the image and sometimes provide elaborate handling instructions.

## Study 2: Online Forums

The first phase of data collection was conducted over two weeks in September 2017. Overall 57 comments were counted that relate directly to the trade and collection of Jewish figurines and pictures. In early March 2019, these forums were revisited and the lack of new comments was apparent.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.stylowe-upominki.pl/en/p/SKRZYNKA-NA-KEYS-WOODEN-ZYD-NA-luck/2148> [no longer accessible].

<sup>40</sup> <http://sklepzupominkami.com.pl/na-szczescie/2749-figurka-zyda-zydek-naszczescie.html> [no longer accessible].

<sup>41</sup> <http://savaart.flog.pl/wpis/4573697/zydki-emausowe-figurki-o-wysokosci-okolo-2535-cm-por-uszajace-sie-na-tajemniczych-sprezynach>, issued April 1, 2012, accessed May 26, 2020.



## Szafal (szafal.pl)<sup>42</sup>

Under the heading “for luck,” the question this forum debates is how to hang a picture depicting a Jew in order “to make it happy” (note that the artifact is imbued with life-like qualities, such as the ability to be made “happy”). An exchange took place between 2009 and 2013. Here are some comments:

I have heard that a Jewish picture hung in the house (usually near the entrance door) guarantees money at home. Some people believe that the general possession of any Jewish figurine makes our money “held”... but is it right to believe so? In my opinion this is just superstition, although I don’t mind .... faith works wonders [asiunia2706, October 21, 2011.]

My mom has a figurine, she has to put it upside down on Friday and turn it back upright on Sunday, I guess. But my mother is not a good example of the miraculous power of the Jew... [Ilmina, October 21, 2011.]

... I have not heard of the advantages of a Jew, but if a Jew is successful, I will gladly invite him to my home. [Yrsa, February 20, 2009]

(...) I don’t believe it, but on the other hand ... Don’t mind it to hang for me ... or maybe just happily to smile to me ... :))) [aagaa, February 21, 2009]

(...) I have had 3 Jewish figurines in my house for a few years now and I find that there is something in it. I will not write here that I made a fortune and I have villas with a swimming pool and 3 cars; no :) but I don’t complain and somehow am successful with everything. Maybe that’s the case and maybe it just affects positive thinking ... I don’t know, I believe in it and I will not give them to anyone. It is said that to bring on this wealth you have to get it (the figurine) from someone and not buy it yourself :) [Anonymous, June 20, 2010]

## Sklep z Upominkami (sklepszupominkami.com.pl.)<sup>43</sup> and Srebrna Agrafka (http://www.srebrnaagrafka.pl)<sup>44</sup>

These websites provide explanations about the importance of Jewish images and figurines as well as tips on how to engage with them so as to make one successful:

The Jews have always symbolized great businessmen, wise and scrupulous people. That’s why the figurine has two things: it attracts money and protects you from unnecessary expenses.

There are, however, several rules for the Jew to make financial success:

<sup>42</sup> <http://forum.szafa.pl/84/4746068/zydek-na-szczescie.html>, accessed May 26, 2020.

<sup>43</sup> <http://sklepszupominkami.com.pl/na-szczescie/2259-figurka-zydek-na-szczescie-prezent.html> [no longer accessible].

<sup>44</sup> <http://srebrnaagrafka.pl/sklep/anielskiewariacje/produkt/zydek-na-szczescie-i-pieniadze> [no longer accessible].

- 1) Jew should be middle-aged with beard and gray—which symbolizes his maturity, knowledge and experience.
- 2) Should hold (count) money
- 2) Hang the figurine in the corridor above the entrance door or the left side of the door, which symbolizes successful business, and always look at him before leaving the house.
- 3) At the end of the year and on Saturday (Sabbath day), turn the figurine upside down and shake it, so the accumulated money will return to the house where it belongs to.
- 4) At the workplace the figurine should be in the boss's office to make the business profitable.

### **Bobemajse (bobemajse.blogspot.com)<sup>45</sup>**

This exchange took place in September 2011. Here are some excerpts:

(...) as the old folk wisdom says, when one can't change something, one must love one another. Fight the superstition of grabbing the button and counting up to ten at the chimney sweep, or the temptation to touch the humpbacked "for luck"? It's more or less the same category as a Jew with mammon. [Anonymous, September 11, 2009]

Such images have long been disgusting me, there are plenty of them (you did not notice?), Because there is a superstition that such a picture or figure bring happiness in business. It's a curiosity even in my local pizzeria:) And in many homes. It is depressing, but it testifies to some pre-war associations. Such a grim calling. [Sara, June 5, 2011]

In many homes of friends of my mother's age—hanging on the walls, among the images of angels, hangs a portrait of a Jew counting money. I once asked my mother why a Jewish man with money is hanging there (I didn't know anything about the meaning of that portrait) and I received the explanation that such a portrait brings financial HAPPINESS. Just as the angels take care of the peace and health of the household members, the portrait of the Jew is to bring about a lack of hunger, financial liquidity, a sense of (financial) security (...) [Green Canoe, June 14, 2011]

### **Forum Rzeźbiarzy (forum.rzezbierz.idl.pl)<sup>46</sup>**

Commentaries refer to the fact that the main purpose of owning and collecting figurines is financial gain and happiness:

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<sup>45</sup> <http://bobemajse.blogspot.com/2011/09/bez-komentarza.html>, issued September 10, 2011, accessed May 26, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.forum.rzezbierz.idl.pl/viewtopic.php/t=1322&start=60&sid=b56f9b2ebfd012932354fba035b8d53f> [no longer accessible].

Hello, Mirek, thanks for visiting, I will tell you honestly that the Jew fad is not bad. (...) [koand, April 28, 2011]

The Jews are fairy-tale without proportion, it is a symbol to bring happiness [wacek 721, May 5, 2011]

## Summary of the Discourse

With various extrapolations (on superstitious beliefs, Jews and Poles in general) the discourse focuses on providing or refuting evidence about the efficacy of the figurines (pictures) to usher in wealth and good fortune to their owners. The attitude toward these objects is functional and confined to their “utility.” Few comment on relevant aesthetic (decorative, ornamental) aspects.

## Discussion

The Jewish figurine as an aide-mémoire of Jews in Polish history fluctuates between personal and collective memory of the past,<sup>47</sup> yet principally evoked here and now is its utility in the service of an individual’s finances in the context of the new, post-Communist Polish market economy. Thus the phenomenon of trading figurines of Jews on the internet is truly contemporary, capturing the transformative journey of Poland from a socialist command economy to private facing capitalist enterprise, along with current tastes, purchasing trends, and new methods of marketing.

The essentialization of the figurine as a magic-demonic device for enrichment and avoidance of financial mishap also serves to emphasize the differences between “us” (Poles) and “them” (Jews). This mindset is prone to stereotyping, which in Polish history of the past century has been overwhelmingly negative.<sup>48</sup> The discourse around these artefacts is mostly concerned with procedures to enact them; an exchange between experienced “figurine handlers” and the novices who look out for guidance from those well versed in the incantation procedure.

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. Nowak, “Żydowsy sąsiedzi: o więziach społecznych w pamięci mieszkańców południowej Polski,” [“Jewish Neighbors: On Social Bonds in the Memory of the Inhabitants of Southern Poland,”] *Lud* 100 (2016): 209–32, <https://apcz.umk.pl/czasopisma/index.php/LUD/article/view/lud100.2016.00/14543>.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Tokarska-Bakir, *Legendy o krwi*.

It is difficult to reconcile our data with Polish benevolent, conciliatory, bridge-building well-meanings, such that Lehrer finds.<sup>49</sup> That is so whether we consider the grotesque deed itself,<sup>50</sup> whereby symbolic violence is mitigated against a figure of an old man (hanging it upside down), imbuing it with magic powers to enrich or ruin—unsurprisingly, in the latter case, the figure may end going up in smoke (literally, with unavoidable shocking Shoah connotations) as Tokarska-Basir reports the following exchange on the internet:

Dear friends! I must warn you! Recently, I have tried out the Jew myself, and I still can't get over it! After a few months of hanging in the entrance hall, he just let us go bankrupt. My husband threw him in the fire, and he didn't even allow me to keep the frame.<sup>51</sup>

Neither does the overall cultural/linguistic context facilitate a neutral (let alone positive) interpretation.<sup>52</sup> The standard reference words *Żyd*, *Żydzi*, *Żydy*, *Żydki* are well ingrained in the Polish language and culture with a clear pejorative bias.<sup>53</sup> Incantation references dominate the trading discourse on the internet, and they are sufficiently robust to sideline reflection and critical thinking about the consequences of reification. Those voices that try to expose the negative connotations are the exception in this discourse.

The analytical interpretation we have undertaken deals with the visible content of the discourse, often underlined with arguments that justify conduct by offering logical explanations and “factual” evidence. However, there is also an invisible, implicit layer to the discourse, which resonates with a subconscious cultural stand. It is difficult to discern that from the narratives at our disposal, since they tend to be short and, as we do not have recourse to the protagonists generating them for further clarifications. Nevertheless, a few exchanges on the internet amount to more than a terse paragraph that may lend itself to such analysis. Thus the following vignette stands out among our examples as a complete story.

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49 Cf. Lehrer, “Can there Be a Conciliatory Heritage?”; Lehrer, *Jewish Poland Revisited*; Lehrer, “Niepokojące pamiątki.”

50 Cf. Tokarska-Basir, “The Jew with the Coin.”

51 *Ibid.*, 9.

52 Cf. A. Cała, *Wizerunek Żyda w polskiej kulturze ludowej* [*The Image of the Jew in Polish Folk Culture*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1992); and A. Wierzbicka, “Żyd, Żydzi, Żydy, Żydki: Stereotypes and Judgments Ingrained in the Polish Language,” *Acta Universitatis Lodzianae: Folia Linguistica* 49 (2015): 57–67.

53 Cf. Wierzbicka, “Żyd, Żydzi, Żydy, Żydki.”

Hello. I wanted to write something about this image. I am a businessman and I have often seen such paintings in law offices, consultancy offices, real estate brokers and I will tell you. The first time I saw this picture I didn't dare ask anyone why this picture hangs. You know why? Because I was scared to offend someone, in case it was a relative, and also because asking someone such a question might put me in an embarrassing light. After a while, and I came across this picture again, and it did not give me peace. I had such a strange feeling that finally I also hung such a picture at home. How did my business do? Before then I have been working hard but others would benefit from my work. After I hung up this image, strange things started to happen. The people I used to do business with suddenly started calling me, meeting me, and above all, playing honestly with me. So you have the answer if it really works. My hunch and lesson from life is that hard work led me to this picture—I wish not so late!<sup>54</sup>

The context here is business and enterprise. The narrator first noticed the picture of a Jew with money hanging in an office. The protagonist did not wish to enquire about it since he thought it might not be polite to do so and possibly insinuate that the owner has Jewish relatives, which may be embarrassing. Then he (let's assume it is a he) saw the picture in other similar establishments and finally acquired one. Since then his business situation changed for the better. Whereas before he may have had to chase opportunities and may have been taken advantage of, after hanging the picture, clients started to pursue him and deal with him honestly. Hence the picture acts in a dual capacity: as a good luck device it generates customers and as a shield against harm, it counteracts dishonesty.

The tone of the narrative is neutral. There are no judgmental statements except making the point that the narrator deserves the fruits of his hard work (i. e., he earned the right to find out a “trick” others benefited from), though he is somewhat unlucky not having come across it sooner. The undertone reveals the following: having a Jew as relative is embarrassing; an image of a Jew works wonders, demonstrating omnipotence, thereby attributing Jews the might to provide and to ruin. That is necessary because the world is a difficult and deceitful place. Decent folks can't succeed just by hard honest work. One needs magical (demonic?) assistance. Jews, through their image representation, can supply that. People know about this “trick,” but they may not share that knowledge willingly.

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54 <http://bobemajse.blogspot.com/2011/06/obrazu.html>, issued June 5, 2011, accessed May 26, 2020.

Shulamit Volkov's well-known thesis about antisemitism as a socio-cultural code resonates here.<sup>55</sup> Volkov considers a socio-cultural code a position on a given issue that whilst playing a marginal role in the worldview of protagonists, nevertheless holds wide-ranging ramifications. The vast majority of Poles know next to nothing about contemporary Jews. Jews do not constitute a significant object in their everyday cognitions. The perception of and about Jews however does have a bearing on their (national) identity. Polish national identity as forged through history has been marked by a self-perception of Poland as the suffering nation: Poland "Christ among nations," "the martyr of Europe,"<sup>56</sup> plagued with external as well as internal enemies, prime amongst the latter are the Jews.<sup>57</sup> The post-Communist revival of interest in Poland's Jewish past and the revelations (such as by historian Jan Tomasz Gross) about Polish complicity with Nazi atrocities, as well as post-World War II pogroms, challenges this image of Poland and Poles as victims. Jews once again, are on the Polish public agenda.

What we seem to get from this narrative is a reversed identification (transference) with the aggressor, similar to what one witnesses on the football pitches in present-day Poland,<sup>58</sup> whereby football club fans' verbal exchanges are infused with insults and derogatory remarks about Jews. In these remarks, dominated by re-imagining Poland under Nazi occupation, the "attacking" fans assume the role of the Nazi persecutor, while their rivals are the suffering Jews. In our case here the image of the omnipotent Jew, represented in the shape of a wooden (clay, plastic) figurine, is incorporated into the psychic space of the protagonist, in what William James called "the will to believe that things tell a story."<sup>59</sup>

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55 Cf. S. Volkov, "Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code: Reflections on the History and Historiography of Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany," *Yearbook of the Leo Baeck Institute* 23 (1978): 25–46; and Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism," *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 1 (2006): 51–62.

56 Cf. A. Zybała, *Polski umysł na rozdrożu: wokół kultury umysłowej w Polsce* [*The Polish Mind at a Crossroad: About Intellectual Culture in Poland*] (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH, 2016).

57 Cf. J. B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); and A. Cała, *Żyd—wróg odwieczny? Antysemityzm w Polsce i jego źródła* [*The Jew—the Eternal Enemy? Antisemitism in Poland and its Origins*] (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Nisza, 2012).

58 Cf. J. Tokarska-Bakir, "The Open Secret: Victims, Perpetrators, Witnesses and Bystanders in Polish Public Discourse at the Beginning of the 21st Century," in *Intellectual Anti-Semitism: Comparative Studies from a Global Perspective*, ed. S. K. Danielsson and F. Jacob (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2018), 223–58.

59 Quoted in D. M. Boje, *Storytelling Organizational Practices: Managing in the Quantum Age* (London: Routledge, 2014), 187.

Socio-cultural codes according to Volkov signify larger important life positions, which stand out in particular at times of crisis and polarity, as was the case, for example, during the Dreyfus affair in France. Dreyfusians and anti-Dreyfusians employed antisemitism as a marker on bigger issues such as Republicanism, the juridical system, and the role of the army in society. In our narrative the Jewish figurine plays a role in new, post-Communist Poland, with its drive for economic expansion and personal financial success. The protagonist's position is ambivalent. He wishes to join those financial success stories but that may not be achievable by one's efforts alone. The skills and competence required in the new Poland are beyond the modest honest workman; they call for magical-demonic support; and in Polish national-traditional cognition no one would do better than "The Jew." Upholding or opposing such beliefs about Jews are a marker to other key positions. According to the latest data,<sup>60</sup> present-day antisemites (who hold Jews responsible for world economic upheaval<sup>61</sup>) as against the modern "anti-antisemites"<sup>62</sup> split on a host of cardinal issues on the Polish national agenda such as the economy, religion, and political affiliation. Thus antisemitism in contemporary Poland acts as a marker, a socio-cultural code. The humble figurine of the Jew with a coin plays a key role in Polish affairs: History's vengeance?

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<sup>60</sup> The data referenced here are extensive surveys conducted in 2011 and 2012 respectively. Hence they predate the rise to power of the nationalist PiS government in 2015. Cf. Sulek, "Ordinary Poles"; and I. Krzemiński, "Polish National Antisemitism," *Polin* 31 (2019): 515–42.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism (Part 1: Antisemitism)* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1951); and Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes."

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Volkov, "Readjusting Cultural Codes"; and Krzemiński, "Polish National Antisemitism."

*tion, issues related to changes in the labor market, as well as the creation of technological networks in which the position of a human changes radically.*

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Rifat N. Bali

## Antisemitism in Turkey: A New Phenomenon or More of the Same?

In the year 1989, Turkish and Jewish business leaders came together with the leaders of Turkey's Jewish community and a number of retired Turkish diplomats to establish the *Quincentennial Foundation*, a non-profit organization formed to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of Jewish life in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. One branch of the organization was established in New York City, the apparent purpose of which was to hold similar events in the United States as well.<sup>1</sup>

The message that was repeatedly relayed to public opinion at all of the foundation's events that took place in Istanbul—and especially the ones in New York City and Washington, DC—over the four-year period between 1989 and 1992 was as follows: the Ottoman Empire and its successor state the Republic of Turkey were and are a tolerant nation, one which has served as a refuge for all manner of refugees throughout its history. Offered as the most brilliant examples of this tolerance were the Ottoman welcoming of many Spanish, or “Sephardi” Jews after their expulsion from Spain in 1492 in the wake of the Reconquista and the rescue by Turkish diplomats of dozens of Jews during the Second World War. In light of such actions, Turkey was put forward as one of the rare Islamic states where antisemitism did not exist. The official aim of this pitch was not so much to glorify—and certainly not to critically examine—the past as to put a positive face on the present. By commemorating and celebrating instances of Turkey and the Turks' historic tolerance, the true if unofficial purpose was to shore up the image of the Turkish Republic among the US public and its politicians and to thereby counter the decade of efforts by various Armenian-American organizations to lobby the White House and Congress to officially acknowledge the Armenian genocide.

In the public relations campaign developed by the Turkish regime in conjunction with the leaders of the country's Jewish community, the message to leading American opinion-makers was clear: a nation that could behave with

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed study of the foundation and its activities, see R. N. Bali, *Model Citizens of the State: The Jews of Turkey During the Multi-Party Period*, trans. P. F. Bessemer (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2014), 310–29.

such tolerance toward its Jewish minority could not have committed the crimes against humanity that it has been accused of, namely, the Armenian genocide.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, this account has little or no connection with Turkey's historical reality, since there have been various forms and manifestations of antisemitism in Turkey since the Republic was declared in 1923. Regardless of which party was in power or what political view held sway, Turkey's Jewish population has faced discrimination and been treated in many ways as de facto second-class citizens. Moreover, one of the unintended results of the *Quincentennial Foundation's* various activities between 1989 and 1992 was the increased visibility of Turkish Jews within the public sphere, which often brought harsh reactions from the Islamist sector and, ironically, thereby served as a stimulus to the significant increase in antisemitic literature and publications in Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

In the elections held exactly one decade after the end of the *Quincentennial's* activities in 1992, Turkey elected its first ever Islamist government by a large margin. The Justice and Development Party or AKP had begun as a breakaway Islamist party, separating itself from the Islamist-Nationalist "National Vision" (*Milli Görüş*) movement of Necmettin Erbakan, the founding father of political Islam in Turkey, and repudiating the political past of Turkey's Islamists while still retaining Islamist values and references, and preferring to style itself as an Islamic version of Europe's various Christian Democratic parties. The AKP would go from strength to strength, handily winning successive elections in 2007, 2011, and 2015. The international press would publish frequent articles on how the secular Turkish Republic was being transformed under an Islamist government, and this interest would be increased further by the attempted coup d'état by a military cabal in 2016. Another frequent Turkish subject taken up by the international press were that reports of increasing antisemitism in Turkey under AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the resulting exodus of Turkey's Jews.

But is this really the case? This is what I would like to discuss in my article.

## Antisemitism During the Single Party Period (1923 – 1946)

Antisemitism has existed in Turkey from the establishment of the Republic in 1923 to our day. It has manifested itself in various forms and manners over this time, depending on the period according to the ideological currents then

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 268–300 and 310–29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 324–25.

dominant. During the so-called Single Party Period (1923–1945), during which time Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his colleagues ran the country within the framework of the Republican Peoples Party they founded, and with the expressed aim of “secularizing” Turkish society, antisemitism was most clearly expressed in the economic and cultural spheres. During these years, frequent criticism was leveled at Turkish Jewry for not assimilating or “Turkifying” themselves as quickly as desired by the regime and for preferring to speak their native language of Ladino or the French they learned in Alliance schools to Turkish. Behaving in such a fashion, the argument went, showed an ingratitude toward their Turkish hosts, as they showed themselves as having either forgotten or disregarded the goodness and tolerance they were shown by the Ottoman Turks in welcoming them from Spain in 1492.<sup>4</sup> The caricatures of the Jewish couple Salamon and Rebeka found in the humor magazines of the era were practically indistinguishable from the Nazi caricatures of the period. Salamon is portrayed as a somewhat seedy, hook-nosed, miserly shyster, who is obsessed with money and speaks Turkish with a thick “Jewish” accent.<sup>5</sup> This atmosphere of hostility would be the backdrop for two important anti-Jewish incidents in Turkey.

In the first of these, a series of pogroms conducted against the Jewish population of Eastern Thrace would occur in July 1934, in areas of dense Jewish settlement and in reaction to what was seen as Jewish domination of the local economy. In the response to threats, looting, and actual expulsions, a significant portion of the area’s Jews were forced to either abandon their homes and property or sell them at a significant loss and migrate to Istanbul.<sup>6</sup>

The second event was the passage of the Capital Tax Law (*Varlık Vergisi Kanunu*) in November 1942. This law, which was imposed in a strikingly arbitrary and discriminatory fashion against the country’s non-Muslim minorities, imposed a far greater assessment of “taxable” wealth on non-Muslims than on Muslims of comparable wealth. Hundreds of Turkish non-Muslim citizens were thus forced to dispose of their property at bargain-rate prices in order to pay

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study, see R. N. Bali, *Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri: Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni* (1923–1945) (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999) [in Turkish].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. H. Bayraktar, *Salamon und Rebeka: Judenstereotype in Karikaturen der türkischen Zeitschriften “Akbaba,” “Karikatür” und “Milli İnkilap” 1933–1945* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2006); L. Olivier-Mallet, “Karikatür Dergisinde Yahudilerle İlgili Karikatürler (1936–1948),” *Toplumsal Tarih* 34 (October 1996): 26–33 [in Turkish].

<sup>6</sup> See R. N. Bali, *1934 Trakya Olayları*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2012) [in Turkish]; B. Pekesen, *Nationalismus, Türkisierung und das Ende der jüdischen Gemeinden in Thrakien, 1918–1942* (Munich: Oldenburg, 2012); H. Bayraktar, “Zweideutige Individuen in Schlechter Absicht”: *Die antisemitischen Ausschreitungen in Thrakien 1934 und ihre Hintergründe* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2011).

the heavy tax assessment imposed on them. Those unable to do so were apprehended and sent to Eastern Anatolia to toil in road construction under harsh winter conditions.<sup>7</sup>

## Antisemitism During the Multi-Party Period

As World War II was drawing to a close, Turkey began to take steps toward the establishment of a multi-party democracy. After the rushed election of 1946 meant to preserve the ruling party's majority, a second election, held in 1950, managed to bring the opposition to power for the first time since the Republic's inception. The new Democrat Party, established by a group of disillusioned RPP members, espoused liberal democratic values and adopted an extremely positive approach toward the country's various minorities.

However, the DP's rise to power also witnessed a new phenomenon of political parties making concessions to the country's more traditional and religious elements, particularly in regard to easing the RPP's heretofore strict interpretation of the principle of secularism.

The DP's laxer approach toward secularism (as well as that of subsequent parties) served as a tacit admission that Atatürk's social engineering project of transforming an essentially Islamic society into a secular one had not been popular or planted deep roots among the majority of the population.

Even after the DP was toppled and disbanded by the military coup of 1960, the process of "de-laicization" it had begun and which we might characterize as Turkish society "returning to its fundamental cultural codes," would be continued by its various successor parties (Justice, Motherland, and True Path Parties) in the following decades.

In parallel to the trend among rightist politicians to increasingly cater to the sensibilities of the broad conservative and Muslim voting public for electoral gain, Necmettin Erbakan (1926–2011), a professor of mechanical engineering and President of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (*Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği Başkanı*) whose political Islam competed for those same voters, would establish his "National Vision" movement (*Milli Görüş*) in 1969 and enter the Turkish political stage as the chairman of his newly created Nationalist Order Party (*Milli Nizam Partisi*). Although the party

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<sup>7</sup> For sources in English, see R. N. Bali, *The Wealth Tax (Varlık Vergisi) Affair: Documents From the British National Archives* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2012); R. N. Bali, *The "Varlık Vergisi" Affair: A Study On Its Legacy-Selected Documents* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2010); F. Ökte, *The Tragedy of the Capital Tax*, trans. G. Cox (London: Croom Helm, 1987).

was eventually closed down after being ruled as having “behaved in contradiction to the principle of secularism,” it would be re-formed under different names (and shut down) a number of times throughout Erbakan’s life, even surviving its founder in the current form of the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*).<sup>8</sup>

One of the main characteristics of the “National Vision” movement has been its antisemitism. Its members, including Erbakan himself, as well as its party organ *Millî Gazete* frequently make use of antisemitic themes, including references to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and its claims of Jewish and Zionist world domination. They have also adapted these to local use, repeating *ad nauseum* the claims that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and establishment of the State of Israel were both the result of a Dönme-Jewish-Zionist plot.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, despite the apparent extremism of much of his thought, the father of the National Vision movement Necmettin Erbakan was no marginal player in Turkish politics. Erbakan served as minister without portfolio and deputy prime minister in the first and second so-called “Nationalist Front” governments (March 31, 1975 to June 21, 1977 and July 21, 1977 to January 5, 1978, respectively), as well as prime minister in the *Refahyol* coalition government (June 1996–June 1997). When he passed away on February 27, 2011, Erbakan was given an official state funeral that was attended by all of the top government officials. Not unsurprisingly, Erbakan is remembered as a sympathetic, jocular, and slightly eccentric figure in Turkish political life, and referred to as “hoca,” a term of respect used for both secular and Islamic religious scholars. His literally thousands of antisemitic utterances are simply seen by the public as the eccentricities of an otherwise upright politician and not to be taken too seriously. Indeed, not a single one of the dozens of eulogies written after his demise mentioned his antisemitism. Indeed, Erbakan’s image as an “elder statesman” remains so powerful and unimpeachable that there is even a university in Konya named after him. Moreover, the antisemitic rhetoric of Erbakan and his “National Vision” ideology have never been subject to criticism per se within any sector of Turkish society or politics, nor has anyone of prominence dared to characterize the founder of Turkish political Islam as an “antisemite”; it has been easier to simply ignore it.

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<sup>8</sup> The different political parties were the National Order Party (*Millî Nizam Partisi*, or MNP) 1970–1972, The National Salvation Party (*Millî Selamet Partisi*, MSP) 1972–1981, the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, RP) 1983–1998, the Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*, FP) 1997–2001, and finally, the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*, SP) 2001–present.

<sup>9</sup> For a study of these themes, see R. N. Bali, *Antisemitism and Conspiracy Theories in Turkey* (Istanbul: Libra Kitap, 2013).



## The AKP, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Antisemitism

Established on August 14, 2001, the vast majority of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, or AKP) founders, including prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his successor Abdullah Gül, were breakaway politicians from Erbakan's National Vision movement.<sup>10</sup> Erdoğan and his colleagues had cut their teeth within this movement and were imbued with its cultural codes. As such, they were no strangers to the antisemitic currents that had so influenced the older generation of Islamist politicians.

Erdoğan himself had spent the 1970s as the head of the National Salvation Party's Youth Division, and it is a commonly known fact that he once wrote and directed a play called "Mas-Kom-Yah," short for "Masons, Communists, and Jews"—the "three great enemies" of Islam, Turkey, and the World as defined by the National Vision movement.<sup>11</sup> Even so, Erdoğan is not simply a younger version of Erbakan. The principal difference between Erbakan and himself is that Erbakan and his political associates believe in "Jewish World Domination" and therefore see "a Jewish hand" behind every negative development. Despite his clear antipathy for both Jews and the State of Israel, Erdoğan's hostility is simply not on this same level of obsession. The difference can also be seen in Erdoğan's far greater display of political pragmatism than that shown by his former mentor. Nevertheless, over time Erdoğan's speech, when discussing Zionism, Jews, or Israel has, like that of Erbakan before him, increasingly taken on an antisemitic tone and hue.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in a 2014 speech before the Washington-based Council of Foreign Relations the Turkish president would feel obliged to make the following declaration:

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**10** The AKP's official website is <https://www.akparti.org.tr/en>. For a selected number of English titles on the AKP and Erdoğan, see: M. H. Yavuz, ed., *The Emergence of A New Turkey* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2006); Ü. Cizre, ed., *Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party* (London: Routledge, 2007); E. Axialris, *Political Islam and the Secular State in Turkey: Democracy, Reform and the Justice and Development Party* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014); S. Çağaptay, *The New Sultan: Erdogan and the Crisis of Modern Turkey* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2017).

**11** Ö. Karlı and K. Butakım, "Ve Erdoğan sahnede!" *Vatan*, May 2, 2012 [in Turkish].

**12** Raphael Ahren, "Erdoğan Calls Zionism a 'Crime against Humanity,'" *The Times of Israel*, February 28, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/erdogan-calls-zionism-a-crime-against-humanity/>.

I am very sad to see that my country, myself, and my colleagues, sometimes, are labeled as being anti-Semitic. But Turkey, in no part of its history, has ever been racist. It has never been anti-Semitic in any time in its history at all. I am one of the first prime ministers in the world to have declared anti-Semitism to be a crime against humanity. Turkey, its people and its state, have always stood by the oppressed. When the Jews were under pressure or oppressed, Turkey extended a helping hand to them. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in the fifteenth century, they sought refuge in the Ottoman territory and they lived peacefully in this land for centuries. Similarly, our country embraced the Jews fleeing Hitler's persecution. There are times when I personally am labeled as an anti-Semitic person. Criticizing Israel's massacres that defy international law, trample on human rights and life is not anti-Semitism. Holding a state responsible that massacres 10 people by stopping an international Gaza-bound aid flotilla isn't anti-Semitism. It isn't anti-Semitism either to criticize an administration that massacres innocent babies and children in their homes, mosques, hospitals, schools, beaches and parks without any discrimination. Our criticism is not directed at the Jews at all. It is only and solely directed at the Israeli administration and its policies, and let no one distort this.<sup>13</sup>

The antisemitism present in Erdoğan's "New Turkey" is of a qualitatively different character than that of previous eras. During the current period, clearly antisemitic journalists and authors are often held in great honor and esteem. Indeed, they have traveled with the president's official retinue on his overseas trips, have been invited to be hosts of Erdoğan in his informal Presidential Talks at the Presidential Palace with Turkey's leading intellectuals,<sup>14</sup> and honored with prizes and awards.<sup>15</sup> Some of these journalists have taken part in the so-called "Committee of the Wise Persons" (*Akil İnsanlar Heyeti*) formed to find a

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13 N. N. "Erdoğan, CFR'da konuştu," *Sputnik News*, September 23, 2014, [https://tr.sputniknews.com/rsfmradio.com/2014\\_09\\_23/erdogan-cfr-konusmasi/](https://tr.sputniknews.com/rsfmradio.com/2014_09_23/erdogan-cfr-konusmasi/) [in Turkish, no longer available]; R. Ahren, "Erdogan Rebuffs Anti-Semite Claims but Lashes Israel for 'Massacre'," *The Times of Israel*, September 23, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/erdogan-rebuffs-anti-semite-claims-but-lashes-israel-for-massacre/>; "President Erdoğan Addresses CFR," Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, issued September 23, 2014, <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/3249/president-erdogan-addresses-cfr.html>.

14 Mehmed Şevket Eygi (Pro Erbakan's *Millî Gazete's* columnist) and Kadir Mısıroğlu were invited, cf. Z. Güranlı, "Cumhurbaşkanı Sofrasına Mısıroğlu'nun davetine CHP'den sert tepki," *Hürriyet*, August 18, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-sofrasina-misiroglunun-davetine-chpden-sert-tepki-29844266> [in Turkish].

15 In October 2017, Nurettin Topçu (1909–1975) a rightist intellectual known for his antisemitic writings was among the recipients of the Turkish Presidency Great Prizes of Culture and Art. In 2014 Alev Alatlı (1944–), also known for her antisemitic writings, was among the recipients of the Prizes.

solution to the Kurdish problem.<sup>16</sup> Among the founding fathers of the Islamist and Nationalist current in Turkey, both Erdoğan and his successor as prime minister, Abdullah Gül, have respectfully referred to the antisemitic author and poet Necip Fazıl Kısakürek with the honorific “üstad” (“master”) adjective, and President Erdoğan has handed out cultural and artistic awards named after him at ceremonies organized by the pro-AKP daily *Star*.<sup>17</sup> Due to the AKP’s overwhelming parliamentary majority and apparently unassailable hold on political power, newspaper columnists who support the party have gained the confidence to express their antisemitic views more openly. Usually, this takes the form of disseminating conspiracy theories regarding current events in which either Jews, Israel, or the United States play a central role. During the popular disturbances in Istanbul in June 2013, surrounding the attempted destruction of Gezi Park, one of the city’s few remaining green spaces, the claim was often heard of a “mastermind,” a veiled hint to a Jewish conspiracy, directing events in order to destabilize Turkey. As such, it was simply an updating of the “American-Zionist plot to destroy Turkey” conspiracy mentioned so frequently by Erbakan in the 1970s. The pro-government A Haber television station even made it the subject of a documentary,<sup>18</sup> and the president’s chief advisor Yiğit Bulut embraced the idea publicly.<sup>19</sup>

The fifteen-year period in which the AKP and, more specifically, Erdoğan have been in power have been a period increasingly described publicly as the latter’s “imperial reign.” The most frequent reference is to the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II, known in the West as “the Red Sultan” and more affectionately to the Islamists as “the Great Ruler” (*Ulu Hakan*), an historical figure who embodies the country’s past glories and who has become the subject of an ongoing

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**16** Abdurrahman Dilipak and Hasan Karakaya from the daily *Yeni Akit*, both known for their antisemitic writings, were included in this committee. See Ü. Kozan, “İşte Akil İnsanlar Heyeti,” *Hürriyet*, April 4, 2013, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/iste-akil-insanlar-heyeti-22957853> [in Turkish].

**17** “4. Necip Fazıl Ödülleri sahiplerini buldu,” *Sabah*, December 15, 2017, <https://www.sabah.com.tr/kultur-sanat/2017/12/15/4-necip-fazil-odulleri-sahiplerini-buldu> [in Turkish].

**18** “Islamist Turkish President Erdoğan Says A ‘Mastermind’ Is Plotting Against Turkey,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch no. 6021, issued April 14, 2015, accessed August 7, 2020 <https://www.memri.org/reports/islamist-turkish-president-erdogan-says-mastermind-plotting-against-turkey-anti-semitic>; “Turkish Film ‘Mastermind’ Purports to Reveal Jewish Conspiracy,” *YnetNews*, May 2, 2015, <https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4652817,00.html>; Y. Rosenberg, “Will Obama Condemn The Mainstreaming of Anti-Semitism by Turkey’s Ruling Party?,” *Tablet Magazine*, March 20, 2015, <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/189783/will-obama-condemn-the-mainstreaming-of-anti-semitism-by-turkeys-ruling-party>.

**19** “Yiğit Bulut: Türk ekonomisinden tek çakıl taşı koparamayacaklar,” *Haberler*, September 26, 2016, <https://www.haberler.com/yigit-bulut-turk-ekonomisinden-tek-cakil-tasi-8804639-haberi/> [in Turkish].

drama produced by Turkish state television (TRT 1) *Payitaht: Abdülhamid*, in which the sultan's life is portrayed against the backdrop of a Zionist conspiracy to topple the Ottoman Empire. Unsurprisingly, the series has been wildly popular within both Islamist and nationalist circles where the belief in such a Zionist plot to bring down the sultan in revenge for his refusal to grant Palestine to Theodor Herzl is widely and uncritically accepted.<sup>20</sup>

## Positive Developments During the AKP Era

Despite all of the aforementioned negative developments during the period of AKP rule, we should also mention three “positive” ones. The first of these is that, with the AKP's repeated electoral victories and total control of the national government, the once widespread claim that “the Islamists cannot come to power in Turkey because the Sabbateans are in control of the state apparatus” has finally been laid to rest. Similarly, one no longer hears among the Islamist press the claims that Atatürk himself was of Dönme (and hence, Jewish) origin and that it was due to this that he abolished the Caliphate and established a secular state, or, in their words, a “Jewish Republic.”<sup>21</sup> The reason for this sudden silence is simple: if the thus far unprecedented electoral success of the AKP since November 2002 is understood as “a popular revolt by political Islam against the Kemalist order” then the lack of active resistance and ease with which it was carried out makes such claims of “Sabbatean hegemony” all the more hollow.

The second “positive” development of this era is that, when the various antisemitic utterances and publications target Turkish Jewry Prime Minister [and now President] Erdoğan has intervened, making declarations to assure the country's Jews that they are under the state's protection along the lines of “they are our [fellow] citizens, our brethren that the Jewish world entrusted to us.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Turkish State-Owned Network Airs Television Drama Series,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch no. 7027, issued July 26, 2017, accessed August 7, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/turkish-state-owned-network-air-televisi-on-drama-series-depicting-jews-murderous-and>; H. E. Cohen Yanarocak, “Decoding the ‘Payitaht Abdülhamid’,” *Turkeyscope* 1, no. 5 (March 2017): 4–7, <https://dayan.org/content/decoding-payitaht-abd%C3%BClhamid>.

<sup>21</sup> For more on this matter, see R. N. Bali, *A Scapegoat For All Seasons: The Dönmes or Crypto-Jews of Turkey* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008); M. D. Baer, “An Enemy Old and New: The Dönme, Anti-Semitism, and Conspiracy Theories in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 103, no. 4 (2013): 523–55.

<sup>22</sup> “Turkey's Jews are under my protection: Turkish Prime Minister,” *Hürriyet*, June 22, 2012, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkeys-jews-are-under-my-protection-turkish-pm-23788>;

Finally, the third “positive” development has been the success of the AKP regime of acting on principle that no secular Turkish political party has ever succeeded in doing while in power: under the AKP, Turkey has returned community properties previously confiscated by the state to the various minority communities to whom it originally belonged.<sup>23</sup>

## “Antisemitism Grew During the Erdoğan Period” ... or did it?

The claim, often repeated in recent years, that “antisemitism has increased since Erdoğan has come to power” is partially valid and partially not.<sup>24</sup> It is true that, in comparison with previous eras, antisemitic publications and public declarations have increased, but the principal reason for this is the explosion of communication in general as Turkey has entered the digital age. Antisemitism was widespread even before this period, but its visibility has grown with increased online access. Today, with the internet, it is no longer necessary to actually purchase a newspaper in order to read newspaper columnists, whether from the Islamist sector or elsewhere. In the pre-digital age, a person could not simply broadcast their views to the general public, but in the digital age all persons—not just journalists and authors—are free to respond to news items and opinion pieces and to offer their own commentaries, opinions, and analyses to anyone and everyone. In this way, an unanticipated if also unsubstantiated truth has come to light. Through the internet, it can now be clearly seen that antisemitism pervades the very core of Islamist and nationalist thought in Turkey. The decade-and-a-half of AKP rule has given the large Islamist base, where an atmosphere of hos-

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“Government pledges to ensure the safety of Jewish Community in Turkey,” *Daily Sabah*, July 26, 2014, <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2014/07/26/government-pledges-to-take-care-of-jewish-community-in-turkey>.

**23** AKP claims that it returned two billion dollars worth of property to the minorities, cf. S. Wilson, “At a Breaking Point in Turkey: Should Jews Stay or Should We Go?” *Jewish Journal*, March 18, 2015, [http://jewishjournal.com/cover\\_story/164955/](http://jewishjournal.com/cover_story/164955/).

**24** See for example R. Ahren, “Turkish MP: Erdoğan’s anti-Semitism Difficult to Reverse,” *The Times of Israel*, February 5, 2014, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/turkish-mp-erdogans-anti-semitism-difficult-to-reverse/>; B. Johnson, “Anti-Semitism in Erdoğan’s Turkey is a Feature, not a Bug,” *Fox News*, October 25, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2017/10/25/anti-semitism-in-erdogan-s-turkey-is-feature-not-bug.html>; M. D. Baer, “Erdogan Accuses Germany of Echoing the Nazis—But his own Record on anti-Semitism is Shameful,” *LSE European Politics and Policy (EU-ROPP) Blog*, April 13, 2017, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/75701>.

tility toward both Israel and Jews prevails, an overweening self-confidence. This has resulted in its writers, journalists, and opinion leaders expressing their ideas with an unhesitating sense of freedom and lack of restraint.

The argument that the Erdoğan regime has fanned the flames of antisemitism is one that has been generally used in the international media by Turkish journalists opposed or hostile to Erdoğan and the AKP.<sup>25</sup> For these writers, “antisemitism” has become a tool for criticizing Erdoğan and for further tarnishing the already tarnished image of the Turkish leader in the eyes of the West.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Turkey, the western world—and the United States and Israel in particular—have long been sensitive to antisemitism, and thus reports of Turkish antisemitism, despite its ubiquitous quality, always possess “news value” and can thus be easily resorted to by the western press.

Let us now return to my opening remarks. It is more than a little ironic that, whereas in 1992, when the Quincentennial celebrations were in full swing, antisemitism in Turkey was written off as insignificant, marginal, or its existence even denied outright for the sake of political expediency. In the current period, its existence is now stressed—sometimes exaggeratedly so—by those opposed to Erdoğan and the AKP, and not out of actual concern for its victims, but once again for the purpose of political expediency. At the end of the day, the widespread and deeply rooted antisemitism within a significant part of Turkish society is not a new phenomenon. It was of a similarly ubiquitous nature in earlier periods, but in the pre-digital age it was not as readily apparent. Now, however, a malignant and serious antisemitism has become so routine and commonplace as to not even draw a reaction. Whether out of fear, fatigue, or simply apathy, no one seems willing to confront the phenomenon or take a moral accounting.

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**25** B. Bekdil, “How Turkey Plans to ‘Combat Anti-Semitism,’” *Middle East Forum*, September 25, 2014, <http://www.meforum.org/4833/how-turkey-plans-to-combat-anti-semitism>; B. Bekdil, “Turkey’s Runaway Anti-Semitism,” *Gatestone Institute*, March 10, 2016, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/7564/turkey-anti-semitism>; B. Uzay, “Turkey, where are your Jews?” *Israel National News*, April 12, 2017, <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/20389>.

**26** The two main Turkish journalists who denounces AKP’s antisemitic rhetoric are Burak Bekdil, a fellow at The Middle East Forum and an author at the Gatestone Institute International Policy Council, and Uzay Bulut, a Fellow at The Middle East Forum and an Associate Fellow at The Philos Project which claims to be “dedicated to promote positive Christian engagement in the Middle East,” cf. <https://philosproject.org/about/> (accessed July 17, 2019).

## What Must Be Done to Combat Antisemitism in Turkey?

Is it even possible to contend against the widespread antisemitism in Turkey? What direction should the struggle take? Before all else, it is necessary to emphasize a fundamental reality. The Turkish public and establishment does not see the existence of antisemitism as a problem to be solved. Thus, the first step must be to persuade them that it is indeed a problem and a serious one at that. This can be done with an action plan that brings together a great number of parties in order to form a strong, united front. First and foremost, this would mean the leaders of Turkey's Jewish community and civil society organizations within the country that concern themselves with human rights violations and hate speech, as well as a broad and ongoing campaign by American Jewish organizations and the identifying and publicizing of antisemitic publications and public declarations, along with calls to punish those disseminating them. Yet, it must be kept in mind that this method is the strategy of escalation, of "entering the fray." It must be kept in mind because such an active strategy will carry with it a number of serious dangers, including the engaging in an impossible to win fight with the Islamist press and the likelihood that any such struggle will provoke violent reprisals against Turkish Jews by the Islamist sector's radical fringes. Furthermore, such a struggle is unlikely to bear fruit so long as allegedly "objective" criticism of "Zionism" and "Israel"—both of which possess strongly negative, near demonic meaning for a significant part of the Turkish public—have a central place in the antisemitic discourse within the country. This is because of the consensus in nearly every part of Turkish society that the State of Israel is a "terror state" engaged in "colonizing" Muslim and Arab lands.

Any strategy developed by Jewish activists or opinion leaders in Turkey to combat anti-Israel and anti-Zionist rhetoric is by definition doomed to failure, since even the non-Jewish civil society institutions, activists, and journalists who are inclined to support such activities hesitate to voice their support, preferring to remain silently on the sidelines out of the justified fear that they will immediately be accused of being "Zionists" or "Israel lovers," appellations that in Turkey can irreparably damage their reputations and, hence, their careers.

Ultimately, we must be realistic. The leaders of Turkey's dwindling Jewish community do not wish to undertake any active struggle against antisemitism, for to do so, they rightly believe, is not likely to bring about any improvement in their situation; on the contrary, it might very well make it much worse. If they decide publicly for an active approach to combat antisemitism, they will be accused by Turkey's political establishment of tarnishing the image of Turkey

by portraying it as an antisemitic country where Jews are under pressure and fear and are immigrating in increasing numbers to Israel, something which the news agencies are repeating more and more these days. The Turkish Jewish community leaders have never, never officially protested the widely spread antisemitic publications and statements, quite to the contrary. If we travel back in time to 1992, we will see that they have denied its existence since acknowledging it officially will mean that Turkey's ever-loyal-model minority community is joining the ranks of the "anti-Turkey coalition," something which is inconceivable. Therefore the struggle against antisemitism in Turkey will not and cannot be transformed from its current "soft sell" approach of measured and restrained condemnation into an active campaign that insists on punishment for the purveyors of such. The only thing that *can* be done under current conditions is to acknowledge Turkish antisemitism as an intellectual problem and thus fight it through the press in the hopes of eventually generating sufficient pressure among the country's decision makers to act.

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Günther Jikeli

# Attitudes of Syrian and Iraqi Refugees in Germany toward Jews<sup>1</sup>

Antisemitism is on the rise again in twenty-first century Germany. Jews feel increasingly threatened.<sup>2</sup> Antisemitism is not limited to certain individual social groups. It is found on both the left and right wings of the political spectrum, as well as in the mainstream. Immigrants are also said to hold antisemitic sentiments. However, antisemitism is a problem in Germany, even without taking immigration or the large numbers of newly arrived refugees into account. As a relatively large proportion of these refugees comes from countries where hatred of Jews is a part of official government propaganda and education, the questions arise whether the increased levels of immigration are also leading to an increased risk of antisemitism, and if so, what can be done to counter this development.

Refugee attitudes are also relevant regarding the question of integration. What “integration” actually means and how far the German public and the refugees will move toward one another remains to be seen. When interacting at school, in the workplace, in public, in the media, or in the political sphere, immigrant populations seeking integration will not only encounter the immediate challenges of learning the language and obtaining professional qualifications; over the long term, attitudes toward democracy, gender roles, religion, minorities, and because of Germany’s history, toward Jews and Israel in particular, will play a significant role in the process of integration. A major review of integration practices of refugees in seven European countries stresses the “importance of introducing asylum seekers to core European values, including gender

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1 An earlier and substantially longer version of this essay was published in German in December 2017 in G. Jikeli, *Einstellungen von Geflüchteten aus Syrien und dem Irak zu Integration, Identität, Juden und Shoah: Forschungsbericht Dezember 2017* (Berlin: American Jewish Committee, 2017), <https://docplayer.org/68777670-Einstellungen-von-gefluechteten-aus-syrien-und-dem-irak-zu-integration-identitaet-juden-und-shoah-forschungsbericht-dezember-2017.html>. The research was supported by the Bennett Fund and the Meyer Fund.

2 A series of interviews conducted by the University of Bielefeld at the request of the German Parliament’s Independent Circle of Experts on Antisemitism in May and June 2016 showed that 37% of Jews interviewed were worried about possible assaults and 58% avoided certain places or parts of the city due to security concerns. Seventy percent wear no visible Jewish symbols out of fear; see A. Zick et al., *Jüdische Perspektiven auf Antisemitismus in Deutschland. Ein Studienbericht für den Expertenrat Antisemitismus* (Bielefeld: Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung, Universität Bielefeld, 2017), [https://uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/daten/JuPe\\_Bericht\\_April2017.pdf](https://uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/daten/JuPe_Bericht_April2017.pdf), 4.

equality, tolerance regarding sexual orientation and the role of religion in secular Western societies from the very beginning of the integration process,” in addition to providing a safe haven, access to the labor market, and housing.<sup>3</sup> There has already been broad public debate on three issues, about which refugees are thought to hold anti-democratic positions: Islamism, sexism, and antisemitism. These debates have been based mostly on anecdotal evidence, and they often do not take into account the diversity of different groups of refugees and the fact that many of them have become victims of Islamism, sexism, religious intolerance, and racism themselves, both from the indigenous population and from other migrants. However, such attitudes—Islamism, sexism, and antisemitism—prevail in many of the refugees’ home countries.<sup>4</sup>

Do refugees hold views similar to those of the majorities in their home countries? If so, are they prepared to change these views, or have they already changed them as a result of their new social, legal, and economic environ-

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3 European Foundation for Democracy, ed., *Refugees in Europe. Review of Integration Practices & Policies* (Brussels: European Foundation for Democracy, 2018), <https://emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/2018-Refugees-In-Europe-Full-Version.pdf>, 17.

4 Poll results show high levels of appreciation for a number of anti-democratic attitudes and outlooks that are critical of the rule of law, in particular in predominantly Muslim countries. At the end of 2011/beginning of 2012, honor killings of women were viewed as possibly justified by 71% in Iraq and 74% in Afghanistan. Thirty-two percent and 34% of the Iraqi and the Afghan populations respectively denied women the right to decide for themselves whether to wear a headscarf. Fifty-five percent and 75% of the Iraqi and the Afghan populations respectively are convinced that the lifestyles of most compatriots reflect the Hadith and Sunnah (canonical tales of the life of Mohammed), with corresponding approval rates for the statement, “The Sharia is the revelation of the word of God” (69% in Iraq and 73% in Afghanistan). Consequently, a large majority in both countries stated that sons should inherit more than daughters. Seventy-seven percent of those polled in Iraq agreed that a wife should not have the right to divorce, and 53% completely agreed with the statement that a woman should always have to comply with her husband; a further 39% overwhelmingly agreed. Approval rates in Afghanistan were even higher. Homosexuality was considered morally wrong by 77% of Iraqis. Forty-one percent in Iraq and 79% in Afghanistan favored the death penalty for leaving Islam. See Pew Research Center, “The World’s Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society,” April 30, 2013, <https://www.pewforum.org/2013/04/30/the-worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-overview/>. On antisemitic positions in many of the refugees’ countries of origin, see “ADL GLOBAL 100,” Anti-Defamation League, issued 2014, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://global100.adl.org/>; and Pew Research Center, *Little Enthusiasm for Many Muslim Leaders: Mixed Views of Hamas and Hezbollah in Largely Muslim Nations* (Washington: Pew Research Center, 2010), <https://www.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/pdf/268.pdf>.

ments?<sup>5</sup> Instead of generalization and speculation, a closer look and empirical research are called for.

Almost 1.5 million people applied for asylum in Germany between the beginning of 2014 and July 2017. All applicants have their own story, which varies considerably depending on the country of origin among other factors. Most applicants come from Syria (34%), Afghanistan (12%), and Iraq (10%).<sup>6</sup> Of the Syrian refugees, 29% identify as Kurds, and 91.5% have a Muslim background.<sup>7</sup> Syrian nationals are currently the third-largest group of foreign nationals in Germany, preceded by Turkish and Polish nationals.<sup>8</sup> With wars and unrest in many of these countries ongoing, with entire towns and parts of major cities destroyed, prospects for a better life in Germany remain. Thus, it is likely that a large number of refugees, perhaps the majority, will stay in Germany for the foreseeable future.

Taking stock of the situation at hand is crucial for developing effective private or state-funded programs for successful integration. Initial steps have already been taken, both by refugees themselves and by local populations and authorities, with a remarkable number of German volunteers providing support to refugee arrivals. The German Federal Agency for Employment (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) has developed a program for assessing the professional qualifications

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5 Bassam Tibi has devoted a book of 460 pages to this question, which calls for a reform and Europeanization of Islam, as well for critical engagement with authoritarian modes of thought; see B. Tibi, *Islamische Zuwanderung und ihre Folgen—Wer sind die neuen Deutschen?* (Hannover: ibidem-Verlag, 2017).

6 Based on additional data from: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Aktuelle Zahlen zu Asyl* (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2017), [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/AsylinZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl-juli-2017.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=5](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/AsylinZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-zu-asyl-juli-2017.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=5); idem, *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016: Asyl, Migration und Integration* (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2017), [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2016.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=16](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2016.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16); idem, *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2014: Asyl, Migration und Integration* (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2015), [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2014.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=14](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2014.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=14). Because of further migration, many of the people applying for asylum during this time may no longer reside in Germany; see H. Brücker, N. Rother, and J. Schupp, eds., *IAB-BAMF-SOEP- Befragung von Geflüchteten: Überblick und erste Ergebnisse* (Nuremberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2016), [http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/2016\\_fb29-iab-bamf\\_soep-befragung-gefluechtete.pdf](http://www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/2016_fb29-iab-bamf_soep-befragung-gefluechtete.pdf), 18–19.

7 First-time applicants in 2016, Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, *Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2016*, 24–25.

8 “Zahlen für 2016,” Statistisches Bundesamt, issued 2017, accessed September 1, 2017, <https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/GesellschaftStaat/Bevoelkerung/MigrationIntegration/MigrationIntegration.html>.

of refugees.<sup>9</sup> Schools have set up special “welcome classes.” Countless state-led and private initiatives and projects have been established to improve language skills, the housing situation, health services, trauma treatment, and cultural exchange. The extent to which these initiatives are able to address the most pressing problems facing refugees often depends on how much help is offered by individuals and in the local environment as well as on the continuation and adaptation of these initiatives.<sup>10</sup>

One factor complicating the integration of refugees is the fact that parts of the German population demonize immigration groups, sometimes going so far as to attack refugees and their homes; this bitterness is evidenced by a continuously updated chronicle of anti-refugee incidents and statistics from the Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt, BKA). The latter shows that refugees often also become victims of crimes committed by other immigrants.<sup>11</sup>

Representative surveys by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) show that a large majority of recent refugees support democracy and the rule of law in general terms.<sup>12</sup> Another poll of 779 refugees from Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, and Afghanistan in Bavaria shows that over 70% of refugees from Syria and Iraq reject the statement: “Following the laws of my religion is more important to me than obeying the laws of the state.”<sup>13</sup> Eighty-nine percent of the Syrian refugees questioned spoke out in favor of “respecting” both religious and non-religious individuals. Ninety-seven percent of the refugees reject religiously motivated violence.

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**9** For example, the Bundesagentur für Arbeit offers the program “Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge” (Perspectives for Refugees) to assess practical knowledge among refugees in preparation for the job market.

**10** For a review of best practices, see European Foundation for Democracy, *Refugees in Europe*.

**11** Cf. “Chronik flüchtlingsfeindlicher Vorfälle,” Mut gegen rechte Gewalt, accessed June 22, 2018, <https://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/service/chronik-vorfaelle>. In 2015, the Federal Criminal Police Office registered 1,031 criminal offenses against refugee shelters and houses. The numbers dropped to 995 in 2016 and to 312 in 2017. In 2017, 46,057 refugees were victims of criminal offenses. This number represents 5% of all criminal offenses. Thus, refugees, who are less than 2% of the population, were more likely to become victims of criminal action. However, perpetrators were also often refugees or migrants. In only 15% of criminal offenses against refugees were the suspects German, cf. Bundeskriminalamt, *Kriminalität im Kontext von Zuwanderung Bundeslagebild 2017*, issued May 8, 2018, [https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung\\_2017.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung/KriminalitaetImKontextVonZuwanderung_2017.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4), 53–56.

**12** Brücker, Rother, Schupp, *IAB-BAMF-SOEP-Befragung von Geflüchteten*, 55–59.

**13** S. Haug et al., *Asylsuchende in Bayern: Eine quantitative und qualitative Studie*, Abschlussbericht (Munich: Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, 2017), [https://www.hss.de/download/publications/Asylsuchende\\_in\\_Bayern.pdf](https://www.hss.de/download/publications/Asylsuchende_in_Bayern.pdf), 66–69.

With respect to antisemitism, a topic that was unfortunately only covered by one item, the study found alarming approval rates. Fifty-two percent of Syrian respondents and 54% of Iraqi respondents concurred with the statement: “Jews have too much influence in the world.”<sup>14</sup> Among the German population, the approval rates have varied between 15% and 25% in recent years.<sup>15</sup> The level of approval among refugees does not depend on variables like age, marital status, level of education, duration of stay in Germany, or the extent to which one identifies as religious. However, it does depend on religious affiliation. Over 50% of Muslims concurred with that statement, showing a much higher approval rate than Christians, of whom only 22% concurred.<sup>16</sup> As part of the same study, detailed interviews were conducted with 12 refugees, among them four from Syria and four from Iraq. The respondents themselves did not express any antisemitic views, but they mentioned the existence of negative attitudes toward Jews in their respective home countries.<sup>17</sup> In a different qualitative study, 25 refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq were asked about their attitudes toward Jews; the authors of the study detected a type of “routine anti-Zionism,” “which holds Israel responsible for all the negative developments in the region,” as well as a routine antisemitism, constituted by negative attitudes toward Jews that are seen as a matter of course.<sup>18</sup> The majority of respondents in this study expressed antisemitic views, with one interviewee explicitly stating that she hates Jews.

A survey in Berlin of 445 refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Syria revealed that 14% would not like to live next door to a Jewish family from Israel (only 4% would not like to live next door to an African family, but 43% would not like to live next door to a gay couple).<sup>19</sup> A study based on interviews

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14 Ibid.

15 Deutscher Bundestag, *Bericht des Unabhängigen Expertenkreises Antisemitismus*, Drucksache 18/11970, issued April 7, 2017, <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/119/1811970.pdf>, 63; “ADL Global100,” Anti-Defamation League, issued 2015 and 2016, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://global100.adl.org/>.

16 Haug et al., *Asylsuchende in Bayern*, 66–69.

17 Ibid.

18 S. Arnold and J. König, *Flucht und Antisemitismus: Erste Hinweise zu Erscheinungsformen von Antisemitismus bei Geflüchteten und mögliche Umgangsstrategien: Qualitative Befragung von Expert\_innen und Geflüchteten* (Berlin: Berliner Institut für empirische Integrations- und Migrationsforschung (BIM), 2016), [https://www.bim.hu-berlin.de/media/Abschlussbericht\\_Flucht\\_und\\_Antisemitismus\\_SA\\_JK.pdf](https://www.bim.hu-berlin.de/media/Abschlussbericht_Flucht_und_Antisemitismus_SA_JK.pdf), 29.

19 R. Freytag, *Flüchtlinge 2016: Studie der HMKW zu Demokratieverständnis und Integrationsbereitschaft von Flüchtlingen 2016* (Berlin: Hochschule für Medien, Kommunikation und Wirtschaft, 2016), [https://www.hmkw.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/pdfs/Publicationen/HMKW\\_F1%C3%BCchtlinge\\_2016\\_Studie\\_Ronald\\_Freytag\\_20160815.pdf](https://www.hmkw.de/fileadmin/media/downloads/pdfs/Publicationen/HMKW_F1%C3%BCchtlinge_2016_Studie_Ronald_Freytag_20160815.pdf).



with 18 teachers and two caregivers for minor refugees, and another study based on interviews with five experts working with recent migrants and 24 experts (from public authorities, research and education, Jewish and Muslim organizations, and politicians), provides anecdotal evidence that strong antisemitic attitudes exist among some refugees.<sup>20</sup>

Negative attitudes toward Jews are the societal norm in Syria and Iraq. A poll conducted in mid-2013 showed that 92% of those polled in Iraq concurred with at least six of the eleven antisemitic statements presented. Seventy-five percent considered the statement that Jews are responsible for the majority of wars in the world to be “probably true.” Eighty-four percent were convinced that Jews held too much power in the business world.<sup>21</sup> Antisemitic propaganda and incitement against Israel has long been the official party line of the Baath Party in Iraq (in power until the toppling of Saddam Hussein), which identifies as anti-imperialist, revolutionary and Arab nationalist. In Syria, the Baath Party and the regime continue in this vein.<sup>22</sup> Such attitudes are also reflected in the educational system and in schoolbooks, which in Syria continue to contain anti-Zionist, antisemitic, and anti-American incitement. The picture presented of Germany in Syrian history schoolbooks is also problematic. In these, Hitler is portrayed as a

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**20** M. Kamp, “Vorurteile abbauen, Vielfalt schätzen: Ein Projekt für Geflüchtete,” in *Discover Diversity: Politische Bildung mit Geflüchteten*, ed. A. Demirel and D. Hızarcı (Berlin: Kreuzberger Initiative gegen Antisemitismus, 2017), [https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/data/kiga\\_discover\\_diversity\\_vielfaltmediathek.pdf](https://www.vielfalt-mediathek.de/data/kiga_discover_diversity_vielfaltmediathek.pdf), 36; M. Berek, *Antisemitism and Immigration in Western Europe Today. Is there a connection? The Case of Germany* (Birkbeck: University of London, 2018), 72 and n. 80 on p. 73. Despite the anecdotal evidence, the latter study concludes that there is no connection between antisemitism and recent immigration. However, this conclusion is based on two methods that cannot establish if there is a connection or not: (1) It uses surveys that are representative for the general population, in which recent migrants are too marginal to have any visible impact, and (2) It uses statistics of antisemitic criminal offenses that do not register the share of recent migrants in any meaningful way. Although the study does not hold up to academic standards in its methods, one of the expert interviews is particularly revealing of the view of one of the mayor Muslim organizations. Mohammed Khallouk, a representative of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany that has links to the Muslim Brotherhood, argued that antisemitism simply cannot exist among Muslims because Islam does not recognize racial exclusion. He also claimed that the readiness among Muslims to accept the rights and security of other minorities largely depended on how far their own religious rights were accepted—as if this was a matter of political bargain. Cf. Berek, *Antisemitism and Immigration*, 77; 90.

**21** “ADL GLOBAL 100,” Anti-Defamation League, issued 2014, accessed October 1, 2017, [www.global100.adl.org](http://www.global100.adl.org).

**22** Israel continues to be described as the enemy in the 2012 amended Syrian constitution, cf. “Qordoba – Translation of the Syrian Constitution Modifications 15–2–2012,” issued February 15, 2012, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://de.scribd.com/doc/81771718/Qordoba-Translation-of-the-Syrian-Constitution-Modifications-15-2-2012>.

strong leader, defending Germany against the Jews, who allegedly enriched themselves during the Great Depression of 1929. Jews are portrayed as the eternal enemies of Muslims and Arabs, as well as humanity as a whole. Zionism and Israel are demonized in these books as imperialist and responsible for all the problems in the Middle East.<sup>23</sup>

## Methods and Sample

In December 2016, 16 group interviews with 68 refugees from Syria and Iraq were conducted in Berlin. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each and were conducted with the help of one female and three male translators who were also refugees from Syria: one female Arab Muslim, one male Arab Christian, one male Arab Muslim, and one male Kurdish Muslim. All interviews were conducted in Arabic, with the exception of one in Kurdish and two in English. All interviews contained parts that were conducted in German. The interview questions were translated into Arabic and Kurdish as applicable and the answers translated into English. The sample contained separate groups of refugees: refugees over/under 27 years of age, women, men, Arabs, Kurds, Palestinians from Syria, and mixed groups. All interviews were conducted by the author, who introduced himself as an academic researcher from both Indiana University and the University of Potsdam.

Contact with the interviewees was made through social workers in refugee support institutions and through the translators and their contacts. To avoid interviewing only those with ideological motives, a small reimbursement for expenses (20 €) was offered as an incentive for participation.

According to the social workers providing the contacts, the majority of the interviewees could be considered among the more “tolerant and open” refugees intent on integrating and communicating with the German population. It also needs to be taken into account that independent academic research is unknown

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**23** R. Heugel, *Die deutsch-arabische Freundschaft: Deutsche Geschichte (1815–1945) in syrischen Schulbüchern* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2013); A. Groiss, *Jews, Zionism and Israel in Syrian School Textbooks*, issued June 2001, accessed October 1, 2017, <http://www.impact-se.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Syria2001.pdf>; J. M. Landis, *Islamic Education in Syria: Undoing Secularism*, prepared for “Constructs of Inclusion and Exclusion: Religion and Identity Formation in Middle Eastern School Curricula,” Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, issued November 2003, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/be13/112be6d2c4bee6f487dd988b2d40dcc12978.pdf>. On the newer schoolbooks in Iraq, amended since the fall of Saddam Hussein, see C. Asquith, “A New History of Iraq,” *The Guardian*, November 24, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2003/nov/25/schools.schoolsworldwide>.

under the dictatorial regimes of the refugees' countries of origin. Additionally, at the very least for the duration of their asylum proceedings, which also contain an "interview," the refugees are very dependent on the German welfare state. This may have led to an underrepresentation of individuals who presume they hold socially unacceptable attitudes toward Jews or Islam.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the subjects covered, like Islamist terrorism, gender equality, the conflict in the Middle East, or Jews and Israel are considered sensitive and were sometimes met with restraint, negativity, and distrust toward the interviewers and translators. The interviewer's affiliation with an American university, disclosed at the beginning of the interviews, also may have led to some reservations on the part of individuals holding anti-American attitudes. It is also possible that potential anti-democratic—and in particular antisemitic and anti-American—attitudes were not communicated openly during the interviews.

Two groups were aware prior to the interviews that the questions would focus on attitudes toward Jews, and openly hostile anti-Jewish positions were not present in those interviews. The others knew that the interviews were part of academic research on positions held among refugees in Germany.

The interviews were conducted in quiet cafés and restaurants, or in different Berlin refugee hostels, seminar rooms, or the interviewees' quarters. Following the interviews, the refugees were asked to complete a short survey on biographical data (age, profession, level of education, place of birth, religion, ethnic background, language skills, current occupation, length of stay in Germany). The interviews were recorded, then fully translated and transcribed. They were analyzed by two researchers through inductive and deductive coding with the analytical software MAXQDA in an iterative process of categorizing.

All interviewees, 14 women and 54 men aged between 18 and 52, had arrived in Germany beginning in mid-2014, with most of them arriving in 2015. Fifty-five refugees self-identified as Arabs, among them 11 identifying as Arab/Syrian-Palestinian<sup>25</sup> and 13 as Kurds from Syria. The clear majority were Muslims, while six self-identified as atheists (including one with a Christian background), four as Christians, and one as Druze. Levels of education and religiosity varied extensively. The

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**24** In the summer of 2017, the author interviewed another 85 refugees from Syria and Iraq in Berlin, Greifswald, and Cologne for a follow-up project, as well as 20 individuals working with refugees together with three researchers from Indiana University: Haidar Khezri, Asaad al-Saleh, and Alvin Rosenfeld. These more extensive individual interviews are not the subject of this study. A first analysis of these interviews does not provide results that would contradict the present study, even if, in some aspects, especially in relation to attitudes toward Jews, a broader spectrum can be discerned, including radical, openly genocidal positions.

**25** This denotes individuals who grew up in Syria.

interviewees came from cities of diverse sizes, including Aleppo, Baghdad, Damascus, Hama, Homs, Idlib, Qamishli, and Raqqa or the surrounding areas.

## Attitudes toward Jews: From “A Religion like Ours” to Conspirators

The interviews revealed a wide range of positions on Jews and Judaism. These ranged from pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli positions, to tolerance or lack of interest, to accordance with individual antisemitic stereotypes (like the image of the “rich Jew”) and antisemitic conspiracy theories with genocidal tendencies, which manifest themselves in justifying the Shoah. There were also striking discrepancies between members of a respective country’s majority populations and those who belong to ethnic and religious minorities. In particular, some of the interviewed Kurds from Syria showed clear signs of pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli positions. Sometimes these were interspersed with philosemitic tendencies, such as admiring Jews for their alleged power and cleverness. Interviewees with a Syrian-Palestinian background, on the other hand, proved to be particularly prone to antisemitism—not only in relation to Israel but also in their expressions of conspiracy theories.

On a positive note, there were a number of individual statements that suggested a possible shift in the perception of Israel as an enemy: Some interviewees consider Israel to be more humane when compared to IS or the Syrian regime.

While interviewees recognized the fact that Jews constitute a religious community, the fact that Jews also constitute a nation was ignored or explicitly denied. This is closely connected to the rejection of Israel as a Jewish state. But the interviews mainly showed that despite the evidence of some affinity for conspiracy theories and antisemitic thought patterns, most of the participants are currently focused on other things and are not thinking much about Jews at all. Some of the interviewees reflected on this themselves, as this quote suggests:

“They don’t care about anything; they just want to live safely. Guys want to sleep with girls and to drink, too. And the guys who have their families, they just want their kids to be safe [...]. Really, we don’t talk about Jews, we don’t discuss this really, at all” (Inas, in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female from Damascus, Syria).

Some interviewees told us that they had contact with Jews, most of them in Germany, and in some cases also in their home countries. But it is questionable whether these accounts are all true. Several interviewees from the same hostel de-

scribed their high regard for their “Jewish” social worker. When asked, the same social worker denied being Jewish or being aware of the rumor that she was.

Antisemitism usually came up only when certain topics were discussed—such as the causes of war in the Middle East, Islamist terror attacks like the one on 9/11, the reasons behind the existence of the Islamic State, perceptions of Israel, the Holocaust, or the role of Jews in Germany before World War II. Antisemitic attitudes were immediately revealed in connection with references to the Freemasons, the Rothschild family, Zionism, and the banking and finance world. In discussions on traditional relations between Jews and Muslims, the picture was more ambivalent, on the one hand suggesting almost harmonious coexistence and religious tolerance, while on the other hand revealing a deep, eternal hatred between Jews and Muslims.

## Antisemitism and Religion: Islamic Antisemitism

The interviews showed only a few examples of explicit religiously motivated antisemitism. In general, the Muslim interviewees clearly wanted to present a positive image of Islam and avoided portraying their religion as a possible source of conflict. Yet they also reproduced positions that feed Islamic antisemitic stereotypes, like the idea that “the Jews” falsified the Holy Scriptures and tried to poison the Prophet Mohammed.<sup>26</sup> Interviewees also linked positive stereotypes about Jews to Islamic sources:

“Jews, they’re capable, Jews are sons of God ... that’s why they have money, and in the Qur’an, it says they’re hardworking” (Nidal, 35, Kurdish male from Aleppo, Syria with a Muslim background).

The presumption of a general hatred between “the Jews” and “the Muslims” has the potential to become radical, as it extends to all Jews, including those in Germany. One such example is Yanes’s reaction to Jalil’s statement in a discussion on the coexistence of different religions in Germany. Jalil said that Islam was a peaceful religion and that “our Prophet Mohammed told us that we have to accept all the religions. And when they were fighting pagans, he didn’t like to kill any of them because he thought, maybe that might be a believer” (Jalil, 42, Arab Muslim male from Bagdad, Iraq). On closer observation, Jalil’s statement only appears to

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<sup>26</sup> Such interpretations are common among various Islamic groups. The Qur’an and the Hadith describe relations between Jews and Muslims as ambivalent.

be tolerant, especially if applied to current relations between religious groups and atheists in particular. Yanes took issue with this pretense of tolerance:

“They [the Jews<sup>27</sup>] become our enemies in the end; as per the Qur’an and Islam, God tells you [...] that those are your enemies” (Yanes, 32, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

Yanes was not wrong in saying that the Qur’an and the Hadith (traditions or sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) contain passages suggesting—especially in widespread but ahistorical and non-contextualized interpretations—that the Jews are the ultimate enemy of Islam and the Muslims.<sup>28</sup> Even interviewees who do not share these views alluded to such a confrontation: “There’s a very big problem between Islam and Jews. And this problem is from the time of the Prophet” (Nidal, 35, Kurdish male from Aleppo, Syria, with a Muslim background). Individual interviewees were aware of the assertion propagated in Islamist circles that Jews are descendants of monkeys and pigs,<sup>29</sup> but they said they reject it.

As evidence of the Jews’ hatred for Muslims, some interviewees cited the belief that the Jews had tried to kill the Prophet Mohammed. For example, Abia (approximately in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female, from Baghdad, Iraq) recounts that the majority of people in Iraq do not like Jews, whom they believe do not respect the values of Muslims and who speak badly about Islam. Hayyan (approximately in his late 20s, Arab Muslim male from Quneitra, Syria) added that “the Jews” had “tried to kill” the messenger. This rumor is obviously also known to the translator of the discussion, who traces it to the canonical Hadiths, the accounts of the actions and words of the Prophet Mohammed, which include a story of a female Jewish slave who is said to have offered poisoned meat to Mo-

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<sup>27</sup> Upon the translator’s request for clarification of who Yanes identified as the enemy, Yanes replied “Israel,” making it clear that he was not referring to nonbelievers in general. As the previous discussion had mainly revolved around Jews in general and Yanes had already stated that he does not differentiate between Jews and Israel, his statement and its reference to the Qur’an would make no sense if applied to Israel and not Jews; thus, it can be inferred that he does in fact mean Jews.

<sup>28</sup> Of particular relevance among a number of anti-Jewish passages in the Qur’an, the following can be mentioned: Qur’an 5:82, stating that the most bitter enemies of Muslims are to be found among the Jews, much more so than among Christians; Qur’an 2:88, describing how God put a curse on the Jews; Qur’an 2:96, accusing Jews of enjoying the secular life; as well as Qur’an 9:29, calling for a fight against Jews and Christians, until they pay tribute and show submission. The canonical Hadiths contain more explicitly anti-Jewish passages.

<sup>29</sup> N. J. Kressel, *“The Sons of Pigs and Apes”: Muslim Anti-Semitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* (Dulles: Poto-mac Books, 2012).

hammered.<sup>30</sup> Islamists, and in this case also one of the participants, infer from this story that “the Jews” have been the mortal enemies of Muslims ever since the times of the Prophet.

One of the most powerful accusations against “the Jews” in Islamic tradition—in many ways similar to the Christian accusation that “the Jews” killed Jesus—is the assumption that “the Jews” falsified the Holy Scriptures. This accusation can be found in a number of passages, including some in the Qur’an.<sup>31</sup> Stereotypes of “the Jews” as liars and traitors are linked to this accusation.

“What do we know about Jews? [...] A religion for sure, but they falsified it. [...] This is what we know. [...] They have a book like us and they have a prophet, and we recognize their prophet and everything, but they falsified the book that was revealed by God. [...] And the Qur’an also said it is not the same book” (Bader, 33, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from the Yarmouk refugee camp close to Damascus, Syria).

Akram turned the accusation on its head: “There are a lot of Jews thinking about us as, ‘This is my enemy,’ and say we falsified the Qur’an” (Akram, 26, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Damascus, Syria). Even the wish for the destruction of Israel can be justified in religious terms, by declaring “Palestine”—which in these views includes the territory of Israel—Muslim territory to which Jews and the Jewish state can claim no sovereignty.

“At the end Palestine is ours. We are Muslims and we know that Palestine belongs to Muslims and Arabs and that Aqsa [the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem] is for us and that one day, Palestine will be free and will return to us” (Yasser, 41, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Homs, Syria).

Inas and Fatin, both young, secular, hardly religious women from Damascus, mentioned a belief held within their circles of friends and family and propagated in schools and school books in Syria: “I heard in Islam that before the doomsday, we will get Palestine back and we will win the war” (Inas, approximately in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female from Damascus, Syria).

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**30** Sahih Muslim 26:5430 and Sahih Bukhari 3:47:786.

**31** From a theological perspective, the problem for Islam is that the Qur’an counts as God’s direct word, and it includes several stories from the Torah or the Old Testament but changes some of them, in some cases even significant details. If the text of the Qur’an counts as absolute truth, the Torah has to be a falsification of these stories, even if it is historically uncontested that the Torah originated long before the Qur’an and transcripts exist that pre-date Islam. The accusation of falsification can be found in the Qur’an, for example in 4:46 or in 2:75, where Jews are accused of having intentionally distorted God’s words.

This assumption shows the intricate mix of secular, Islamic, and nationalist interpretations of a war against Israel or against “the Jews,” as the case may be. It can be linked to the delusion widely held in Islamist circles of a global war against Islam that, if not led by “the Jews,” is at the very least supported by them. In this conception, there will be a religious war before Judgment Day, a war that Islam will win.<sup>32</sup> As proof of this belief, Gamal, a former school principal and university professor, cited *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, from which he recited from memory: “We did our best to end Christianity in Europe and to restrict it inside the Church. [...] And it won’t take us a long time to finish Islam” (Gamal, 45, Arab Muslim male from Idlib, Syria). In Gamal’s view, the ever-present accusation that “Islam” is the cause of terrorism proves the authenticity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which he said is a “Jewish book.” He owns two copies.

Some interviewees explained their animosity toward Jews as being part of Muslim tradition. For example, Inas remembers Muslim rules of conduct toward Jews and Christians.

“I hear that Jews are like us. They are clean like Muslims. [...] But you cannot sleep in their houses because you cannot be safe. Christians are not clean, but you can sleep in their houses. But Jews are our cousins because they are like us in habits and ... you know, the normal lifestyle, we are the same” (Inas, approximately in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female from Damascus, Syria).

## Anti-Israelism (Anti-Zionism): Against Israel’s Existence

For most of the refugees interviewed (with the exception of most Kurdish participants), it is considered normal to hold negative attitudes toward Israel and to believe that the existence of the State of Israel is illegal and should end. Accordingly, Zionism is almost always viewed negatively. It is also a term that is used to denote any number of fantasies about alleged Israeli influence in the world, as well as Israel’s alleged plans for territorial expansion. In other words, Zionism is not simply seen as a national movement for the establishment of a Jewish state. The simplistic black and white anti-Israel sentiment, generalizing and oversimplifying issues while offering no criticism of individual positions of the Israeli

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32 R. L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist’s View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987).



government, reflects a fundamental opposition to the State of Israel out of principle; at stake is not criticism but antisemitic hostility. For most interviewees, perceptions of Jews on the one hand and Israel/Israelis on the other hand often overlap, even for those who insist that there is a significant difference between Jews and Israelis.

Those with anti-Israel views position themselves as pro-Palestinian (even if they personally do not have a Palestinian background);<sup>33</sup> at the same time, their rejection of Israel is not so much related to Palestinian suffering as it is a question of principle: just the existence of a Jewish state on allegedly Arab or Muslim territory is seemingly unacceptable to them.

Interviewer: “Do you think that it is a bad idea that Israel exists?”

Gamal: “Yes, of course.” (45, Arab Muslim male from Idlib, Syria)

For Gamal, it is simply normal to deny Israel’s right to exist. It is interesting to note that he qualified his above statement with the sentence, “But not worse than Bashar al-Assad.” Some Syrian interviewees do recognize that the crimes committed by the Syrian regime and IS are more serious than any crime allegedly committed by Israel. “Israel in its criminal history in Palestine did not kill people as much as Bashar al-Assad killed in six months in Syria!” said Burhan (27, Kurdish Muslim male from Damascus, Syria), who himself is far from being free of anti-Israel conspiracy theories. However, his responses show some evidence of a shift in the perception of Israel as an enemy. Other participants like Gamal prefer to see a conspiracy at work: Gamal described Bashar al-Assad as a “partner” of the Islamic State. His reasoning: Both do not fight Israel, even though Israel attacks Syria. For Gamal, this suggests that all three act together. Others, however, are convinced that Syria is being attacked “to protect Israel” (Zaid, 29, Arab Muslim male from Syria). That Israel is behind the wars in Syria and Iraq is a belief shared by secular and religious, Christian and Muslim, female and male interviewees. Some are more likely to point to the (negative) regional influence Israel holds and to highlight Israeli attacks on Syria and the occupation of the Golan Heights or South Lebanon, which they consider to be parts of a plan dating back to 1948 or even earlier to create a Greater Israel.

“As for Israel, even though they seem compact and do not say anything about all the problems in the region, their plans, which date back to 1948, extend beyond Palestine. They

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<sup>33</sup> Interviewees of Palestinian background often stressed their Palestinian identity, and they consider it natural to hold anti-Israel positions, without having to refer to the suffering of Palestinians and Israeli responsibility.

really wanted to get rid of Syria since the war of October [reference to the Yom-Kippur war of 1973]. It is also better for them to get rid of Syria, because Syria or Iran is always confronting them, so they want to remove religion from the equation. They will also be there creating problems. In my opinion, Israel has a very huge influence over what's happened" (Jaleel, 31, Arab Christian male from Damascus, Syria).

Other interviewees assigned Israel a passive but cynical role in the Syrian war

"Israel hasn't done anything, it's just watching us. It doesn't have to interfere because Arabs are killing each other and Syria and Iraq and Libya were destroyed, and Israel is happy like this" (Yasser, 41, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Homs, Syria).

The main reason cited by participants for their anti-Israel views is their condemnation of the "occupation of Palestine"—a position they assume is widely shared, including the interviewer. It must be noted that this term does not refer to the occupation of the West Bank but to the actual founding of the State of Israel. The Syrian and Iraqi regimes often use state propaganda to influence perceptions of the Jews, as evidenced by Assad's reflections on the time before he came to Germany: "I didn't know much about Jews; all I knew is the Jews are occupying Palestinian lands" (Assad, 31, Arab Muslim male from Homs, Syria).<sup>34</sup>

When asked directly whether Israel has a right to exist, Zaim replied with a rhetorical question, which was supported by the other participants of the group interview from Syria and Iraq:

"If we assume the Russians, as an example, came and occupied parts of Germany and stayed in it, now, after 40 or 50 years will they have the same right to live on the same land exactly like the Germans?" (Zaim, 20, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Raqqa, Syria).

For ideological reasons, many interviewees denied the historical truth that Jews lived in the Middle East long before the State of Israel was established. Jews are perceived to be European only and therefore alien to Arab territory.

Interviewer: But don't you think that Jews were in Jerusalem and Hebron, like 2,000 years ago?

Yasser: "Who? Jews? No, Jews were in Britain, Jews' home is not Palestine. [...] Jews don't have a home, they don't have a country..." (41, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Homs, Syria)

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<sup>34</sup> Assad rejected antisemitic conspiracy theories offered by other participants and showed little resentment toward Jews. He believes that his Jewish acquaintances in Germany are the ones who taught him that the stereotype of the "rich Jew" who "owns everything" is, in fact, true.

Yasser rejected the Jews' right to national self-determination more than the argument that there is no history of Jewish life in the Middle East. He took the argument one step further by proclaiming that Jews did not have the right to have a country of their own and related back to the stereotype of the rootless, ever-wandering Jew.<sup>35</sup> Interviewees recognized the historical fact that Jews have been living for centuries not only in Jerusalem but also in Iraq and Syria. From their perspective, however, this fact only serves to reinforce the idea that a harmonious coexistence is only possible under Arab or Muslim leadership. Ultimately, this belief leads to a call for a destruction of the Jewish state in favor of a Muslim- or Arab-dominated Palestine, in which Jews would be tolerated. One proponent of this position is Zaid:

“In our Arab mentality there is no peace if you don't give back what was taken. [...] What I want is that their army will be ended, and they may continue to live on our land, to practice their religion. [...] This is what we want for the next 25 years. Inshallah. And I will repeat it for the third time, we will decide for the whole Arab nation's future, even if there will be a third or a fourth world war, because we have a big generation raised on this culture. We don't have any problem with Jewish people, we believe this is [also] their country, their region, but we want to end the Israeli army and it will be finished. And they may live with us, under the Palestinian country practicing their Jewish religion without any problem. We just want to live in peace and security” (Zaid, 29, Arab Muslim male from Syria).

The fundamental rejection of the Jewish state was also evident in the way some of the more Western-oriented interviewees rejected the official name of Israel and instead used the term “Palestine.” Inas, already quoted before, said this: “For me it's a dream to go and see Palestine. Really, it's a dream for me.” When asked whether she was referring to Israel or Palestine, she responded in a friendly but firm way: “No, no, it's Palestine. Palestine and something called Tel Aviv” (Inas, approximately in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female from Damascus, Syria).

The Christian stereotype of Jews as child murderers has been handed down since the Middle Ages, and in contemporary discourse it is often applied to Israel. During the interviews there were some isolated references to the emotional

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<sup>35</sup> Yasser is a good example of someone who tries to differentiate between Jews and Israel. Despite his fundamental opposition to Israel, denial of a Jewish nation and its connection to Israel, and his use of anti-Jewish stereotypes, he still said, “We are not against Jews. Some people are good and some are bad. Netanyahu is a bad person, but not all the citizens are” (Yasser, 41, of Palestinian-Syrian origin from Homs, Syria). Jaleel, quoted above recounting a conspiracy theory about Israel's alleged responsibility for the destruction of Syria, offers another rather unoriginal conspiracy fantasy on the events of September 11, 2001, claiming that 3,000 Jewish employees did not show up for work that day, only to continue: “I have three very nice Jewish friends here, so this is only about the governments” (Jaleel, 31, Christian from Damascus, Syria).

image of the “child murderer Israel”: “Palestine is under occupation, and children and people are being killed for sixty years now,” said Safeer (49, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from the refugee camp Yarmouk close to Damascus, Syria). The image of the “child murderer Israel” with its emotive power was rarely evoked, though. This may have to do with the fact that when the interviews were conducted in December 2016, media coverage on the Middle East conflict provided virtually no images to support this stereotype, while images of Syrian children killed in gas attacks were still very much on participants’ minds. Another likely reason is that the suffering of the Palestinians is not central to every interviewee’s rejection of Israel. On the whole, it is evident that the Israeli-Arab conflict has much greater significance for interviewees with a Palestinian background, who discussed the issue much more emotionally. For other interviewees, the Israeli-Arab conflict is less significant in light of the wars in Syria and Iraq.

When the participants were asked whether they believed that what the Nazis did to the Jews was the same as what Israel is doing to the Palestinians, there was a wide range of reactions. There was an almost even split between those who agreed with the comparison and those who rejected it. Agreeing that events in Israel are even worse than the Holocaust often went hand-in-hand with a fundamental rejection of Israel’s right to exist; this also seemed to be the main factor in agreeing with the comparison, as there was no attempt to compare specific aspects of the Holocaust with the current situation in Israel. Instead, “the Holocaust” is used as a symbol. More than one participant refused to answer this question, as it is perceived to reflect a pro-Israel bias.

Hassan, who did not want to reveal his opinion, claimed to speak on behalf of “Muslim and Arab young people” who generally oppose Israel, and he noted that he sees similar opposition among some Germans:

“I can’t give an evaluation whether I’m with or against Israel. [...] But regardless of the definition or the evaluation, our Muslim and Arab young people have that idea that they don’t want Israel as a government, not as people. There are even German people who declare that Israel is wrong” (Hassan, 39, Arab Muslim male from Iraq).

Others were less restrained in their evaluations. Yanes considers the atrocities committed by Israel to be worse than the Holocaust:

“Israel is doing worse than that, like bombing and killing and displacing people and destroying, and all of this is being done to build the state of Israel and to protect it. [...] It’s worse than the Holocaust” (Yanes, 32, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

In his case, as well as in Hassan's, it is clear that his main goal was to disavow Israel.

Vaguely equating the actions of the Israeli government against Palestinians to the extermination of the Jews may well be rooted in a lack of knowledge of both the Holocaust and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, coupled with a fundamental rejection of violence. "Murder is murder" was the response of many, when asked for their opinions on the comparison between Nazis and Israelis. This mindset could very well form a basis for educational measures. But the comparison may also be rooted in other hostile attitudes, as in Jawad's case, who is convinced that Israelis and/or Jews have a tendency to be brutal because of their experience of the Holocaust.

"If you ask a psychologist about a child who is always making trouble and beating the other children, he will find that his father or someone else treated him with violence. [...] The fear and surviving culture push them to kill others and justify this to themselves." Translator: "You mean that what Israel is doing to Palestinians is equal to what Germans did to Jews?" Jawad: "Of course, because killing is killing. If you enter a peaceful land . . ." (Jawad, 34, Arab Muslim male from Syria).

At the same time, rejecting the Nazi-Israel comparison does not necessarily mean that the founding of the State of Israel is considered legitimate, at least if certain parallels are still being drawn. Dila (26), an atheist Kurdish woman from Syria, said that the actions of Israelis and those of Nazis stem from "the same idea, but in a different way. The Israelis stole the land, even if they didn't kill so many people and Hitler killed so many people." Interestingly, the comparison was often rejected by members of minority groups, in particular Kurds but also some Christians and atheists, and quite strongly in some cases.

Dalal (18), a young female Christian from Homs, Syria, explained: "I think that the Nazis were worse, they're really much worse. Also, everything that happened in Palestine, it's not like what happened to Jewish people." Burhan (27), the only Kurdish participant in one group interview, agreed with the others that Jews are rich and the banks belong to them, but he rejected the comparison of Israelis to Nazis, "because Israel has more mercy with Palestinians than Hitler had with them. Israel and the Jews with all their rudeness, they did not do in Palestine one per cent of what they faced in Germany." Even Sayid (20), a young Arab Muslim male from Hama who does not belong to any minority group in Syria, offered quite a multi-faceted view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In another interview, he also rejected the comparison: "In case you would like to know who is worse between Hitler and Israelis, I certainly would say Hitler." Rejecting the comparison of Israel with Nazi Germany often does not seem contingent upon any specific knowledge about the Holocaust or the Israeli-Pal-

estinian conflict. Rather, it depends upon whether there is a prevailing hostility against Israel and Jews. Siyamend, a 22-year-old Kurdish male from Qamishli, Syria, said: “It’s not the same, because what we learned about Israel of Palestine, and I don’t really know the true story, but we learned that the Israeli army took their land. But here [in Germany], there were holocausts; I mean, the two cases are completely different.” And Shaheen, 26, another participant in the Kurds-only group interview, agreed with him, even though he referred to Arab TV channels that generally report negatively about Israel: “Sure there are violations of the rights of the Palestinians in Israel, as we have seen on Arab TV channels, for example when it comes to housing and things like that. But I don’t think we can compare that to the genocides that were here.”

Hayyan, an Arab Muslim male from Syria, approximately in his early 30s, has his own personal reason for rejecting the comparison of Israel with the Nazis. He is from Quneitra in the Golan Heights, directly adjacent to Israel. His father spent two years in an Israeli prison but was treated well. And he knows, “Even now in the areas that are close to Israel, whenever there are any injured people on the borders, they [the Israelis] are taking them to give them medical assistance, whatever their treatment might cost.” Hayyan appears to know nothing more about the Holocaust than other interviewees, and he denounces Israel for having (temporarily) occupied his village, but he rejects the demonization of Israel through comparison with Nazis. That Israel observes the rule of law in the treatment of prisoners in jail and in the care provided for Syrian casualties seems to have had a profoundly positive effect on Hayyan’s views of Israel and Israelis.

The explicit differentiation between Israelis on the one hand and Jews on the other that can often be heard is mostly used to deny allegations of antisemitism, while at the same time legitimizing a negative attitude toward Israel: “I think Israel is something bad but the Jews are human” (Adnan, 36, Arab Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

Some of the interviewees did make explicitly positive statements about Jews, on the condition that Jews distance themselves from Israel and thus show solidarity with “their” side. Others, however, made no distinction between Jews and Israelis: “I don’t really know the difference between them, but as a Palestinian I think both of them are my enemies” (Yanes, 32, Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Damascus, Syria). In global conspiracy theories, those categories tend to be blurred despite attempts to differentiate, as the following section illustrates.

## The “Rich Jews” and Conspiracy Fantasies to Explain the World

The globally spread antisemitic stereotype of the rich Jew was far more prevalent in the interviews than was any other stereotype.<sup>36</sup> Most interviewees took it for granted that Jews simply have to be rich. This alleged fact was not necessarily viewed as negative.

“The idea that Jewish people have a lot of money, it is really common in our society. And what’s the problem if they have a lot of money? Syrian merchants were taught by Jews how to manage their trades” (Qadir, 31, Arab Christian male from Damascus, Syria).

Some interviewees chose their words carefully, which showed their uncertainty: “As Arabs we think of the Jews as the richest people on earth, but this might be wrong” (Maen, 23, Arab Muslim male, Khirbet Ghazaleh, Syria). Others offered what they considered proof:

“All the statistics that we see on social media say that most worldwide stocks and banks are owned by Jews. And it is known from ancient times that Jews make good commerce and they really know how to trade. They are an example of great businessmen. They do the sell-a-lot-and-win-little strategy, so they really are rich people” (Burhan, 27, Kurdish Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

There was no consistency among interviewees in applying the stereotype of the “rich Jew.” In general, it was simply transferred to “the Jews.” Some participants spoke of “large Jewish families” controlling the “international monetary system,” and of others who “own most of the biggest Swiss banks” (Qadir, 31, Arab Christian male from Damascus, Syria). The image of the “rich Jew” was also applied to Israel, embedded in conspiracy theories in which Israel and the Jews control the whole world through money.

“Israel, especially Jews are known for [being] the biggest financial power in the world, so they are ruling the world with their money. Just yesterday I read that some Jewish doctor, I forget his name, said that the Star Academy program was made by us, and we spread it in the Arab world through Europe in order to humiliate the Arab woman, because the Arab man is already humiliated. So when they told him that the program is in Lebanon, he

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**36** Only in one interview, two Syrian-Palestinian participants (Suaad, 27, and Sabri, 41, from the refugee camp Yarmouk close to Damascus and Homs/Syria, respectively) claimed to have never heard of the stereotype of the “rich Jew.”

[the Jewish doctor] said that it's sponsored by them, the Jews, Israel and America, so they are ruling the world with their money" (Ratib, 36, Arab Muslim male from Iraq).

The quote from Ratib illustrates how the stereotype of the rich Jew is often equated with Jewish power, which is framed as destructive and dangerous for non-Jewish communities, in this case the Arabs. Zaid associates this with control of the media, politics, and the whole world:

"Jews are controlling the whole media world, even America. They're controlling the main politicians, for example, Donald Trump, the president of the US [...]. They are controlling the world because they have money, but we have the gas, the oil, and everything" (Zaid, 29, Arab Muslim male from Syria).

The interviewees see secret conspiracies of alien powers at work in any number of circumstances. Often—but not always—they suspect that Jews are pulling the strings behind it all. This was evident when the participants were asked to explain the wars in their home countries. In addition to (realistic) assessments that countries such as Russia and the United States but also Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are pursuing their own interests in Syria and Iraq, there was also speculation about the underlying issues and causes, which was rife with conspiracy theories. Alien powers were said to have caused the wars to destroy Islam, to exploit the Arab countries and get their oil, to create a market for weapons, or to force the countries' brightest minds to emigrate and then to exploit them in the workforce. These alien powers are believed to be located in the US or Israel or are simply conceived as "the Jews" in an ominous global arms industry. Explanations of this sort reveal an understanding of the world in which an all-powerful "other" is the cause of negative developments. This perspective is supported by a selective historical narrative in which the division of the Near and Middle East following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire in French and British spheres of influence is directly transferred to the present and conceived as an anti-Arab or anti-Muslim conspiracy.

"I once heard Hillary Clinton talking about the termination of Sykes-Picot Agreement, which is relating to the division of Arab countries and has the duration of one hundred years. [...] So that [in 2011] people in Arab countries would revolutionize and make another Arab Spring after its termination, so I think it's a Western, American and Israeli conspiracy on Arab countries to maintain the peace of Israel" (Sayid, 20, Arab Muslim male from Hama, Syria).

In this understanding of history, it is not individual agents with their own individual interests who influence the course of the world but dark, impenetrable powers that determine the course of history across generations according to a



laid-out plan. It is hardly surprising, then, that this kind of thinking refers back to the tradition of antisemitic conspiracy fantasies like *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and that “the Jews” or Israel are accused of using another country like a pawn in a game.

These conspiracy fantasies provide an unchallenged framework for interpretation of not only political and historical events but also casual, almost trivial phenomena, which are perceived as a threat to one’s own community. Burhan, for example, is convinced that the computer game “Counter-Strike” was brought to Syria by evil forces to raise a new generation of coldblooded warriors for the ongoing civil war.

“The world we live in is like a chess game, and there are unknown hands that control the pieces. They try to make us believe that our countries have fortunes and we should steal them [...] but the truth is that they were planning for this for over a hundred years, and still planning for the next hundred years. There is an unknown force in this world, and I personally think that the international Mossad ... international Zionism leads the whole world, and every country, population, every nation’s destiny is in their hands, and if any president of any country isn’t satisfying the Masons they will replace him instantly with someone who wants to do whatever they want him to do. I believe that they are behind the suppression of populations, and behind Islamization, ISIS, and introducing Islam in the wrong way and creating a violent generation. For example, the Counter-Strike game entered Syria in 2004. It wasn’t just a game they were creating a generation who is ready to carry weapons. This game is about counters and armed desperados, it’s all about war and death, so they raised this generation on killing and using weapons and knowing about killing strategies. [...] I will tell you a story about my cousin, who was born in 1994. In 2004 he was ten years old, and since he was 10 years old he started to play Counter-Strike. When the revolution started he was one of the firsts to carry a weapon” (Burhan, 27, Kurdish Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

Burhan is proud of the culture of Syria and laments the destruction of his country. He holds Mossad, “international Zionism,” and the Freemasons responsible. It is interesting to note that Burhan’s view of the world is defined by conspiracy theories, including antisemitic ones. He is convinced that Jews dominate the banks and that Jews were at least informed ahead of time of the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, because they allegedly did not come to work that day. At the same time, this thinking is fractured at least in one respect. When the discussion turns to Israel, Burhan praises the Israeli government for looking after its own people and being more humane than the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

“Freemasons” often appear in conspiracy fantasies and are associated with Jews. This was evident in the interviews not only in the example of Burhan with his Muslim Kurdish background but also in the case of Qadir, who has a Christian background.

“America is Israel and Israel is America. I’m not talking about the religious correlation; however, it plays a significant role. Eventually, there is something called ‘Freemasonry,’ whose vast majority and founders are Jewish. The story is, Israel is the cancer that exists inside the body of the Arab countries. It’s one huge factor that controls the whole region. The second thing is the image of the religions. [...] I do not care what your religion is, since it’s your own private relation with God. Nevertheless, what most people have not realized is that religion has become a weapon in the hands of others instead of the hands of its own people” (Qadir, 31, Arab Christian male from Damascus, Syria).

As a member of the Christian minority in Syria, Qadir may be particularly aware of the extremist, anti-secular interpretations of Islam. He considers the lack of nationalism and the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites to be the biggest problems in the Arab world in general and in Syria in particular. In the group discussion with a majority of Muslims from Syria, he nevertheless avoided criticizing Islamism, instead referring to the alleged misuse of religion through conspiracies from the outside, possibly to avoid being accused of criticizing Islam. At the heart of Qadir’s conspiracy fantasies is not only “the cancer” Israel but also the US, or, more precisely, the US as a country controlled by “the Jews” or Israel.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, often play an important role in the conspiracy narrative because they were allegedly orchestrated by the Americans and/or the Jews to legitimize the attacks on the Middle East, “the Muslims,” or “Islam.” Politics in America and the American president are seen as strongly dependent on the Jewish or Israeli lobby.

A conspiracy fantasy that is especially popular among Syrian interviewees consisted of an alleged secret alliance between Bashar al-Assad and Israel: The Syrian regime is said to only appear to be following anti-Israeli policies while at the same time preventing any effective measures against Israel because of their alleged links. The anti-Zionist ideology of the Syrian regime is so firmly entrenched in the minds of some refugees that, despite their opposition to the regime, they dare not question this theory.

However, there are signs that even those who believe in the crudest antisemitic conspiracy fantasies are sometimes willing to reevaluate their positions. For example, Maen (23, Arab Muslim male from Khirbet Ghazaleh, Syria) talked about a rumor he has heard that Israel or Jews control most of the media in the world and that Jewish families control most of the banks. In this context, he mentioned “The Protocols of Zion” and another conspiracy theory book, only then to state that he may not have all the facts and the books could be wrong. He also criticized as propaganda the fact that “we grew up hating Israel, and our Arab leaders are ... telling us we should hate Israel.”

## Distancing Oneself from Antisemitic Propaganda and Minorities' Solidarity with Jews: The Kurdish Example

"They [the representatives of the Syrian regime] turned out to be worse than the image of the Jews they were promoting" (Shaheen, 26, Kurdish Muslim male from Syria).

Some participants explicitly rejected antisemitic stereotypes and allegations. In their rejections, however, it became apparent that such antisemitic views are the societal norm in their home countries and are spread through state propaganda. It also became clear that only some antisemitic ideas were being reconsidered, while other stereotypes and thought patterns persisted.

The following three examples of Fatin, Adnan, and Maryam show different cases of Arab interviewees distancing themselves from antisemitic positions. Fatin is a student in Germany and tends to hold very secular and tolerant positions. Her English is excellent and she speaks German well. While she still believes that Israel was behind the attacks on September 11, 2001, she has begun to question some antisemitic attitudes. This includes anti-Jewish stereotypes in everyday language and an acknowledgement of Syria's state-sponsored agitation against Israel and Jews as propaganda. She makes an effort to differentiate between Jews, Israelis, and the State of Israel.

"I used to hear it from all my old friends. If someone is really mean, they say he's Jewish. [...] [In our generation] it's a little bit better. And especially for me, after we moved out of Syria. Because, as you said: the propaganda of Syria was teaching us all the time that it's our enemy and we are not allowed to think about everything, as it is Jewish, Israeli, Zionism and they're all enemies. And then we start thinking about it when we grow up or when we move a little bit out of Syria. We start to recognize the difference between Jews and Israel" (Fatin, 26, Arab Muslim female from Damascus, Syria).

Adnan, 36, used to be the branch manager of an international fashion house in Damascus. During the interviews, he stressed that in Syria, it may sometimes be advisable to show that you are against Jews to avoid conflict with the regime. He claimed he does not have any hatred toward Jews and that, even if he himself is no expert on the matter, the Qur'an teaches respect toward Jews.

During the course of the interview, however, he also explained that the Jews became enemies through their occupation of Palestine.

"If I were in Syria right now and you would ask me my opinion about Jews, I would tell you that I hate all of them, because I would be afraid for myself. If I did not tell you this, if I told

you the opposite, I would go to prison for ten years. [...] They teach us that Israel is the same as the Jews and that we must hate both of them. But in the Qur'an [it says] we must respect Jews" (Adnan, 36, Arab Muslim male from Damascus, Syria).

Maryam, 35, an Arab atheist female with a Christian background from Damascus/Syria, said, "you cannot depend on what has been taught at school, that Jews are greedy and have a lot of money," because "they are also human beings, as I have come across some wonderful people here."

None of these three interviewees is particularly religious, and they all come from Damascus, a considerably pluralistic and large city. All three emphasized that Syrian propaganda is not solely aimed at Israel but at Jews in general. Fatin also described antisemitism in everyday language. Each of them had different reasons for reconsidering their previous antisemitic attitudes: for Fatin, it was simply being geographically far away from Syria; in Adnan's case, it was because he no longer faced the Syrian regime's coercion to antisemitism, along with his tolerant understanding of Islam; for Maryam, it was her encounters with Jews in Germany.

Among Kurdish participants, antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracy fantasies were generally less prevalent, even if counterexamples exist and are also quoted in this report. If Kurds voiced antisemitic positions, it was more likely to happen in mixed Arab-Kurdish groups than in Kurdish-only groups. In part, this may have to do with an instrumental use of antisemitic images: Adapting to the prevailing (antisemitic) discourse may make it possible to argue for Kurdish interests against the majority positions. In groups consisting of Kurdish participants only, some drew parallels between their people and Jews or Israel because of the perception of a shared enemy ("the Arabs," or the states Iraq, Syria, and Turkey). Others saw parallels between the Holocaust and Saddam Hussein's gas attack against Kurds in 1988 in Halabja and other cities.<sup>37</sup>

Nidal, a 35-year-old Kurd and former teacher from Aleppo, not only described the lack of hatred between Kurds and Jews but also spoke of a secret love that can be seen in the way that Jews have helped Kurds. He sees parallels in the history of the Kurdish and the Jewish peoples, equating the killing of thousands of Kurds in Saddam Hussein's gas attacks with the Holocaust. His image of Jews is shaped by philosemitism: because of God's gifts, the Jews are supposedly particularly capable and rich.

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<sup>37</sup> A Christian participant, possibly with an Armenian background, drew parallels between the Holocaust and the genocide of the Armenians, though this did not stop him from believing in antisemitic conspiracy fantasies about the Freemasons and Jews allegedly dominating them.

“We knew, we were told that Jews helped [Kurds]. [...] A kind of love grew, but it was a love that was hidden. [...] How did we know that it was wrong [how people speak about Jews] in Syria? We knew it wasn’t correct because, all the time ... the things you said and did weren’t the same. [...] I mean we viewed Jews like we viewed ourselves, for instance, the things they had been through in the Second World War, and Halabja, Anfal, these were the same. Well, and Jews, they’re capable, Jews are sons of God ... that’s why they have money” (Nidal, 35, Kurdish male from Aleppo, Syria with Muslim background).

Siwar described a clear difference between Arabs who are said to be against Jews and would even support murdering Jews, and Kurds who are said not to share this hatred. He even mentioned inconsistencies in Syrian educational programs related to Israel, as they mention the historical Jewish settlement in Canaan but accuse today’s Jews of occupying Arab land.

“What is the difference between Kurds and Arabs in Syria in terms of Nazis and in terms of Germany? Well, for example, Arabs despise them [the Jews], and they’re amused by that type of killing. Thousands of people were killed and they were amused by it, but Kurds aren’t like that. Because there’s no hostility between us and Jews, Jews are a people like us, they’re humans and in fact they’ve been through rough times [...]. On the point of Israel invading Palestine, I remember in school, in the history book that I read in Syria, it said that Jews were occupying Palestinian land, Canaan’s land for a long period [...]. Jews were in that land, and Arabs took them out [...] and now they’re coming and say that they have occupied our land” (Siwar, 26, Kurdish Atheist male from Qamishli, Syria).

Equating Israel with Nazism was often rejected by Kurds. They emphasized the completely different forms of discrimination or killings. Asked about his opinion on the statement “What the Nazis did to the Jews in World War II is the same as what Israel does to the Palestinians,” Muhammed (22, Kurdish male from Kobane/Syria with Muslim but pro-PKK family background) responded by recounting a story about a chance encounter with Palestinian tourists from Jerusalem. They told him about their good life there but complained about the Israeli occupation. He replied to them that he had to flee to Germany and could not go back like they could and that he was not a tourist like them. Siyamend clearly recognizes that equating the Israeli Army and its actions with Jews in general is something he was taught in school.

“I know that there was this generalization, for example, if we saw the Israeli army doing bad things, we would think all Israelis are like this. And this is something they taught us at school, that every Israeli, every Jew is bad, because they were occupying a small part of Syria and such things. So by teaching you this while you are young, they promote [the idea] that Israelis are Jewish and are bad” (Siyamend, 22, Kurdish Muslim male from Qamishli, Syria).

Kurds have been victims of discrimination in both Syria and Iraq. The nationalist Arab ideology and actions of the Baath Party were also aimed against them. These may be major reasons they reject the anti-Zionist-antisemitic part of the Arab nationalist ideology. At least under the regime of Hafez al-Assad, the daily oath of allegiance in the Syrian school system included an allegiance to the regime, to Arab unity, to the fight against the Muslim Brotherhood, and against Zionist imperialism. Even Kurdish school children were forced to swear this oath of Arab unity under threat of corporal punishment. Dila, 26, a Kurdish female from Syria, recounts:

“The real enemy for us students was not the Muslim brotherhood or Israel. Of course, they were talking about imperialism or Zionism, but when they were talking about that, they were also talking about the Kurds [...]. They were always connecting Kurds with imperialism, that they are getting support from imperialism, like imperial countries.”

For Kurds, perhaps this also made the propaganda against Zionist imperialism somewhat less convincing.

## Factors Influencing Antisemitic Positions

The interviews pointed to six social or ideological factors of influence that can be expected to apply to other Syrian and Iraqi refugees. More research will need to be done to find out how powerful the individual factors are and whether others may exist.

- (1) Among many of the participants, an antisemitic norm is prevalent in parts of the societies from which they come, as well as in their social environments. This is evident in antisemitic statements, which suggested the interviewees took some forms of antisemitism for granted. At the same time, participants spoke explicitly about a widespread hatred of Jews in their home countries. “I know that the majority of people don’t like Jews in Iraq,” said Abia (approximately in her mid-20s, Arab Muslim female from Bagdad/Iraq), while others hesitated to admit this.
- (2) The governments in the participants’ home countries engage in antisemitic propaganda, even including it in the official school curriculum. Interviewees from Syria in particular described a curriculum that declares Israel, but also Jews in general, as enemies. This is confirmed by studies on Syrian schoolbooks mentioned above. But even the uncritical study of certain works of world literature, like Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*—which is included in the literary canon for schools in Syria—can lead to or reinforce antisemitic stereotypes.

- (3) Antisemitism is widespread in old and new media and consumed uncritically. Participants explicitly mentioned books, television and the Internet, including YouTube, as sources of antisemitic notions. In new media in particular, conspiracy fantasies are spread quickly and are unfiltered, whether it is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* or conspiracy fantasies on the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Freemasons, the “Illuminati” or the Rothschild family, which all were mentioned by the interviewees.
- (4) Some participants showed what could be termed “Palestine-ism,” a notion that connects an identification with Palestinians to an automatic hatred of Israel and Jews. This type of over-identification with “the Palestinians” as victims does not allow for any differentiation and leads to an automatic hatred of Jews and Israel. It was prevalent among interviewees with a Palestinian background. Yanes, 32, an Arab-Palestinian Muslim male from Damascus, Syria, put it like this: “[A]s a Palestinian, I think both of them [Jews and Israelis] are my enemies.”
- (5) Fragments of a pan-Arab ideology, which include the cliché of the “Zionist imperialist” enemy, demonize Israel in a way that not only promotes notions of an Israeli-Jewish world conspiracy and aims at Israel’s destruction, but also accuses Jews of sympathizing or working with a diabolical state. Arab nationalism can hardly be separated from a pan-Arab ideology, which relies on Israel as the enemy. It is also apparent in the notion of an imperialism led by Jews or Zionists targeting Syria or Iraq.
- (6) Anti-Jewish, often Islamist interpretations of Islam declare “the Jews” to be the enemies of Muslims. Fragments of Islamist ideology and anti-Jewish interpretations of Islam can also be seen in non-Islamist Muslims. Some assumed a general hatred between “the Muslims” and “the Jews” and cited actual or alleged sources in Islam as proof.

These factors of influence often work together in arguments and in attitudes: they reinforce each other.

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Matthias Küntzel

## How to Challenge Islamic Antisemitism?

Although not restricted to Islamist movements, Islamic antisemitism is a key factor in the Islamists' war against the modern world. It lies behind Tehran's desire to destroy the "cancerous tumor" of Israel and inspires Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's threat that Israelis won't be able "to find a tree to hide behind," a clear allusion to a hadith that demands the killing of Jews.<sup>1</sup> It causes Mahmoud Abbas to deny any connection between Jerusalem and the Jews<sup>2</sup> and transforms the political conflict between Israel and the Arabs into a religious struggle between good and evil.

Islamic antisemitism mobilizes the terrorists of the Islamic State to murder Jews in Europe, and it ensures that not only in Amman, but also in Berlin and Malmo, Arabs threaten Jews with this particular war cry: *Khaybar, Khaybar, O Jews; the army of Muhammad will return*. Khaybar is the name of an oasis inhabited by Jews that Muhammad conquered in blood in 628. It is also the name of an assault rifle made in Iran and a type of rocket used by Hezbollah to fire at Israeli cities in 2006.

In this paper, I will discuss four topics: (1) What distinguishes Islamic antisemitism from other forms of Jew-hatred? (2) Why and when did this ideology come about? (3) Why is it particularly difficult to fight Islamic antisemitism? (4) How can we challenge Islamic antisemitism?

## What Does the Term "Islamic Antisemitism" Mean?

This term is neither a general attack on Islam, whose texts also include Jew-friendly passages, nor a general accusation against Muslims, quite a few of whom are against antisemitism. Instead, it refers to a specific kind of antisemi-

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1 A. Gruber, "Erdogans Erlösungsantisemitismus: 'Kein Baum wird die Juden schützen,'" mena-watch, issued December 15, 2017, accessed May 3, 2018, <https://www.mena-watch.com/mena-analysen-beitraege/erdogans-erloesungsantisemitismus-kein-baum-wird-die-juden-schuetzen/>.

2 "Israel's Violations Absolve us from our Commitments: Abbas at OIC Summit," Wafa-News-Agency, issued December 13, 2017, accessed May 3, 2018, [http://iinanews.org/page/public/news\\_details.aspx?id=226907#.WurNEpdCTcs](http://iinanews.org/page/public/news_details.aspx?id=226907#.WurNEpdCTcs).

tism based on a fusion of two sources: the anti-Judaism of early Islam and the modern antisemitism of Europe.

European antisemitism, as manifested in the phantasm of the Jewish world conspiracy, was alien to the original image of the Jews in Islam. Only in the Christian tradition do Jews appear as a deadly and powerful force capable of killing even God's only son. They were able to bring death and ruin on humanity—being held responsible for outbreaks of the plague. The Nazis believed in the phantasm of the Jews as the rulers of the world, who were thus also responsible for all its misfortunes. There was, according to their phantasm, only one way to the redemption of the world: the systematic annihilation of the Jews.

Not so in Islam. Here, it was not the Jews who murdered the Prophet, but the Prophet who murdered Jews; in the years 623 to 627, Muhammad had all the Jewish tribes in Medina enslaved, expelled, or killed. Therefore, some typical features of Christian antisemitism did not appear in the Muslim world: "There were no fears of Jewish conspiracy and domination, no charges of diabolic evil. Jews were not accused of poisoning wells or spreading the plague."<sup>3</sup>

Instead, Muslims used to treat the Jews with contempt or condescending toleration. The hatred of Jews fostered in the Qur'an and in the Sunnah pursued the goal of keeping them down as dhimmis: hostility was accompanied by devaluation.

In Shiite Iran Jews were even perceived as being unclean. When it was raining, they were forbidden to take to the streets so that their "impurity" would not be transferred to Muslims. This cultural imprint made the idea of Christian antisemites, that Jews of all people could represent a permanent threat to the world, seem absurd.

This, however, changed with the emergence of Islamic antisemitism. Its essence is the fusion of Islamic anti-Judaism from the old scriptures with modern European antisemitism—hence the combination of the worst Islamic and the worst Christian images of the Jews.

A case in point is the Charter of Hamas. In Article 7, this Charter cites a *hadith* in which the Prophet Muhammad says that the Muslims will kill the Jews "when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. Then stones and trees will say: O Moslems, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him."

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3 B. Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 122.

At the same time, Article 22 of the same Charter states that the Jews “were behind World War I ... [and] were behind World War II ... There is no war going on anywhere without having their finger in it.”<sup>4</sup>

This Charter simultaneously portrays the Jews on the one hand as degraded, fleeing, and hiding and, on the other, as the secret and true rulers of the world. Logically, this combination is as absurd as the Nazi belief that Jews simultaneously control Communism and Wall Street.

However, through this very mixture, both components become radicalized: European antisemitism becomes recharged by the religious and fanatical moment of radical Islam, while the old anti-Judaism of the Qur’an—supplemented by the world conspiracy theory—receives a new and eliminatory quality.

One prominent feature of this new quality is the conviction that Jews everywhere, in league with Israel, are behind a sinister plot to undermine and eradicate Islam.

As early as during the 1930s, Amin el-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, claimed that the Jews were eager to destroy the holy Muslim sites in Jerusalem. In the 1950s, Sayyid Qutb continued this propaganda in his pamphlet, “Our Struggle With the Jews”:

The bitter war which the Jews launched against Islam ... has not been extinguished, even for one moment, for close on fourteen centuries until this moment, its blaze raging in all corners of the earth.<sup>5</sup>

The seventh century is here again associated with the twentieth century and Qur’anic statements about Jews mixed with the phantasm of a worldwide conspiracy. This viewpoint excludes compromises: “Muslims and Jews [are] locked in a timeless and total confrontation, until one completely subjugates the other.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, the political conflict between Arabs and Zionists about Palestine became Islamized and changed into a religious struggle of life and death. How and when did this kind of Jew-hatred come about?

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<sup>4</sup> Hamas Covenant of 1988, accessed May 3, 2018, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/hamas.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp).

<sup>5</sup> R. L. Nettler, *Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist's View of the Jews* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1987), 83–84.

<sup>6</sup> M. Kramer, “The Jihad Against the Jews,” *Commentary*, October 1994, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-jihad-against-the-jews/>.

## The Origins of Islamic Antisemitism

Islamic antisemitism is not simply a continuation of tradition or a response to injustice; in fact it is the product of a process of deliberate fusion of old Islamic scriptures and new conspiracy theories which started only eighty years ago.

Surprisingly, Nazi Germany's Arabic-speaking propaganda played an important role. This fact is little known but has been confirmed by recent seminal studies such as Jeffrey Herf's *Nazi Propaganda in the Arab World* of 2009 and David Motadel's *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* of 2014.<sup>7</sup>

Since 1937, the Nazis sought to radicalize the latent anti-Judaism of Muslims in order to destroy the British plan for a two-state solution for Palestine—the so-called Peel Plan, which provided for the creation of a small Jewish state. However, initial Nazi attempts to export their racist antisemitism into the Islamic world failed. As a consequence, the Nazis discovered the Islamic creed as a door opener to gain access to the Muslim masses. There is a whole lot of antisemitic potential in Islamic scriptures if you read them selectively. To quote David Motadel:

Berlin made explicit use of religious rhetoric, terminology, and imagery and sought to engage with and reinterpret religious doctrine and concepts ... Sacred texts such as the Qur'an ... were politicized to incite religious violence against alleged common enemies ... German propaganda combined Islam with anti-Jewish agitation to an extent that had not hitherto been known in the modern Muslim world.<sup>8</sup>

The first text that propagated sheer Jew-hatred in an Islamic context by mixing selected anti-Jewish episodes of Muhammad's life with the so-called wickedness of Jews in the twentieth century was the thirty-one-page pamphlet "Islam—Jewry: Call by the Grand Mufti to the Islamic World," published in 1937 in Cairo. On the one hand, this text builds on the traditions of early Islam: "The battle between the Jews and Islam began when Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina," we read here:

At that time the Jewish methods were already the same as today. Their weapon as ever was defamation ... They said Muhammad was a swindler..., they tried to undermine Muhammad's honor ..., they began to ask Muhammad senseless and unsolvable questions. ... But with this method too, as before, they had no success. So they ... tried to eradicate the Muslims.

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<sup>7</sup> J. Herf, *Nazi Propaganda in the Arab World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); D. Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War*, 76, 97.

At the same time, the text attacks the Jews in the diction of European antisemitism as “great businessmen,” “exploiters,” “microbes,” and as the perpetrators of the plague. Since Muhammad’s days, we read here, the Jews have been constantly trying to “destroy Muslims.” “The verses from the Qur’an and hadith,” the brochure concludes,

prove to you that the Jews have been the bitterest enemies of Islam and continue to try to destroy it. Do not believe them, they only know hypocrisy and cunning. Hold together, fight for the Islamic thought, fight for your religion and your existence! Do not rest until your land is free of the Jews.<sup>9</sup>

During the Second World War, the Nazis distributed this pamphlet in several languages within the Arabic-Islamic world and thus confronted the Jews with the perspective of total war: If the evil of the Jews is immutable and permanent, transcending time and circumstances, there is only one way to cleanse the world of them—by their complete expulsion or annihilation.

Nazi Germany propagated this idea also by using radio programs in the Arabic language that were broadcast three times a day and seven times a week between April 1939 and April 1945.<sup>10</sup>

For example, in a speech broadcast in March 1944, the Mufti of Jerusalem termed the Jews “bacilli” and “microbes” and called on Muslims

to drive all Jews out of Palestine and the other Arab and Islamic countries with determination and strength. Spend all efforts to ensure that there is no longer a single Jew or single colonialist left in these countries.<sup>11</sup>

This long-lasting propaganda strengthened an exclusively anti-Jewish reading of the Islamic scriptures, popularized European conspiracy theories and agitated in an antisemitic manner against the Zionist project. It gradually changed the perception of Jews within Islamic societies and contributed to the fact that Jews were more and more seen as a kind of “race” and that hostility to Jews became far more intense than in past eras of Islamic history.

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<sup>9</sup> Translated from the German version of M. Sabry, “Islam-Judentum. Aufruf des Großmufti an die islamische Welt im Jahre 1937,” in *Islam, Judentum, Bolschewismus* (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt, 1938), 22–32.

<sup>10</sup> See Herf’s seminal study about this radio propaganda, Herf, *Nazi Propaganda in the Arab World*.

<sup>11</sup> G. Höpp, ed., *Mufti-Papiere: Briefe, Memoranden, Reden und Aufrufe Amin al-Husainis aus dem Exil, 1940–1945* (Berlin: Schwarz, 2001), 211.

The pamphlet “Islam—Judaism” was followed in the early 1950s by Sayyid Qutb’s “Our Struggle with the Jews”—a deeply religious pamphlet which Saudi Arabia disseminated in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. Then, in 1988, came the Charter of Hamas. One might think that an ideology that developed only eighty years ago would be easy to defeat. But this is not the case.

## Why is it so Difficult to Fight this Particular Form of Antisemitism?

One main reason is obvious: Islamic antisemitism is connected to the Muslim creed. Western societies, however, are split when it comes to the question of Islam. One side tends to downplay Islamism and Islamic antisemitism, while the other side seeks to demonize Islam as a whole.

The successes of Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Germany’s Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), and others have shown that racism against Muslims has become a mass phenomenon. These movements mix up Islamism and Islam in a populist way and tend to use it to place every dark-skinned Muslim under general suspicion.

It would be a mistake to expect these movements to help in the fight against Islamic Jew-hatred. They create, on the contrary, detrimental effects because, first of all, they lead this alleged fight under a racist banner and tend to label all Muslims as potential or real antisemites. They thus endorse “the Islamist claim that Islamists alone are true Muslims, while waving away the modernizers [among them] as outliers, fabulists, and frauds,” to quote Daniel Pipes.<sup>12</sup>

Second, they want to “liberate” their own countries from Muslims, but not the Muslims in other parts of the world, from the terror of Islamism and the idiocy of antisemitism. Third, they tolerate and even support antisemites within their own ranks.

The emergence of these racist movements is, however, partly caused by the downplaying of Islamism and Islamic antisemitism by the political and media elite in the West. This leads us to the second stupid approach to Islamic antisemitism—to treat it with “ignorance, avoidance, minimization, denial or misinterpretation.”<sup>13</sup> Neil J. Kressel wrote a whole book about this “conspiracy of si-

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<sup>12</sup> D. Pipes, “Foreword,” in *The Challenge of Modernizing Islam: Reformers Speak Out and the Obstacles They Face*, ed. C. Douglass-Williams (New York: Encounter Books, 2017), xvii.

<sup>13</sup> N. J. Kressel, “*The Sons of Pigs and Apes*”: *Muslim Antisemitism and the Conspiracy of Silence* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2012), 57.

lence.” Few would openly say that they are willing to tolerate or ignore Jew-hatred among Muslims. Instead, as an excuse they claim “that whatever happens now in the Muslim and Arab world by definition bears no resemblance to the ... history of Jew-hatred in the Christian world.”<sup>14</sup>

A case in point is Gilbert Achcar, a professor at the London School of Oriental and African Studies. Achcar does not deny that “antisemitism ... has grown spectacularly in Arab political statements and Arab media.”<sup>15</sup> Yet, he then goes on to excuse it by asking rhetorically:

Is the fantasy-based hatred of the Jews that was and still is typical of European racists ... the equivalent of the hatred felt by Arabs enraged by the occupation and/or destruction of Arab lands...?<sup>16</sup>

His answer is a definite no:

The antisemitic statements now heard in Arab countries are fantasy-laden expressions—due, as a rule to cultural backwardness—of an intense national frustration and oppression for which “the Jews” of Palestine in their majority, as well as Israel, the “Jewish state” they founded, must, in fact, be held responsible.<sup>17</sup>

This statement presents a two-pronged apology for Islamic antisemitism—first, with claiming that such antisemitism is the antisemitism of the oppressed. Following this idea, it is consequently claimed that Israel is responsible for this antisemitism since it is also responsible for the oppression.<sup>18</sup>

This assumption is highly problematic since those “fantasy-laden” expressions are directed at the destruction of the Jews or Israel. They, as a rule, do not address real deeds or misdeeds of Israel’s governments. Otherwise, the response would not be antisemitism aimed at annihilation but justified or unjustified indignation over a misguided policy aimed at changing it.

In a second excuse, Achcar claims that Arab antisemitism is “due ... to cultural backwardness.” This is erroneous in two ways. First, it is factually wrong: it

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>15</sup> G. Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 248.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 275.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. Küntzel, “Western Intellectual Attitudes toward Antisemitism in the Arab and Muslim World,” in *Unity and Diversity in Contemporary Antisemitism: The Bristol-Sheffield Hallam Colloquium on Contemporary Antisemitism*, ed. L. D. Klaff and J. G. Campbell (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019), 193.



is mostly members of the cultural elite such as academics, journalists, publishers, and clerics who spread the message of hate. Secondly, this claim has a strong racist undertone.<sup>19</sup> Achcar claims that, when Arabs deny the Holocaust, “it has nothing to do with any conviction. It’s just a way of people venting their anger, venting their frustration, in the only means that they feel is available to them.”<sup>20</sup> Achcar thus gives the antisemites, as long as they belong to what he considers an oppressed group, a moral *carte blanche*.

Achcar, like many of his colleagues, infantilizes Muslims by branding them as essentially stupid people who cannot be held to Western standards of decency and who cannot be expected to know what they are doing. Maajid Nawaz, a prominent British Muslim, derides this undertone: “A credible Muslim can only be inarticulate” and “requires an intermediary to ‘explain’ his anger.”<sup>21</sup>

We are dealing here with what I call the “orientalization” of antisemitism in the Arab or Muslim world which is of course a kind of racism in itself—albeit an apparently benevolent type of racism in the eyes of its upholders. Some might call it a “racism of low expectations,” as if a Muslim person is supposed to uphold appalling views, while others might call it “paternalistic racism.”

In addition, there is the charge of Islamophobia. This term is highly misleading because it mixes two different phenomena—unjust hatred against Muslims and necessary criticism of Islamism, Islam and the Qur’an—and condemns both equally. Words are crucial; this word was promoted in order to counter the critique of Islamic antisemitism—first by intimidating those who refuse to ignore or downplay the hatred of Jews among Muslims and second by introducing a counter-term to antisemitism.

The invention of opposite terms in order to parallel and downplay Nazism, antisemitism, or the Holocaust is nothing new. Some always combine the word “Nazism” with “Zionism,” others do not mention the term “Holocaust” without the counter-term “nakba” while the opposite term to antisemitism is, of course, Islamophobia.

It is true that racism is a component of antisemitism. Antisemitism, however, is not a component of racism but a specific ideology with elements not known in the field of racism. This peculiarity is ignored in the listing of “antisemitism” and “Islamophobia.” It was, by the way, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who more than any-

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *idem*.

<sup>20</sup> G. Achcar, “Israel’s Propaganda War: Blame the Grand Mufti,” interview by G. Miller, *Monthly Review online*, 2010, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/achcar120510p.html>.

<sup>21</sup> M. Nawaz, “The British Left’s Hypocritical Embrace of Islamism,” *Daily Beast*, August 8, 2015, updated April 14, 2017, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-british-lefts-hypocritical-embrace-of-islamism>.

one else made sure that the term “antisemitism” was always followed by the term “Islamophobia” in declarations by the Council of Europe or the OSCE.

Both—the downplayers of Islamism and the demonizers of each and every Muslim—have a biased point of view. The influence of one side, however, strengthens the influence of the other side and vice versa. Both betray the minority of modern Muslims who actively oppose Islamism and Islamic antisemitism. This betrayal is inexcusable since Islamists fight this minority of modern Muslims tooth and nail.

## What Needs to Be Done to Break out of this Vicious Circle?

My first suggestion is easier said than done: There is the need to develop a political movement against right-wing populists and against appeasers of the Left; a movement which brings together those Muslims, ex-Muslims, and non-Muslims, who want to fight Islamic antisemitism and Islamism and who want to change the attitudes of governments and media in this respect. An international conference somewhere in Europe together with individuals from the MENA-region could be a starting point.

Today, Muslims who seek good relations with Jews are often treated as lepers. This has to end. It is therefore the first and most important step “to make the world safe for Muslim critics of antisemitism—physically safe, socially safe, organizationally safe, even academically safe.”<sup>22</sup> These critics must not exclude the Qur’an. The Tunisian philosopher Mezri Haddad, for example, refuses to gloss over what the Qur’an says. Since “Islamic thinkers ... cannot purge the Qur’an of its potentially antisemitic dross” wrote Haddad, “they must closely examine this corpus with hermeneutical reason” and have to “show intellectual audacity.”<sup>23</sup>

The time is ripe for this kind of endeavor. The intellectual climate within the Arab world has partly changed. More and more people have recognized that the dangers that threaten this region do not come from Israel but from Sunni jihadists and Iran’s theocracy. This experience seems today to be triggering a period of thaw in parts of the Arab world, and notably Saudi Arabia, not only with respect

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<sup>22</sup> Kressel, *“The Sons of Pigs and Apes,”* 201.

<sup>23</sup> Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Special Dispatch Series No. 1362, issued November 21, 2006.

to Israel and the Jews but also with regard to the debate about political and religious affairs.

Recently, for example, ‘Abd Al-Hamid Al-Hakim, a prominent Saudi intellectual, called via Twitter “to uproot the culture of hatred for Jews” while his colleague Mash’al Al-Sudairi blamed Amin el-Husseini in the London based Saudi daily *Asharq Al-Awsat*: “He was the one who tried to combine the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Nazi-ideology” and “damaged the [Palestinian] cause more than anyone else.”<sup>24</sup>

This dynamic contradicts both the malignant and the benevolent racists who try to construct a kind of *homo islamicus* to keep Muslims trapped in the cage of an immutable culture. It creates at the same time an opportunity to promote an alliance between Islamic and non-Islamic critics of Islamic antisemitism.

My second suggestion relates to the state level. Whether we are successful or unsuccessful in our fight against Islamic antisemitism depends crucially on the actions of governments.

In Germany, for example, there are various attempts to contain Islamic antisemitism with a mixture of pedagogy and state prohibitions. These attempts are honorable, but they remain pointless as long as this antisemitism is not contained at its source—that is in Tehran, Beirut, Gaza, or Ankara. They remain pointless as long as Jew-hatred incessantly manipulates the Muslims in Germany via social networks in the Turkish, Arabic, or Persian languages.

This proves that Islamic antisemitism is a major foreign policy issue. Only governments can stop this flow of hate messages by denouncing and punishing state or non-state actors that allow Islamic antisemitism to spread in textbooks, mosques, and media.

Regrettably, most Western governments ignore Islamic antisemitism in other parts of the world. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, for example, does not want to jeopardize Germany’s privileged relations with Ankara and Tehran.

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24 Z. Harel, “Shift In Saudi Media’s Attitude To Israel—Part II: Saudi Writer Who Visited Israel: We Want An Israeli Embassy in Riyadh; We Should Make Peace With Israel, Uproot Culture of Hatred For Jews,” MEMRI, Inquiry & Analysis Series No. 1399, issued May 29, 2018, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/shift-saudi-medias-attitude-israel-%E2%80%93part-ii-saudi-writer-who-visited-israel-we-want-israeli>; and “Saudi Writer: The Arab League Summits Are Completely Pointless; Palestinian Leaders—First And Foremost Jerusalem Mufti Al-Husseini and PLO Leader Arafat—Damaged the Palestinian Cause The Most,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch No. 7499, issued May 31, 2018, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/saudi-writer-arab-league-summits-are-completely-pointless-palestinian-leaders-%E2%80%93first-and>.

## Why is it Especially Important to Challenge Islamic Antisemitism?

Today, we are witnessing an antisemitic war, led by Islamists. The intention to kill any Jew expresses the essence of antisemitic warfare.

While conventional war—such as the ongoing war in the Ukraine or the many wars in Syria—is aimed at gaining territory and influence, the antisemitic war is aimed at extermination.

Take as an example the jihad warriors of the Islamic State: In Europe they especially target Jewish institutions such as the Jewish school in Toulouse, the kosher market in Paris, the Jewish museum in Brussels, or the synagogue in Copenhagen. They want to kill Jews. It does not matter if those Jews are Zionists or anti-Zionists, if they are supporters or opponents of Israeli policies. The only thing that matters is that Jews are killed.

The same is true with Israel. For Hezbollah or Hamas, it does not matter if the Qassam rocket or a suicide bomber kills a baby or an old person, a supporter of Netanyahu or a foe. What matters is that Jews are being killed. More than a few Islamists today believe that if you annihilate the Jewish state you will redeem the world. To quote just a few recent statements by officials of the Iranian regime: “We will raze the Zionist regime in less than eight minutes,” “Israel must be wiped off the earth!,” “In 25 years Israel will no longer be on the map.”<sup>25</sup>

Let us assume for a moment that a nuclear power such as Pakistan told another nuclear power, such as India: “In 25 years, India will no longer be on the map.” There would be an outcry all over the world. For it would be clear to everyone: Whoever threatens a nuclear power with destruction is provoking a nuclear exchange, a nuclear disaster.

Israel is certainly a nuclear power and Iran has the ability to construct a nuclear weapon as well. Amazingly, there was no outcry when Teheran proclaimed: “Israel must be wiped off the map!” This battle cry, however, confronts us with a new kind of total war: the antisemitic nuclear war.

Thus, challenging Islamic antisemitism effectively is not only about protecting the Jewish communities in Europe and the Middle East. It is crucial to peace in the world.

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. E. Benari, “‘In 25 years Israel Will no Longer Be on the Map’,” *Arutz Sheva*, July 1, 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/214351>.

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Uriya Shavit

# “Muslims are the New Jews” in the West: Reflections on Contemporary Parallelisms

This article examines a spectrum of contemporary texts by Muslim essayists, scholars, and activists based in the Arab world, in Europe, and in the United States that comparatively analyzed Jewish experiences in the West as invaluable lessons for Muslim minorities. These included: antisemitism and the struggle against it; segregation from and integration into majority societies; and political lobbying on behalf of the “greater nation.” The article argues that the diversity of Jewish realities, past and present, and the general sense that Jewish minorities in the West ultimately found ways to preserve their religious identity while amassing social-political influence, have rendered comparisons between Muslims and Jews an essential aspect of different (and at times contesting) arguments about the future of Muslim minorities in the West.

## Introduction

In 2012, Israel’s Channel 10, the country’s second-largest commercial television network, aired a documentary series entitled “Allah Islam,” which painted an alarming picture of radicalized Muslim communities in Europe. The series, described by several critics as uneven,<sup>1</sup> was met with exceptional public interest, with ratings for the network soaring to as much as 20 percent. The notion that Europe is being Islamized, or is under “Muslim occupation,” has been repeatedly articulated in recent years in Israeli media. Reports on European Jews (particularly French Jews), who migrated to Israel or contemplate doing so and invoke their concern about Muslim attitudes to Jews as a main motivation, contribute to the image of European Muslims as an imminent threat.<sup>2</sup> In the past decade,

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**Note:** This is a republication of the author’s earlier publication of the same title in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 36, no. 1 (2016): 1–15.

1 Cf. A. Mendelzon, “Ma Mevi Yoter Rating me-Sinat Muslimim?,” [“Nothing Provides Greater TV Ratings than Hatred for Muslims?”] *Mako*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.mako.co.il/video-blogs-specials/Article-f25e58c13eea931006.htm>.

2 For example, in the words of Sandra, a 35-year-old French Jew, who emigrated on July 16, 2014, with her husband and four children:



I have given several dozen public lectures on Muslim minorities in Europe to Israeli audiences. When the time for question and answer comes, participants—usually highly educated and politically moderate senior citizens—often express the conviction that Europe is being, or already has been, “taken over” by Islam, and that it is headed for a catastrophe that endangers its Jewish minorities and Israeli interests. A sense of Schadenfreude, that Europeans will finally get a taste of the medicine which Israelis have swallowed for many years, is the frequent undertone of these analyses.

### “Muslims of Europe”: A Fictitious Concept?

As is the case with many of the discussions on Islam in the West, common depictions of a clear-cut rivalry and “inherent clash” between the Jews and Muslims of Europe are predominately characterized by essentializations. They gravely err in two respects. First, in political, social, and cultural terms, “Muslims of Europe” is almost a fictitious concept. The Muslims of the continent are diverse and divided in their religious attitudes and practices based on doctrinal, philosophical, political, national, territorial, ethnic, linguistic, and other affiliations, to the extent that analyzing them as one coherent, unified group, with common ideologies and ambitions, including with regard to views on Jews and Judaism, is reductionist and misleading—no less than analyzing the Jews of the continent in such generalizing terms would be.

Second, while the attitudes of certain Muslim individuals and groups should be a cause of concern for European Jews, a great historical irony is that Jewish freedom of religion in Europe has become intertwined with that enjoyed by Muslims. Some of the Islamic rituals and traditions that have been at the core of public debates on Islam in Europe in recent years, such as male circumcision and the slaughtering of animals, are similar to Jewish traditions and rituals. Where the rights of Muslims are affected, those of Jews are affected as well. France,

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“I was born in Paris, I like very much the European way of living, and I never considered living here [in Israel. However] it is hard to be a Jew in France today. There are more than seven million Muslims there, on the streets there’s an atmosphere of anti-Semitism, and the government shuts its eyes,” see Rofe-Ofir, Sharon. “Anu Banu,” [“Here We Came,”] *Laisha*, September 29, 2014.

For an in-depth report on the effect of sporadic attacks by Muslims had on Jewish emigration from Europe see A. Lebor, “Exodus: Why Europe’s Jews Are Fleeing Once Again,” *Newsweek*, July 29, 2014, <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/08/08/exodus-why-europes-jews-are-fleeing-once-again-261854.html>.

for example, did not legislate a ban specifically against Muslim headscarves. The text of the law approved on March 15, 2004, stated that “in public and secondary schools, wearing signs or clothes by which pupils clearly display a religious affiliation is forbidden.”<sup>3</sup> While the legislation was initiated in order to specifically ban *hijabs* and reflected a wider public concern over the increasing presence of Islamic symbols and displays in the public sphere, it also resulted in the banning of certain Jewish skullcaps in state schools. Even where Jews are not directly affected by acts aimed against Muslims, infringements on the rights of another religious minority create dangerous precedents. For who is to assure that the same Swiss electorate that prohibited the building of minarets in one referendum would not prohibit the building of synagogues in another?

## Commonality of Interests

As religious minorities who observe traditions that some European liberals and conservatives alike view disparagingly, Jews and Muslims on the continent today have more than monotheism in common. To the extent that their religious heritage matters to them—whether in a devotional, cultural, or folkloristic sense—they have common interests against liberal and populist voices that seek to limit the practice of religious traditions.

In recent years, Jewish and Muslim leaders recognized this commonality on local, national, and transnational levels, leading to dialogues and joint initiatives that do not always attract media attention. The swift and successful action by Jewish and Muslim German organizations to ensure that a June 2012, Cologne court ruling that declared circumcisions illegal would not affect the right to circumcise boys in the country was, perhaps, the finest demonstration that on certain critical issues, Jewish and Muslim agendas are similar and can be best served when advocated together. Leaders from both communities protested against the ban, including in a joint march in Berlin, describing it as a gratuitous infringement on religious freedoms and warning that it would effectively make leading a Jewish or Muslim life in Germany impossible.<sup>4</sup> The protests led the Ger-

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3 J. R. Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 136. On the support for the ban across the French political spectrum and its motivations see *ibid.*, 63–127, and J. Ezekiel, “French Dressing: Race, Gender, and the Hijab History,” *Feminist Studies* 32, no. 2 (2006): 256–78.

4 Cf. “Juden und Muslime gehen gemeinsam auf die Straße,” *Die Welt*, September 9, 2012, <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article109113576/Juden-und-Muslime-gehen-gemeinsam-auf-die-Strasse.html>; B. Weinthal, “Jews, Muslims, Christians Protest Circumcision Ban,” *The Jerusalem*

man parliament, with the active support of the German Chancellor, to approve by an overwhelming majority in December 2012 a law that secured the right to circumcise boys.<sup>5</sup>

Germany's short-lived judicial ban on circumcisions also demonstrated that Jewish European organizations, despite being a minority of far smaller demographic proportions, hold (especially in the German context) greater political leverage than do similar Muslim organizations. While the prospect of a ban on circumcision alarmed Germany's Muslim leaderships, it was the outcries of German, European, and Israeli Jewish leaders, and the concern of German politicians of the reappearance of prejudice against Jews, that encouraged prompt legislative action that ensured the continued legality of circumcisions.<sup>6</sup>

## Lessons to Learn from the Jews

The resemblance between Muslims and Jews as minorities in Europe, and the greater ability of Jews to promote as minorities their agendas, has not escaped the notice of a spectrum of Muslim scholars and activists, some based in the Muslim world and some in Europe. In recent years, the notion of "Muslims as the new Jews" has proliferated in deliberations on the future of Islam on the European continent. In stark contrast to the Jewish-Israeli image of European Muslims as a dangerous "other" that threatens European Jewish existence, a plethora of texts written by Muslims presented European Jews as reflections of European Muslims and argued that the Jewish experience provides invaluable lessons for Muslims. Comparisons pointed to the tragic past of the Jews and to their prosperous and secure present to make different points about how Muslim

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*Post*, September 9, 2012, <https://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-News/Jews-Muslims-Christians-protest-circumcision-ban>; K. Connolly, "Circumcision Ruling Condemned by Germany's Jewish and Muslim Leaders," *The Guardian*, June 27, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jun/27/circumcision-ruling-germany-muslim-jewish>; J. Kay, "Muslims and Jews Finally Come Together—To Defend Circumcision," *The National Post*, June 27, 2012, <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/jonathan-kay-muslims-and-jews-finally-come-together-to-champion-circumcision>.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. Rashti, "Germany Votes to Keep Circumcision Legal," *The Jewish Chronicle Online*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.thejc.com/news/world-news/94038/germany-votes-keep-circumcision-legal>.

<sup>6</sup> In July 2012, the German press reported that Angela Merkel warned against Germany becoming the only country in the world where Jews cannot practice their rituals, suggesting it would make Germany a laughing stock, see "Kanzlerin warnt vor Beschneidungs-Verbot," *Bild*, July 16, 2012, <http://www.bild.de/politik/inland/beschneidung/kanzlerin-warnt-vorbeschneidungsverbot-25180102.bild.html>.

minorities in Europe should preserve their religious identity and engage with majority non-Muslim societies. While “Jewish examples” served authors of different orientations, all shared the notion that Muslims in Europe, being socially and politically weak, must study Jewish history in order to learn how to avoid catastrophe on the one hand, and how to improve their condition on the other.

This article offers a qualitative reading of texts in Arabic, English, and German by Muslim essayists, political activists, and religious scholars, which comparatively explore three aspects of Jewish experiences:

- (1) combating hate speech, discrimination, and persecutions;
- (2) striking a balance between integration and preservation of religious identity;
- (3) amassing political influence.

The voices examined are diverse, representing different agendas, different understandings of what it means to be Muslim, particularly a Muslim in the West, and addressing different audiences. As such, they should not be confused as part of one “Muslim” discourse. What they do have in common, however, is the notion that Muslims living in the West face serious challenges and that it is the responsibility of Muslim thinkers to introduce new ideas as to how these challenges can be resolved. The article does not aim to exhaust the corpus of comparative argumentations. Rather, its purpose is to demonstrate the diverse functions which parallelisms with Jewish experiences play in contemporary works on Islam in Europe and the proliferation of such representations on various platforms.

## Antisemitism and Islamophobia

In academic and popular discourses, Islamophobia is invoked to denote negative, essentialist approaches to Islam and to Muslims.<sup>7</sup> ‘Abd al-Jalil Sajid, President of the National Association of British Pakistanis, argued that the term was introduced to reflect a reality of rapid and considerable growth of prejudice and hostility towards Muslims that is based on the stereotype of Muslims as violent religious fanatics who reject concepts such as tolerance and equality.<sup>8</sup> While the

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<sup>7</sup> For example, C. D. Field, “Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain: The Evidence of Opinion Polls, 1988–2006,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 18, no. 4 (2007): 447–77; H. Afshar, R. Aitken, and M. Franks, “Feminisms, Islamophobia and Identities,” *Political Studies* 53, no. 2 (2005): 263; D. Shumsky, “Post-Zionist Orientalism? Orientalist Discourse and Islamophobia among the Russian-Speaking Intelligentsia in Israel,” *Social Identities* 10, no. 1 (2004): 94.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. A. Sajid, “Islamophobia: A New Word for an Old Fear,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 12, no. 2/3 (2005): 31.

term gained prominence in analyses of Western attitudes towards Muslims, particularly Muslim minorities in the West in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, it has been used throughout the twentieth century to denote anti-Muslim attitudes<sup>9</sup> and has been included in the Oxford English Dictionary since 1997.<sup>10</sup>

As any phobia, the one associated with Islam points to an irrational fear; the term thus suggests anti-Muslim sentiments to be a form of illness that should be cured. It is invoked not only to reflect reality but also to protest against it: to alert Europeans and Muslims alike that what may seem to be sporadic incidents are, in fact, a reflection of a social bias that needs to be addressed both educationally and legally, making certain attitudes and actions illegitimate.

Islamophobia was related to a wide range of attitudes and actions, and in some studies was not defined at all, damaging its efficacy as a discursive means to delegitimize prejudice and intolerance. To note but two examples, along with physical attacks against Muslims, Abduljalil Said mentioned “delay and inertia in responding to Muslim requests for cultural sensitivity in education, in healthcare, and in protection against incitement to hatred,” and “curtailment of civil liberties that disproportionately affect Muslims” as forms of Islamophobia.<sup>11</sup> Mustafa Abu Sway, a professor of Philosophy and Islamic Studies at al-Quds University, wrote that “ultimately, Islamophobia also comprises prejudice in the media, literature and everyday conversation.”<sup>12</sup> These definitions potentially cover opinions and legislation that do not reflect irrational fears of, or hatred toward, a religious minority. For example, it is true that campaigns against male circumcision, *halal* slaughtering, and *niqabs* have resonated in recent years, at least in part, because of a cultural atmosphere that has become less patient to cultural plurality, especially one that involves Islam. But these campaigns were motivated also by convictions about human rights or animal rights which, whether accepted or rejected, cannot be simply dismissed as representing a “phobia,” that is, as illegitimate.

The comparison of Islamophobia to antisemitism served as an essential argument in a number of discussions on the topic. The equation of the two suggested that contemporary attacks on Muslims and Islam are reincarnations of old and new hatreds against Jews and Judaism. It was introduced for a reason.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. R. Richardson, *Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism—Or What? Concepts and Terms Revisited*, <http://www.insted.co.uk/anti-muslim-racism.pdf> (accessed November 5, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. L. P. Sheridan, “Islamophobia Pre- and Post- September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 21, no. 3 (2006): 317.

<sup>11</sup> Sajid, “Islamophobia,” 31–32.

<sup>12</sup> M. Abu Sway, “Islamophobia: Meaning, Manifestations, Causes,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 12, no 2/3 (2005): 15.

The mainstreams of Western societies have come to consider antisemitism a complete taboo. As noted by Yascha Mounk, today’s European right-wing, anti-migration populists consciously embrace Philo-Semitic views to ward off accusations of racism.<sup>13</sup> Thus, no argument about the need to take Islamophobia seriously could be more compelling than its equation with anti-Jewish bigotry. By invoking this comparison, activists and writers cautioned non-Muslims and Muslims alike that if not stopped, discrimination against Muslims can devolve to inhumane criminal acts. The comparison also encouraged Muslims to advocate, as Jews did, for legislation that would criminalize hatred directed against them and urged European governments to treat Islamophobia with the same intolerance with which they treat antisemitism.

## The U.K.

One example is a Labor politician of Pakistani extraction, Shadid Malik, who served, at the time, as the MP for Dewsbury (West Yorkshire) and as Minister for International Development in U.K. In 2008, he stirred considerable public interest when pointing to a resemblance between past antisemitic and current anti-Muslim sentiments. Malik revealed that he and his family were victims of attacks directed against them because they are Muslim, including the firebombing of their car. Emphasizing that he does not intend any comparison with the Holocaust, Malik said:

in a way that it was and still is in some parts almost legitimate to target Jews, many Muslims would say that we feel exactly the same way—that somehow there is a message out there that it is OK to target people as they are Muslims.<sup>14</sup>

Maleiha Malik, a lecturer in law at King’s College in London, argued that just as antisemitism in Britain portrays a religious minority as a “threat to the nation,” so too does anti-Muslim racism. In both cases, differences arising from religious cultures are pathologized and systematically excluded from definitions of “being British.” Malik suggested that the comparison between the phenomena reveals

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Y. Mounk, “Europe’s Jewish Problem: The Misunderstood Rise of European Anti-Semitism,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 17, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141990/yascha-mounk/europes-jewish-problem>.

<sup>14</sup> S. Doughty, “We Muslims Are the New Jews’ Says MP Who Has Been Victim of a Hit-and-Run and a Firebomb Attack,” *The Daily Mail*, July 3, 2008, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1031697/We-Muslims-new-Jews-says-MP-victim-hit-run-firebomb-attack.html>.

an alarming recurring pattern in modern British history: the rapid collapse of security fears associated with a particular religious minority is transformed into a racialized discourse of “civilization versus barbarism.” In doing so, she drew a parallel between the pejorative public images of Jewish immigrants who settled in the East End of London at the turn of the century to those of Muslim immigrants today. Just as the Muslims of today, those Jews, a minority visually distinguished by the men’s dark clothes and long beards and the women’s hair-coverings, were depicted as a minority that adhered to a sacred book filled with religious legal strictures and arcane punishments, and supported gender inequality. Politicians warned against the risks of their self-segregation, and while only a minority among them affiliated with extremist anarchist and Bolshevik groups, an alarm was raised about the entire community.<sup>15</sup>

Several writers cautioned that should anti-Muslim sentiments in the West not be curbed, the situation could even deteriorate to another Holocaust, only this time against Muslims. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, a British essayist of Indian-Ugandan descent who frequently comments on migration and multiculturalism, argued, in an article critical of the Muslim Council of Britain’s decision not to participate in the national Holocaust Memorial Day service, that “today, the new Jews of Europe are Muslims.” Noting that the Germans who led the extermination of Jews were highly cultured and educated, no less than today’s Europeans, she stated that there are no guarantees that history would not be repeated:

Since the organized massacres of Muslim males in Bosnia, we 16 million European Muslims live with a menacing whirr at the back of the head, ghostly fears that the fires next time will burn with our bodies. We are today’s despised “other,” blamed for all the ills of the world which is still largely controlled by Christians. We have to atone ceaselessly for the Taliban and al-Qaida and home-grown men of violence. We are expected—just as Jews were in the thirties—to bend our heads and take the slurs, looks of hatred, to accept the burden of shame. By remembering the Holocaust with past victims, we remind ourselves of what could happen in the future.<sup>16</sup>

Ziyad al-Drif, the Saudi ambassador to UNESCO, offered an equally strong warning about a looming tragedy. Writing in the pan-Arab daily newspaper *al-Hayat*, al-Drif defined Islamophobia as a phenomenon that is based on three core pejorative concepts: Islam is organically tied to violence; inherently contradicts de-

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. M. Malik, “Muslims Are Now Getting the Same Treatment Jews Had a Century Ago,” *The Guardian*, February 2, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/feb/02/comment.religion1>.

<sup>16</sup> Y. Alibhai-Brown, “Why Muslims Must Remember the Holocaust,” *The Guardian*, January 23, 2006.

mocracy; and is entirely inimical to secularism. He suggested that a number of principle motivations encourage Western anti-Muslim sentiments: (a) concerns that migration waves and changing demographic balances would result in the Islamizing of Western societies; (b) the masking, at times unconscious, of ethnic racism in religious terms; and (c) efforts to divert attention from the crimes committed by the Zionists against the Palestinians. Al-Dris admitted that two distinct types of Muslim groups had contributed to the rise of Islamophobia: extremist movements that apply terror under the banner of Islam and inevitably create sentiments of fear, especially among people who do not know what Islam really stands for, and certain Muslim commentators who have become regular guests on certain talk shows and, under the guise of experts with insider knowledge, spread fears by arguing that violence is rooted in Islam. Relying on Western commentators who hold that anti-Muslim sentiments in the West have surpassed antisemitic ones, al-Dris concluded his essay by presenting the rhetorical question of whether Islamophobia is a means to prepare European societies for a new Holocaust—only this time, one committed against Muslims.<sup>17</sup>

## Germany

The corollary between antisemitism and Islamophobia served as a basis for calls to change policies and to treat the two phenomena in the same manner. For example, the German-Muslim essayist, Kassem Mohsen, demanded Germans fight anti-Muslim sentiments with the same seriousness that they fight anti-Jewish ones. He argued that just as Holocaust denial has been criminalized, and justifiably so, forms of intolerance towards other religions should also be outlawed. As an example, Mohsen invoked the murder of the Egyptian Marwa al-Sharbini, a German-Egyptian pharmacist and Islamic activist who was stabbed to death in a Dresden court in 2009 by Alex Wiens, a German immigrant from Russia, against whom she had testified in a criminal case for verbally abusing her during a quarrel at a playground. Mohsen protested against what he considered the mild coverage of that particular hate-crime in the media. He argued that had a Jew been murdered by a neo-Nazi following a quarrel at a playground, the German press—particularly the Axel Springer press (publisher of the mass-circulation *Bild*, which is exceptionally pro-Israel and harshly critical of any expressions

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17 Cf. Z. al-Dris, “‘al-Khawf min al-Islam’ wa al-‘Ada’ lil-Samiyya’: Iydilujjiyya Manfa’a wa Tha-qafat Ibtizaz – Hal Tumahhidu al-Islamofubiyya ila’ Holocaust min Naw’ Akhar?,” [“The Fear of Islam and Anti-Semitism: A Beneficial Ideology and a Culture of Extortion—Will Islamophobia Lead to a New Kind of Holocaust?”] *al-Hayat*, September 27, 2010.



of antisemitism)—would have reported on the crime for months on months, treating it as a major news story.<sup>18</sup> Parallels such as the ones drawn by Mohsen are not common in the German discourse on minority rights, in which participants are usually careful to avoid any relativization of antisemitism.<sup>19</sup> It is thus, perhaps, not surprising that Mohsen based much of his argument on an essay written by a senior German historian of the Holocaust, Wolfgang Benz, who drew a parallel between the portrayal of Jews as “enemies of the public” in the late nineteenth century and the similar portrayal of Muslims in contemporary times, suggesting both to be the products of hysteria and manipulation.<sup>20</sup>

## France

Sa'ïd al-Lawindi, a former correspondent of *al-Ahram* in Paris, who resided in the French capital for eighteen years and earned his PhD from the Sorbonne, dealt extensively with anti-Muslim sentiments in a book he published in 2006. He argued against the biased realities in Europe, in which Muslims are discriminated against and exposed to vicious attacks, but it is unlawful to deny the Holocaust,<sup>21</sup> and in which Muslim headscarves are banned but the religious headcoverings of other religions are not.<sup>22</sup> In an opinion column he published in *al-Ahram* on the occasion of his book's publication, al-Lawindi urged Muslims to follow the example of Jews and more assertively stand against discrimination. Whereas Muslims settle for expressing sorrow for being persecuted, he wrote, the Jews had launched campaigns leading the Europeans not only to express regret for what they had done to the Jews in the past but also to pay reparations and to criminalize the denial of the Jewish Holocaust. Muslims, suggested al-Lawindi,

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**18** Cf. K. Muhsen, “Hetzer mit Parallelen,” <http://muslim-essay.de/archiv/hetzer-mit-parallelen.html> [no longer available].

**19** On the sensitivity of the comparison in German society, see G. Margalit, “On Being Other in Post-Holocaust Germany—German-Turkish Intellectuals and the German Past,” in *Juden und Muslime in Deutschland: Recht, Religion, Identität*, ed. J. Brunner and S. Lavi (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2009), 223. Margalit described the dismissal of Faruk Şen, the director of the Center for Turkish Studies in Essen, who wrote about the discrimination Turkish migrants face in Europe and referred to them as “Europe’s new Jews.”

**20** W. Benz, “Antisemiten und Islamfeinde: Hetzer mit Parallelen,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 21, 2012, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/antisemiten-und-islamfeinde-hetzer-mit-parallelen-1.59486>.

**21** Cf. S. al-Lawindi, *Fubiya al-Islam fi al-Gharb [Islamophobia in the West]* (Cairo: Kitab al-Yawm, 2006), 87–98.

**22** Cf. *Ibid.*, 109.

should stop weeping and wailing and campaign for the criminalization of Islamophobia. The matter, he stressed, was all the more serious because while anti-Muslim sentiments were directed against Arab and Muslim migrants, they could, in the future, be directed against Muslims in majority Muslim countries as well.<sup>23</sup>

Calls for joint Muslim-Jewish action against the discrimination of both groups were also introduced. In 2008, Muslim activists and scholars, some based in Europe and some in Muslim countries, signed an open letter for dialogue initiated by the Cambridge-based Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations. They pointed to the great respect one finds in the Quran and the Prophetic traditions for Jews, as well as to the need to properly contextualize verses and traditions that are hostile. The signatories (including the prolific and controversial Oxford-based Islamic theorist Tariq Ramadan) emphasized that Muslims and Jews in Europe should rise above the sentiments stirred by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, recognize that their religions have a history of positive encounters, and realize that with the increase in antisemitism and Islamophobia, they “need to develop joint strategies to tackle discrimination.”<sup>24</sup>

## Jewish Identity, Muslim Identity

A main theme in works that aim to construct Muslim identities in the West has been the need to strike a balance between preservation of religious identity and integration into majority non-Muslim societies. Opinions on what “Muslim identity” stands for in terms of norms and duties varies greatly—from liberals such as Bassam Tibi, who calls for religion to remain a cultural-spiritual private matter,<sup>25</sup> to preachers such as Amr Khaled, who asks Muslims to be ambassadors of goodwill while emphasizing integration and volunteer work as Islamic duties,<sup>26</sup> to Islamists, Salafis, and others, who depict Muslim migrants as potential missionaries and largely legitimize their presence in the West based on the hope that their presence there would benefit the larger interests of Islam. However, with the ex-

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. al-Lawindi, “al-Islamofubiyya wa Mu’adat al-Samiyya: Muqaranat Wajiba,” [“Islamophobia and Antisemitism: Essential Parallelisms,”] *al-Ahram*, May 8, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Bismillah Ar Rahman Ar Rahim, “An Open Letter: A Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding between Muslims and Jews,” *European Judaism* 41, no. 1 (2008): 148–54.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. B. Tibi, *Der Islam und Deutschland: Muslime in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 22–23, 265–75.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. Khaled, *Integration im Islam: Über die Rolle der Muslime in Europa* (Karlsruhe: Andalusia, 2005), 16–26.

ception of Salafi voices, all participants in this discussion envision Muslim minorities as constructive contributors to their receiving states and encourage their audiences to develop friendships with non-Muslims and to promote the welfare of their societies. (In fact, a careful reading of Salafi texts suggests that they, too, do not close the door to engagements with non-Muslims, provided that these have an Islamic context. They also stress the importance of abiding by the laws of the land as an Islamic norm and interest).<sup>27</sup>

The Jewish experience in Europe (and other diasporas) offers two distinct attitudes to the challenge of integration. Orthodox Jews, largely secluded in enclaves, limited their interpersonal relations with non-Jews and refrained from teaching their children non-religious sciences or exposing them to secular literature. Enlightened modern Jews, the forefathers of the modern secular Jews, integrated into non-Jewish societies, learned secular topics, and entered non-traditional professions while struggling to preserve some of their practices and seeking Jewish education for their offspring. Both examples were introduced by Muslim authors to support different arguments on the character Muslim integration should assume.

## Emulating the Ghetto Jew

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, one of the more prolific and influential contemporary Sunni-Arab jurists and theologians, first addressed the need to strengthen the religious identity of Muslim minorities in the West in 1960 in his first major work *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, an introduction to Islamic law that became a bestseller throughout the Muslim world but was originally commissioned as a textbook for Muslim migrants.<sup>28</sup> In the late 1990s, he began to develop a systematic legal doctrine for Muslim minorities, *fiqh al-aqalliyat al-Muslima*, which legitimized, and even encouraged,<sup>29</sup> permanent residence in non-Muslim lands and endeavored to accommodate certain *sharʿi* restrictions to the unique circum-

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<sup>27</sup> For a discussion see U. Shavit, “Can Muslims Befriend non-Muslims? Debating *al-walāʾ wal-barāʾ* (Loyalty and Disavowal) in Theory and Practice,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 25, no. 1 (2014): 71–78.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Y. al-Qaradawi, *al-Halal wal-haram fi al-Islam* [*The Permissible and Prohibited in Islam*] (Cairo: Matkabat Wahaba, 2004), 9–11.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Y. al-Qaradawi, *Fi fiqh al-aqalliyat al-Muslima* [*On the Religious Law of Muslim Minorities*] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2006), 17.

stances Muslim minorities experience, while at the same strengthening their religious identity and tasking them with proselytizing among non-Muslims.<sup>30</sup>

As part of his theorizing, al-Qaradawi suggested that it is crucial for Muslims living in the West to concentrate in enclave-neighborhoods as a means to develop and protect religious-communal life. This idea first appeared in al-Qaradawi’s scholarship in a groundbreaking *fatwa* issued by the European Council for Fatwa and Research in October 1999, which conditionally legitimized taking mortgages in Europe. As one of several justifications, the Council, which he heads, invoked the need to make it possible for Muslims to reside in proximity to a mosque, an Islamic center, an Islamic school, and other Muslims, in a way that will create “a small Islamic community within the greater [non-Islamic] society,” strengthen the bonds between members the community, and facilitate their living in accordance with the norms of Islam.<sup>31</sup>

In an article al-Qaradawi published in 2012, he repeated the idea that to protect their religious identity, Muslim minorities in the West should create enclaves in cities and towns and establish their own religious, educational, and recreational institutions. He explained that Muslims need to establish “their own small community within the larger community,” lest “they would melt into the larger community the very way salt melts into water.”<sup>32</sup> In support of this concept, al-Qaradawi introduced Jewish experience:

Undoubtedly, what preserved the Jewish identity throughout past history is that the Jews maintained their own small community that is distinguished for its own thoughts and rituals, that is the “Jewish ghetto,” so Muslims should work hard to establish their own “Muslim ghetto.”

Al-Qaradawi’s example is reductionist. It idealized a complex and often tragic past, neglecting to mention that ghettos were established because orthodox Jews were required, by the Christian authorities, to confine themselves in segre-

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**30** For an overview, see U. Shavit, *Islamism and the West: From “Cultural Attack” to “Missionary Migrant”* (London: Routledge, 2014), 152–60.

**31** I. M. Imam, “Fatwa Tujizu Shira’ al-Manazil bi-Qarḍ Ribawi lil-Muslimin fi Ghayr Bilad al-Islam,” [“A Religious Decision Permitting Muslims in non-Muslim Countries to Purchase Homes through Mortgages,”] *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 3, 1999, 25; Y. al-Qaradawi, “Shira’ Buyut al-Sukna fi al-Gharb ‘an Ṭariq al-Bunuk,” [Purchasing Homes through Banks in the West] in *ibid.*, *Fi Fiqh al-Aqalliyyat al-Muslima [On the Religious Law of Muslim Minorities]*, 176–77. See also in al-Qaradawi’s defense of the *fatwa*, *ibid.*, 160.

**32** Y. al-Qaradawi, “Muslim Minorities and Politics,” issued April 20, 2012, <http://www.onislam.net/english/shariah/contemporary-issues/critiques-and-thought/456871-muslim-minorities-and-politics.html?Thought> [no longer available].

gated areas, along with other restrictions intended to humiliate them or to prevent their participation in certain occupations. It also failed to note the heavy price Orthodox Jewish communities paid for their segregation in terms of social progress and financial opportunities. However, his purpose was not to provide a historical account but to argue that minorities can only protect their religious identity by implementing a certain measure of segregation.

This by no means implies that al-Qaradawi asks Muslims in the West to withdraw from their majority non-Muslim societies. His doctrine for Muslim minorities, as constructed since the 1990s, recognizes the importance of engaging with non-Muslims and positively contributing to their societies. Drawing on this conviction, his call for the creation of “Muslim ghettos” was followed by a definitive statement that isolation from non-Muslims is not the intention of his call, as that would amount to “lifelessness”; instead, openness that does not lead to assimilation is required.<sup>33</sup>

## Emulating the Prosperous Jew

Read in this sense, al-Qaradawi’s comparison is not as radically different, as it may appear at first, from the comparison between Jewish and Muslim integration in France that al-Lawindi, the former *al-Ahram* correspondent in Paris introduced, as was discussed above. Al-Lawindi’s book was critical of Muslim minorities for failing to find a way to incorporate their religious identity with the conventions of Western societies and argued that in order to integrate in a meaningful way they must neglect some practices and traditions. He described the legal case of an Algerian immigrant who, upon discovering his nineteen-year-old daughter alone at home with a French friend from university, brutally beat her in his state of fury. The friend jumped from the window and called the police. The judge expressed understanding for the father’s different background and values. However, he told the father that because he chose to leave his country and become part of another society, he should assimilate into that society and become part of its social fabric. If he does not desire that, then the door is open for him to return to his country of origin. Al-Lawindi agreed with the judge’s viewpoint. As in other societies, he wrote, French society achieved its current social balances and structure after many struggles. Moreover, French society has

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

the right to defend these social balances and structures from external viewpoints.<sup>34</sup>

This does not mean that Muslim minorities should give up their beliefs and norms. Rather, al-Lawindi called on them to integrate to a limited extent. Thus, Muslim minorities should integrate to such a degree that enables them to not distance themselves from their roots while also ensuring they are not perceived as alien by Westerners. A middle ground must be found. According to al-Lawindi, the Jewish experience demonstrates that a middle path can be found between the preservation of religious identity and integration into Western societies. Whereas al-Qaradawi was impressed with the Ghetto Jew, al-Lawindi was impressed with the enlightened Jew, who demonstrates how to integrate without losing those aspects of religious identity that *really* matter. He wrote:

In this context, comes to mind the Jewish model which reinforces the validity of establishing harmony between “me” and the “other,” especially if the two live together. Hence, Jewish intelligence has inspired the Jews themselves and convinced them to live as Jews in their homes and as European citizens in public!

There is no question that the success which the Jewish Diaspora achieved in Europe and the United States is inspired by such a conviction. Additionally, the unity and concordance may be reflected by the unions of Jewish organizations which enjoy political importance at the international level and which are highly respected and followed even in the narrower decision-making circles in the world.

The beauty here lies in the fact that the Jews living in the Diaspora seem as if they have assimilated completely in public. Thus, they are ordinary citizens who are subject to every law and regulation that original citizens are subject to. However, the moment they return to their apartments they take off this mask to re-integrate themselves with the life they grew up with and always knew. They eat, wear, listen to music and watch films, celebrate religious or non-religious ceremonies as they choose and see fit, without disturbing others in any way.<sup>35</sup>

## The Jewish Enlightened Model

As with al-Qaradawi’s analysis, al-Lawindi’s enchantment with the achievements of enlightened Jewish communities is reductionist. It does not mention the antisemitism that intensified in the late nineteenth and twentieth century in part as a response to the integration of emancipated, modern Jews in previously banned educational and professional fields. Neither does it acknowledge

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. al-Lawindi, *Fubya al-Islam fi al-Gharb*, 135–36.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Lawindi, *Fubya al-Islam fi al-Gharb*, 136–37.

that for more than a few Jewish families, integration was the precursor to complete assimilation and even conversion to Christianity.

For al-Lawindi, the Jewish enlightened model holds only advantages, and thus he believes it is regrettable that Egyptians, and Arabs in general, who reside in the West, do “exactly the opposite” of what European Jews do. In their homes, he wrote, “they do everything foreigners do, without any reservations or precautions as regards to food and drink, as well as other European habits, while only in public they remember that they are Muslim Arabs!” The Arabs in the West, he continued, “make all effort to put barriers between themselves and the customs of the country in which they live.” They wear robes, put on hoods, wear beards, and cover their heads “until they look as if they have just come to live or even to visit the country, while the truth is that they have been living there for tens of years.” By this practice, they believe that they are protecting themselves against assimilation or integration—but they are wrong. In fact, these patterns of behavior would never “protect their identity or protect them from assimilation of any kind.” The correct behavior, as suggested by the Jewish example, is to remove the barriers that separate Muslim minorities from the majorities while practicing their “culture and religion without difficulties or fabrication” only inside their homes.<sup>36</sup>

## Jewish Politics, Muslim Politics

Another comparative theme in a number of Muslim reflections on the future of Muslims in the West is the relationship between Jews in the Diaspora and the Zionist enterprise. Inspired by the Jewish example, several Muslim authors suggested that Muslims should lobby for the rights of Muslims and the Muslim nation in a way similar to how Jews advocate for various Zionist causes. This notion began to resonate in the early 1980s, a time when the permanent nature of Muslim presence in the West became evident. In 1984, Muhammad al-Ghazali (1917–1996), one of the most prolific and influential Islamist writers in the second half of the twentieth century, wrote a comprehensive treatise on the future of Muslim minorities in the West. While his book cautioned against the danger of assimilation, he also suggested that with the assistance of Muslim states and the creation of educational and communal Islamic institutions, Muslim minorities would be able to not only preserve their identities but also to spread Islam among non-Muslims. His conceptualization of migrants as potential advocates of the greater

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Islamic cause was inspired, in part, by the example of the scientist and Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952) and his successful endeavors that yielded the Balfour Declaration (the British commitment in 1917 for a Jewish national home in Palestine).

Al-Ghazali, in a fervor reminiscent of Zionist textbooks, wrote that Weizmann was an organic chemistry professor at the University of Manchester, who in 1916 resourcefully invented a method to produce acetone from corn flour that salvaged the war effort of the Allied Forces because they desperately needed vast quantities of that liquid, which dissolved nitroglycerin and nitrocellulose in the manufacturing of explosives used in bullets and shells. When asked what he wanted in exchange for his brilliant invention, Weizmann refused any monetary compensation that would allow him to buy “a mansion or build a house decorated with mosaics and ornaments,” as he believed in “his people’s lie (their claim over Palestine) as an ideology worthy of sacrificing all materialistic possessions.” Instead of wealth or fame for himself, Weizmann implored the British leadership to pass the Balfour Declaration.

For al-Ghazali, the image of Weizmann as a scientific prodigy, whose genius advanced his people, summarized the Muslim tragedy of recent generations: “This Jewish scientist served his tribesmen and tribe! He thought of his people and not of himself, served his faith and not his desires, and used his scientific gift to unite the dispersed believers of his faith.” One cannot find people like the first President of Israel among Muslims, argued al-Ghazali; some Muslims are hungry for respect, only interested in ruling over states established on the ruins of the Caliphate. Some are godless scientists, whose sole aim in conducting research is accumulating wealth for themselves and their children. And some are devoutly religious, whose lives revolve around trifles, modesty and over-purification, not acknowledging the importance of science.<sup>37</sup>

Whereas al-Ghazali was fascinated with an example from the early twentieth century, others pointed to the contemporary relations between Jewish diaspora communities and the state of Israel as a model that should be emulated. They described the strong bonds between Jewish communities and the Jewish state and the effective political lobbying of those communities on behalf of Israel. While fascination with Jewish political organizations was not limited to Islamist-inclined thinkers, it gained traction in their writing in particular, as it conformed to their belief that Islam should be the primary reference that defines the identity of Muslim minorities and legitimizes their residence in the West.

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37 M. al-Ghazali, *Mustaqbal al-Islam Kharij Ardihi: Kayfa Nufakkiru Fih* [*The Future of Islam outside Its Boundaries: How to Conceptualize It*] (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1997), 72–74.



Three years before al-Ghazali published his treatise, Hassan Muhammad Hassan argued, in a book on the means to combat the expansion of Western cultural dominance in the Muslim world, that Muslims residing in the West must promote Islamic interests, much like the Jews do for Zionist interests. He emphasized that Jewish prominence in the United States is due to their high participation rates in elections and astute organizing,<sup>38</sup> and suggested funding Islamic summer camps for youths similar to the Zionist camps that take place in Israel. Hassan recalled Jewish students he had met while studying in New York, who embarked on short or prolonged visits to the “Zionist entity” where they defended and worked on *Kibbutzim*, earning less than they would have at home. Upon their return to America, they were filled with pride and the desire to spread Zionist ideology.<sup>39</sup> Expressing a similar sentiment in the late 1990s, Palestinian historian ‘Abd al-Fattah al-‘Awaisi, pointed to the contribution that the Jewish lobby in Great Britain made to the establishment of Israel. Accordingly, he called for the Arab-Islamic lobby in Britain to mobilize, “by all legitimate means,” in order to shape history.<sup>40</sup>

## Following the Jewish Example

Legitimizing the permanent residence of Muslims in the West in his systematic treatise on the religious law of Muslim minorities, al-Qaradawi suggested that the Islamic presence in the West is important in order to not leave it entirely under Jewish influence as but one justification of his argument.<sup>41</sup> In a short *fatwa* he published in 2006, which methodically and succinctly summarized his position on the duties of Muslim minorities, al-Qaradawi called on the immigrants to follow the Jewish example by adopting and championing the rights of their nation:

Such kind of duty involves championing the cause of Palestine, Iraq, Kosovo, Chechnya (and other places where Muslims are facing great ordeals), with the sincere intention to return the usurped rights to their legitimate owner. Nowadays we see the Jews, from the four

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**38** Cf. H. M. Hassan, *Wasa'il Muqawamat al-Ghazw al-Fikri lil-'Alam al-Islami* [*The Means of Combating the Ideological Invasion to the Islamic World*] (Mecca: Rabitat al-'Alam al-Islami, 1981), 110–11.

**39** Cf. *ibid.*, 179–89.

**40** ‘A. al-Fattah al-‘Awaisi, “Dawr Baritaniya fi Ta’sis al-Dawla al-Yahudiyya 1840–1948,” [“The Role of Britain in Establishing the Jewish State, 1840–1948,”] *Filastin al-Muslima* (May 1998): 22–28.

**41** Cf. Y. al-Qaradawi, *Fi Fiqh al-'aqqaliyyat al-Muslima*, 33.

corners of the world, championing and backing Israel, and we call on all Muslims in all parts of the world, saying that it is high time to champion the rights of their Muslim *umma*.<sup>42</sup>

At times the impression cannot be avoided that the anticipation for the creation of a “Muslim lobby,” which would counter Jewish lobbies, is an external one, projected from the outside on local Muslim leaderships that have other priorities.<sup>43</sup> A demanding tone is common to writings on the matter by authors based in Muslim countries, as if working to benefit “greater Muslim causes” and emulating Jewish lobbying methods is something that is only to be expected of Muslims in the West, a test, so to speak, of the religious credentials of those minorities. These expectations ignore several differences between the two cases. First, Jewish lobbying is directed toward one nation-state, of which a majority of Jews in the Diaspora are supportive (even when critical of specific policies). A Muslim state, on the other hand, does not exist other than as a conceptual ideal, and the transnational political interests of Muslims living in the West are largely related to their ethnic and territorial affiliations, rendering a consensus on priorities and policies almost impossible. Second, some Muslims find the very notions of “Muslim politics” or the “Muslim nation” ideologically resentful. Third, the effectiveness of Jewish lobbying, particularly in the United States, is due in no small part to the wealth and professional status of individuals, to which there is, at present, no sufficient equivalent among Muslim minorities.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that Muslims who actually live in the West are more conscious about these differences than scholars and activists who are external observers. One example is the explanation offered in 2002 for the weakness of the “Muslim lobby” in the United States by the Eritrean-American ‘Abd al-Rahman al-‘Amudi, a founder and chairman of the American Muslim Council,

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42 Y. al-Qaradawi, “Duties of Muslims Living in the West,” issued May 7, 2006, [www.oinislam.net](http://www.oinislam.net) [no longer available].

43 To note one example, in 2009, Fatma ‘Abd al-Jabar, the President of Harvard’s Muslim Youth Association and an Obama 2008 activist, gave an interview to *al-Ahram*. Responding to a question, she noted, as a matter of fact, that there exists no Muslim equivalent to the Jewish lobby and some are endeavoring to create one. The rest of the interview dealt with other issues. However, it was given the title: “Faitna ‘Abd al-Jabar: The American Muslim Youth Aspire to Create a Strong Muslim Lobby,” see A. Sayyid, “Faitna ‘Abd al-Jabar: Al-Shabab al-Amriki al-Muslim Yah-lumu bi-Wujud Lubi Islami Qawi,” [“Faitna ‘Abd al-Jabar: American Muslim Youth Dream of a Strong Islamic Lobby,”] *al-Ahram*, September 29, 2009, <http://digital.ahram.org.eg/articles.aspx?Serial=78273&eid=90> [no longer available].

an advocacy organization.<sup>44</sup> In an interview entitled “Is it possible to create a Muslim lobby in America?,” al-‘Amudi noted that a Jewish Zionist lobby had operated in the United States since 1950, whereas a Muslim lobby was initiated only in 1990; that Muslims in America are extracted from different countries, resulting in different priorities, and in any case their main focus at the present time should not be international politics but American society itself, particularly its social problems; and that Muslims cannot match Jewish fundraising. He quoted a congressman who told him that the Jewish lobby contributed 45 percent of his campaign budget and asked whether the Muslim lobby can make the same contribution. Politics, concluded al-‘Amudi, are all about who pays more. Shifting the burden of responsibility, he called on Arab regimes to allocate their funding to initiatives in the West in more efficient ways.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

This paper has examined the writings of a number of contemporary Muslim scholars, essayists, and activists who have introduced a variety of comparisons between Jewish and Muslim experiences in the West and which appear to support different lines of arguments. The Jewish example was invoked to caution that Western societies and Muslim minorities alike should take anti-Muslim sentiments more seriously, to encourage educational and legal actions against manifestations of such sentiments, and to protest against perceived Western privileging of Jewish sensitivities. Parallelisms were invoked to advocate for the creation of enclave societies as a means to preserve religious identity but also to advocate for integration and for the need to neglect some manifestations of religiosity in the public sphere. Finally, comparisons to Jewish realities were invoked as a means to encourage Muslim minorities to unite politically in ways that would benefit Muslim interests. However, as is often the case of comparative analyses that are intended to make ideological points, readings of Jewish pasts and presents were reductionist and simplistic, and some entirely ignored the complexity of different aspects of Jewish and Muslim experiences.

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<sup>44</sup> In 2004, al-‘Amudi was sentenced to twenty-three years of imprisonment for illegal dealings with Libya that involved a plot to assassinate the Saudi King; his lawyer stated he was a victim of other conspirators, see J. Markon, “Muslim Activist Sentenced for 23 Years for Libya Contacts,” *The Washington Post*, October 16, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. M. J. ‘Arafa, “Hal Yumkin Takwin Lubi Islami fi Amrika?” [“Is the Creation of an Islamic Lobby in America Feasible?”] issued September 7, 2002, accessed September 5, 2014. <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=7953>.

Yet, common to all comparisons is a sense of comfort one finds in learning that another has already experienced similar difficulties and prevailed. To be a Muslim in Europe today is a challenge. In Jewish history, Muslims find reasons for great alarm but also hope for a better future. To quote the words of a Muslim-British writer in a student magazine:

Learning Jewish history will not only untangle many of the stereotypes that unfortunately many Muslims in the West still have, but it will also help them see some of their own experiences reflected in another minority. This will give them the sense that they are not alone, which it can often feel like.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> U. Butt, “What Western Muslims can Learn from Jewish History,” issued May 2, 2012, <http://www.catch21.co.uk/2013/05/what-western-muslims-can-learn-from-jewish-history> [no longer available].

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Alex Feuerherdt

# The BDS Movement: Why Israel?

## The BDS Movement – Past and Present

The BDS movement is currently the most active and best known anti-Israel association. The abbreviation “BDS” stands for “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions.” Officially, the movement was founded in July 2005 by more than 170 organizations, supposedly representing the Palestinian civil society. At least, this is how the BDS movement likes to tell the story.<sup>1</sup> Since 2005, BDS has gained many supporters, even outside the Palestinian territories, among them celebrities like South African archbishop Desmond Tutu, British film director Ken Loach, American philosopher Judith Butler, and ex-Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters. The BDS movement perceives and describes Israel as an “Apartheid state,” like South Africa previously, and calls for a comprehensive economic, political, academic, and artistic boycott, as well as for a withdrawal of investments, an embargo, and coercive measures. Thus, it targets the Jewish state as a whole. It is headed by Omar Barghouti, who, albeit having studied at Tel Aviv University, accuses Israel of “Apartheid,”<sup>2</sup> “Nazi practices,”<sup>3</sup> and “ethnic cleansing.”<sup>4</sup> He categorically rejects a two-state solution and maintains that any dialogue with Israelis would be “unethical” and “dangerous.”

Another well-known BDS activist is Lebanese-American professor of politics As’ad AbuKhalil, who in 2012 said:

The real aim of BDS is to bring down the state of Israel. [...] That should be stated as an unambiguous goal. There should not be any equivocation on the subject. Justice and freedom for the Palestinians are incompatible with the existence of the state of Israel.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Cf. “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” BDS Movement, issued July 9, 2005, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://bdsmovement.net/call>.

2 O. Barghouti, “Besieging Israel’s Siege,” *The Guardian*, August 12, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/besieging-israel-siege-palestinian-boycott>.

3 O. Barghouti, “‘The Pianist’ of Palestine,” *countercurrents.org*, issued November 30, 2004, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.countercurrents.org/pa-barghouti301104.htm>.

4 O. Barghouti, “No State Has the Right to Exist as a Racist State,” interview by S. Cattori, *Voltairenet.org*, December 7, 2007, <http://www.voltairenet.org/article153536.html>.

5 A. Abu Khalil, “A Critique of Norman Finkelstein on BDS,” *Al-Akhbar English*, issued February 17, 2012, accessed October 3, 2018, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/blogs/angry-corner/critique-norman-finkelstein-bds> [no longer available].



Palestinian-American writer Ahmed Moor, another leading figure of the BDS movement, wrote in 2010:

BDS does mean the end of the Jewish state. [...] I view the BDS movement as a long-term project with radically transformative potential. [...] In other words, BDS is not another step on the way to the final showdown; BDS is *The Final Showdown*.<sup>6</sup>

Activists and supporters of the BDS movement regularly go public with bold and eye-catching campaigns. Every year, for instance, they organize a so-called “Israeli Apartheid Week” in more than fifty cities, especially across the United States, Canada, the UK, and South Africa, featuring numerous rallies and on-campus events. Especially on campuses in the United States and the UK, this is not the only time of the year that BDS activists make their presence felt. In 2010 for example, the University and College Union (UCU), which is the largest further and higher education union in the UK, voted to “sever all relations” with *Histadrut*, which represents the majority of trade unionists in the State of Israel. The cited reason was that *Histadrut* had “supported the Israeli assault on civilians in Gaza in January 2009, and therefore did not deserve the name of a trade union organization.”<sup>7</sup>

Already in May 2007, UCU decided to boycott all academic institutions in Israel.<sup>8</sup> And BDS did not stop at this point: In a very aggressive manner, student BDS activists have called for the termination of all cooperation between their respective universities and their Israeli counterparts. They try to prevent Israeli scientists from lecturing. If their attempts are not successful, they heckle and massively disturb the lectures. Their goal is to obstruct any dialogue with Israeli scientists. This way, they turn these individuals into mere pieces of a collective to which they assign collective guilt. They don’t judge these scholars by what they do but from where they come. This is evidence of antisemitic and racist thinking.

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<sup>6</sup> A. Moor, “BDS is a Long Term Project with Radically Transformative Potential,” *Mondoweiss*, issued April 22, 2010, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://mondoweiss.net/2010/04/bds-is-a-long-term-project-with-radically-transformative-potential/>.

<sup>7</sup> “UCU Congress votes to sever relations with Israeli Histadrut Boycott process will be initiated for college in West Bank settlement,” *Palestinian Campaign for the Academic & Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI)*, issued May 31, 2010, accessed April 1, 2020, <http://pacbi.org/pacbi140812/?p=1249>.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Meikle, “Lecturers Vote for Boycott of Israeli Universities,” *The Guardian*, May 31, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2007/may/31/highereducation.israel>.

The BDS movement also takes aim at culture. This goes beyond Roger Waters; musicians like Elvis Costello<sup>9</sup> and Brian Eno cancelled concerts or called on their fellow musicians not to perform in Israel.<sup>10</sup> Some artists even opt against selling any records in Israel. American writer Alice Walker went as far as to refuse to let her prize-winning novel *The Color Purple* be translated into Hebrew.<sup>11</sup> Musicians like Carlos Santana<sup>12</sup> and Nick Cave<sup>13</sup> who resist the pressure for a boycott and decide to perform in the Jewish state are bullied by the BDS movement; the movement uses online campaigns, furious appeals, and protest rallies against these concerts to put pressure on them. Everyone who does not explicitly support the goals of the BDS movement is automatically seen as a political foe. Here, too, the principle of collective liability is applied and especially apparent in the case of Alice Walker: Whoever speaks Hebrew is pronounced guilty.

As the BDS movement declares in its statements, the supposed result of all these efforts is the following: Israel “ends its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands” and “respects, protects and promotes the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties.”<sup>14</sup> What is innocently couched in the language of human rights is nothing less than the dismantlement of the Jewish state. That the BDS movement fails to say which parts of “Arab land” it considers to be under colonization—just the West Bank or perhaps the entire land of Israel?—is no lapse but a deliberate decision. While hypothetically leaving the door open for a two-state solution, the message is designed to resonate with those who want to “liberate all of Palestine,” meaning a No-State-of-Israel solution.

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9 Cf. V. Dodd and R. McCarthy, “Elvis Costello cancels concerts in Israel in protest at treatment of Palestinians,” *The Guardian*, May 18, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/may/18/elvis-costello-cancels-israel-concerts>.

10 Cf. S. Harmon, “Brian Eno and Roger Waters Scorn Nick Cave’s ‘Principled Stand’ to Play in Israel,” *The Guardian*, November 22, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/nov/22/brian-eno-and-roger-waters-scorn-nick-caves-principled-stand-to-play-in-israel>.

11 Cf. A. Flood, “Alice Walker Declines Request to Publish Israeli Edition of *The Color Purple*,” *The Guardian*, June 20, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jun/20/alice-walker-declines-israeli-color-purple>.

12 Cf. N. Barrows-Friedman, “Why is Carlos Santana refusing to honor Israel boycott call?” *Electronic Intifada*, June 29, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/nora-barrows-friedman/why-carlos-santana-refusing-honor-israel-boycott-call>.

13 Cf. R. Reed, “Roger Waters, Brian Eno Criticize Nick Cave for Israel Concerts,” *Rolling Stone*, November 20, 2017, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/roger-waters-brian-eno-criticize-nick-cave-for-israel-concerts-128927/>.

14 “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” BDS Movement.

The “right of return” on which the Palestinian “refugees” insist is not just based on ideological but also on strategic considerations: Since the refugee status of the Palestinians is inherited by descendants, the number of “refugees” has ballooned from an initial 700,000 to currently five million. Most of these people have never lived in Israel. Their “return” would turn Israel’s Jews into a minority at the mercy of the Arab majority. For these reasons, even American political scholar Norman Finkelstein—otherwise a fervent “anti-Zionist”—has sought to distance himself sharply from the BDS movement. In February 2012, he said in an interview:

They don’t want Israel. They think they’re being very clever. They call it their three tiers: We want the end of the occupation, we want the right of return, and we want equal rights for Arabs in Israel. And they think they are very clever, because they know the result of implementing all three is what? What’s the result? You know and I know what’s the result: there’s no Israel.<sup>15</sup>

The BDS campaigns are an integral part of the battle against the Jewish state, which is fought on different fronts and with different weapons: by means of terrorist attacks, bombs, and rockets in the Middle East, by means of boycott activities in Europe and North America. To defeat an enemy with superior military capabilities, the “anti-Zionists” engage in a division of labor: While some attack Israel with brute force, others, invoking human rights, are working on Israel’s demonization and delegitimization in the international arena.

Without exception, everything Israel conducts to defend herself is denounced as a breach of human rights. The reverse argument is that every act against the Jewish state is a vindication for human rights. Subsequently, even Palestinian terrorism is legitimized as “resistance” while Israel’s measures of defense are declared a “genocide”—even more than that, they are declared an unprecedented crime against humanity.

Human rights are not only the central reference point for the BDS movement but also for so-called “critics of Israel” in general. In a remarkable speech in September 2016 during the conference “The Future of the Jewish Communities in Europe” in the European Parliament, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks said:

Throughout history, when people have sought to justify anti-Semitism, they have done so by recourse to the highest source of authority available within the culture. In the Middle Ages, it was religion. So we had religious anti-Judaism. In post-Enlightenment Europe it was science. So we had the twin foundations of Nazi ideology, Social Darwinism and the so-called

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<sup>15</sup> “Norman Finkelstein on BDS,” filmed February 2012, YouTube video, 4:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iggdO7C70P8>.

Scientific Study of Race. Today the highest source of authority worldwide is human rights. That is why Israel—the only fully functioning democracy in the Middle East with a free press and independent judiciary—is regularly accused of the five cardinal sins against human rights: racism, apartheid, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing and attempted genocide.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, the antisemite regards the Jew—and the Jewish state as the collective subject—as someone who violates the respective most important sanctuary of his age: The Jew kills the savior, he defiles the pure race, he violates human rights. At the same time, the antisemite perceives himself as being the party of the good and the noble-minded, one of those who save the world from the utmost evil—by getting rid of this evil, by exterminating it.

This is why the BDS movement is not concerned with the well-being of the Palestinians but strives for the greatest possible damage to Israel. The BDS activists don't care about the Palestinians. This already manifests itself in the fact that none of them have ever raised their voice against the Palestinians' complete deprivation of rights in Lebanon, or the carnage that is brought about by the regular fights between Hamas and Fatah.

Violence against Palestinians whose source cannot be traced back to Israel is simply no issue. And they are even less sympathetic toward the Jewish state and its citizens: Never have they protested against Hamas' and Hezbollah's missile attacks against Israel. Never have they turned against the Iranian president's antisemitic outbursts or warned against his plans to acquire nuclear weapons. Never did they call for a boycott of Iranian goods or demand that they should be labeled. That alone suggests that the BDS movement is far from "just" opposing Israeli "occupation." Much more is at stake.

## There's No Business Like NGO Business

This becomes clear when we take a look at the genesis of the boycott movement which preceded the BDS movement. Essentially all these campaigns are being waged by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). We can pinpoint the boycott movement's hour of birth to the notorious "World Conference against Racism" which was held by the United Nations in August and September 2001 in Durban, South Africa. Why "notorious"? Because a large majority of the participants

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<sup>16</sup> J. Sacks, "The Mutating Virus: Understanding Antisemitism," rabbisacks.org, issued September 27, 2016, accessed April 1, 2020, <http://rabbisacks.org/mutating-virus-understanding-antisemitism/>.

turned this conference into a tribunal against Israel. Israel was put on the pillory as a monster of racism and colonialism.

This had already been looming during the preparatory meetings—one of which had been held in Tehran. The Durban conference’s NGO forum was even worse. Eight-thousand activists from 3,000 NGOs took part in it, among them major and well-known organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.<sup>17</sup> The forum, in its final declaration, accused Israel of being a “racist Apartheid state” and committing “ethnic cleansings” against the Palestinians.<sup>18</sup> These charges were followed by calls for boycotts, sanctions, and the diplomatic isolation of the Jewish state. Meanwhile, Palestinian NGOs sold copies of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on conference grounds and also distributed other antisemitic pamphlets.<sup>19</sup> One of them displayed a picture of Adolf Hitler. The caption read: “What if I had won? There would be no Israel and no Palestinian’s bloodshed. The rest is your guess.”<sup>20</sup> Jewish participants of the NGO Forum were repeatedly attacked, verbally, and physically.<sup>21</sup> All this happened at a time when Palestinian terrorists conducted bloody suicide bombing attacks in Israel on an almost daily basis—and just a few days before 9/11.

In the following years, the forum’s final document exceedingly turned into a plan of action for NGOs which view themselves as pro-Palestinian. It was the base for subsequent NGO campaigns in which Israel was portrayed as a revenant of South Africa under Apartheid; much of this can be found in the BDS movement’s statements. The *Durban strategy* was born: From now on, the Jewish state should be demonized and delegitimized through a language couched in human rights, by citing dubious “testimonies” of alleged victims and by fading out the victims of Palestinian terrorism. Among the early examples of this kind of campaigning are the attempt to depict the Israeli army’s anti-terror operation in Jenin in 2002 as a “massacre against the civilian population”; the concerted call for an academic boycott against Israel in British universities; and the myriad

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17 Cf. United Nations, “Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Durban, August 31<sup>st</sup> – September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001,” [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/451954/files/A\\_CONF.189\\_12%28PartIII%29-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/451954/files/A_CONF.189_12%28PartIII%29-EN.pdf), 32.

18 “NGO Forum Declaration,” World Forum against Racism, issued September 3, 2001, accessed April 1, 2020, <http://i-p-o.org/racism-ngo-decl.htm>.

19 Cf. M. Elliott, “The Racism Conference: The Disgrace in Durban,” *Time*, September 9, 2001, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,174283,00.html>.

20 T. Lantos, “The Durban Debacle. An Insider’s View of the World Racism Conference at Durban,” *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 26, no. 1 (2002): 34.

21 Cf. “Submission to the UN Preparatory Committee for the Durban Review Conference,” NGO Monitor, issued 2007, accessed April 1, 2020, [https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/IL/NGOM\\_ISR\\_UPR\\_S3\\_2008anx\\_DurbanPrepcomSubmission.pdf](https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session3/IL/NGOM_ISR_UPR_S3_2008anx_DurbanPrepcomSubmission.pdf).

of declarations made during the Lebanon war in 2006 in which Israel was accused of war crimes and a breach of human rights, while the terrorist attacks by Hezbollah were downplayed.

And let us not forget the close cooperation between NGOs and the Goldstone commission, set up by the notorious UN Human Rights Council. There is a statistic from summer 2015 which reveals very clearly the Human Rights Council's nature and why it does not deserve its noble title.<sup>22</sup> The analysis shows which countries have been condemned how many times since the inception of the Human Rights Council in 2006 until 2015. The result: In total, there were 62 condemnations of Israel, and 55 of the rest of the world combined. Again: 62 versus 55. In the country ranking, Syria, with 15 condemnations, ranks way behind the Jewish state, followed by Myanmar (12), North Korea (8), and Iran (5). Paradies of human rights like Afghanistan, Lebanon, or Pakistan are given a clean record, whereas Israel is on the Human Rights Council's agenda, in every single session—a decision which was taken upon the council's founding. "Item 7" is a permanent agenda item focused on the "Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories." Needless to say, Israel is the only country in the world to which the council dedicates a permanent agenda item.

In 2009, the Human Rights Council set up the aforementioned Goldstone commission which was supposed to investigate the Gaza war of 2008/2009. Eventually, it published a report<sup>23</sup> in which Israel was accused of the most serious violations of human rights, while it barely criticized Hamas. In large parts, the report was based on dubious, unverified accounts, and testimonies submitted by anti-Israel NGOs. More than 500 of such references can be found in the document. Many of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations whose statements and assessments were incorporated in the Goldstone Report explicitly support the BDS movement.

So there is an amalgamation of the United Nations and anti-Israel NGOs. This even extends to the staff: Leading members of the Goldstone commission have, for many years, been active in NGOs which oppose Israel. Richard Goldstone, the commission's chairman, worked in a leading position at Human Rights Watch—an organization which has been criticized, among other things, for a fundraising event in Saudi Arabia in which it pitched its "fight" against "pro-Is-

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. "Updated: Chart of all UNHRC Condemnations," UN Watch, issued August 11, 2015, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.unwatch.org/updated-chart-of-all-unhrc-condemnations/>.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. "Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict," Human Rights Council, issued September 25, 2009, accessed April 1, 2020, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>.

rael pressure groups.”<sup>24</sup> It was only after his appointment as the chairman of the investigative commission that Goldstone left Human Rights Watch. Previously, he had signed an open letter, circulated by Amnesty International, which was addressed to Ban Ki-moon, at that time Secretary-General of the United Nations, and decried the Israeli operation as an “attack on Gaza’s civilian population.”<sup>25</sup> Among the co-signers were Hina Jilani and Desmond Travers, later members of the Goldstone commission. Another member of the Goldstone commission was Christine Chinkin, a former consultant to Amnesty International. In January 2009, Chinkin was a co-signer of a protest letter titled “Israel’s bombing of Gaza is no self-defense but a war crime.”<sup>26</sup> So these ladies and gentlemen had already rendered a verdict before they were asked by the UN to enquire war-related events.

To say it more bluntly: The boycott campaigns, the Apartheid analogies, the drastic condemnations, the totally one-sided reports—this is all done with the goal to demonize Israel and to cast it as an illegitimate state which has no right to exist but has to disappear. The French historian Léon Poliakov once noted that Israel was “the Jew among the nations.”<sup>27</sup> This dictum highlights two things: the isolation which turns Israel into a pariah; and the morphing of antisemitism, from targeting the individual Jew to turning against the Jewish state as a collective subject. Accordingly, the ideologemes of modern antisemitism closely resemble classic antisemitism. I would like to demonstrate this using a recent example from Germany, in which BDS activists collaborated with the established politics.

## Don’t Buy from the Jewish State!

In November 2015, the European commission made the decision that fruits, vegetables, and cosmetics produced by Israeli companies based in the West Bank, in

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<sup>24</sup> J. Goldberg, “Fundraising Corruption at Human Rights Watch,” *The Atlantic*, July 15, 2009, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2009/07/fundraising-corruption-at-human-rights-watch/21345/>.

<sup>25</sup> “Amnesty International’s Goldstone Campaign: With a Review of Statements from other NGOs,” NGO Monitor, issued October 22, 2009, accessed April 1, 2020 [https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/amnesty\\_international\\_goldstone\\_s\\_cheat\\_sheet\\_](https://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/amnesty_international_goldstone_s_cheat_sheet_).

<sup>26</sup> “Issue 201: U.N. Gaza Inquiry Challenged for Bias by 50 U.K., Canadian Lawyers,” UN Watch, issued September 13, 2009, accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.unwatch.org/issue-201-u-n-gaza-inquiry-challenged-bias-50-u-k-canadian-lawyers>.

<sup>27</sup> L. Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism, Volume 2: From Mohammed to the Marranos*, trans. N. Gerardi (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 149.

Eastern Jerusalem or in the Golan Heights which are to be imported to the European Union must carry a special label and must no longer be sold under the label “country of origin: Israel.”<sup>28</sup> This decree was described as a step toward more transparency because the consumers ought to have the right to know whether an article comes from the “occupied territories” or Israel proper. However, goods from Turkish-occupied Cyprus or Western Sahara—which is currently occupied by Morocco—are not subject to such labeling requirements. This practice solely affects the Jewish state.

So this decree was based on genuinely political reasons. In the view of the European Union, it seems, the Jewish state and its settlement policies are the only culprit to be blamed for the breakdown of the peace process. There is no mention of the fact that there are quite a few Palestinians for whom the *whole* of Israel is an illegal settlement project, and who underscore their point of view with rockets, bombs, and all kinds of terrorist attacks. It says a lot that even goods from those settlements which, according to every single hitherto proposed peace plan would remain part of Israel, are subject to the decree. This is playing into the cards of those who are yearning for a Palestine “from the river to the sea.” The EU decree is an implicit call for a boycott. Its goal is to make consumers refrain from buying the goods in question or, better yet, to prompt the vendors to pull them from the shelves. The labeling requirement furthers and promotes the demonization, delegitimization, and isolation of Israel. Some especially impatient people in the German cities of Bremen, Berlin, Bonn, and Hamburg did not want to wait for the EU to implement its decree.<sup>29</sup> Wearing white protective clothing—as if to protect against a dangerous contamination—they play-acted as controllers. Attached to their uniforms were home-made labels identifying them as “inspectors,” followed by the text “label requirement for goods from illegal Israeli settlements.”<sup>30</sup> The activists then went to places where they suspected such goods: big department stores, farmers markets, and drugstores.

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**28** “Interpretative Notice on Indication of Origin of Goods from the Territories Occupied by Israel since June 1967,” European Commission, issued November 11, 2015, accessed April 1, 2020, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20151111\\_interpretative\\_notice\\_indication\\_of\\_origin\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20151111_interpretative_notice_indication_of_origin_en.pdf).

**29** Cf. A. Feuerherdt, “Die antisemitische Vorhut der EU,” *Lizas Welt*, November 30, 2015, <https://lizaswelt.net/2015/11/30/die-antisemitische-vorhut-der-eu/>.

**30** J.-P. Hein, “‘Inspektore’ suchen Produkte aus Israel!,” *Bild Online*, November 30, 2015, <https://www.bild.de/regional/bremen/kundgebungen/inspektore-suchen-produkte-aus-israel-43598854.bild.html>.



“We are acting on suspicion,” said their spokesman Claus Walischewski from Bremen.<sup>31</sup> As is well known, the suspicion that the Jews don’t play by the rules has often in Germany’s history been sufficient to occupy the moral high ground and to lecture them. This is why Walischewski and his comrades labeled *all* Israeli products they could find. Not with a yellow star, of course—only Nazis do that—but with paper flags. “Attention,” the flags read, “attention, this product *might* originate from an illegal Israeli settlement.” Truly, an altruistic service to human rights, isn’t it? Since Claus Walischewski is Amnesty International’s regional spokesman in Bremen, he is above suspicion of doing anything reprehensible, let alone antisemitic.

In Bonn, too, self-styled “inspectors” in white protection coats showed up. Here they even carried forms which they had specifically prepared for this purpose.<sup>32</sup> With true German diligence, they registered the results of their rigorous inspection under the headline “German civil society—inspection of products by Israeli companies.”

Indeed, the BDS movement has a sense of symbolism. This alone illustrates the ideological foundation and motivation: antisemitism, even if they deny it. The uniform-like protection clothing, suggesting that there was a risk of disease; the gang-like organization as a self-mandated executor of the people’s will under the label “civilian society”; the thorough inspection and detailed recording in lists, as a first step toward cleansing; the suspicion, that is, the rumor about the Jews, just as Theodor Adorno had defined antisemitism; and finally, the tagging of the article, that is, the stigmatization of everything which is perceived as Jewish, and the call for a boycott. The “inspectors’” intent is obvious. They turned the Nazi slogan “Don’t buy from the Jew” into “Don’t buy from the Jew among the states.” This, in a nutshell, is the rallying cry of the BDS movement.

And yet, the BDS activists are not the core problem but just the vanguard. Even if they feel as though they have authority, they do not wield immediate power. This was clearly shown when a major drugstore chain ordered the BDS’ Bremen group to stay away from all its stores. The EU commission’s labeling decree is much more serious. It makes mandatory—in the whole European Union—

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31 J.-P. Koopmann, “Vorsicht, vielleicht verboten,” *taz*, November 28, 2015, <http://www.taz.de/%215255916/>.

32 Cf. “BDS-Inspektion bei Galeria Kaufhof in Bonn,” BDS-Kampagne, issued November 29, 2015, accessed April 1, 2020, <http://bds-kampagne.de/2015/11/29/bds-inspektion-bei-galeria-kaufhof-in-bonn/>. The columns read: “Article,” “declaration of origin,” “actual origin,” “Israeli company on the label,” “German company on the label,” “bar code” and “suspicion.” No one shall claim the persecution of Jewish crime in Germany was not following due bureaucratic procedure.

what German BDS activists merely tried to anticipate in a few stores. It turns their resentment into law, causing a damage of much bigger proportions—not necessarily economically but politically speaking. Moreover, the EU decree shows that the demands of the BDS movement have become part of European policies.

## In Lieu of a Conclusion

I hope to have shed light on the strategies behind the campaigns to boycott and delegitimize Israel, their consequences, and the alliances which are forged in the process. The BDS movement is an essential part of it, and deserves attention, especially in those cases where its ideology and activities are “successful.” That’s, for instance, the case when artists cancel concerts, when Israeli scientists are no longer able to speak in universities, when unions sever their ties to Histadrut, when anti-Israel NGOs gain significant influence in institutions of the United Nations and use it to further the demonization of the Jewish state, or when the European Union labels Israeli goods, and by so doing implicitly calls for a boycott.

In his book *Catch the Jew*, American-Israeli writer Tuvia Tenenbom sharply criticized the NGOs active in the Middle East and their sponsors in Europe.<sup>33</sup> During his research, he came across many associations whose supposed goal was to assert peace and human rights. Actually, however, Tenenbom said, “they devote themselves to the destruction of the state of Israel and the delegitimization of its Jewish citizens.” The European activists, according to Tenenbom, “travel thousands of miles to catch the Jew—wherever they find him.” They thought of themselves as “righteous people” but were “ailing from a superiority complex, and their Jew-hatred is unbearable.” Tenenbom nails what anti-Israel campaigns like the BDS movement are all about: The alleged commitment to peace, freedom, and humanitarianism is nothing but a rhetorical gimmick to cover up the hate against Jews in general and the Jewish state in particular. The boycotts therefore do not serve any purpose of human rights, civilian society or humanitarian causes; attacking Israel is a goal in itself.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. T. Tenenbom, *Catch the Jew!* (Jerusalem: Gefen, 2015).

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## **Activist Perspectives on Combating Antisemitism**



Dave Rich

## Why is the British Left Anti-Israel, and Why Does it Matter?

Jeremy Corbyn, the current leader of the British Labour Party, the figurehead of a left-populist backlash against neoliberalism, globalisation, and the centrist politics of former Labour Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, first became a Member of Parliament in 1983; and when he did so, in fact before he even became an MP, Corbyn was a sponsor and supporter of a small anti-Zionist group on the radical left called the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine (LMCP), which campaigned for the creation of a democratic, secular state of Palestine in place of Israel and pledged to oppose “manifestations of Zionism”<sup>1</sup> in Labour. Its mission statement included the pledge that “The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine will fight within the Labour Movement—and the Labour Party in particular—to eradicate Zionism.”<sup>2</sup> Corbyn became a sponsor of the organisation early in 1983, not long after it was formed, and as an MP spoke regularly at its fringe meetings at party conferences and its other events. Israel’s Labour Party was a particular target for its campaigns: it even brought out a special booklet on the subject, “to expose the monstrous myth of Labour Zionism’s progressive or socialist nature.”<sup>3</sup> In 1985, the Students’ Union of Sunderland Polytechnic, a college in the north east of England, decided to ban its Jewish Society due to that society’s support for Zionism, which was considered by far-left students at the Polytechnic to be racist. The Students’ Union was roundly condemned for what was felt by many to be an antisemitic act, but the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine supported the Students’ Union. It declared in its newsletter that while “it was a *tactical* mistake on the part of Sunderland Polytechnic Students’ Union to ban an overtly Zionist Jewish Society ... We totally reject the assertion that Sunderland Poly’s action was in any way antisemitic.”<sup>4</sup> The article went on to insist that anti-Zionism cannot possibly be antisemitic, because “Zionism is inherently racist” and a “colonising movement.” In the same newsletter, Jeremy Corbyn, by now an MP, encouraged people to join the organisation, writing: “The Palestine question is one of the most important issues fac-

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1 Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, *Newsletter* (undated).

2 *Ibid.*

3 Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, *Labour Zionism: Socialist or Colonialist?* (London: Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, 1988).

4 Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine, *Newsletter* 2 (1985), emphasis in the original.



ing the Labour movement,” and “The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine is the only campaign rooted in the Labour Movement whose platform really tackles the important issues in relation to this question. Its activities ought to be supported by every Labour Party member.”<sup>5</sup> There were other pro-Palestinian groups active in the Labour Party at that time, including ones that supported a two-state solution, but for Corbyn, this particular group that opposed Israel’s existence pledged to “eradicate Zionism” from the Labour Party and denied that the banning of a student Jewish society was an antisemitic act was “the only campaign” worth supporting.

All of this is to say that the problems relating to antisemitism and anti-Zionism that the Labour Party has experienced since Corbyn became its leader in September 2015 have deep roots. The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine no longer exists, but its ideas are easy to find in today’s Labour Party and across the British Left. Sympathy for the Palestinians and opposition to Israel has become the default position for many on the liberal and social democratic left: a defining marker of what it means to be progressive. Outright anti-Zionism is axiomatic for much of the Marxist left. This anti-Zionism has become part of a radical package of foreign policy stances that is glued together by opposition to American and Western power. Find out what somebody on the left thinks about Israel and Zionism and you can usually predict their views about a range of issues, such as who is to blame for jihadist terrorism and how to respond to it; the causes of Islamist extremism and of Islamophobia; Western military interventions overseas; and the wisdom of allying Britain to American power. For this part of the left, the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has come to symbolise much more than a struggle between two peoples for the same small strip of land on the eastern Mediterranean. Israel is seen as the epitome of Western domination, racism, and colonialism, and the Palestinians have come to represent all victims of Western power and militarism. “In our thousands, in our millions, we are all Palestinians,” Corbyn told a rally in 2010. Or, as one of Corbyn’s closest aides in the Labour leadership, Seumas Milne, put it when he was a Guardian journalist, Palestine has become “the great international cause of our time.”<sup>6</sup>

This is the political culture where the current leadership of the British left finds its home. When I say “leadership,” I mean this in both a formal and informal sense: the elected political leadership of the Labour Party, of course, but also the political culture that, right now, sets the tone and direction for the

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5 Ibid.

6 S. Milne, “Palestinians have every right to defend themselves,” filmed November 26, 2012, YouTube video, 3:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EBjIQ-PI7g>.

broader left. This political culture claims to be the true inheritor of “Old Labour,” which dates back to the immediate post-war years when a Labour government created the National Health Service and the foundations of today’s welfare state. But this is a false claim: really, this political culture is a legacy of the radical, youthful New Left of 1968, which was a rejection of that older Labour tradition. That 1968 New Left was more interested in identity than class. It saw the engine of revolution as residing in what was then called the Third World—now the Global South—rather than within Western proletariats. It rejected NATO and the Atlanticist foreign policy that came with it. It pursued single-issue campaigns on gender, sexuality, the environment, race, and disarmament, rather than seeking the broad social coalitions and mass movements on which the labour movement was traditionally based. This was the generation for whom the struggle to dismantle European empires in the name of anticolonialism was much more urgent and relevant than the fight against fascism—a fight that was won before most of them were even born.

Today it is easy for a leftist observer to look at Israel, a country allied to the United States, militarily powerful and economically successful, occupying land that the international community has decided belongs to the Palestinians, who in turn are stateless, weak, and poor—and draw the obvious political conclusions. It is taken for granted by much of today’s left that Israel is a colonial settler state. This was not always the case; and it was only during the 1960s, the decade when this New Left began to radically re-think so many of the left’s positions, that the hostility toward Israel and Zionism now common across much of the left began to take shape. Anti-colonialism, race, and the Cold War were formative in the New Left’s development and created a framework that left Israel and Zionism on the wrong side of its political thinking. Shortly before the Six Day War, *New Left Review*, the leading intellectual journal of the New Left in Britain, published an article by Che Guevara in which he contrasted Israel, “backed by the imperialists,” with its enemies, “the progressive countries” of the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> In its next edition, following the war, *New Left Review* carried an interview with Isaac Deutscher, the acclaimed biographer of Trotsky and author of *The Non-Jewish Jew*, in which Deutscher scathingly described the war as part of “a tremendous political, ideological, economic, and military offensive over a vast area of Asia and Africa” by “American imperialism, and the forces associated with it and supported by it.”<sup>8</sup> This idea that Israel was implanted in the Middle

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7 C. Guevara, “Vietnam Must not Stand alone,” *New Left Review* 43 (May–June 1967): 79–91.

8 I. Deutscher, “On the Israeli-Arab War,” interview, *New Left Review* 44 (July–August 1967): 30–45.

East by Western colonialism was also a common theme in the propaganda of the PLO from its founding in 1964 and is still heard regularly today in statements by Palestinian leaders. Just recently in Ramallah, Mahmoud Abbas said in a speech that “Israel is a colonialist venture which is unconnected to Jews—they were exploited in order to facilitate this project, using terms such as the Promised Land.”<sup>9</sup>

This anticolonial analysis of Israel’s founding denies the authentic, historic Jewish connection to the land of Israel or their agency in the creation of the Jewish State. Jews and their national aspirations are relegated to being mere tools of a vast Western conspiracy against the Palestinians, or against the Arab world, or against all Muslims, depending on who is propagating this particular theory. It also connects the modern left to older Marxist thinking that the Jews are not a genuine nation or people. Marxist theory has never been comfortable with the idea that Jews form a nation or that Zionism is an authentic movement of national liberation. Marx himself, Bruno Bauer, Abram Leon, and other Marxist and socialist writers grappled with this question over many decades, but the fundamental Marxist view of Jews and Judaism has changed little: Jews are not an authentic national people, Zionism is counter-revolutionary, and both will become redundant with the onward march of history.

If this kind of anticolonial anti-Zionism is a sort of conspiracy theory in which the antisemitism is only implicit, and in which the Jewish masses are portrayed as victims of a conspiracy by Jewish elites in the Zionist movement, there are other conspiracy theories about Zionism that deploy much more explicit antisemitism. The antisemitic treatment of Zionism in Soviet propaganda, for example, that developed during the last years of Stalin’s life, outlived Stalinism and intensified after 1967, both for domestic consumption and as part of Soviet outreach to the European left and to Third World countries. Articles accusing Israel of racism and colonialism, comparing Zionism to Nazism, and using traditional antisemitic tropes were published with increasing regularity in the Soviet media and then translated into English and distributed in pamphlet form in the West. The image of a global Zionist conspiracy with Israel as its tool, powered by Jewish wealth and responsible for war and economic exploitation, is strikingly similar to older antisemitic conspiracy theories about Jews. This is not a coincidence: the rhetorical connection of Zionism to colonialism and imperialism allows and encourages the idea that Zionism is a global network of power,

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9 J. Khoury, “Abbas Declares Oslo Accords Dead: ‘Trump’s Peace Plan Is a Slap, We’ll Slap Back,’” *Haaretz*, January 15, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/palestinians/abbas-declares-oslo-accords-dead-trump-s-peace-plan-is-a-slap-1.5730759>.

used to prosecute wars and generate financial gain, much as the fabled Jewish conspiracy was alleged to do. This Soviet antisemitism percolated through anti-colonial politics to influence the anti-Zionist discourse to which Western leftists were increasingly exposed.

This is a form of antisemitism that mimics and borrows from traditional antisemitic themes, but it is nevertheless a specific left-wing variant that manifests in specifically left-wing ways. There are other features of left-wing hostility to Zionism and to Israel that can have antisemitic consequences. For example, Jews seeking to operate in left-wing spaces may be asked to declare their position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or their attitude toward settlements, or to sign statements opposing the occupation. Jewish students often complain about being subjected to this kind of questioning; recently, Amnesty International cancelled a meeting of the Jewish Leadership Council on their premises in London on the grounds that, according to Amnesty, the JLC supports settlements and opposes boycotts of them. This is a political test solely for Jews, and as such it is discriminatory, but it is more than that: it is also a subtle, left-wing version of the old antisemitic loyalty test, in which Jews are suspected of having more loyalty to other Jews than to the nation in which they live or the political movement for which they express support. The subtext to this left-wing variant of the old antisemitic charge of Jewish disloyalty is a regret that Jews betrayed their true revolutionary calling by choosing Zionism. Marxism first encountered Zionism as a competitor for the affections of Jews across Russia and Europe a century ago. For various reasons Zionism won that particular argument, and some on the left have never forgiven Jews for choosing nationalism instead of putting their hopes and dreams into the universal liberation of all humanity.

The reason why Jews are treated differently by so many on the left comes down to the question of power. This is not just about the relative power disparity between Israel and the Palestinians, although that is an important factor. It is also about how many on the left see the position of Jews within their own societies; and this in turn relates to left-wing understandings and definitions of racism. Racism is largely understood as a prejudice determined by skin colour, deployed by the structures of power and inequality in society, that manifests as socio-economic discrimination and exclusion. It follows that those who have power cannot be victims of racism, while those without power cannot be racist. This same strand of left-wing thought sees Jews as white, wealthy, integrated, and close to, or part of, the political and financial elites that wield ultimate power in Western societies. Therefore, logically, Jews cannot suffer racism.

However, antisemitism operates not through concrete discrimination but through ideas, myths, and conspiracy theories that encourage hatred of Jews precisely because they are seen as powerful. It is found in the *Protocols of the Elders*

*of Zion*, Holocaust Denial, and the blood libel. And this is precisely the kind of antisemitism that has the potential to appeal to people on the left, because it claims to be anti-hegemonic, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist: all things that appeal to left-wing people. During the Left's formative years, when socialist and Marxist thinkers were developing their critique of capitalism and international finance, a strand of thinking emerged that drew on existing antisemitic conspiracy theories associating Jews with capitalism to argue that the working classes were oppressed by a specifically Jewish network of power and wealth. Now, most left-wing people are not antisemitic and, overall, the Left's history of opposing antisemitism outweighs its history of indulging it; nevertheless, from its earliest days, the Left has had its own particular form of antisemitism that is not fascist or xenophobic but is a distorted reading of the Left's commitment to freedom and emancipation. It is, in that well-known phrase, the "socialism of fools"; and in a time when mainstream politics on the left and right seems to be particularly foolish, this kind of antisemitism is currently having one of its periodic moments of popularity.

There is one fundamental difference between left and right that should not be glibly dismissed: most of Israel's left-wing critics, even those who use antisemitic language and ideas, are avowedly anti-racist. Many are Jews and act in the name of what they believe to be Jewish values. This makes opposition to Israel fundamentally different from the antisemitism that affected European Jewry in past centuries; but the fact that left-wing anti-Zionists sincerely believe themselves and all their comrades to be anti-racist makes it much harder for them to see the antisemitism in their movement, precisely because they believe it cannot exist there. Instead, they assume that any antisemitism to be found on the left is caused by right-wing people who have wandered into the wrong party by accident, or by left-wing people who have mistakenly read something antisemitic and not recognised it as an alien politics.

To illustrate this point I will conclude with one of the most striking visual images from Jeremy Corbyn's time as Labour Party leader. The problem of antisemitism in the Labour Party peaked in April 2016, when Labour MP Naz Shah and former Labour Mayor of London Ken Livingstone were both suspended from the party for alleged antisemitic statements. This turned a minor scandal into a full-blown crisis for Labour. Three days later, Corbyn came under intense pressure to speak out about this problem of antisemitism in his party, and he chose to do so at London's May Day rally, an annual left-wing event to mark International Workers' Day. However, the way he did it, and the political context he gave to antisemitism highlight many of the problems I have described.

"Addressing the marchers before they set off from Clerkenwell Green, a traditional site for radical protests, Corbyn said:

We also have to stand up against racism in any form whatsoever in our society. We've stood in this green and Trafalgar Square and many other places, against apartheid South Africa. Eventually apartheid South Africa was defeated. We stood in solidarity with many in the USA, fighting for civil rights during the '60s and '70s. We stand in solidarity now against the growth of the far right across Europe, that are more interested in blaming migrant workers, blaming victims of war who are refugees, than facing up to the reality that we're all human beings living on one planet, and you solve problems by human rights, humanity and justice and respect, not by blaming minorities. And so we stand absolutely against antisemitism in any form. We stand absolutely against racism in any form. We stand united as a Labour movement, recognising our faith diversity, our ethnic diversity, and from that diversity comes our strength. That is the strength of our movement.<sup>10</sup>

This is Jeremy Corbyn's understanding of antisemitism—and it is a typical view. He sees it only as a far-right phenomenon: part of a broader xenophobic politics that is against diversity and stigmatises refugees and minorities. He opposes it because he opposes fascism and as part of his internationalist politics that opposed apartheid and racial inequality overseas.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet in a remarkable visual irony, many of the marchers who stood and listened to the Corbyn that day carried banners with images of Joseph Stalin. Now, Stalin was, amongst other things, an antisemite, and the Soviet bloc practiced antisemitism as state policy. In the late 1940s, Stalin crushed Jewish political and cultural activity in the Soviet Union. In the early 1950s, he oversaw antisemitic purges of Jewish Communist Party figures in the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe. 2018 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the antisemitic campaign in Communist Poland in 1968 that, while dressed up as “anti-Zionism” and decrying overt antisemitism, forced half of Poland's remaining Jews to flee the country. It is likely that Stalin's death in 1953 prevented the mass round-up and deportation—and possibly even genocide—of Soviet Jews. Jews around the world spent decades campaigning for the freedom of Soviet Jewry. Yet the historical amnesia and political ignorance of the British Left is so profound that the leader of the Labour Party can stand in front of a mass of Stalinist flags and, with a straight face, claim that “we stand absolutely against antisemitism in any form.”<sup>12</sup> And until this changes, the British Left will continue to be a place where antisemitism of one particular form—a specifically left-wing form—finds a home.

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**10** Ruptly, “‘We stand absolutely against anti-Semitism’—Corbyn leads London May Day rally,” filmed May 1, 2016, YouTube video, 2:06, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er\\_lhpTKMHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=er_lhpTKMHI).

**11** This section is taken from the author's book *The Left's Jewish Problem: Jeremy Corbyn, Israel and Anti-Semitism* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), 132–3.

**12** Ruptly, “‘We stand absolutely against anti-Semitism’.”

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Jeremy Jones

## Thinking Locally, Acting Globally

Just over twenty-five years ago, in Brussels, a huge gathering of politicians, diplomats, Jewish leaders, civil society, intellectuals, academics and activists, convened to celebrate a new era—after the fall of the Soviet Union—in which antisemitism had been relegated to the gutters from which it had emerged.

At “My Brother’s Keeper: World Conference on Anti-Semitism and Prejudice in a Changing World,”<sup>1</sup> the optimism was all but pervasive. A number of keynote speakers and assorted experts exuded a faith in both the present and future. The handful of dissenters—of which I was one—were relegated to the sidelines for suggesting it was too early to know what we were witnessing, let alone what the future may have held.

The serious activists amongst that assembly—and from the multitudes not included in it—have generally concentrated efforts not just on documenting antisemitism but taking initiatives to maximise the chances that antisemitism would, at the very least, be socially unacceptable and that it would serve to impede the political progress of any who espoused it.

This may explain why these deliberations are taking place at a time when, wherever one turns, one sees what I will call “non-antisemitism”—where any actor rejects the label of being antisemitic, despite objective evidence.

In the United Kingdom, many loud, occasionally dissonant, voices articulate the view that the “non-antisemitism” in the British Labour Party should be promoted as an innate left-wing value,<sup>2</sup> proclaimed from the rooftops of Labour boroughs, as this is part of the Momentum<sup>3</sup> toward inevitable rebuilding of that venerable democracy.

In Norway, Bjørnar Moxnes a member of Parliament who previously had an international profile just a little below that of a Scottish third division football team, has been proclaiming the “non-antisemitism” of his move to have the bul-

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1 Cf. World Jewish Congress, ed., *My Brother’s Keeper: World Conference on Anti-Semitism and Prejudice in a Changing World, July 6–8, 1992, Brussels, Belgium* (Brussels: World Jewish Congress, 1992).

2 See D. Rich, *The Left’s Jewish Problem* (London: Biteback, 2018), and D. Hirsh, *Contemporary Left Antisemitism* (London: Routledge, 2018).

3 Momentum is a mass membership organisation in the British Labour movement. For its relevance to this discussion, see R. Marchant, “We Need to Talk about Momentum and anti-Semitism,” Labour Uncut, issued January 17, 2018, accessed March 23, 2020, <http://labour-uncut.co.uk/2018/01/17/we-need-to-talk-about-momentum-and-anti-semitism/>.



lies, defamers, and slanderers, the so-called BDS movement, receive a Nobel Prize.<sup>4</sup> He was reported to have said his political stance was “completely free of antisemitism.”<sup>5</sup>

The intense “non-antisemitism” in discussions of one individual, in an episode perhaps best labelled the Tsuros<sup>6</sup> of Soros, has been reaching fever-pitch in recent weeks.<sup>7</sup>

Organisations such as Sunni-badged Hamas and the-clearly-in-no-way-related Shi’a imperialists of Iran,<sup>8</sup> are keen to promote their “non-antisemitism” to the West, often recruiting the virtually talentless street performers from the miniscule and theologically deviant Jewish sect, Neturei Karta,<sup>9</sup> to act as the chorus to the Islamist virtuosi.

Is it ungenerous to not welcome the prevalence of this “non-antisemitism?” After all, it is partial acknowledgement of quite a dramatic change in the state of public discourse, at least for much of the West and those parts of the planet upon which European philosophies have had the greatest impact. It may be that we live in an unusual time.

How often, in how many places, in all of recorded history, would attitudes toward members of an out-group be cause for great reflection, much less potential embarrassment? In the religious sphere, treating others with contempt, vilifying those who refused to acknowledge any variety of the One True Way, endowing characteristics upon them which furthered one’s own claim to moral superiority and contributing to their misery, thus providing further testimony to one’s own righteousness, be anything others than Articles of Faith? Judaism, and its both subjectively and objectively confusing adherents, has been a reli-

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4 Cf. “Norwegian MP Defends Nominating ‘Peaceful’ BDS Movement for Nobel Prize,” *The Times of Israel*, February 11, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/norwegian-mp-defends-nominating-peaceful-bds-movement-for-nobel-prize/>.

5 Ibid. For a good discussion on the relationship of BDS to antisemitism, see K. L. Marcus, “Is the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement Anti-Semitic?,” in *The Case Against Academic Boycotts of Israel*, ed. C. Nelson and G. N. Braham (Chicago: Wayne State University Press, 2015), 243–58.

6 “Tsuros” is the Yiddish/Ashkenazi rendering of the Hebrew word meaning “troubles.”

7 For background see E. D. Guerrero and A. Schonberger, “The Nationalist Hungarian Government is Endangering Jewish People with its Smear Campaign against Philanthropist George Soros,” *The Independent*, December 3, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/hungary-government-george-soros-viktor-orban-antisemitism-a8089621.html>.

8 Cf. C. B. Glick, “Column One: Hamas and the Nexus of Global Jihad,” *The Jerusalem Post*, February 5, 2015, <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Hamas-and-the-nexus-of-global-jihad-390182>.

9 See D. Sugarman, “A Short Guide to Neturei Karta, the anti-Zionist’s Favourite Fringe Jewish Sect,” *The Jewish Chronicle* (UK), September 11, 2017, <https://www.thejc.com/comment/comment/who-are-the-neturei-karta-1.444090>.

gion which has coexisted with numerically superior, passively or not-so-passively aggressively others, for millennia. Literature testifying to feelings of embarrassment by those in the intellectual leadership of movements declaring Judaism and Jews as deserving of contempt, maltreatment, and even hatred is far more difficult to locate than are rationalisations for this behaviour.

Christianity included Jewish religious texts in its Holy Canon, reliant on some of these for the very essence of its own narrative of Divine Intervention in the affairs of humanity. It developed as a rival to Judaism. The Gospel was first shared with Jews. Early Christians and Jews shared communities, and from the very beginning, there was an issue of the attitude of Believers in a Revealed Truth meant for all humanity toward those who knew and could have accepted the Way but refused to do so. In the essential principles of each, only one interpretation could be correct. Further, it mattered very much to Christians that this was the case. Add to this admixture the accusation of Deicide, and you have some powerful motivators at work. For most of the past two millennia, anti-Judaism was *de rigueur*, not a cause of discomfiture or something of which to be embarrassed or ashamed. That is not to suggest for a moment that the translation of this attitude into persecution, mistreatment, and murder was never an issue for devout Christians—only that Jews and Judaism were particularly confronting.<sup>10</sup>

One should not underestimate the cathartic impact of the Shoah, particularly given the cultural Christianity of the societies from which Nazism and its supporters emerged and the overlap between religious preaching of hatred and the acceptance of “racial” antisemitism. It is barely half a century since the overhaul of Catholic teaching at the Second Vatican Council,<sup>11</sup> a little over thirty years since the first Papal descriptions of antisemitism first as deplorable<sup>12</sup> and then as a sin,<sup>13</sup> with most Protestant theologising and Eastern reflection on the subject of the nexus between a self-defined religion of love and the consequences of human interpretation of a Divine moral code even more recent.

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**10** W. Nicholls, *Christian Antisemitism: A History of Hate* (London: Jason Aronson, 1993) presents a good overview.

**11** Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration On The Relation Of The Church To Non-Christian Religions*, issued October 28, 1965, accessed July 17, 2018, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

**12** Cf. Pope John Paul II, “To the Jewish Community of Rome,” speech at Rome Synagogue, issued April 13, 1986, accessed March 30, 2020, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/speeches/1986/april/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19860413\\_sinagoga-roma.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/de/speeches/1986/april/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19860413_sinagoga-roma.html). [German]

**13** Cf. Pope John Paul II, “To the Representatives of the Jewish Community in Sydney,” speech, issued November 26, 1986, accessed March 30, 2020, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_19861126\\_com-ebraica-sidney-australia.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1986/november/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19861126_com-ebraica-sidney-australia.html).

The position of another great World Religion, Islam, is in a sense more nuanced with its antagonisms toward Judaism and Jews taking different forms which have often lacked the Manichean overlay of Christian conceptions. As is the case with Christianity, there are direct references to Jews and Judaism in Holy Teachings. The Faith developed in the presence of and proximity to Jewish believers who had the opportunity to accept The Truth. The Qur'an includes significant references to personalities and episodes familiar to Jews, and commentary is included which makes (generally negative) references to Jews, leaving it open to interpretation as to what these references mean. Additionally, there are hadiths, testaments of the words and actions of the Messenger, by various contributors and in a number of compilations, which have been used to form attitudes toward Jews and Judaism.

It is not difficult to find emphasis on passages which paint Judaism as it is practised, the behaviour of specific Jews or Jews as a group in a negative light in the Islamic world, just as it is not difficult to find emphases on Judaism as Monotheism (in a superior class to Christianity) and on passages promoting goodwill. It is as disingenuous to deny that there are not significant numbers of Muslims who say in prayers—for many seventeen times a day—that they seek guidance to avoid becoming like the Jews,<sup>14</sup> or that apocalyptic visions of a war with Jewish enmity to Islam defeated are not very common, as it would be to deny the streams which both promoted and practiced a far gentler attitude to the religion and its followers. But it must be noted that those who held even the most negative of views or carried out the worst excesses of discrimination and persecution would not have felt any need to proclaim that they were not true believers in the morality and theological buttresses of their activities.

The above references to religion were selected to remove doubt that discomfort or embarrassment, let alone regret, were not hallmarks of the presentation of the Oldest Hatred even from movements which include such concepts in their essences.

It should be self-evident that those who define Jews as racial, let alone religious, existential enemies of all which is good, would not pretend that they were embarrassed to be anti-Jewish. Indeed, one can gain wry amusement in observing how the different strains of racist antisemitism compete to prove which of

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. S. A. Aldeeb Abu-Sahlieh, *The Fatiha and the Culture of Hate: Interpretation of the 7th Verse through the Centuries* (Scotts Valley: Create Space, 2015); “Egyptian Writers Criticize The Negative Attitude to Christians and Jews Reflected in The Common Interpretation of the Fatiha,” MEMRI, Special Dispatch No.7025, issued July 25, 2017, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.memri.org/reports/egyptian-writers-criticize-negative-attitude-christians-and-jews-reflected-com-mon>.

them hates Jews more, and which has better strategies in intimidating, upsetting, offending, and hurting Jews individually and collectively. In one relatively recent example, we had well-known English reputation self-immolator and a-historian David Irving chastise open denier of the Holocaust, Fredrick Töben, for having an “antisemitic website” which gave misrepresentation of historical truth a bad name.<sup>15</sup>

For a variety of historic factors, not least of which was intellectually opportunistic anti-colonialism and another the weakening of institutions of liberal democracies, proclaiming anti-racism (including “non-antisemitism”) has become an essential part of rhetoric from significant segments of contemporary self-defined left-wing movements. No matter how self-evident left-wing racism (and I am not only referring to antisemitism) may be, these selectively progressives will argue, until they are green in the face, that they cannot possibly be racist because they are of the left.

Remember Durban, 2001, the UN World Conference Against Racism and the accompanying Youth and NGO Fora? My personal memories include not just leaflets bemoaning Hitler’s failure to kill every Jew on the planet or cartoon booklets containing images of Jews as hook-nosed, clawed, blood-dripping-from-teeth subhumans or the sale of obscene antisemitic texts on sovereign UN soil, but the way so much of the human rights world accepted this as a legitimate (if slightly unsavoury) part of a legitimate political struggle.<sup>16</sup> The other memory that came from that period was the way an email address I established specifically for that conference suddenly received steady traffic a few days after I returned home—and just after the September 11th terrorist attacks in New York. These emails stated variously that the terrorist attacks were good things, the terrorist attacks never happened, or that Jews were responsible for so-called “false flag” attacks.

I was at the UN Conference in Durban as a delegate appointed by the Government of Australia and at the NGO Conference representing the World Jewish Congress. It was my privilege to present at a session organised by the Jewish caucus against antisemitism and to take part in the activities of the Australian NGO Caucus and with colleagues in the Indigenous caucus. I spoke on the manifestations of antisemitism as the new millennium was beginning, in what is arguably

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. D. Irving, “Action Report,” issued July 20, 2000.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. Jones, “Durban Daze: When Anti-Semitism becomes Anti-Racism,” *Australia/Israel Review*, October 26, 2001.

the world's most Jewish-friendly country, Australia, and how we were dealing with it.<sup>17</sup>

First, we had engaged in widespread education. We tried to help all Australians see opposition to antisemitism as one of, or at least consistent with, what it meant to be a good Australian.<sup>18</sup> This was particularly significant given that Australia is a country of immigration, with high proportions of the population born outside Australia and even higher proportions having one or more parents born overseas. It is significant that we saw antisemitic parents not passing on hatred to the next generation—because the next generation wanted to be “Australian.”<sup>19</sup>

Understanding that this task required more hands than the maximum of two each from every Jew, we had been building alliances, coalitions, partnerships, and cooperative ventures.<sup>20</sup> Our national protestant Uniting Church had taken aboard the need for Christians to not only purge their souls from antisemitism but to help purge the national soul of the same evil.<sup>21</sup>

We had used the law to the extent that editors, internet service providers, employers, political parties, religious institutions, and civil society understood that antisemitism could have consequences (beyond hurt to the targets/victims). Arabic papers in the Middle East may publish antisemitic pseudo-analyses of world affairs—but Australian Arabic newspapers could not reprint them.<sup>22</sup> Holocaust denial on the internet, if posted by an Australian resident or hosted by an Australian server, could have courts order its removal.<sup>23</sup> Years of leafletting anti-

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17 Cf. J. Jones, “Confronting Reality: Anti-Semitism in Australia Today,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, nos. 3–4 (2004), <https://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-jones-f04.htm>.

18 Cf. S. Rutland, “Negotiating Religious Dialogue: A Response to the Recent Increase in anti-Semitism in Australia,” in *Negotiating the Sacred: Blasphemy and Sacrilege in a Multicultural Society*, ed. E. Burns Coleman and K. White (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 17–30.

19 Cf. M. F. Haverluck, “Muslim Refugees’ Archaic Views of Jews, Women, Infidels,” *One News Now*, January 23, 2018, <https://onenewsnow.com/culture/2018/01/23/muslim-refugees-archaic-views-of-jews-women-infidels>.

20 Cf. J. Jones, “The Jewish Community of Australia and Its Challenges,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* 13 (2006), <https://jcpa.org/article/the-jewish-community-of-australia-and-its-challenges/>.

21 See the Reports on the activities of the Uniting Church in Australia/Jewish Community National Dialogue (1991 to present), the Annual Conversation of the Jewish Community at the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference (1998 to present), the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims & Jews (2002 to present) and other national, regional, and informal dialogues can be found in the Annual Reports of The Executive Council of Australian Jewry (1992 to 2018).

22 Cf. J. Jones, “Erasing Hatred,” *Australia/Israel Review*, July 25, 1997.

23 Cf. *Toben vs. Jones* [2003] FCAFC 137 (Judgement of full bench of the Federal Court of Australia).

Jewish slanders could be ended with one complaint, as laws developed.<sup>24</sup> (Later cases demonstrated that protected political speech did not include promotion of antisemitism in a party's paper and that freedom of religion did not include freedom to promote hatred of others).<sup>25</sup>

We had, with a large degree of success, developed local responses to global phenomena and, to some measure, expanded the understanding of the destructive nature of antisemitism beyond national borders. Jewish leaders of the generation of my parents could proudly speak of the way the Australian Lutheran Church, for example, had led other Lutherans in thinking of Judaism as a living faith and not something superceded millennia ago.<sup>26</sup>

Australia's nearest neighbour is the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, Indonesia. The Muslim population of Indonesia approximates the Muslim population of the Arab League. Two Indonesian Muslim movements, *Nahdlatul Ulama (NU)* and *Muhammadiyah*, have claims to be the largest Muslim movements in the world, the first claiming to have between forty and sixty million adherents, the latter up to forty-five million. For most of the recent period, NU has had significant elements which have been positively inclined to Jews and a willingness to be open to discussion about Israel. Muhammadiyah has also contained elements which have worked to promote inter-religious understanding. Both have played essential roles in defining Indonesian identity—and have been conscious of the potential of Indonesian Muslims to impact Global Islam.

Over ten journeys to Indonesia and countless interactions with Muslim Indonesians in Australia, it has been interesting to observe a range of attitudes toward Jews.<sup>27</sup> Most Indonesians have never met a Jewish person. For many of them, real, living Jews are of little interest. "Palestine" is an important social

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24 Cf. *Jones vs. Scully* [2002] FCA 1080 (September 2, 2002, Judgement of Federal Court of Australia).

25 Cf. Executive Council of Australian Jewry Media Release, "One Nation's Publication of Anti-Jewish Material Declared Illegal," no date; Jeremy Jones, and on behalf of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry vs. The Bible Believers Church – [2007] FCA 55, February 2, 2007.

26 Council of Presidents of the Lutheran Church of Australia, *Lutherans and the Jews*, issued September 29, 1996, accessed March 30, 2020, [http://www.jcrelations.net/Australian\\_Lutherans\\_A\\_statement\\_on\\_Lutherans\\_and\\_Jews.2380.0.html?L=6%29%2C%29.%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%27%28..%2C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%27&page=3&pdf=1](http://www.jcrelations.net/Australian_Lutherans_A_statement_on_Lutherans_and_Jews.2380.0.html?L=6%29%2C%29.%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%27%28..%2C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%5C%27&page=3&pdf=1).

27 Cf. "Jones Makes Interfaith History," *The Australian Jewish News*, August 18, 2015, <https://ajn.timesofisrael.com/jones-makes-interfaith-history/>.

cause, but understanding of the history and contemporary situation of Israel and Palestinians is generally superficial.<sup>28</sup>

Knowledge of Jews—as a concept rather than a segment of humanity—comes from a variety of sources. Many of my visits to Indonesia have been directed at Muslim centres of scholarship and social organisation, and the Qur’an is a primary informer of ideas about Jews. Various readings of the Qur’an permit positive, negative, or mixed views of Jews as monotheists gone astray through to deserved objects of contempt, with the historic burden for transmission of understanding falling upon religious teachers. Which hadiths are accepted, taught, and emphasised, which tafsir (exegesis) is given prominence and what is included in weekly khutbah (Friday “sermons”) provide the religious overlay on understanding of how Indonesians feel they are meant to understand Jews.

Another source is the behaviour of role models. Former NU leader, and the first elected president of democratic Indonesia, Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid) was, indisputably, a serious international proponent of not just dialogue but of good relations with Jews. His legacy lives on, in a far more significant way than that of Amien Rais, a former Muhammadiyah leader who was hostile beyond the call of duty.<sup>29</sup>

The new kid on the block is global communications media. In question and answer sessions on campuses, in pesantrans, and in NGO round-tables, there is one introduction to any question which can chill the spine—“I have done a lot of reading on the internet...” Far be it from me to belittle the internet as a source for genuine information and thoughtful opinion, but this introductory comment seems to be invariably followed by base antisemitism, distortion of history or invented events. In Indonesia, critiques of Jews drawn from the internet are generally uncontradicted.

I have escorted numerous groups from majority Muslim countries through the Sydney Jewish Museum and this, together with the groups of Islamic leaders I have accompanied to dialogue meetings in Israel, has prompted my invitations to educate in Indonesia.<sup>30</sup> But to do this with any level of effectiveness and credibility, it has been necessary for me to learn a great deal about Islam.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Hadler, “Translations of antisemitism: Jews, the Chinese and Violence in Colonial and Post Colonial Indonesia,” *Indonesians and the Malay World* 32, no. 94 (November 2004): 291–313.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. G. Barton, “Islam and Politics in the New Indonesia,” in *Islam in Asia: Changing Political Realities*, ed. J. F. Isaacson and C. Rubenstein (London: Transaction, 2002), 37–38.

<sup>30</sup> A report of one such visit can be found at “Indonesian Muslim Leaders promote dialogue in Israel and Palestinian Authority,” J-Wire, issued January 30, 2017, accessed March 30, 2020,

If asked by an engaged Muslim if one has read the Qur'an, it is better than not to be able to answer in the affirmative. Familiarity with Islamic prayer, observances, cultural nuances, and more are, in my experience, essential for meaningful relationships and respect.

A Jewish person in much of the world is a novelty, a curiosity but not an unknown, due to religious texts, in the Muslim or Christian worlds. In my experience, there is a thirst for understanding how Jewish people live, what is believed by Jews, where Jews differ from each other and from Muslims and adherents of other faiths. It can be very difficult to begin the conversation, and it requires a great deal of work to develop the skills for constructive interactions, but if one is serious about combatting antisemitism, the effort is worthwhile.

Despite geography, the Australian and Indonesian circumstances are, objectively, worlds apart. But they are linked by both being subjected to major impacts by growing globalisation.

Australian education for multiculturalism is now in competition with online education for racist, national assertions of identity. Global connectivity has fractured a model of responsibility, engagement, and a localised social contract. It is not helpful that this coincides with a lack of respect for many traditional institutions.

Australian benchmarks for acceptable discourse are not respected in a globalised communication world. While laws assert acceptable discourse in any specific constituency, online environments have no such understandings, even where online activity is subject to domestic law.

Efforts by local religious leaders to live well in multi-identified environments, which can be careful, nuanced, and sophisticated, can be undermined due to the ability of remote figures to engage and influence. This is a problem in Australia but a far greater problem in Indonesia.

## So What Can Be Done?

First, we need to rethink our strategies and priorities. We can no longer think globally and act locally and think that will be good enough. We can not abandon local action, but we must recognise the changed contexts in which we operate.

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<https://www.jwire.com.au/indonesian-muslim-leaders-promote-dialogue-in-israel-and-palestinian-authority/>.



The internet and associated social media is global. It is international. Informational battles need to be engaged on many fronts, and it does not matter where a person addressing disinformation is based. The issue is sorting out priorities and maximising human and other resources.

Christianity is global. There are identifiable hubs of supersessionism and other forms of antisemitism. We need to address local, national, and regional churches but also work with them to fight evil internationally.

A Eurocentrism in the fight against antisemitism may lead to the conclusion that there are not many Jewish people who have had engagements with Islam similar or greater than Jewish Europeans have had with Christianity. But there are Jews who have lived in Islamic societies and others who have taken the time and made the effort to learn about Muslims and Islam and are equipped to engage and help break down misconceptions. That said, we need more people, Jewish and otherwise, who can and will devote themselves to work in this area.

Perhaps, as a first stage, we need to map the universe of anti-antisemitism: Who and where, how and how successfully. We also need to identify role models, inspirational figures, with standing and/or celebrity.

It is possible that the time when “Non-antisemitism” will be proclaimed by antisemites may pass—and sooner rather than later. Whether we progress to genuine absence of antisemitism or a tsunami of overt antisemitism to no small degree depends on our skills in understanding the challenges and effecting intelligent strategies.

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André Oboler

# Solving Antisemitic Hate Speech in Social Media through a Global Approach to Local Action

## Introduction

In 2008 the term “Antisemitism 2.0” was coined to describe the normalisation of antisemitism in society through the use of social media.<sup>1</sup> In the past decade, the impact of social media in daily life has grown dramatically as has its use as a medium for hate speech.<sup>2</sup> Antisemitism remains one of the most common forms of hate speech in social media along with the rise in anti-Muslim hate speech following the rise of Daesh (ISIS), the resulting refugee crisis, and the rise in global terrorism. Other groups in society are also targeted with misogyny, homophobia, and racism against Indigenous peoples making headlines around the world. The Jews have again been the canary in the coal mine with efforts to tackle Antisemitism 2.0 leading the way in the broader response to what has become known as Hate 2.0.<sup>3</sup> In anonymous platforms like 4chan and 8chan, a more extreme version of this hate was normalised and by 2019 had led to members of that community carrying out multiple deadly terrorist attacks.<sup>4</sup>

The first problem in tackling Antisemitism 2.0 is being able to identify antisemitic content in social media in an efficient and effective manner so it can be empirically measured. This problem was identified as a key challenge at the 2009 Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism, and a solution involving crowdsourcing of reports and automated verification was presented to a meeting of the Online Antisemitism Working Group of the Global Forum in 2011. The soft-

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1 Cf. A. Oboler, “Online Antisemitism 2.0. ‘Social Antisemitism on the Social Web’,” *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Post-Holocaust and Antisemitism Series* 67 (April 2008), <https://jcpa.org/article/online-antisemitism-2-0-social-antisemitism-on-the-social-web/>.

2 Cf. M. Wendling, “2015: The Year that Angry Won the Internet,” *BBC News*, December 30, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35111707>.

3 Cf. A. Oboler, *Aboriginal Memes and Online Hate* (Melbourne: Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2012), <http://ohpi.org.au/aboriginal-memes-and-online-hate/>.

4 Cf. A. Oboler, W. Allington, and P. Scolyer-Gray, *Hate and Violent Extremism from an Online Subculture: The Yom Kippur Terrorist Attack in Halle, Germany* (Melbourne: Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2019), ii, 1–3, <https://ohpi.org.au/hate-and-violent-extremism-from-an-online-subculture-the-yom-kippur-terrorist-attack-in-halle-germany/>.

ware was presented at the 2013 meeting and formally endorsed after a draft report based on the first 2,024 reported items was circulated at the 2015 meeting.<sup>5</sup> The final report was released on Holocaust Memorial Day in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

The new technical solution allows the problem to be redefined as a quality of service challenge where the level of hate must be constantly measured and kept below a threshold of acceptability.<sup>7</sup> As was foreshadowed in 2010, if platforms failed to keep the level of hate low enough, governments would step in with regulation.<sup>8</sup> This occurred in 2016 in Germany and the European Union with agreements between companies and governments.<sup>9</sup> In 2017, Germany passed regulatory laws targeting non-compliance.<sup>10</sup> Facebook itself was singled out on the question of measurement and fined two million Euros, when it only reported the number of complaints explicitly made under the German law rather than reporting all user reports of antisemitism and other forms of hate flagged by German users as the law required.<sup>11</sup> The result was underreporting by multiple orders of magnitude.

The solution to antisemitism in social media has two parts. The first is a global effort to create transparency and accountability through a sharing of real-time data about hate speech in social media. The second part is local action in response to this data which is in keeping with the values and norms of each society. For example, criminal sanctions for posters of hate speech; penalties for social media platforms; counter speech exposing hate speech; counter speech promoting alternative positive narratives; education; campaigns targeting hate promoters, social media platforms, or advertisers.

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5 Cf. A. Oboler, *Measuring the Hate: The State of Antisemitism in Social Media* (Melbourne: Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2016), <http://ohpi.org.au/measuring-antisemitism/>.

6 Cf. *ibid.*

7 Cf. A. Oboler and K. Connelly, "Hate Speech: A Quality of Service Challenge," in *2014 IEEE Conference on e-Learning, e-Management and e-Services (IC3e)* (Piscataway: IEEE, 2014), 117–21.

8 Cf. A. Oboler, "Time to Regulate Internet Hate with a New Approach?," *Internet Law Bulletin* 13, no. 6 (2010): 102–6; Oboler, "A Legal Model for Government Intervention to Combat Online Hate," *Internet Law Bulletin* 14, no. 2 (2011): 27–30.

9 Cf. "European Union agreement with Social Media Platforms on tackling Hate Speech," Online Hate Prevention Institute, last modified May 31, 2016, accessed December 19, 2019, <http://ohpi.org.au/european-union-agreement-with-social-media-platforms-on-hate-speech/>.

10 Cf. M. Connellan, "Germany Holds Social Media Companies to Account for Hate Speech," *SBS News*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/germany-holds-social-media-companies-to-account-for-hate-speech>.

11 Cf. "Germany Fines Facebook for Underreporting Hate Speech Complaints," *Deutsche Welle*, July 2, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-fines-facebook-for-underreporting-hate-speech-complaints/a-49447820>.

## The Danger of Antisemitism 2.0

Antisemitism 2.0 is

the use of online social networking and content collaboration to share demonization, conspiracy theories, Holocaust denial, and classical antisemitic motifs with a view to creating social acceptability for such content.<sup>12</sup>

The paper describing the new phenomenon was pre-released at the Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem in February 2008, while that week's *New York Jewish Week* carried a first-page story warning that the phenomena was "potentially more hazardous than the relatively straightforward smear campaigns and petitions of yesteryear."<sup>13</sup> Facebook at this time had just turned four, was slightly less popular than MySpace, and boasted around 100 million users.<sup>14</sup>

As social media's influence continued to grow, the danger of Antisemitism 2.0 was further explained in a hearing before the Italian Parliament's subcommittee on antisemitism. The hearing heard that,

the danger is not so much that people might read content inspired by anti-Semitism, but rather that they may be induced to accept it as a valid point of view, a fact of life, or something with which one may or may not agree, but not something whose dissemination one should oppose. This is where the risk lies. Some people will feel affected by it and will want to do something against anti-Semitism, but others will remain passive and consider it normal, humdrum, legitimate. And this gives rise to a culture in which hatred, racism and antisocial behaviour are able to spread, posing huge risks to law and order and to security.<sup>15</sup>

It is not just the online world that is threatened but the values of society as a whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Oboler, "Online Antisemitism 2.0."

<sup>13</sup> T. Snyder, "Anti-Semitism 2.0 Going Largely Unchallenged," *The New York Jewish Week*, February 20, 2008, 1, <http://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/anti-semitism-2-0-going-largely-unchallenged/>.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. M. Arlington, "Facebook Now Nearly Twice The Size Of MySpace Worldwide," *Tech Crunch*, January 22, 2009, <https://techcrunch.com/2009/01/22/facebook-now-nearly-twice-the-size-of-myspace-worldwide/>.

<sup>15</sup> Chamber of Deputies, "Presentazione del documento conclusivo del Comitato di Indagine sull'Antisemitismo = Presentation of the final document of the Sub-Committee of Inquiry into Anti-Semitism," *Convegni e conferenze* 164 (Rome: Chamber of Deputies, 2013), 304.

The alt-right in the United States is a manifestation of Antisemitism 2.0. It began in parts of Reddit and 4chan,<sup>16</sup> as an “obscure, largely online subculture” before entering the “very center of American politics.”<sup>17</sup> *Rolling Stone* describes it as a white supremacy movement linked by a “contempt for mainstream liberals, feminists, ‘social justice warriors’ and immigrants,”<sup>18</sup> but overlooked the most common target: the Jews.

The antisemitism of the alt-right and the subculture it emerged from can be seen in 4chan’s Politically Incorrect boards efforts to mainstream the antisemitism meme of the Jew.<sup>19</sup> It can be seen in the dedication of this subculture to white nationalism with antisemitism “at its theoretical core.”<sup>20</sup> It can be seen in the promotion of the idea of Jews as grand manipulators trying to destroy the white race.<sup>21</sup> DNA testing followed up by posts to prove one’s “whiteness” have taken off within these groups.<sup>22</sup> In the alt-right, antisemitism can be seen in Richard Spencer’s call to “Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory!” followed by a Nazi salute at the “DeploraBall.”<sup>23</sup> It can be seen in the meme of Pepe the Frog as a Nazi with Trump’s face, spread virally by the alt-right and even by

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16 “Alt Right,” Know Your Meme, accessed September 1, 2017, <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/cultures/alt-right>.

17 G. Michael, “The Seeds of the Alt-right, America’s Emergent Right-wing Populist Movement,” *The Conversation*, November 23, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/the-seeds-of-the-alt-right-americas-emergent-right-wing-populist-movement-69036>.

18 C. Skutsch, “The History of White Supremacy in America,” *Rolling Stone*, August 19, 2017, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/features/the-history-of-white-supremacy-in-america-w498334>.

19 Cf. A. Oboler, *The Antisemitic Meme of the Jew* (Melbourne: Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2014), <http://ohpi.org.au/the-antisemitic-meme-of-the-jew/>.

20 Cf. E. K. Ward, “Skin in the Game: How Antisemitism Animates White Nationalism,” *The Public Eye*, June 29, 2017, <http://www.politicalresearch.org/2017/06/29/skin-in-the-game-how-an-tisemitism-animates-white-nationalism/>.

21 This idea of war between the Jews and the white race is the origin of the “Gas the Kikes, Race War Now” slogan common on these forums. The idea of the Jews as the enemy emerges from Nazi literature, including their use of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and continues to be portrayed in modern online memes and websites, for example, that of Holocaust denier Andrew Carrington Hitchcock, see <http://andrewcarringtonhitchcock.com/jewish-genocide-of-the-white-race-case-closed/>, accessed December 12, 2019 [no longer available].

22 Cf. E. Reeve, “Alt-Right Trolls Are Getting 23andme Genetic Tests to ‘Prove’ Their Whiteness,” *Vice News*, October 8, 2016, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/vbygqm/alt-right-trolls-are-getting-23andme-genetic-tests-to-prove-their-whiteness](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/vbygqm/alt-right-trolls-are-getting-23andme-genetic-tests-to-prove-their-whiteness).

23 Cf. D. Lombroso and Y. Appelbaum, “‘Hail Trump!’: White Nationalists Salute the President-Elect,” *The Atlantic*, November 21, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/richard-spencer-speech-npi/508379/>.

Trump's son.<sup>24</sup> It can be seen in the resulting widespread use of Pepe as a symbol by the alt-right and the ADL's response listing it as a hate symbol.<sup>25</sup> It can also be seen in the alt-right's (((echoes))) targeting Jews on Twitter.<sup>26</sup>

The alt-right and those in the subculture from which it grew are not just promoters of antisemitism. They are deliberate promoters of the normalization of antisemitic messages in society through social media. They are deliberate promoters and accelerators of Antisemitism 2.0. This wasn't a natural progression but a result of efforts by hardcore antisemites from Stormfront who deliberately infiltrated and then reshaped the subculture on /pol/ to advance their own ideology in a younger generation.<sup>27</sup> Within the subculture, the brainwashing of people to accept the group's conspiracy theories is known as "red-pilling," named after the choice given to Neo in *The Matrix* movie where he had to choose between a blue pill that would put him back to sleep in an artificial reality, or the red pill which would break him out of this controlled environment and let him see the real world.<sup>28</sup> It is the use of social media to red-pill the public, opening their eyes to narratives that demonize Jews, propagate conspiracy theories, promote Holocaust denial and spreading classical antisemitic motifs in mainstream online spaces that drives Antisemitism 2.0 forward.

Take for example the triple parentheses identifying Jews on Twitter. Identifying Jews online is not new. The infamous JewWatch website is one of the most well-known and oldest antisemitic websites on the internet and is built on this concept. What the triple parentheses add is embedding the identification of Jews into the fabric of the Twittersphere. The markers would appear in the Twitter feeds of otherwise regular conversations and normalize the singling out of Jews.

The alt-right and others in this subculture formulate plans to manipulate the mainstream media, social media, and online culture to spread their narratives—

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24 Cf. A. Ohlheiser, "Why Pepe the Frog's Nazi Phase Doesn't Worry his Creator," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/09/14/why-pepe-the-frogs-nazi-phase-doesnt-worry-his-creator/?utm\\_term=.afc8b7441709](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2016/09/14/why-pepe-the-frogs-nazi-phase-doesnt-worry-his-creator/?utm_term=.afc8b7441709).

25 Cf. S. Begley, "Anti-Defamation League Declares Pepe the Frog a Hate Symbol," *Time*, September 28, 2016, <http://time.com/4510849/pepe-the-frog-adl-hate-symbol/>.

26 Cf. "Triple Parentheses Echo," Know Your Meme, accessed September 1, 2017, <http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/triple-parentheses-echo>.

27 Cf. Oboler, Allington, and Scolyer-Gray, *Hate and Violent Extremism from an Online Subculture*, 70, <https://ohpi.org.au/hate-and-violent-extremism-from-an-online-subculture-the-yom-kippur-terrorist-attack-in-halle-germany/>.

28 Cf. A. Marwick and B. Lewis, "The Online Radicalization We're Not Talking About," *NY Magazine*, May 18, 2017. <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2017/05/the-online-radicalization-were-not-talking-about.html>.



any “escape” of a meme or narrative into the mainstream is seen as victory.<sup>29</sup> The aim is to have the subculture’s narratives embedded as part of the fabric of the online world and daily life. This leaves the individual with the “choice” of becoming red-pilled or continuing life as what the subculture derogatorily call “normies.”

Following the election of President Trump and the emergence of the alt-right as a public force, members of the subculture were encouraged to red-pill their families enlarging the support base.<sup>30</sup> The alt-right marches, such as that in Charlottesville, further promote the message of white supremacy as a normal part of politics which people should accept. This message was reinforced by President Trump’s comment, “I think there is blame on both sides,” after the violence at the alt-right march in Charlottesville.<sup>31</sup> What started with an effort to normalize antisemitism in the online world has in 2017 shifted to an effort to normalize it on the streets of America. It is not just in America either: when a senior Google representative tells a UK Home Affairs Select Committee that a YouTube video titled “Jews admit organising white genocide” and featuring former KKK Grand Wizard David Duke “did not cross the line into hate speech” and therefore remains online (with over 91,000 views),<sup>32</sup> that too helps to normalize antisemitism online and in society.

Antisemitism has been, and remains, the canary in the coal mine for society. It is through the prism of the fight against antisemitism that both the new manifestations of hate and new efforts to tackle it emerge. We must continue to specifically tackle Antisemitism 2.0 even as we simultaneously use what we learn to also tackle the wider problem of Hate 2.0 affecting other groups in society. The creation of social acceptability for racism,<sup>33</sup> religious vilification (particularly against Muslims),<sup>34</sup> misogyny, homophobia, and other forms of hate weaken society and makes the fight against antisemitism that much harder.

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Cf. M. Pearl, “How to Tell if Your Alt-Right Relative Is Trying to Redpill You at Thanksgiving,” *Vice*, November 24, 2016, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_au/article/nnk3bm/how-to-tell-if-your-alt-right-relative-is-trying-to-redpill-you-at-thanksgiving](https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/nnk3bm/how-to-tell-if-your-alt-right-relative-is-trying-to-redpill-you-at-thanksgiving).

<sup>31</sup> D. Merica, “Trump Says Both Sides to Blame amid Charlottesville Backlash,” *CNN*, August 16, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/15/politics/trump-charlottesville-delay/index.html>.

<sup>32</sup> S. Oryszczuk, “Google Chief: Far Right Video Accusing Jews of ‘Organising Genocide’, Isn’t Hate Speech,” *The Times of Israel*, March 15, 2017, <http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/google-chief-far-right-video-accusing-jews-of-organising-genocide-isnt-hate-speech/>.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Oboler, *Aboriginal Memes*.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. A. Oboler, “The Normalisation of Islamophobia through Social Media: Facebook,” in *Islamophobia in Cyberspace: Hate Crimes Go Viral*, ed. I. Awan (London: Routledge, 2016), 41–61.

## Accountability of Platforms and People

At the 2009 Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism, the working group on antisemitism on the internet and in the media identified the lack of metrics for measuring antisemitism on social media as a major challenge. The challenge remained open and was reaffirmed at a 2011 meeting of the working group and then in a report released at the 2013 Global Forum.<sup>35</sup> It noted the

lack of metrics on: a. The number of problem items in specific platforms e.g. reported groups in Facebook, reported Videos on YouTube; b. The number of items resolved on specific platforms e.g. groups shut down, videos removed, complaints reviewed or dismissed; ... d. The time delay between something being reported and action being taken in a specific platform.<sup>36</sup>

The reluctance of social media platforms to tackle antisemitism was clear. Facebook, for example, refused to recognise Holocaust denial as a form of hate speech and therefore as a breach of its community standards.<sup>37</sup> This was confirmed to the Global Forum's working group in a 2011 letter that stated in part, "the mere statement of denying the Holocaust is not a violation of our policies. We recognize people's right to be factually wrong about historical events."<sup>38</sup>

It was readily demonstrated that even obvious cases of antisemitism were being rejected when they were reported to Facebook, for example the picture of Anne Frank with the words "What's that Burning? Oh, it's my family" written across it.<sup>39</sup> Further work looking at forty-seven antisemitic Facebook pages showed how many remained online despite numerous reports.<sup>40</sup> The report led to formal complaints through the Australian Human Rights Commission in which a mediated solution, involving the removal of the listed content (at

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. A. Oboler and D. Matas, "Online Antisemitism: A Systematic Review of the Problem, the Response and the need for Change," issued May 30, 2013 (Jerusalem: Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013), <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutTheMinistry/Conferences-Seminars/GFCA2013/Pages/Online-Antisemitism-A-systematic-review.aspx>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. A. Oboler, "Facebook, Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism 2.0," Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 27, 2009, <http://jcpa.org/article/facebook-holocaust-denial-and-anti-semitism-2-0/>.

<sup>38</sup> The full text of the letter can be seen in Oboler and Matas, "Online Antisemitism," 50.

<sup>39</sup> "Facebook Fails Review," Online Hate Prevention Institute, issued September 14, 2012, accessed December 12, 2019, <http://ohpi.org.au/facebook-fails-review/>.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. A. Oboler, *Recognizing Hate Speech: Antisemitism on Facebook* (Melbourne: Online Hate Prevention Institute, 2013), [http://ohpi.org.au/reports/IR13-1\\_Recognizing\\_hate\\_speech\\_anti\\_semitism\\_on\\_Facebook.pdf](http://ohpi.org.au/reports/IR13-1_Recognizing_hate_speech_anti_semitism_on_Facebook.pdf).

least for Australian users) and a commitment to remove any identical content uploaded in the future was given by Facebook. The problem is not limited to Facebook, indeed later research has shown Facebook's response, while still far from acceptable, was the most effective response from the major social media platforms. YouTube, for example, took a similar approach to Facebook on Holocaust denial until June 2019, when, as part of a suite of policy changes to tackle hate, they did what Facebook still refuses to do and announced a ban on Holocaust denial.<sup>41</sup>

While the isolated examples and small samples in research and advocacy in the early 2010s demonstrate the problem, without detailed metrics there was no transparency and as a result there could be no accountability. Social media platforms were largely self-regulated and unresponsive. Inside the United States, hate speech enjoys first amendment protection, meaning laws seeking to restrict it would be deemed unconstitutional. Outside the United States, the platforms argued that they were mere carriers, and it is the users who should be prosecuted if illegal hate speech is uploaded. This argument is problematic as it is the platforms that decide what content is promoted to whom and profit from the existence of the content.

The 2009 Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism recommended that carrier immunity was "too broad and needs to be limited in the case of antisemitism and other forms of hate," more specifically, it recommended that

while real time communication may be immune, stored communication e.g. user published content, can be brought to a service providers attention and the provider can then do something about it. Opting not to do something about it after a reasonable time should in all cases open the service provided up to liability.<sup>42</sup>

The 2013 report to the Global Forum, which repeated this recommendation and presented the TEMPIS Taxonomy which outlined different types of online communication (defined according to factors such as timing, empowerment of users, moderation, publicness, identity and social impact) so that similar types of communication could have the same expectations applied to them regardless of the social media platform being used.<sup>43</sup> A 2010 article warned that

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. "Our Ongoing Work to Tackle Hate," YouTube Official Blog, issued June 5, 2019, <https://youtube.googleblog.com/2019/06/our-ongoing-work-to-tackle-hate.html>.

<sup>42</sup> Oboler and Matas, "Online Antisemitism," 30.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 5–10.

those who profit from user generated content need to be given the responsibility to take reasonable steps to ensure their platforms have a robust response to the posting of hateful material. The role of government, and the law, is to ensure reasonable steps are indeed taken.<sup>44</sup>

A draft report released at the 2015 Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism for the first time provided a large sample of data about antisemitism in social media. The final report, released on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2016, added statistics about platform responsiveness.<sup>45</sup> Based on a sample of 2,024 unique items of antisemitic content from across Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, the report divided the content both by platform and across four different categories of antisemitism: traditional antisemitism (49%), New Antisemitism (34%), Holocaust denial (12%), and promoting violence (5%).<sup>46</sup> The percentage of content removed by the platforms, after ten months, varied greatly both by category and within each category. The high was Facebook removing 75% of content promoting violence and the low was YouTube removing just 4% of New Antisemitism.<sup>47</sup> The full spread can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Percent of Antisemitism Removed after 10 Months

	Traditional	New Antisemitism	Holocaust Denial	Violence
Facebook	42 %	27%	58 %	75 %
Twitter	25 %	20%	20 %	14 %
YouTube	9 %	4 %	10 %	30 %

In 2017, after efforts to resolve the problem of online hate through agreements between the government and the social media companies failed to deliver the desired results, Germany became the first country to legislate liability for platform providers. The law allows for fines of up to 500 million euros for platforms that systematically fail to remove obvious breaches of German hate-speech law within twenty-four hours.<sup>48</sup> This German approach was a positive step forward and long overdue but relies on the ability to track social media hate speech in order for it to be effectively applied. It is also, at present, a blunt tool without differentiation for the different types of communication which may be used on-

<sup>44</sup> Oboler, “Time to Regulate,” 105.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Oboler, *Measuring the Hate*.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 7.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Connellan, “Germany Holds Social Media Companies to Account for Hate Speech.”

line, as discussed in the TEMPIS Taxonomy. Not all hate requires the same priority of response. Content which incites violence may need a more rapid response than Holocaust denial, for example, while content shared publicly in a form that can go viral may need a more urgent response than the same content sent as a private message to a single person.

There is a need to track antisemitic content and content related to other forms of hate and extremism, both at the level of individual items and at the level of summary data showing the content which is impacting society. The challenge first presented at the Global Forum in 2009 is now more urgent than ever. Indeed, governments beyond Germany have now taken up this challenge and are working to develop plans to regulate transparency.<sup>49</sup>

## Approaches to Monitoring Antisemitism in Social Media

The gathering of data on online antisemitism can be approached in three ways: expert solicitation, automation through artificial intelligence (AI), or crowdsourcing. Each approach has both advantages and drawbacks. The best approach is one which synthesizes the contributions of all three approaches to triangulate a more accurate and complete picture.

Expert solicitation is the oldest approach and involves experts first finding and then assessing examples of antisemitism. The Simon Wiesenthal Centre's *Digital Terrorism and Hate Project*, for example, has been using this approach since the late 1990s.<sup>50</sup> The problem is the time involved, the limited number of experts, and the fact that using experts for anything but the most viral and high impact cases is not an effective use of resources, makes this an impractical approach to use a comprehensive understanding at scale. This is particularly true when close to real-time analysis is needed. As an ADL spokesperson told

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Online Safety Legislative Reform: Discussion Paper*, Department of Communications and the Arts, Australian Government, issued December 11, 2019, <https://www.communications.gov.au/have-your-say/consultation-new-online-safety-act>, 23; *Online Harms White Paper*, UK Government, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, issued April 2019, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/793360/Online\\_Harms\\_White\\_Paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/793360/Online_Harms_White_Paper.pdf), 40.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. "Facebook, Youtube+: How Social Media Outlets Impact Digital Terrorism and Hate," Simon Wiesenthal Center, June 18, 2009, <http://www.wiesenthal.com/about/news/facebook-youtube-how.html>.

the *New York Jewish Week* when the issue of Antisemitism 2.0 was first raised back in 2008, “we can’t sit here all day monitoring YouTube and Facebook.”<sup>51</sup> There is a role for experts, but it needs to be reserved for analysis, investigating new phenomena of antisemitism, providing commentary on high impact cases, and perhaps most importantly for training both people and artificial intelligence systems. This includes training for civil society organisations, volunteers, the staff of both social media companies and the companies they outsource relevant functions to, as well as training people in government across the areas of human rights, public policy, law reform, and law enforcement.

Artificial Intelligence is promoted by some as a silver bullet. A web crawler can be used to capture information from websites which can then be analyzed. At a large scale, this is how data is gathered for search engines such as Google. A relevant page is chosen as a starting point, all outgoing links are explored and if those linked pages are classified as antisemitic, the process will repeat and their links will be followed as well. On social media, a similar approach can be applied using algorithms that either crawl through the content on social media sites, or with the consent of a platform provider directly access the content on the platform’s servers. An example can be seen in the work of Monika Schwarz-Friesel where a specially created web crawler for antisemitic discourse gathered more than 250,000 items of text.<sup>52</sup>

AI solves the problem of scale by applying raw machine power to the task. Given enough time, it is able to read through all the content that is publicly accessible. The problem is in understanding the content. There are two limitations: the first is an inability to process certain types of content, for example, an AI agent may be limited to parsing text and therefore ignore the vast amount of content in images and videos. The second is understanding the text it reads, processing it, and giving it context.

The first problem can in theory be addressed with more complex algorithms which can extract text written into an image, or transcribe sound. These tasks, however, significantly increase the complexity and the cost of the processing. With the huge volume of new content being uploaded all the time, these approaches are not practicable. Nor are they likely to be practicable in the future as the quality of the content continues to increase, requiring greater processing power whenever such additional processing power becomes available. What about messages delivered through the images themselves? The Anne Frank

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51 Snyder, “Anti-Semitism 2.0 Going Largely Unchallenged.”

52 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, “‘Antisemitism 2.0’—The Spreading of Jew-hatred on the World Wide Web,” in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 317.

meme previously discussed requires the graphical representation of text in the image to be converted into real text that can be processed by the computer, then requires an ability to recognize Anne Frank. Both these tasks are possible today, but they are costly to do at scale. Once done, the second problem, that of context and understanding, needs to be solved. In this case it requires a knowledge of Anne Frank's connection to the Holocaust, then an association between the word "burning" and crematoria and the extermination of Jewish families. To further confuse the AI, the statement of her family burning is inaccurate as it was her father who survived and published her diary. For a human with the appropriate background knowledge, the message mocking the victims of the Holocaust is clear. For AI, extracting this message from the many possible messages is beyond what is currently possible. A system could be built to deal with this specific meme, but it would not recognise other memes that promote the same antisemitic ideas, for example the image on Instagram saying "when you meet a Jewish girl and remember you just bought an oven that can fit a person."<sup>53</sup>

The second problem, that of context and understanding, occurs even when the processed content originates as regular text. Simple AI approaches use keywords to identify hate speech. Imagine running a Google search for "kike" on Facebook (to do this, enter the search in Google as "site:facebook.com kike" without the quotes). The problem with this approach is immediately obvious. There are 1,750,000 results for this found on Google, but a quick glance shows that many of them would be false positives. One word is not enough to accurately find such content. What about kike and gas together? The first result is a page called "Kike Gas" which repeatedly posts pictures of an oven with gas cylinders of various sizes, a refill price, and a phone number.<sup>54</sup> The page has an address in Puerto Rico and a picture of a real-world gas cylinder storage area with a sign saying Gas Kike. The page appears to be related to a real business, and there is no overt antisemitic content. Searching for kikes (plural) and gas gives better results: a blank Facebook page with the name "Gas the Kikes" claiming to be a university,<sup>55</sup> a post from a group combating antisemitism which quotes antisemitic phrases,<sup>56</sup> an alt-right like page dedicated to "Aryan Argentine Memes,"<sup>57</sup> a

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53 J. Butler, "Far-Right Extremist Groups Are Using Instagram As A Recruiting Ground," *10 Daily*, March 3, 2020 <https://10daily.com.au/news/tech/a200302fyqto/far-right-extremist-groups-are-using-instagram-as-a-recruiting-ground-20200302>.

54 <https://www.facebook.com/KIKE-GAS-294941390704685/> [no longer available].

55 <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gas-the-Kikes/920193234669031>.

56 Documenting Anti-Semitism, "USA, April 5, 2017 AMCHA 2016 annual study," Facebook, April 6, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/Documenting.Anti.Semitism/posts/1356674271077720:0>.

page from Facebook’s Help Community titled “I am sick and tired of the antisemitism that is allowed on this site” in which people have posted examples of antisemitism some of which have been linked to from that page for months with no resulting action,<sup>58</sup> and a page titled “Right Wing Death Squad,”<sup>59</sup> among many other false positives.

A more specific search for “gas the kikes” in October 2017 gave 594 results from YouTube but none on Facebook (despite the presence of the “gas the kikes” page we know exists).<sup>60</sup> The same search in March 2020 showed that this has reduced to 31 results.<sup>61</sup> On YouTube itself a search for “gas the kikes” gave 176 results in October 2017,<sup>62</sup> but had dropped to 48 by March 2020.<sup>63</sup> On Facebook’s internal search looking for “gas the kikes” brings up a post with the lyrics of an antisemitic music video with phrases such as “I wanna gas all the kikes until they become zero,”<sup>64</sup> another post says “Gas the kikes, race war now!” over a background of rainbow and multi-coloured heart balloons,<sup>65</sup> many others use the phrase to describe what antisemites are saying as they comment on news stories. The results show that major platforms like Facebook and YouTube are getting better for at least some types of antisemitic expression, but even for these easy to identify cases, problems persist.

Text analysis is not much more advanced than a search, though by examining the raw data such approaches may find examples which are being filtered out by search engines or platforms’ internal search functions. Text analysis can find specific phrases, or combinations of words and phrases related to antisemitism through AI,<sup>66</sup> but the AI cannot accurately differentiate between antisemitic content and discourse about antisemitism (i. e., discussing and seeking to counter antisemitism) so the capacity to use AI to measure antisemitism directly is limited. However well it does, there will always be many false positives. Without human review, the results are likely to be misleading—just as any search

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57 <https://www.facebook.com/AryanArgieMemes/?nr> [no longer available].

58 <https://www.facebook.com/help/community/question/?id=881307688690518> [no longer available].

59 <https://www.facebook.com/Right-Wing-Death-Squad-591174651085238/> [no longer available].

60 Search as at October 15, 2017.

61 Search as at March 15, 2020.

62 Search as at October 15, 2017.

63 Search as at March 15, 2020.

64 <https://www.facebook.com/enix.sho/posts/1491580350918573> [no longer available].

65 <https://www.facebook.com/myron.dawson.965/posts/130188527710071> [no longer available].

66 Cf. S. Zannettou et al., “A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism,” Network Contagion Research Institute: *arXiv e-prints*, issued September 2018, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://arxiv.org/abs/1809.01644>.



is likely to provide some irrelevant results. As can be seen, the results also depend on the search tool. Facebook clearly allows its internal search far more access than Google is able to get. YouTube only searches the titles and descriptions of videos while a Google search for content on YouTube also picks up phrases appearing in the first few comments. These technical limitations may be built into software, or may be inherited unknowingly by software due to dependencies on other libraries, online services, or APIs (application programming interfaces). More advanced text analysis can be seen in “Conversation AI” a tool launched by a Google subsidiary in September 2016, and

designed to use machine learning to automatically spot the language of abuse and harassment—with ... an accuracy far better than any keyword filter and far faster than any team of human moderators.<sup>67</sup>

The tool is still based on text analysis and the use of phrases and the presence or absence of other words to determine if content is antisemitic. While it may be an improvement over simple keyword identification, it is far from a robust solution. Even if it were, 4chan’s /pol/ quickly responded with “Operation Google” which sought to use “Googles” as a code word for African Americans, “Skypes” as code word for Jews, “Yahoos” as code for Mexicans and “Skittles” as code for Muslims.<sup>68</sup> More recently, /pol/ started a campaign trying to get the hash symbol to be used as a replacement for the swastika, arguing that if it was done successfully, they would either make many regular uses of the hash, such as hashtags, seem like an endorsement of neo-Nazism, or forcing platforms like Twitter to break their core systems.<sup>69</sup> The use of code words greatly complicates the process of text analysis, particularly if the code words are regularly changed. In a fight between regulation by Artificial Intelligence and circumvention through human creativity, the computers have little chance of winning. This is especially true when the message seeking to be regulated is an idea which can be rephrased and adapted, rather than a repetition of a known item of content such as song or movie.

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<sup>67</sup> A. Greenberg, “Inside Google’s Internet Justice League and its AI-Powered War on Trolls,” *Wired*, September 19, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/09/inside-googles-internet-justice-league-ai-powered-war-trolls/>.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. P. Tambutto, “4chan Aims to Fill Google with Racism Following ‘War on Trolls,’” *Crave*, September 23, 2016, <https://www.mandatory.com/living/1125143-4chan-aims-fill-google-racism-following-war-trolls>.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. M. Thalen, “4chan’s New Troll Campaign Aims to Make the Hashtag a White Supremacist Symbol,” *Daily Dot*, May 26, 2019, <https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/4chan-troll-campaign-bash-the-hash/>.

Another approach, focused on images, has been to track the spread of a specific antisemitic meme across different sites. The single meme is represented by a collection of different images, each of which can be recognised through image analysis. An experiment tracked the spread the antisemitic meme of the Jew and also noted the spread of variants of this meme as it infected other memes.<sup>70</sup>

The last approach is that of crowdsourcing. This is the method used in the 2016 report previously discussed. Through a custom built advanced online reporting tool called Fight Against Hate, members of the public reported and categorized items of antisemitism they found across Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter.<sup>71</sup> The volume of data collected is far higher than could be gathered by experts alone but far lower than what an AI tool could find in an automated search. The main weakness of this system is the potential for users, through ignorance or malice, to incorrectly make reports. For example, organized groups could seek to use the tool to report their opponents (be it businesses, sporting teams, schools, political parties, etc.) or to report content they disagree with but which is not hate.<sup>72</sup> The solution has two parts, one part sees users offering to review content others have reported, and the system determines which items each person gets in order to ensure an independent judgement, and the other involves the limited use of experts to validate items allowing a model of trust to be developed so the system is aware which non-experts tend to agree with the experts judgements.<sup>73</sup> This approach uses people to identify and review the content and artificial intelligence approaches to ensure quality.<sup>74</sup>

Mixed approaches where experts are supported by AI give better results. For example, the use of AI to gather examples of discourse from online conversations and publications can provide a rich starting point for analysis using corpus linguistics. In corpus linguistics, a sample is gathered and then manually coded by experts, usually with each sample being coded by more than one expert to avoid both bias and error. This form of coding is not related to programming but rather to the association of a piece of text with a particular concept. This approach to manual coding in relation to Wikipedia back in 2010 exposed a prob-

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. S. Zannettou et al., “A Quantitative Approach to Understanding Online Antisemitism Part 3: Meme Analysis,” Network Contagion Research Institute: *arXiv e-prints*, issued September 2018, accessed December 12, 2019, <https://ncri.io/2018/09/06/a-quantitative-approach-to-understanding-online-antisemitism-part-3-meme-analysis/>.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Oboler, *Measuring the Hate*.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Oboler and Connelly, “Hate Speech.”

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

lem of systematic bias related to New Antisemitism.<sup>75</sup> The combination of a crawler to gather a sample of likely antisemitic discourse, combined with expert coding to classify it, can be seen in the work of Monika Schwarz-Friesel.<sup>76</sup> The use of an API to gather a corpus and extract patterns relating to evolving antisemitic messaging was demonstrated in the work of Paul Iganski and Abe Sweiry on Twitter.<sup>77</sup> The work of Gunther Jikeli, Damir Cavar, Daniel Miehling, also looking at antisemitism on Twitter, highlights how “annotators have to be highly trained and knowledgeable about current events to understand each tweet’s underlying message within its context.”<sup>78</sup> Their work used students in a course on antisemitism in social media who were applying the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism to code the data and found some significant variance in application even with a common understanding of the definition. While these approaches all use real world data, they are limited to the sample their tools have gathered. The last of these studies, for example, extracted Tweets that included the word “Jew\*” (e.g., Jew, Jews, Jewish, etc.) and “Israel.” If the “Just bought an oven” and “what’s that burning” memes discussed above were (in text form) on Twitter during the time period this data was gathered, the first would be included while the second would not. This means that these approaches have the potential to focus the study of antisemitism on those posts which use words or phrases that have been previously identified. They will not provide a complete picture of the level of antisemitism, and even data on the relative level over time may be skewed by efforts from the platforms which target those same words. Research on the topic also alters the environment as it may suggest words or phrases to which platforms’ attention could be applied to reduce the count they need to report as governments increase their demands for transparency and systemic improvement. This is a benefit for real-world action tackling antisemitism, even as it disrupts research into manifestations of antisemitism.

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75 Cf. A. Oboler, G. Steinberg, and R. Stern, “The Framing of Political NGOs in Wikipedia through Criticism Elimination,” *Journal of Information Technology and Politics* 7, no. 4 (2010): 284–99.

76 Cf. M. Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate* (Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin, 2018), [https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism\\_2.0\\_short\\_version\\_final.pdf](https://www.linguistik.tu-berlin.de/fileadmin/fg72/Antisemitism_2.0_short_version_final.pdf).

77 Cf. P. Iganski and A. Sweiry, “Antisemitism on Social Media,” lecture for the Panel Internet and Antisemitism, Conference “An End to Antisemitism!,” University of Vienna, Vienna, February 21, 2018.

78 Cf. G. Jikeli, D. Cavar, and D. Miehling, “Annotating Antisemitic Online Content. Towards an Applicable Definition of Antisemitism,” submitted to Cornell University, September 29, 2019, <https://arxiv.org/abs/1910.01214>.

The best solution would be to use experts to calibrate a crowdsourced system. It would use the crowdsourcing system to review content collected by the AI tools, as occurs with items people have reported. This would give statistics on the level of false positives in the AI system. It would also review how many items in crowdsourced systems, gathered initially from human reports, were not found by the AI. This would provide data on the AI's blind spots and the degree of false negatives. The three approaches together would allow a triangulation on the real nature of antisemitism in social media.

## Transparency through Global Cooperation

Creating real transparency around the problem of Antisemitism 2.0 requires a global approach. Social media platforms often block content in particular countries rather than globally. Differences can occur between the treatment of content in different languages. A crowdsourced approach fundamentally needs the support not only of a large crowd but of one seeing social media through the lens of different countries, languages, and cultures. It needs to be calibrated to relevant experts. For a truly global picture, the tools and methodology also need to be consistent.

The work of the 2016 “Measuring the Hate: The State of Antisemitism in Social Media” report based on crowdsourcing is limited to the English language. The data was not easily accessible to other researchers and was managed by a single organisation. A 2017 report from the World Jewish Congress and Vigo Social Intelligence looks at antisemitism across many countries;<sup>79</sup> it is based on automated text analysis (with some manual review) and skewed toward expressions of antisemitism that the software was able to easily identify which results, for example, in overreporting on Twitter and underreporting on YouTube. This problem also exists in academic research where research is more likely to follow the path with the lowest implementation barriers. Some platforms, and some content on certain platforms, are simply harder to include in AI gathered data and therefore less likely to be included in research.

The Fight Against Hate reporting tool has been rebuilt so it can operate in any language (subject to a list of translations being provided) and can be embedded on the websites of many organisations and configured to their needs. Exam-

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<sup>79</sup> Cf. World Jewish Congress and Vigo Social Intelligence, *The Rise of Anti-Semitism on Social Media: Summary of 2016* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 2017), <http://www.crif.org/sites/default/fichiers/images/documents/antisemitismreport.pdf>.

ples of antisemitism are classified into categories and then subcategories as they are reported. There are thirty-one categories in all, and together they cover all the aspects of the *IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism* as well as the *IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion*.

There is also a review capability where people can check and classify items others have reported. Organisations can now see a summary report and a list of the items reported via their website, enabling them to respond in real time and monitor trends. The next step is for organisations to partner in the project, help translate the tool to their language, and to use it to gather data locally for themselves while also contributing to the global pool of data. The first such project is taking place with Australia and Italy, led by Australia as part of its engagement with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

An additional tool, CSI-CHAT (Crowd Sourced Intelligence—Cyber Hate and Threats), has been developed to enable organisations and experts to access and work with the data from Fight Against Hate. Data can be sorted, searched, classified, annotated, and compiled. The tool also produces statistical reports on the data including trend analysis and dataset comparisons.

Organisations will have access to work with the data reported via the gateway on their own website. Each organisation will be able to choose whether they share this data with other organisations, or whether they will release it into the common data pool. Access to additional items from the common data pool will be available in return for reciprocity. As the same item may be reported to many organisations and only the first to release the item to the common data pool will be credited with it, there is an inbuilt incentive to pool data. Even where the specific items of data are not shared, the system can account for duplicates in the private data sets of multiple organisations and provide a true picture of the total numbers of items reports and their nature.

Future work will allow organisations to upload additional datasets gathered through automated approaches and assess their coverage for different types of antisemitism. Access to the human-collected data and the support of experts will allow automated tools to be further improved.

## **Community Resilience through Local Cooperation**

The benefits of the Fight Against Hate reporting tool combined with the CSI-CHAT analysis tool go well beyond transparency. With the involvement of different stakeholders in society, the tools can help create communities of resistance and solidarity against antisemitism, racism, and other forms of bigotry while strengthening the resilience of communities, like the Jewish community, which

are the targets of online hate. The SMARTER (Solidarity in Moving Against Racism Together while Enabling Resilience) Approach outlines how local adoption of the tool can build resilience by empowering individuals who encounter hate, their local communities whose websites feature the reporting tool, and those who are able to undertake positive action once data is made available to them through CSI-CHAT.<sup>80</sup>

To fully engage the model, a Jewish community, which would be an “Affiliated Civil Society Organisation” under the SMARTER Approach, would need to also engage other Affiliated Civil Society Organisations, General Civil Society Organisations, Government Agencies and Academic Researchers ensuring that all have access to the data the Jewish community is gathering.<sup>81</sup> Resilience is increased when it is clear there is wide engagement on the problem of online antisemitism, and this is not simply left to the Jewish community. At the same time, through reporting, members of the community can take positive action to counter online antisemitism.

With some small adaptations the system can also empower community organisations and others in civil society so they can assist during crisis situations to triage data which may provide real-time intelligence on physical threats to the community. This has been presented in the context of far-right extremism targeting the Muslim community and inciting violence through social media following mass casualty events that are blamed on the Muslim community.<sup>82</sup> It could work equally well in situations which cause a significant increase in the level of threat faced by the Jewish community, for example, an extreme escalation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and particular situations where some actions of violence are occurring and social media is being used to fan the flames and incite further attacks. In such a situation, multiple organisations inside and outside the Jewish community could review online threats and escalate those that look credible for attention by police.

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**80** Cf. A. Oboler and K. Connelly, “Building SMARTER Communities of Resistance and Solidarity,” *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies* 10, no. 2 (2018): 100–18.

**81** Cf. *ibid.*

**82** A. Oboler, “Open Source Intelligence During High Risk Situations,” lecture, Australia and Asia Pacific Launch of Tech Against Terrorism and the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, Sydney, Australia, June 20, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/onlinehate/videos/1800284873382060/>.

## Accountability through Local Action

Reports on the hate speech that real people have seen and reported within a particular country, and evidence of any failure of social media companies to appropriately respond, will enable national governments to hold social media platforms accountable. This data from people within the jurisdiction, with commentary from local experts in line with the values and norms of the society, can support legal schemes like the one created in Germany in 2017 and ensure that they are practically and routinely applied.

Local organisations can also work with the data in a practical way. Knowing the common narratives of antisemitism, including any new narratives or symbols, can assist with the development of responses and counter narratives. Being able to monitor trends can also help to assess the effectiveness of strategies seeking to combat antisemitism. Tracking individual items can allow repeat abuses to be identified and the efforts of law enforcement in this regard can be supported by civil society. They can also form the basis for education in schools and society more generally in responding to antisemitism. Based on greater information campaigns highlighting areas of weakness in the platforms, response can be initiated. While the local action may be different around the world, with access to a common platform best practices can be created and shared.

## Conclusions

The problem of Antisemitism 2.0 is growing globally. The normalisation of hate that started online is increasingly being manifested offline. We cannot tackle the problem of antisemitism without paying specific attention to its normalisation through Antisemitism 2.0 in social media.

To meet the challenge of Antisemitism 2.0, we need data, and we need to be able to share it. There are positive developments in automatically gathering samples of potentially antisemitic data,<sup>83</sup> or discussions about Jews or Israel, to manually evaluate them for antisemitism,<sup>84</sup> but we need to move to a real-time picture of what is occurring, and how it is changing. We need to move to a model of trust which allows us to use input from more people, with varying levels of expertise, to assess the content. We need this picture to stretch across countries and

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<sup>83</sup> Cf., e.g., Schwarz-Friesel, *Antisemitism 2.0 and the Cyberculture of Hate*; World Jewish Congress and Vigo Social Intelligence, *The Rise of Anti-Semitism on Social Media*.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Jikeli, Cavar, and Miehl, “Annotating Antisemitic Online Content.”

across language barriers. We need to draw on experts, artificial intelligence, and the resources of the public through crowdsourcing. We need to know not just what is out there, but what people are seeing, and what is having an impact. We need enough examples of what is being seen in the wild, whether or not it contains the words and phrases we are expecting and actively looking for, to know how antisemitism is adapting to both local and global changes.

We also need information at the national level to support action against antisemitism by civil society and governments. From transparency we can create accountability, but creating that accountability is a national responsibility, and it must take place within the norms and culture of each society. Global transparency reports and common standards are a start, but some local tailoring of such reporting will become essential.

We must work together and provide the expertise and cooperation needed to bridge the technological gap, the language barriers, and the cultural differences and to empower both civil society and governments to tackle the rising, global problem of Antisemitism 2.0. That also means overcoming practical barriers such as ensuring governments are funding both civil society monitoring work and new research.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> A. Lange et al., "Recommendations Regarding the Internet, its Influencers and its Users," in *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-Faceted Approach*, ed. A. Lange et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 382.



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Michael Whine

# Europe's Undertakings to Combat Antisemitism

## Introduction

The primary role of governments is to protect their citizens from harm, and the role of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) is to establish binding and voluntary agreements to ensure the orderly and peaceful interaction between states. Additionally, IGOs advise states on best practices in matters of strategic importance and provide assistance where requested.

Putting aside the human rights and other conventions agreed on at the global level by the United Nations, I shall examine the role of European IGOs in combating antisemitism and assess their successes and limitations. I will do so by discussing the decisions and programmes of the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), and their agencies. Some of the agreements focus on the wider issues of racism and hate crime, but in doing so they incorporate action against antisemitism; other agreements have a narrower focus and are specifically limited to antisemitism. Necessarily this requires surveying progress at a national level, which is where the initiatives impact Jewish communities.

EU concerns over mounting racism and antisemitism were first signalled in the 1994 Resolution on Racism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism, and the 1995 Communication from the Commission on racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism which proposed that 1997 be designated as the European Year against Racism.<sup>1</sup> In these earlier years, no attempt was made to differentiate the various harms, or to examine their specific natures, and they were treated as a whole. Since 2003,

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**Note:** This essay has its origins in M. Whine, "Can European Agencies Combat Antisemitism Effectively?" *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2017): 371–81.

1 Cf. European Parliament, *Resolution of the European Parliament on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-semitism* (OJ C 323/154, 20.11.1994), issued October 27, 1994, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/libe/102/text5\\_en.htm#annex2](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/libe/102/text5_en.htm#annex2); European Parliament, *Resolution of the European Parliament on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-semitism* (OJ C 308/140, 20.11.1995), issued October 26, 1995; Commission of the European Communities, *Communication from the Commission on Racism, Xenophobia and Anti-semitism* (COM (95) 653 final), issued December 13, 1995, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51995PC0653&from=EN>.

however, European states have developed their undertakings to combat antisemitism specifically and have begun to identify problem areas which they must address in order to do so more effectively. In the following years, they have agreed upon working definitions of antisemitism and Holocaust denial and established bias indicators to describe contemporary antisemitism. They have improved their collection of data on incidents and crimes, and they have instituted a series of political and legal agreements that condemn antisemitism and call for the prosecution of perpetrators of crimes motivated by it. They have also published practical guidelines to enable criminal justice authorities to combat antisemitism. Official statistics are now augmented by large-scale polling and surveys, and training programmes have been instituted for law-enforcement personnel that focus on hate crime generally, and crime that is motivated by antisemitism categorically.

This progress has been achieved by the twenty-eight states of the EU, the forty-seven states of the CoE, and the fifty-seven states participating in the OSCE. Some agreements are limited to a particular IGO and its Member States, but increasing inter-agency collaboration ensures that other states will also benefit. However, it is at the national level when states apply the agreements that weaknesses emerge, and it is these which are examined in the second part of this essay.

## Political and Legal Agreements to Combat Antisemitism

As antisemitic incidents in Europe rose at the end of the twentieth and start of the twenty-first centuries, the OSCE was persuaded to hold an international meeting in Vienna in 2003. Prominent political and Jewish leaders from the United States, Canada, and Europe spoke in turn about the problem, but they had no mandate to take action.<sup>2</sup> However, the Vienna meeting overcame European governments' reluctance to address the issue, and thereafter they began to consider their responsibilities toward their Jewish citizens in a more effective manner. They noted the threats posed by the spillover of Middle East tensions and the antisemitic messages promoted by Arab states and their media and by Islamist bodies. The Vienna meeting had been preceded by the 2002 OSCE Ministerial

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism*, Vienna, June 19–20, 2003, Consolidated Summary, PC.DEL./883/03, issued July 18, 2003, [www.osce.org/cio/42394?download=true](http://www.osce.org/cio/42394?download=true).

Council meeting in Porto, where the rise in all types of hate crimes was discussed. The conference declaration noted their concern over “the manifestation of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, antisemitism, and violent extremism, wherever they may occur.”<sup>3</sup> The following year, at the urging of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and following a recommendation from the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, the OSCE held the Berlin Conference in May 2004. The conference declaration committed the OSCE to collecting data on antisemitism and other hate crimes, to periodically review such data, and to identify best practices to counter antisemitism. It also appointed a personal representative of the chairperson in office, whose task is to report on the progress being made by participating states.<sup>4</sup>

Berlin was followed by other high-level OSCE conferences in Cordoba, Bucharest, and Astana at which the mechanisms for monitoring antisemitism were established; teaching materials on antisemitism, Jewish history, and the Holocaust were commissioned; and training for criminal justice agency personnel was put in place.<sup>5</sup> However, ODIHR was unwilling to combat antisemitism on its own at that point; it had to be addressed in concert with other forms of hatred. Jewish representatives had no issue with the decision but argued instead that the longevity and uniqueness of antisemitism required focused action across a broad range of fronts, including in the realms of religion, education, and law enforcement.

Ten years after the first Berlin conference, a second conference was convened in November 2014 to review progress in the wake of a continuing rise in incidents and the terror attack on the Brussels Jewish Museum five months earlier in May. That gathering focused on Jewish concerns more concretely. The conference recommendations were referred to the December 2015 Ministerial Council meeting in Basel, which proposed to offer Member States a set of best practices

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3 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council*, Porto, December 6–7, 2002, MC.DOC/1/02, issued December 7, 2002, [www.osce.org/mc/40521?download=true](http://www.osce.org/mc/40521?download=true), 45–46.

4 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Berlin Declaration, Bulgarian Chairmanship*, issued 2004, <https://www.osce.org/cio/31432?download=true>.

5 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Cordoba Declaration by the Chairman-in-Office*, CIO.GAL/76/05/REV.2, issued June 9, 2005, [www.osce.org/cio/15548?download=true](http://www.osce.org/cio/15548?download=true); idem, *Bucharest Declaration by the Chairman-in-Office*, CIO.GAL/89/07, issued June 8, 2007, [www.osce.org/cio/25598?download=true](http://www.osce.org/cio/25598?download=true); idem, *Astana Declaration by the Chairman-in-Office*, CIO.GAL/111/10, issued June 30, 2010, [www.osce.org/cio/68972?download=true](http://www.osce.org/cio/68972?download=true).



to combat antisemitism and enhance the security of communities, which are noted below.<sup>6</sup>

The Words into Action program was an outcome of the Basel ministerial meeting and is intended to strengthen states' and civil society capacities to prevent and respond to antisemitism and terrorism against Jewish communities. The three-year program is structured around three themes: addressing communities' security needs; education about Jews and antisemitism; and coalition-building between Jews and other faiths. The work streams bring together police officers, Jewish community security experts, educators, and interfaith activists to define and promote best practices.<sup>7</sup> At the time of this writing, the security program is the most advanced, and memoranda of understanding to initiate training have been signed between the OSCE and several governments. The Words into Action security handbook notes OSCE commitments, human rights standards, key government obligations toward their Jewish citizens, and describes anti-Jewish crimes and hate speech and their impact on Jewish communities. It provides practical security advice for Jewish communities, police and security services, describes their security needs, and effectively draws together many of the above-listed recommendations. Its appendices include the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism, the UK Community Security Trust Police Guide to Judaism and Jewish religious dates, and it is being translated into a number of languages.<sup>8</sup>

Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education and Coalition Building for Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, the second and third elements in the Words into Action program, were both launched in mid-2018, the former in partnership with UNESCO, and at the time of writing await final acceptance by OSCE participating states.<sup>9</sup>

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**6** Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Declaration on Enhancing Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism*, MCD0C/8/14, issued December 5, 2014, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/2/d/130556.pdf>.

**7** OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities: A Practical Guide* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2017), [www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true](http://www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true).

**8** Cf. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2017), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/269756?download=true>.

**9** Cf. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education—Guidelines for Policymakers* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2018), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/383089>; idem, *Coalition Building for Tolerance and Non-Discrimination—A Practical Guide* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2018), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/385017?download=true>.

Within the framework of the EU, a similar process was also developing, propelled by the rise in antisemitic incidents. In 2002, the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) commissioned the fifteen National Focal Points of its Racism and Xenophobia Network (RAXEN) of national human rights and equalities commissions to collect data on antisemitism within the EU. It also commissioned Berlin's Technical University Centre for Research on Antisemitism to analyze the reports and publish a composite analysis. Their findings were not well received by the EUMC board, allegedly because they apportioned much of the blame for rising antisemitism on Europe's Muslim communities, and a clumsy attempt was made to suppress them.

When the report was leaked to the media, the EUMC was obliged to commission a second report, "Perceptions of Antisemitism in the European Union," based on Jewish leaders' perceptions of the threats to their communities. This confirmed the findings of the first report.

The final composite report, "Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002–2003," finally acknowledged what the Jewish communities had sensed for some time: that tension in the Middle East led to dramatic rises in antisemitic incidents and that activists from the extreme right were no longer the primary perpetrators, at least in Western Europe. The report also called for the regular monitoring of data and a workable definition of antisemitism for the post-Holocaust era, in which anti-Zionism often serves as a mask for Jew hatred. The latter recommendation was taken up by the EUMC, and a working definition was agreed upon after academics and activists were asked to submit ideas. Representatives of the American Jewish Committee and the European Jewish Congress negotiated the final wording in Vienna, alongside OSCE representatives.<sup>10</sup>

The definition was not intended as a legal one, and neither the EUMC nor its successor, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), formally adopted it, although they published it on their websites. Although the FRA removed it from its website after several years, it was subsequently adopted, in slightly modified form, by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), the successor to the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, the outcome of the International Forum on the Holocaust. This had been convened in 2000 by Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson. The definition sits alongside the IHRA Working Definition of Holocaust Denial, and both definitions have been accepted by the thirty-one Member States of

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002–2003* (Vienna: FRA, 2004), an updated version including manifestations from 2002 to 2012 can be found online via [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013\\_anti\\_semitism-update-2002–2012\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2013_anti_semitism-update-2002–2012_web_0.pdf).

IHRA.<sup>11</sup> The European Parliament and the governments of Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, Macedonia, Romania, Scotland, and the UK have adopted it thus far.<sup>12</sup> The US State Department also promotes it as does the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the human rights commission which advises CoE Member States on human rights and inspects their compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. It is included in the ECRI short version of the General Policy Recommendation Number 9 on Antisemitism published in 2017.<sup>13</sup> Adoption in itself, however, has merely a declaratory value, and it is hoped that states will use it as a guide for their criminal justice systems.

At a political level, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a body of parliamentarians appointed by their national parliaments, has passed two resolutions: in 2007, on combatting antisemitism in Europe, and again in 2016 on the renewed commitment in the fight against antisemitism in Europe. The first drew attention to the growth of antisemitism, often fuelled by Middle East tension and migrant communities, the need to “vigorously and systematical-

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**11** Cf. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, *Working Definition of Antisemitism*, issued May 26, 2016, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/node/196>; idem, *Working Definition of Holocaust Denial and Distortion*, issued October 10, 2013, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-holocaust-denial-and-distortion>.

**12** Cf. “Austrian Government Adopts Working Definition of Antisemitism,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, issued April 28, 2017, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/austrian-government-adopts-working-definition-antisemitism>; “Bulgaria Adopts International Definition of anti-Semitism,” *The Times of Israel*, October 19, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/bulgaria-adopts-international-definition-of-anti-semitism/>; J. Chase, “German Government Adopts International anti-Semitism Definition,” *Deutsche Welle*, March 5, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/german-government-adopts-international-anti-semitism-definition/a-40608166>; “Lithuania to Apply the Uniform Working Definition of Antisemitism,” Lithuanian Government, Office of the Prime Minister, issued January 24, 2018, <https://ministraspirmininkas.lrv.lt/en/news/lithuania-to-apply-the-uniform-working-definition-of-antisemitism>; “Macedonia Becomes Fourth Country to Include Demonization of Israel in anti-Semitism Definition,” *Haaretz*, March 15, 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/macedonia-defines-anti-semitism-to-include-demonization-of-israel-1.5909603>; “Romania Adopts Working Definition of Antisemitism,” International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, issued May 29, 2017, <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/news-archive/romania-adopts-working-definition-antisemitism>.

**13** “Defining Anti-Semitism,” U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action, Washington DC, issued 2017, <https://www.state.gov/s/rga/resources/267538.htm>; European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 9 on The Fight against Antisemitism*, issued September 9, 2004, <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-9-on-the-fight-against-antisemit/16808b5ac8>.

ly enforce legislation,” and to address the growth of online hate and antisemitism via the Additional Protocol to the CoE Convention on Cybercrime (see below).<sup>14</sup>

The 2016 resolution contains seven recommendations: the need for comprehensive legislation covering hate crime and hate speech, denial and trivialization of the Holocaust, prosecution of public figures who incite antisemitism, and enhanced penalties on conviction of such offences; the need for efficient data collection; education against antisemitism and on the Holocaust; respect for all faiths and appreciation of diversity by the media; enhancing the security of Jewish communities; promotion of CoE anti-racism initiatives; and the recognition of the role of civil society organizations and the need to support them.<sup>15</sup>

The European law calling for the prosecution of those who engage in antisemitic incitement is contained within EU Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA, which established a minimum legal level for incitement based on racial or religious grounds, and denial or gross trivialization of genocide, including the Holocaust.<sup>16</sup> States were required to transpose its provisions into domestic law by November 2010. The protections it afforded were augmented in 2012 by Directive 2012/29/EU, which established minimum standards on the rights, support, and protection of victims of crime. Again, this law did not reference antisemitism specifically. However, placing the rights of victims at the heart of the criminal justice response to hate crime, including that motivated by antisemitism, thereby strengthened the protection afforded to European Jews.<sup>17</sup>

The 2003 Additional Protocol to the CoE Convention on Cybercrime concerning the criminalization of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems binds signatory states to criminalizing online racial

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. “Combating anti-Semitism in Europe, Resolution 1563,” Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, issued June 27, 2007, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17561&lang=en>.

<sup>15</sup> “Renewed Commitment in the Fight against Antisemitism in Europe, Resolution 2106,” Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe, issued April 20, 2016, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=22716>.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. European Union, “Framework Decision on Combating certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law, 2008/913/JH/,” *Official Journal of the European Union* 328, no. 55 (2008), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008F0913&from=EN>.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. European Union, “Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime,” *Official Journal of the European Union* 315, no. 57 (2012), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2012:315:0057:0073:EN:PDF>.

and religious incitement and the denial of genocide, including the Holocaust, and the EU now requires Member States to transpose it into domestic law.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, three separate but overlapping laws offer a high degree of protection to Jewish communities. Moreover the effect of the legislation has been significantly strengthened by the case law of the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights, which applies the European Convention on Human Rights to cases brought to it by CoE Member States and individuals. Its judgements are binding and require governments to amend their legislation and administrative practice in a wide range of human rights related areas. The court has ruled on a number of cases in defense of the rights of Jews, including upholding criminal convictions against Holocaust deniers, those who promote ethnic hate against Jews, those who insult Jews on account of their religious and racial origin, and those who incite acts of terrorism.<sup>19</sup>

The 2017 European Parliament resolution on combating antisemitism also calls for the adoption of the working definition of antisemitism in order to uphold law enforcement and judicial action; the enhancement of Jewish communities' security; assistance for the European coordinator on combating antisemitism; the appointment of national coordinators to combat antisemitism; and the establishment of cross-party parliamentary groups to strengthen support across the political spectrum. It highlights the important role of civil society, and calls for financial backing for civil society initiatives; media respect for diversity and training for journalists; the full and proper implementation of the 2008 Framework Decision; penalty enhancement on conviction for anti-Jewish crimes where none exists; the establishment of dedicated hate crimes police units; cross border cooperation in the prosecution of hate crimes; comprehensive and efficient hate crime data systems; the enforcement of the Code of Conduct; and Holocaust teaching and a review and funding of teaching materials to ensure that Jewish history and contemporary Jewish life are presented in a comprehensive and balanced manner. Finally, the resolution calls on Member States to officially com-

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**18** Cf. Council of Europe, *Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime: Concerning the Criminalization of Acts of a Racist Nature Committed through Computer Systems*, issued January 28, 2003, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168008160f>.

**19** Cf. European Court of Human Rights, *Fact Sheet—Hate Speech*, issued March 2020, [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS\\_Hate\\_speech\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf).

memorate the Holocaust and for the EC to liaise closely with other IGOs to combat antisemitism at the international level.<sup>20</sup>

Drawing states' attention to antisemitism falls within the mandate of the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, and in 2016 he published a warning to governments about the growth in Holocaust denial and of making any false equivalence between the Holocaust and the suffering endured under Soviet occupation of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>21</sup> Recognising that the GPRs prepared by ECRI are seen only by governments, ECRI now publishes short versions to help civil society organisations understand the obligations which their governments have undertaken. The GPR on Antisemitism was first published in 2004, but an abridged version was published in 2017 and will be available with others in the series toward the end of 2018. Jewish communities can then use it as a checklist to monitor their government's compliance.<sup>22</sup>

## Overcoming Weaknesses in Applying the Agreements

Despite the considerable progress made by the IGOs at a regional level over the past twenty years, there are continuing weaknesses at the national level which result in patchy and uneven application of the agreements.

These deficiencies can be the consequence of one or several reasons: reluctance to change due to political or cultural reasons or institutional racism; slow or partial application of international agreements at the local level; slow transformation by criminal justice systems to accommodate new thinking and practices. Insofar as the first of these is concerned, the FRA has suggested that recent political gains by populist far right parties may be leading to reduced commitment to improve the human rights protection of minorities. It noted that they have increased their percentage of the overall vote in those countries where they have stood from 5 percent in 1997 to 16 percent in the most recent parliamentary elections, and concludes that the election results therefore foster a so-

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**20** "European Parliament resolution on combating anti-Semitism," European Parliament, issued June 1, 2017, accessed April 29, 2020, [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0243&language=EN&ring=B8-2017-0383](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P8-TA-2017-0243&language=EN&ring=B8-2017-0383).

**21** Cf. "Why Remembering the Holocaust is a Human Rights Imperative," Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, issued October 18, 2016, accessed April 29, 2020, [www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/why-remembering-the-holocaust-is-a-human-rights-imperative](http://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/why-remembering-the-holocaust-is-a-human-rights-imperative).

**22** Cf. ECRI, *ECRI General Policy Recommendation No. 9*.

cial climate that provides fertile ground for racism, discrimination, and hate crime.<sup>23</sup>

This may be the case, but the FRA has advanced other reasons for states' failures to apply the agreements made at a regional level, which it has repeated in its annual reporting for several years, which predate the rise in right-wing populism and explain the second reason. These failures fall into four areas: (1) inadequate practical implementation and application of the 2000 Racial Equality Directive which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin and which defines direct and indirect discrimination and harassment; (2) ineffective investigation and prosecution of hate crime, including hate speech; (3) the lack of dedicated national action plans to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, in the absence of accompanying performance indicators and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; (4) the lack of systematic training on applying anti-discrimination legislation for law enforcement officers.<sup>24</sup>

The major complaints, however, are the failure by some states to transpose and apply the Framework Decision, or to transpose it effectively, and to apply the Racial Equality Directive. Recognising these lacunae led the FRA to warn that

The EC initiated formal inquiries into Member States that still had major gaps in transposing the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia into national law. The Commission intended to launch infringement procedures where necessary. This prompted notable legislative developments in a number of Member States.<sup>25</sup>

A two-year research project undertaken on behalf of the EU Directorate-General Justice in five jurisdictions (the Czech Republic, England and Wales, Ireland, Latvia, and Sweden) to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the 2008 Framework Decision established that hate crime policy in the EU and the wider Council of Europe is only applied in a piecemeal fashion. They noted there is no overarching policy across Europe on hate crime, either from the perspective of the EU or the CoE although the OSCE has developed a number of policies in the area. These typically emerge from a desire to combat racism and only

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*, issued May 29, 2018, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/fundamental-rights-report-2018>, 67.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Fundamental Rights Report 2018—FRA Opinions*, issued May 29, 2018, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/fundamental-rights-report-2018-fra-opinions>.

then are expanded to incorporate other forms of racism of which hate crime is one component they asserted.<sup>26</sup>

The report authors added that police recording of hate crime data may be undermined by victims failing to communicate their experiences to the police, and that some states overstated their compliance with the Framework Decision in considering any “hate element” in sentencing defendants charged with hate crimes. These failures inevitably lead to under-recording of hate crimes, including those motivated by antisemitism.<sup>27</sup>

The absence of policies, and the resultant piecemeal approach by states, is a perennial criticism by the FRA which annually reviews Member States’ progress in implementing the 2008 Framework Decision and the 2000 Racial Equality Directive. The agency noted that “in 2017 only 14 states had in place action plans and strategies aimed at combating racism and ethnic discrimination.”<sup>28</sup>

There remain serious gaps in the collection of official data by law enforcement and other relevant authorities. According to the November 2017 FRA report, no data was available for eleven out of twenty-eight EU Member States. The ODIHR report published in the same month notes that only thirty-four out of fifty-seven states submitted official data, of which only twenty-three did so on antisemitism. The FRA observed that “few record antisemitism in a way that allows them to collect adequate official data.”<sup>29</sup> The lack of official records, coupled with victims’ hesitance to report incidents, contributes to the gross under-reporting of the extent and characteristics of antisemitism. This limits the ability of policy makers and other relevant stakeholders at all levels to assess the effectiveness of policies or to implement new initiatives. This, in turn, allows perpetrators to think that they can carry out such attacks with relative impunity. Victims who do not report their experiences to authorities also not receive the assistance that the 2012 directive mandates.

With regard to data collection, the FRA observed that the data that does exist is generally not compatible, not least because it is collected using different methodologies and from different sources. Although official data collection systems are generally based on police records or criminal justice data, authorities do not always categorize incidents motivated by antisemitism under that heading. The FRA therefore concluded:

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<sup>26</sup> FRA, *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*, 68.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. Schweppe et al., *Lifecycle of a Hate Crime: Comparative Report* (Dublin: ICCL, 2018), <https://www.iccl.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Life-Cycle-of-a-Hate-Crime-Comparative-Report-FINAL.pdf>, 22.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 25–27.

<sup>29</sup> FRA, *Fundamental Rights Report 2018*, 67.



The current state of official data collection is such that the present report can only provide an overview of the data available on antisemitism in EU Member States. Due to gaps in data collection and high levels of under-reporting, the data presented here cannot be taken as an accurate portrayal of the prevalence of antisemitism in any given EU Member State, nor should these data be used to compare the situation in different countries. Nevertheless, the data that do exist show that antisemitism remains an issue of serious concern and that decisive and targeted policy responses are needed to tackle this phenomenon.<sup>30</sup>

Dissatisfied with states' lack of progress in measuring hate crime, the EC launched the EU High Level Group in June 2016. This followed the 2015 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights on "Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred" and is designed to speed progress on priority issues. These are countering hate speech online and improving methodologies for recording and collecting data on hate crime. The membership of the group includes representatives of all the IGOs and states' national points of contact on hate crime.<sup>31</sup>

Four training schemes assist states to identify, investigate, and record hate crimes. ODIHR offers hate crime training courses for police officers and prosecutors, and the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL) launched webinar-based courses in 2017. Important though they are, these involve only a minority of officers and prosecutors, and any learning takes time to trickle down to police officers on the streets.<sup>32</sup> To reinforce these projects, the EC is now also funding "Facing All the Facts," a partnership between three national Jewish agencies (CEJI, CST, and CIDI), three national police agencies (those of the UK, Hungary, and Italy), and the OSCE, for police officers.<sup>33</sup> This originated, in

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**30** European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Antisemitism-Overview of Data Available in the European Union 2006–2016*, issued November 2017, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/antisemitism-overview-data-available-european-union-2006-2016>, 5.

**31** Cf. "A EU High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance," European Commission, Justice and Consumers, issued March 18, 2019, [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=51025](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=51025).

**32** Cf. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Training Against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement: Programme Description* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2012), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/tahcle>; idem, *Prosecutors and Hate Crimes Training: Programme Description* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2014), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/pahct>; "78/2016 Hate Crimes: Course Description," European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), issued 2016, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.cepol.europa.eu/education-training/what-we-teach/residential-activities/782016-hate-crimes>.

**33** Cf. "Facing All the Facts," CEJI-A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe, issued 2017, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://www.facingfacts.eu/article/facing-all-facts-project-ready-start>.

part, in a project to enable Jewish communities to gather information on anti-semitism to the standards required by criminal justice authorities, and many communities' representatives have participated in it.

In yet another recent report by the FRA, its director notes that laws against hate crime are in place, as are enhanced penalties for crimes motivated by bias but that

There are two major catches. Only a fraction of victims report hate-motivated harassment and violence to the police. Moreover, even when they do, police officers do not always flag them as hate crimes. Some may not recognize certain incidents as stemming from prejudice. Others may simply lack the necessary practical tools, such as reporting forms, that allow racist motivation to be noted—or the inclination to provide information not always deemed obligatory. This means these hate crimes remain unidentified or unrecorded—and thus un-investigated, unprosecuted, unaccounted and, ultimately, invisible.<sup>34</sup>

The other priority area is addressed by the EC Sub-Group on Countering Hate Speech Online, established in May 2016, which monitors the four largest social networks' application of the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online.<sup>35</sup> In recognizing the substantial role played by social networks in promoting the spread of hate speech, including antisemitism, and their unwillingness to adhere to European legal norms, the EC seeks to monitor their efficiency and speed in removing illegal content brought to their notice by civil society organizations. The exercise is forcing the networks to strengthen their reporting systems, training their staff to recognize and act against illegal hate speech, and increasing their cooperation with civil society. A third monitoring exercise ran from mid-November to mid-December 2017, and although the results have yet to be published at the time of writing, a fourth is planned for the latter quarter of 2018, at which time it will also cover two smaller platforms which joined the process in 2018.<sup>36</sup>

To assist the European Parliament and its Member States in confronting antisemitism, the European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism was established in 2012. Among those who provide progress reports are the EC coordinator on combating antisemitism, who was appointed by the EC vice president and jus-

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<sup>34</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Hate Crime Recording and Data Collection Practice Across the EU*, issued June 19, 2018, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/hate-crime-recording>, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. "Countering illegal hate speech online #NoPlace4Hate," European Commission, Justice and Consumers, issued March 18, 2019, accessed April 29, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=54300](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=54300).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

tice commissioner in December 2015. The coordinator serves as a dedicated contact point for Jewish communities. Developing overarching strategies, with a mission to produce tangible results, the coordinator has assisted members of the European Parliament in passing the April 2017 resolution and the IHRA Working Definition on Antisemitism, identifying funding streams for civil society organizations, and provides ongoing valuable advice.<sup>37</sup>

States that have held parliamentary and other high-level inquiries into antisemitism have been able to identify the ways in which antisemitism manifests itself and the directions from which it comes, and to propose remedial action. The UK, Italy, Germany, and Norway have all held inquiries, and their value is enhanced when they are followed by regular reviews by government or parliament to ensure that recommendations are scrutinized and acted on. Holding governments to account is necessary if progress is to be made. Government action plans, aimed at combating hate crime and racism, likewise focus attention and provide measurement of progress.<sup>38</sup>

Appointing high-level envoys charged with promoting action against antisemitism has likewise paid dividends. In the case of the UK, the envoy doubles as IHRA representative, and the German envoy previously served as his country's representative on IHRA.<sup>39</sup>

Large scale surveys were designed to fill the gaps in knowledge left by the inadequacies of official data collection, and the 2013 FRA poll of 5,900 Jews' experiences of antisemitism in eight EU states revealingly demonstrated the limitations of official data collection on antisemitism. Its worrying conclusions were that 66 percent of respondents considered antisemitism to be a problem; 76 percent considered that antisemitism had worsened; 23 percent occasionally avoided Jewish events because they felt unsafe; 64 percent who had experienced physical violence or threats of violence did not report their experience to the police or

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37 Cf. "Commission Appoints Coordinators on Combating Antisemitism and anti-Muslim Hatred," European Commission, Migration and Home Affairs, issued December 1, 2015, accessed April 29, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2015/20151201\\_2\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2015/20151201_2_en).

38 See, for example, Home Office, *Action Against Hate: The UK Government's Plan for Tackling Hate Crime*, issued July 2016, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/543679/Action\\_Against\\_Hate\\_-\\_UK\\_Government\\_s\\_Plan\\_to\\_Tackle\\_Hate\\_Crime\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/543679/Action_Against_Hate_-_UK_Government_s_Plan_to_Tackle_Hate_Crime_2016.pdf) which is renewable every two years after a full review, and its references to funding action against antisemitism.

39 Cf. "Sir Eric Pickles announced as UK Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues," UK Government, Foreign & Commonwealth Office, issued September 10, 2015, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/sir-eric-pickles-announced-as-uk-envoy-on-post-holocaust-issues>; "New Commissioner at the Federal Ministry of the Interior," Bundesministerium des Inneren, issued April 11, 2018, <https://www.bmi.bund.de/>.

any other organization; and 82 percent who had experienced discrimination did not report it. Equally concerning was the finding that 42 to 53 percent, depending on location, were not aware of legislation that protects Jews from such forms of discrimination.<sup>40</sup>

A second survey with additional questions was launched in mid-2017 covering five more than the original eight states. Preliminary reports are due at the end of 2018, and it will be instructive to see if there have been any improvements in Jews' perceptions of their security, or trust in their states' law enforcement procedures following the initiatives described above.<sup>41</sup>

Following discussion at the High Level Group and based on the recommendations of the two sub groups on data collection and combating online hate, the FRA is now increasing its advice on best practices to enable states to improve their monitoring of hate crimes and to assist victims. Grouped around the theme that better recording of hate crime helps support victims, the FRA suggests that adoption of their advice will both enable policy makers to prioritise action against hate crime as well sending a message that hate crimes are not to be tolerated.<sup>42</sup>

Among these are that states must collect detailed data on the various biases behind hate crime. Only fifteen Member States currently do so, but the information obtained enables them to monitor their responses and to build trust with victims of hate crime. A second recommendation is that Member States should conduct victimization surveys to understand the gap between official hate crime reporting and the perceptions and experiences of hate crime. The shocking revelation from the FRA Survey on Perceptions of Antisemitism was that 64 percent of victims of violent antisemitism did not report their attack to the police or any other body, and that 82 percent of victims of discrimination did not report. The two yearly large scale Crime Survey of England and Wales is used by the Home Office and other departments of state to evaluate and develop crime reduction policies as well as pinpointing the changing nature and levels of crime. The

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**40** Cf. European Union for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Jewish People's Experience of Discrimination and Hate Crime in European Union Member States*, issued October 15, 2013, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2013/jewish-peoples-experience-discrimination-and-hate-crime-european-union-member>.

**41** This article dates previous to the publication of the mentioned report. The report can now be found at: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Second FRA Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews*, issued December 10, 2018, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2017/second-fra-survey-discrimination-and-hate-crime-against-jews>.

**42** Cf. "Better Records to Help Support Hate Crime Victims," European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Press Release, issued June 21, 2018, accessed April 29, 2020, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2018/better-records-help-support-hate-crime-victims>.

UK is only one of nine Member States to conduct such polling and the assessment is that the gaps between what the police report and what victims report is substantial. FRA recommends that Member States should capitalize on civil society expertise and strengthen training and collaboration across a range of areas. This replicates the advice given in the OSCE Word into Action programme which was compiled using Jewish community expertise. Greater tolerance toward minority cultures is recommended as this will enhance the state authorities' understanding of hate crime. Finally, the police have to be trained to recognize and record the bias motive behind hate crime. Others have stressed the importance of first responders to a crime recording the victims or witnesses perception of bias in order to uncover the full nature of the crime.

Only by including the bias motive in any indictment that may follow can the courts assess the scale and motivation for the crime. Again it is only a minority of EU Member States that currently provide training although three programmes are currently on offer, as noted above.

To encourage states that have yet to overcome their reservations about collaborating with civil society or which otherwise need assistance, the FRA also publishes a Compendium of Practices, which states are free to incorporate into their own practices.<sup>43</sup>

## Conclusions

European institutions were slow to recognize that rising antisemitism was coming from new and different directions at the end of the twentieth century. However, they took note of the increase in racism and racist violence and began to legislate and adopt strategies to combat the threat. But it was only after Jewish leaders highlighted their concerns that antisemitism and antisemitic incidents were continuing to rise did they consider dealing with it as a separate human rights abuse. Thereafter several years elapsed before they developed their understanding and capacities to monitor it separately, and then construct policies to combat it.

It also took them some years to move forward from issuing worthy declarations and resolutions to taking effective action. Indeed, the resolutions and statements they have agreed upon have pushed them to recognize the necessity of taking action, as they cannot ignore the specific character and dangers of anti-

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. "Compendium of Practices," European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), accessed April 29, 2020, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/hate-crime/compendium-practices>.

semitism. This has required both more holistic and focused responses than those required to combat other forms of racism.

It is a lengthy process to transpose European laws into domestic legislation. It requires parliamentary action, and governments might argue that they have had other more pressing concerns, but their progress is monitored by the EC which has the power to inspect the transposition of directives, and to hold governments to account. Some governments might be further impeded by the growth of right wing populism. Yet other barriers have been the reluctance of some states' authorities to work collaboratively with civil society, including Jewish communities. Again this issue was addressed in the 2012 Directive, the 2017 European Parliament resolution, and the Words into Action programme, all of which encourage states to utilise civil society expertise.

It is clear nevertheless that despite the enactment of European laws and the creation of agreements to protect Jewish communities and combat antisemitism, many barriers still remain at a national level. These are compounded by the perception that other communities' problems are more pressing, that absorbing millions of recent migrants require governments' attention, and that there are very few Jews in all but a few states.

Those states willing and able to apply the agreements in the manner intended nevertheless should seek to institutionalise them so that they do not fall by the wayside as governments' priorities change. Jewish communities will remain at risk until states prioritise the fight against antisemitism, and institute more informed and efficient protection for them.

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Talia Naamat

# Are the New Forms of Antisemitism Prohibited in the European Legal Systems?

During the past several decades, there has been a marked shift in the way anti-semitism manifests itself. No longer aimed only at the Jew or Jewish institutions, this age-old hatred has morphed into extreme anti-Israeli expressions and actions. While it is no longer acceptable or even lawful to express classical anti-semitic tropes in public, it is a different story when that hatred is properly cloaked in the language of human rights. It may well be established that it is unacceptable and unlawful to incite hatred against the Jewish person, but what is the legal status of inciting hatred against the Jewish State? And when does the latter become the former? This paper will discuss the matter of adjudicating the new antisemitism phenomenon in European countries.

## Old Antisemitism in the Legal Context

To answer these questions, providing some background is necessary on how classic forms of antisemitism are treated under European legislation. Antisemitic sentiment may manifest itself in expressions and actions, and to these the following legal categories may be applied.

### Discrimination

The first legal category is discrimination, which is broadly speaking, restricting a person's access to education, goods and services, housing or employment based on their perceived or actual belonging to a certain group based on protected characteristics.

In 2000, the European Union adopted the Race Directive and the Employment Equality Directive,<sup>1</sup> both imposing duties to transpose non-discrimination

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. EC Council Directive 2000/78/EC of November 27, 2000, establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (O.J. L 303, 2 December 2000, 16; "Employment Equality Directive"), and Council Directive 2000/43, implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (O.J. L 180, 19 July 2000, 22; the "Race Equality Directive").

provisions in member states' national laws. In most cases, anti-discrimination clauses appear in European countries' civil law, and violations are subject to civil fines. In other countries, like France, discriminatory behavior is liable to criminal fines and imprisonment. Discriminating against a person based on their belonging to the Jewish group would fall under these laws.

## Incitement to Hatred, Known as “Hate Speech”

The second relevant legal category applicable to antisemitism is the criminal prohibition of incitement to hatred, also known as “hate speech.” The European Union adopted the Council Framework Decision of 2008,<sup>2</sup> which prohibits, among other things, inciting to hatred or violence. The Framework Decision of 2008 has been transposed, to varying degrees, in the member states.<sup>3</sup> In December 2015, the European Commission began inquiries with member states that had not properly transposed the Framework Decision of 2008. Following such inquiries, these states may be subject to infringement proceedings. According to the Framework Decision of 2008, the protected characteristics should include: race, color, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin.

Considered specific subsets of the hate-speech category, Holocaust denial, justification, and gross trivialization and disseminating Nazi symbols, glorification, and propaganda are also outlawed in approximately sixteen European States,<sup>4</sup> and member states who have not properly enacted Holocaust denial prohibitions as required by the Framework Decision of 2008 may be subject to infringement proceedings by the European Commission.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of November 28, 2008, on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (O.J. L 328, 6.12.2008, 55–58; “Framework Decision of 2008”).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law” [COM(2014) 27 final of January 27, 2014; not published in the Official Journal], <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52014DC0027>.

<sup>4</sup> See T. Naamat et al., eds., *Legislating for Equality: A Multinational Collection of Non-Discrimination Norms* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), and T. Naamat and I. Deutch, *Legislating against Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial: Fall 2013* (updated: Summer 2018) (Tel Aviv: The Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, 2013), available at <http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/event/booklet-laws-prohibiting-holocaust-denial-and-antisemitism>.

## Hate Crimes

The third legal category relevant to antisemitism is “hate crimes.” These are any offenses carried out with a bias motivation or which target a person based on their perceived or actual belonging to a certain group. This bias motivation should be considered an “aggravating circumstance” in the penal code, or taken into account for imposing enhanced penalties. According to the Framework Decision of 2008, all offenses listed in the national penal codes (not only violent offenses), when carried out with this bias motive should be handled as “hate crimes,” including desecration of graves and memorial sites.

However, any individual case adjudicated based on the above categories still rests upon each member state’s law enforcement and the judiciary’s understanding and interpretation of them, and when antisemitic intent is apparent. These interpretative capabilities become ever more crucial when present-day manifestations exhibit an admixture of motivations targeting “Zionism” or Israel, as will be shown below.

## New Antisemitism in the Legal Context

Despite the legislative achievements of the past decades, antisemitism has nevertheless persisted. Its manifestations have only morphed. Given the atrocities of the Second World War and the Holocaust, in the age of international human rights, indeed—when it is socially unacceptable and in certain cases illegal—how can one still openly espouse antisemitic sentiment and act upon it?

Redirecting the antisemitic impulse toward a different target may circumvent existing laws. Realizing that “death to the Jews” can no longer be shouted in public without risking criminal liability, nowadays one might try to get away with “death to Israel,” “death to Israelis,” or “death to Zionists.” Hate speech laws apply to protected characteristics of race, ethnicity, religion, gender but not in all cases on nationality.<sup>5</sup> In any case, these laws prohibit inciting to hatred against an *individual* or *group* but not against a *state*. In order to apply the law, the rhetoric used, albeit against a state and not an individual person, should be

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<sup>5</sup> The following European countries, for example, include nationality as a protected characteristic in their hate speech laws: Austria, Czech Republic, France, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, and Slovakia.

shown to *affect* and incite to hatred against a person or group living in that territory.<sup>6</sup>

Not all criticism of Israel is antisemitic, of course. As a UN member state, Israel should adhere to internationally accepted principles of human rights and be subjected to criticism when it does not. Indeed, there is a way to differentiate between legitimate criticism and rhetoric tainted with antisemitism. When rhetoric against Israel is *demonizing* (e.g., likening IDF soldiers to Nazis), *delegitimizing* (e.g., denying Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state), or (3) employing *double standards* (e.g., disproportionate number of resolutions at the UN condemning Israel), then it is not a legitimate criticism but rather antisemitic speech. This is known as Natan Sharansky's "3Ds Test,"<sup>7</sup> and it is incorporated in the EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism.<sup>8</sup> The Working Definition of Antisemitism is non-legally binding, and therefore, expressions and behavior deemed antisemitic by it are not, necessarily, unlawful. That is not to say it is devoid of legal significance. It may be used as a tool for judiciary and law enforcement and a judge, once identifying the antisemitic expression or intent, may apply a hate-speech or hate-crime law upon it, provided it reaches the required threshold.

The following cases may shed light on the current legal climate with respect to the new antisemitism.

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted the differing standards for applying "hate speech" provisions: Some European countries apply a low threshold of speech "harming human dignity," while others require a higher standard of proving the expression is likely to disrupt public order or incite to violence.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. N. Sharansky, "3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3–4 (Fall 2004), <http://jcpa.org/article/3d-test-of-anti-semitism-demonization-double-standards-delegitimization/>.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. EUMC Working Definition of Antisemitism, issued June 6, 2018, accessed May 11, 2020, <http://www.antisem.eu/projects/eumc-working-definition-of-antisemitism/>. The Working Definition of Antisemitism was adopted in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the European Parliament, and several other European states, including Romania, Austria, Germany, The United Kingdom, Lithuania, and Bulgaria. Cf. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, "Factsheet: Working Definition of Antisemitism of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance," issued October 24, 2017, accessed May 11, 2020, [https://holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/fcat\\_sheet\\_working\\_definition\\_of\\_antisemitism.pdf](https://holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/fcat_sheet_working_definition_of_antisemitism.pdf).

## Is Firebombing a Synagogue an Antisemitic Act, if the Perpetrators Are Protesting Israel?

In July 2014, a Jewish synagogue in Wuppertal near Dusseldorf, Germany, was firebombed with Molotov cocktails. No persons were injured. Three Palestinian-born German residents were caught, confessed, and stated their motivation was to protest Israeli actions in Gaza. In 2015 the first court ruled that since the perpetrators' motivation was to draw attention to the Gaza conflict with Israel, the offence was *not* antisemitic.<sup>9</sup> The perpetrators were consequently found guilty of arson but not of committing an antisemitic act. In 2017, the Dusseldorf court of appeals upheld the lower court's ruling and stated they could not definitively prove the offense had been motivated by antisemitism, since the perpetrators' self-professed motivation was protesting against Israel.<sup>10</sup>

Comparing this ruling with the broad consensus, almost all monitoring agencies' reports from 2014 cited this as an antisemitic act of violence.<sup>11</sup> Representatives of the EU and the US State Department objected to this ruling. Holly Huffnagle, from the US State Department Office of Religion and Global Affairs, stated plainly: "We believe that when a Jewish house of worship is firebombed in response of Israeli policy, it is anti-Semitism."<sup>12</sup> This case illustrates a gap in understanding the connection between actions protesting Israel and inciting hatred against Jewish people in Europe. In their protest against Israel, the perpetrators did not choose to attack an Israeli building, like an embassy or consulate. They chose to attack a Jewish institution. According to the Working Definition of Antisemitism, holding Jews collectively responsible for Israeli policies is an example of antisemitism. Attacking an institution used by Jewish people in Germany, associated with Jewish people living in Germany, should be deemed as a direct attack of intimidation upon them—particularly so when it punishes Jewish persons living in Germany for Israeli government policies.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Landesgericht Wuppertal, 18.01.2016 – 23 Ns – 50 Js 156/14 – 26/15.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Oberlandesgericht Düsseldorf, 09.11.2016 – III-3 RVs 95/16.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. S. Wildman, "German Court Rules that Firebombing a Synagogue is Not anti-Semitic," *Vox*, January 13, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/world/2017/1/13/14268994/synagogue-wuppertal-anti-semitism-anti-zionism-anti-israel>.

<sup>12</sup> As cited in R. Wootliff, "EU, US Officials Slam German Ruling that Synagogue Arson Not anti-Semitic," *The Times of Israel*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-us-officials-slam-german-ruling-synagogue-arson-not-anti-semitic/>.

## Is Chanting “Death and Hate to Zionists” an Expression of Antisemitism?

In July 2014, during an anti-Israeli demonstration in Essen, Germany, a person led the crowd to chant “death and hate to the Zionists.” In court the perpetrator insisted he had “*nothing against the Jews, just against Zionists.*” In the first-instance ruling, the judge declared that calling “death and hatred to Zionists” does amount to antisemitism and that the word “Zionist” was used as a code for “Jew.”<sup>13</sup> The perpetrator was convicted to a three-month probation and a fine of 200 euros. The judgment was upheld in 2015 by an appeals court, which also increased the probation sentence to ten months.<sup>14</sup>

This was a landmark ruling in which a judge had finally made the connection between antisemitic hate speech and speech supposedly only criticizing Israel. To be sure, calls for the “death of Zionists” or Israelis are not a legitimate criticism of Israel but rather, as the court interpreted it, an incitement to hatred prohibited by German law.

In a similar vein, a German court of appeals recently ruled that labelling an anti-Zionist activist as an antisemite was permitted.<sup>15</sup> The case involved statements made by Abraham Melzer, a leading BDS activist, during a “Palestinians in Europe” conference in 2015. While Melzer wished to categorize his speech as merely anti-Israeli, the court stated that Melzer’s behavior was unquestionably antisemitic, in that he had justified the call to kill Jews and had “expressed an extreme hostile conviction toward Jews and the Jewish people.”

These court rulings can be seen as a trend in the German judiciary toward realizing that in certain cases, the word “Zionist” and “Israel” are used as code words for Jew and that expressions should be judged on their substance and whether they, in fact, affect and incite against Jewish people.<sup>16</sup>

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**13** Cf. Amtsgericht Essen, 57 Cs-29 Js 579/14–631/14.

**14** Appeals court ruling of May 22, 2015. See “Report: German Court Rejects Appeal of Man Who Shouted ‘Death to Zionists’ at Protest,” *The Allgemeiner*, May 26, 2015, <http://www.algemeiner.com/2015/05/26/report-german-court-rejects-appeal-of-man-who-shouted-death-to-zionists-at-protest/#>.

**15** Cf. Landsgerecht München, January 19, 2018, 25 O 1612/17. Cf. B. Weinthal, “German Court Allows Labeling Jewish anti-Zionist Activist as Antisemite,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 19, 2018, <http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/Antisemitism/German-court-OKs-labeling-anti-Zionist-activist-as-antisemite-538241>. This court of appeals ruling had overturned a lower court’s former ruling in favor of Melzer.

**16** Other countries outside of Europe are also reaching the conclusion that anti-Israeli hate speech can be considered antisemitic. For example, the South African Equality Court ruling from 2017 provides an important comparative-law perspective. The case involves Bongani Masu-

## Are Calls to Boycott Israel and Boycotting Activities Permitted?

The BDS (Boycott, Divestments, and Sanctions) campaign, its rhetoric, and activities against Israel may in many cases be considered another new manifestation of antisemitism. The objective of the BDS movement is *not* to convince Israel to change its policies on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather, it sets out to convince all other nations that Israel should be ostracized, denying its very right to exist. The BDS charter calls for a right of return for all Palestinian refugees, in effect calling for the annihilation of Israel as the Jewish State.

The BDS campaign exhibits all of the Working Definition of Antisemitism's "three Ds" discussed above: demonizing Israel as a criminal, racist, apartheid regime, IDF soldiers are Nazis; delegitimizing its very right to exist and, obviously, applying double standards: although touted as a rights-based organization, it is solely interested in Israel's human rights record, to the exclusion of all other states, even when other states or authorities' deplorable human rights record affects Palestinians' own welfare.

Given BDS's prevalence during the past decade or so, some national states have had to decide on the legal status of calls to boycott Israel within their territory. Some countries have unequivocally declared that boycotting Israeli products is against the law (France, Spain, the UK), while others like the Netherlands and Sweden have declared that the boycotting activities are constitutionally protected under the right to freedom of expression. The following is a summary of some legal arguments raised and successfully used against the BDS movement.

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ku, a trade union leader associated with the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Mr. Masuku has given many speeches across South African university campuses. In 2009, Masuku spoke at Wits University and spoke against Zionism and Israel. He threatened to make Zionists' lives "a living hell," and said they should leave South Africa. He also cautioned South African families who sent their children to the IDF to not be surprised "when something happens to them with immediate effect." Cf. "A Powerful Judgment in the Battle for Truth about anti-Semitism," South African Human Rights Commission, issued July 4, 2017, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/714-a-powerful-judgment-in-the-battle-for-truth-about-anti-semitism>. The judge declared that Masuku's statements had amounted to incitement to hatred. (South African Human Rights Commission obo South African Jewish Board of Deputies v Masuku and Another (EQ01/2012) [2017] ZAEQC 1; [2017] 3 All SA 1029 (EqC, J); June 29, 2017), cf. Southern African Legal Information Institute, accessed May 11, 2020, <http://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZAEQC/2017/1.html>. Masuku is expected to file an appeal of this ruling.



*France* is considered at the forefront of the legal combat against BDS.<sup>17</sup> It prohibits both calls to boycott Israel and the boycotting activities themselves under existing laws. French legislation is perfectly tailored for the task: its “incitement to discrimination” penal code article includes a list of protected characteristics, among them the basis of nationality.<sup>18</sup> Based on this law, boycotting activities targeting Israeli products have been deemed a criminal incitement to discrimination against Israelis. Moreover, calls to boycott Israel have been successfully convicted under the Freedom of the Press Law, which prohibits expressions of discrimination. At least ten court cases have been tried successfully in French courts against anti-Israel boycotters.<sup>19</sup>

The *United Kingdom* has gone a different route, giving another basis for the illegality of the boycott. Its argument is based on international trade law and that the singling out of Israel and imposing of economic sanctions violates the non-discrimination clause of World Trade Organization agreements.<sup>20</sup> In a Policy Note published in 2016, the government stated that as the EU and Israel both signed the World Trade Organization’s Government Procurement Agreement, and since the agreement requires all signatories to “treat suppliers equally,” boycotting Israeli suppliers would be considered a breach of the Agreement.<sup>21</sup> It remains unclear if this position will change after UK’s departure from the EU. At any rate, this argument could be easily applied to all EU member states signatories of the same agreements with “non-discrimination” clauses. For a comparative perspective, the *United States*, at the federal level, also employs the trade-based argument, and in 2015 passed a law declaring that:

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**17** France has been against economic boycotts long before the current anti-Israel boycott movement, and the same laws employed to counter boycotts against Israel are also used against boycotts of Iran.

**18** According to Article 225(2), these offenses are punishable with imprisonment of up to three years and/or € 75,000 when it consists of refusing service or access, committed in a public space.

**19** Cf. “BDS a Hate Crime? In France, Legal Vigilance Punishes anti-Israel Activists,” *Haaretz*, February 15, 2014, <https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/the-french-law-that-battles-bds-1.5322519>. In 2016, the French Cassation Court upheld two court cases convicting the perpetrators of inciting to discrimination. For more see T. Naamat, “Countering BDS through Legal Measures,” *Justice Magazine* 58 (Fall/Winter 2016): 24–29, <http://intjewishlawyers.org/justice/no58/#24>.

**20** The World Trade Organization Government Procurement Agreement, signed by the UK and Israel, requires all its signatories to “treat suppliers equally.”

**21** United Kingdom, “Procurement Policy Note: Ensuring compliance with wider international obligations when letting public contracts,” Information Note 01/16, issued February 17, 2016, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0116-complying-with-international-obligations>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/putting-a-stop-to-public-procurement-boycotts>.

[T]he boycott, divestment, and sanctioning of Israel by governments, governmental bodies, quasi-governmental bodies, international organizations, and other such entities is contrary to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) principle of non-discrimination.<sup>22</sup>

## The *ultra vires* Argument

Who, exactly, is entitled to call for a boycott of another state?

A broader legal argument made against the BDS campaign is that boycotting measures are taken by entities that are operating beyond the powers vested in them. An individual person, acting for oneself, may decide to buy or refrain from buying a certain product. A sovereign state also may decide to cease from economic relations with another state under certain conditions. However, town councils, municipalities, and representatives of state universities must first examine under the relevant national laws, as well as their own by-laws, whether they have a right to call for a boycott of a foreign state. In the European Court of Human Rights case of *Willem v. France*,<sup>23</sup> in calling to boycott Israel within his municipality, the former mayor of Seclin was deemed to have acted beyond the scope of powers vested in him as a mayor. Similarly, the UK's Policy Note<sup>24</sup> reminds town councils, public bodies, and local authorities that only the government is authorized to call for sanctions of another country. Another notable example is the recent court case in *Spain*, which declared that a boycott against Israel declared by a city council was overruled, deemed it discriminatory since it was not in accordance with the principle of neutrality and objectivity, and since the city council was not authorized to adopt such a resolution which could affect Spain's foreign policy.<sup>25</sup>

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**22** The United States-Israel Trade and Commercial Enhancement Act of 2015. At the state-level, laws have employed the “boycotting the boycotters” approach. Twenty-five states have enacted anti-BDS laws. In essence, these laws require state pension funds to divest from investing in companies that boycott Israeli businesses that have connections with Israeli settlements. Moreover, according to some state laws, like the South Carolina's, eligibility for receiving state contracting is conditioned upon the company not boycotting Israel.

**Note:** The expression “*ultra vires*” refers to acting beyond one's vested powers or authority.

**23** Cf. *Willem v. France*, Application No. 10883/05, ECtHR judgment of December 10, 2009.

**24** Cf. “Procurement Policy Note: Ensuring compliance.”

**25** Cf. L. Gravé-Lazi, “Spanish Court Rules City Council's BDS Agreement Illegal,” *The Jerusalem Post*, December 28, 2017, <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/spanish-court-rules-gran-canaria-city-councils-bds-agreement-illegal-520253>.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the most central question pertaining to antisemitism asked in the legal arena today is when speech ostensibly targeting the State of Israel may actually be considered unlawful “hate speech”; and, similarly, when actions against Israel violate the principle of non-discrimination. As shown above, the approaches and legal arguments employed vary from country to country. But a trend does emerge: there is a new willingness by judges to unmask code words (e.g., Israeli or Zionist) used to circumvent existing laws and an application of non-discrimination principles on calls to boycott Israel. This may lead to a more nuanced approach to applying non-discrimination and hate speech laws, where one may no longer safely hide behind political sounding speech if it is tainted with antisemitism, or when, in point of fact, it affects the security of Jewish people, or incites to hatred against them.

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Simone Dinah Hartmann

# What the EU Should do against Antisemitism: Toward a Strategic Paradigm of Prevention, Containment, and Deterrence

*“There is no greater mistake than to suppose that platitudes, smooth words, timid policies offer (...) a path to safety.”<sup>1</sup>*

Winston Churchill

Churchill’s quote summarizes the challenge we are facing today quite well. As all of Europe and not only its Jews are confronted with an ever-growing threat of lethal antisemitism, the response by European leaders to date has been limited. The reasons for Europe’s reluctance to act are multifold. However, they point to a major misconception about the nature of antisemitism which is not merely a prejudice but a worldview (“Weltanschauung”) and hence differs from racism and anti-Muslim hatred.

The struggle against antisemitism requires an effort by the whole of society and its institutions and must nowadays encompass confronting Islamism and the cultural-relativist Left, in addition to the traditional racist Far Right in order to bring actual results.

Moreover, due to a surge in terror attacks against Jewish targets throughout Europe, a response is required that reaches beyond soft power and requires the involvement of security forces, intelligence agencies, and potentially the military; it is a topic that needs to be addressed through the appropriate institutional channels.

This article will focus on the political, legal, and public frameworks that influence the fight against antisemitism. First, I will address efforts that have been undertaken by the EU to date to counter antisemitism in order to provide an overview of where things stand today. I will then discuss major challenges related to the battle against antisemitism, such as the importance of credibility in confronting antisemitism, the overall political climate, and the public’s bias against Israel. Based on these elaborations, I will introduce the strategic paradigm of prevention, containment, and deterrence that needs to be implemented in order to fight antisemitism in a comprehensive, credible, and effective manner.

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<sup>1</sup> W. Churchill, *Churchill by Himself: The Definitive Collection of Quotations*, ed. R. M. Langworth (Newburyport: Rosetta Books, 2013), 253.

## EU Measures to Counter Antisemitism

In 2004 the EU's Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) published its first survey on antisemitism. While the report acknowledged the rise in attacks against Jews and Jewish institutions, it downplayed the role of Muslims in being the leading perpetrators of such acts and did not consider hostility against Israel as antisemitic.<sup>2</sup>

Later reports by both the EUMC (2009) and Fundamental Rights Agency (2015) linked the increase in antisemitic attacks to the Middle East conflict.<sup>3</sup> According to the EUMC 2009 report, it is "reasonable to assume that anti-Semitism in European Muslim communities is directly linked with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."<sup>4</sup> Such an assertion suggests that antisemitism is the result of Israel's actions, a modernized version of the claim that the Jews are responsible for antisemitism.

In 2008 the European Council adopted a Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia, calling upon member states to ensure that public incitement to violence or hatred on grounds of race, religion, etc. are punishable. Antisemitism though was not particularly emphasized; in fact, it was only mentioned once in reference to an earlier decision.<sup>5</sup>

Five years later, in the Council conclusions on combating hate crime in the EU which called on member states to fully implement the Framework Decision, antisemitism was mentioned only alongside discrimination, racism, xenophobia, and homophobia but never highlighted or addressed on its own.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, *Manifestations of Antisemitism in the EU 2002–2003: Based on Information by the National Focal Points of the EUMC – RAXEN Information Network* (Vienna: EUMC, 2004), [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/184-AS-Main-report.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/184-AS-Main-report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. R. A. Elman and M. Grimm, "Augmenting the European Union's Response to Antisemitism," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2016): 461.

<sup>4</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Antisemitism: Summary Overview of the Situation in the European Union 2001–2008* (Vienna: FRA 2009), [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/347-Antisemitism\\_Update\\_2009.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/347-Antisemitism_Update_2009.pdf), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Council of the European Union, "Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on Combating certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law," *Official Journal of the European Union* L 328 (2008): 55–58, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:328:0055:0058:en:PDF>.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. "Council Conclusions on Combating Hate Crime in the European Union," Council of the European Union, issued December 5–6, 2013, accessed May 23, 2020, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/139949.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/139949.pdf).

At the same time, in December 2013, the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) dropped its working definition for antisemitism which was authored in 2005 by its preceding agency, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). A spokesperson at that time did not consider it to be a valid definition, and the agency declared that it was unable to define the term.<sup>7</sup>

These examples not only showcase the reluctance with which the EU has approached this topic but point to a much more serious problem: the reluctance of the political establishment to come to grips with the ideological foundations of antisemitism and to deal with its major proponents today.

In recent years more positive developments have taken place. The EU Commission's formation of a High-Level Group on combating Racism, Xenophobia and other forms of Intolerance and the appointment of Katharina von Schnurbein as coordinator for combating antisemitism in 2015 have raised expectations that the EU is finally getting more serious in its efforts to fight antisemitism. Nonetheless, it must be noted that simultaneous with Schnurbein's appointment, a coordinator for anti-Muslim hatred was installed as well. These appointments were announced at the EU's first annual colloquium on Fundamental Rights which was held under the theme: "Tolerance and Respect: Preventing and Combating anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim Hatred in Europe," a title that appears to equate antisemitic ideology with anti-Muslim racism.<sup>8</sup> In May of 2017, the EU Commission, together with other institutions, organized a "Joint Day of Action against Antisemitism, anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination"<sup>9</sup> which further suggests that one cannot speak about antisemitism other than in the context of anti-Muslim racism within EU institutions. Such generalizations fail to understand the nature of antisemitism and run counter to efforts to combat it. They are the result of a political climate, promoted by major parts of the anti-racist Left and Islamist organizations that have successfully produced a narrative where antisemitic resentments have been displaced by so-called "Islamopho-

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7 Cf. "EU Drops its 'Working Definition' of anti-Semitism," *The Times of Israel*, December 5, 2013, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-drops-its-working-definition-of-anti-semitism/>.

8 "Commission Appoints Coordinators on Antisemitism and anti-Muslim Hatred," European Commission, issued December 1, 2015, accessed May 23, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2015/20151201\\_2\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-is-new/news/news/2015/20151201_2_en).

9 "OSCE/ODIHR and EU Institutions Hold Joint Day of Action against Anti-Semitism and Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, issued May 31, 2017, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/320471>.



bia.” The goal of such sentiment is to trivialize the emergence of the “New Antisemitism” and relegate it to the Far Right’s antisemitism.<sup>10</sup>

Schnurbein herself has stated that antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred are very different in origins, history, and manifestations. Her priorities as antisemitism coordinator are—in line with the EU commission—tackling online hate speech, Holocaust denial, and education.<sup>11</sup> While these are certainly important issues to address, the EU seems to refrain from pointing to the main sources of antisemitism today. Neither Muslim nor the “New Antisemitism” of the Left are highlighted in the EU commission’s agenda.<sup>12</sup>

A major step in creating a framework for the fight against antisemitism was taken in June 2017 when the European parliament passed the “Motion for Resolution on Combating Antisemitism” by an overwhelming majority. Evidently, the European United Left–Nordic Green Left was the only party voting against the motion. The resolution calls on the EU institutions and the member states to adopt and apply the working definition of antisemitism employed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and to appoint national coordinators on combating antisemitism.<sup>13</sup>

The adoption of a working definition—which is the very same definition that was first introduced by the EUMC, then rejected—marks an important step forward in the EU’s ability to counter antisemitism but due to its legally non-binding status constitutes a half-hearted measure. As of March 2020, seventeen EU countries have adopted the working definition,<sup>14</sup> one of them being Austria which adopted the IHRA definition even prior to the EU’s parliament resolution at the request of then Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz. However, as if to illustrate that such measures are by no means sufficient in the fight against antisemitism, Kurz also—as a candidate during Austria’s 2017 election campaign, raised anti-

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**10** Cf. L. H. Kahlweiß and S. Salzborn, “‘Islamophobie’ als politischer Kampfbegriff: Zur konzeptionellen und empirischen Kritik des Islamophobiebegriffes,” in *Jahrbuch für Extremismus- und Terrorismusforschung 2011/2012 (II)*, ed. A. Pfahl-Traughber (Brühl: Hochschule des Bundes für öffentliche Verwaltung, 2014), 248–63.

**11** Cf. K. von Schnurbein, “Q&A: EU Anti-Semitism Envoy Katharina von Schnurbein,” interview by T. Siurkus, *Moment Magazine*, January 27, 2016, <https://momentmag.com/22574-2/>.

**12** Cf. “Combating Antisemitism,” European Commission, accessed May 23, 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=50144](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=50144).

**13** Cf. “Motion for Resolution on Combating Antisemitism,” European Parliament, issued May 29, 2017, accessed May 23, 2020, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2017-0388\\_EN.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2017-0388_EN.html).

**14** Cf. “Adoption of the Working Definition,” American Jewish Committee, accessed May 23, 2020, <https://www.ajc.org/adoption-of-the-working-definition>.

semitic undertones calling to rid Austria of the “the Silbersteins”<sup>15</sup> and subsequently formed a coalition with the FPÖ, a party that is deeply rooted in the antisemitic tradition.

In sum, the above-mentioned developments must be considered first steps in the EU’s ambitions to counter antisemitism but lack sufficient substance and reach to do so in a comprehensive manner that acknowledges the urgency and seriousness of the issue.

## Challenges to the Fight against Antisemitism

There are yet additional challenges that need to be considered:

(1) The fight against antisemitism requires a demonstration of credibility and integrity in order to meet its overarching objective. Yet, the EU still actively pursues policies that run counter to its own agenda in the struggle against antisemitism and turns a blind eye to the issue whenever politically suitable. Such as in 2016 when Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas remarked in an address to the European Union—during which he received standing ovations by hundreds of EU officials—that “a number of rabbis in Israel announced, and made a clear announcement, demanding that their government poison the water to kill the Palestinians.”<sup>16</sup> Despite this claim that recalls medieval antisemitic libels, then President of the EU parliament, Martin Schulz, called his speech inspiring.<sup>17</sup> It is just one of many examples when antisemitism received a pass from the EU and its dignitaries.

Moreover, in the realm of foreign policy, the EU has been particularly soft on those regimes that promote antisemitism, such as Iran which is one of the main advocates of Holocaust denial and a main sponsor of antisemitic terrorism. Just a few weeks before the commencement of the conference “An End to Antisemitism!”, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Policy of

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15 N. Weißensteiner, “Causa Silberstein: Wodak warnt vor ‘Spiel mit jüdischen Namen’,” *Der Standard*, October 10, 2017, <https://www.derstandard.at/story/2000065749579/causa-silberstein-expertin-wodak-warnt-vor-gefaehrlichem-spiel-mit-juedischen>.

16 R. Emmott and D. Williams, “Abbas Says some Israeli Rabbis Called for Poisoning Palestinian Water,” *Reuters*, June 23, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel/abbas-says-some-israeli-rabbis-called-for-poisoning-palestinian-water-idUSKCN0Z91J8>.

17 Cf. Martin Schulz (@EP\_PresSchulz), “Inspiring address by Pres. #Abbas to #EPlenary – #EU supports aspiration by large majority of #Palestinians for peace and reconciliation,” Twitter, June 23, 2016, [https://twitter.com/ep\\_pressschulz/status/745932784775102464?lang=de](https://twitter.com/ep_pressschulz/status/745932784775102464?lang=de).

the Iranian pseudo-parliament, was received by the EU parliament.<sup>18</sup> Boroujerdi is not only responsible for the support of terrorist organizations like Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas but participated in a 2014 Tehran conference that hosted Holocaust deniers and antisemitic conspiracists.

In recent years, the EU has also become a benefactor of the antisemitic BDS movement. According to NGO Monitor, almost a third of the EU grants administered through EU regional funding programs designated for Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza are received by organizations that actively promote BDS. Out of a total of 67 million euros, these groups have received almost 17 million.<sup>19</sup>

EU funds are also distributed to extremist Muslim organizations that promote antisemitism—as part of programs against radicalization (sic!). Recently it was discovered that more than 200,000 euros will be paid to the Islamic Union of Shia Communities in Germany that is closely aligned with the Islamic Center Hamburg, an outpost of the Iranian regime that has declared its aim to focus on the fight against the “Zionist enemy.”<sup>20</sup>

Against this backdrop the question arises: how does the EU plan to lead a credible fight against antisemitism if its very own institutions and officials, by not explicitly condemning and acting on antisemitic expressions contribute to their public acceptance.

(2) In the current political climate—particularly with the rise of the Far Right and the influence of anti-Zionist stakeholders such as, until recently, Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour Party in the UK—it has become even more challenging to carry out comprehensive measures in the fight against antisemitism. Whether here in Austria where the Freedom Party, a party with an extensive antisemitic tradition, has become part of the government or elsewhere on the European continent where former fringe parties are on the rise.

These developments challenge efforts to make a serious case in the fight against every aspect of antisemitism as these political camps exclusively focus on specific expressions of antisemitism and refuse to reflect on their own contributions to this ever-growing threat.

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**18** Cf. “EU Lawmakers Grill Visiting Iranian Delegation on Holocaust Denial, Terror Links,” *The Times of Israel*, January 24, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/eu-lawmakers-grill-visiting-iranian-delegation-about-holocaust-denial-terrorism/>.

**19** Cf. “EU Funding to NGOs Active in Anti-Israel BDS Campaigns,” NGO Monitor, issued January 23, 2017, accessed May 23, 2020, <http://www.ngo-monitor.org/reports/eu-funding-ngos-active-anti-israel-bds-campaigns/>.

**20** “EU-Geld unterstützt Iran-nahen IGS-Verein,” *FOCUS Online*, January 27, 2018, [https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/schiitischer-dachverband-eu-geld-untersuetzt-iran-nahen-igs-ver-ein-der-gilt-als-extremistisch-beeinflusst\\_id\\_8372882.html](https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/schiitischer-dachverband-eu-geld-untersuetzt-iran-nahen-igs-ver-ein-der-gilt-als-extremistisch-beeinflusst_id_8372882.html).

(3) Bias against Israel dominates the public discourse. The “New Antisemitism” has found its way into academia and the mainstream media. Anti-Zionism, the demonization and delegitimization of Israel, has become the predominant expression of contemporary antisemitism while anti-Israel resentments have become commonplace.<sup>21</sup> The EU and its member states have contributed to this climate not only by singling out Israel repeatedly but by actively supporting measures directed against the Jewish state such as backing anti-Israel resolutions at multilateral organizations like the UN or by introducing discriminatory measures such as the labeling of products from Israeli settlements. These actions tend to reaffirm widespread antisemitic attitudes.

(4) A primary challenge in the contemporary struggle against antisemitism is the ongoing Islamization among Muslim communities that goes hand in hand with antisemitic acts, as evidenced by the multiple terror attacks carried out by Jihadists in Europe. According to several surveys, antisemitic attitudes among (especially young) Muslims are by far greater than among the overall population.<sup>22</sup> A significant percentage of antisemitic attacks—which have been surging in Europe in the past decades—are carried out by perpetrators with a Muslim background. Across European capitals Jews are harassed frequently by Muslim youth. The term “Jew” has become a swear word in German schools with a high percentage of Muslim students.<sup>23</sup> These developments require serious countermeasures which are undermined, however, as certain forms become socially acceptable.

## Strategic Paradigm Confronting Antisemitism

Taking these challenges into account, it is imperative to address the fight against antisemitism not through isolated, cosmetic steps but as a major societal effort that tackles antisemitism in all its expressions.

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**21** Cf. R. S. Wistrich, ed., *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2016).

**22** Cf. “The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other,” Pew Global Attitudes Project, issued June 22, 2006, accessed May 23, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2006/06/22/the-great-divide-how-westerners-and-muslims-view-each-other/>; and G. Jikeli, “Antisemitismus unter Muslimen in Europa,” Lecture at the Gemeindezentrum IKG, Vienna, June 10, 2013, <http://iibsa.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Jikeli-Vortrag-10.-Juni-2013-Wien.pdf>.

**23** Cf. R. Werner, “‘Jude’ ist an Berliner Schulen wieder ein Schimpfwort,” *Berliner Morgenpost*, September 2, 2012, <http://www.morgenpost.de/berlin-aktuell/article108921681/Jude-ist-an-Berliner-Schulen-wieder-ein-Schimpfwort.html>.

As such, I introduce the major strategic imperatives in fighting antisemitism: Prevention, Containment, and Deterrence. These strategic concepts ostensibly contradict one another as applied to statecraft and warfare wherein a nation usually chooses only one path forward in dealing with its adversaries.

In the context of the subject at hand, however, they refer to measures that can either deter or contain actors from committing antisemitic acts through fear of coercive means such as legal punishment or public retribution—and to prevent individuals from joining the antisemitic bandwagon through measures taken by society as a whole.

Below are measures that the EU and its member states should carry out that incorporate these strategic imperatives in the fight against antisemitism:

### **Prevention: Political Islam and Antisemitism Must be Confronted through the Empowerment of Secular Muslims.**

Due to the influx of refugees from Arab and Muslim countries that have a long history of disseminating antisemitic propaganda and conspiracy theories, more programs must be established to counter antisemitism and political Islam within immigrant communities. Such programs need to be led by secular and moderate activists within these communities in order to undermine conservative and radical forces. Governments and civil society should not only encourage and support their efforts in combatting radicalization and antisemitism within Muslim communities but also help raise their profile across society. These figures represent important role models who can embolden other Muslims to follow their lead.

### **Containment: A European-wide Cordon Sanitaire vis-à-vis all Antisemitic Forces Must be Agreed to and Implemented.**

Such an agreement would prohibit governments and political parties, civil society, the media, and influential companies in Europe from seeking partnerships and cooperation with organizations and individuals involved in promoting and spreading antisemitism. Policymakers need to refrain from seeking short-term alliances with parties that base their political program or propaganda on antisemitic tropes and instead use the full extent of the law to discourage them from taking part in the political process. Furthermore, public institutions like those of the EU need to put an end to providing support to antisemitic organizations, such as the BDS movement.

Europe must also establish a foreign policy in line with the fight against antisemitism and apply high standards when dealing with foreign regimes and parties who spread antisemitic sentiments such as Turkey or those that threaten the Jewish state with annihilation such as Iran. Diplomatic, political, and economic measures such as sanctions must be taken to delineate a clear stance against antisemitism and anti-Zionism.

The EU and its member states need to convey to their constituencies that antisemitism in all its forms has no place in European societies and denounce all antisemitic expressions and incidents. Efforts to equate antisemitism with “Islamophobia” or other forms of racism need to be countered. Antisemitism is a distinct ideology and needs to be treated as such.

### **Deterrence: The Law Must Be Enforced Consistently and the Legal Framework on Hate Crimes and those Spreading Hate Speech Needs to be Expanded.**

Many European countries have existing legislation in place that targets certain aspects of incitement and hate crimes. This legislation must be enforced and, where appropriate, adjusted. Policies and legal provisions need to be implemented that, while keeping in line with legislation protecting free speech, ban antisemitism from the public sphere, on or offline. Entities that promote antisemitism, deny the Holocaust and/or call for violence need to be prohibited, and enforcement steps need to be taken against all organizations that perpetrate such acts, whether they be NGOs or Muslim organizations that are linked to states that seek to incite antisemitism or Jihadist terrorist organizations, such as Hezbollah.

It is troubling that contemporary antisemitism has been ignored, belittled, and made use of politically for so long. This makes it all the more important—as uncomfortable as it may be for political leaders in Europe to do so—to ramp up the war against antisemitism and to implement the measures proposed as soon as possible. The struggle against antisemitism in Europe will determine the capacity of the continent to stand up in defense of the freedoms carved out in the Enlightenment and fought over in the French revolution.

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Giovanni Quer

## Antisemitism and the UN

International law provides a wide number of mechanisms to combat racism, discrimination, and hatred. UN agencies report racism and allocate resources to projects endowing the principles of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. Some of these actions also target antisemitism, or at least some of its manifestations. The question of antisemitism is by no means missing from this framework. The UN General Assembly and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights discuss antisemitism in annual reports, which do not fail condemn episodes of Jew-hatred. UNESCO invests in efforts for Holocaust remembrance and funds projects for education against antisemitism. Even the UN Secretary General, on occasion of his recent visit to Israel, warned that “antisemitism is alive and well.”<sup>1</sup> So why is antisemitism on the rise? Is it a mere question of policy efficacy? More provocatively, why does the world need another organization, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), to address Holocaust denial, trivialization, and antisemitism? Shouldn't the UN and its agencies serve as the appropriate forum for monitoring, denouncing, and combating Jew-hatred as a core question of human rights? Finally, what is the purpose of mobilizing actors (most of them Jewish organizations, by the way) for combating antisemitism, when there are solid human rights NGOs that have progressively consolidated their reputation and prominent work for protecting fundamental rights?

This paper analyzes how the UN deals with antisemitism, which is either condemned as a form of Holocaust denial, or is relegated as a phenomenon existing merely in extreme right-wing and racist speech. When other manifestations of antisemitism are acknowledged, mostly in connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict, they are “diluted” in a variety of hatred and bigotry against religious communities, including Christianophobia and Islamophobia. The final part of the paper will address some policy advice.

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<sup>1</sup> See A. Fulbright, “UN Chief in Jerusalem: Calls for Israel’s Destruction are ‘Modern anti-Semitism,’” *Times of Israel*, August 28, 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/un-chief-calls-for-israels-destruction-are-modern-anti-semitism/>; and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres’ speech during the press conference at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial on August 28, 2017, <http://webtv.un.org/watch/antonio-guterres-un-secretary-general-voices-commitment-to-fight-anti-semitism-at-yad-vashem-holocaust-memorial-israel-press-conference-28-august-2017/5557812231001/?term>.

## The UN Policy on Antisemitism

Since 9/11, the conflicts in the Middle East have played a major role in the intensifying religious fundamentalism and anti-religious bigotry. Islamist rhetoric fuels antisemitism<sup>2</sup> and develops anti-Christianity as a result of ideological views on the Western world, whereas Islamophobia grows in the West, which manifests in perceptions of Muslim minorities.<sup>3</sup>

UN agencies have consistently dealt with novel forms of bigotry and hatred directed against religious groups, and in this context, the UN acknowledges and condemns antisemitism. At times, the UN has also pointed to an increasing antisemitic manifestations connected to the developments in the Middle East. More often, antisemitism is mentioned in the several occasions and activities dedicated to Holocaust remembrance and condemned when manifested in its most traditional forms, typical of the extreme right.

It appears, however, that antisemitism has been relegated to a mere phenomenon of hatred connected with the political extreme right, emphasized in its manifestation in the form of Holocaust denial and diluted in the ambiguous formula “antisemitism, islamophobia, and christianophobia,” which is usually mentioned in relation to the Middle East. Its most contemporary and pernicious manifestations, which are inherently connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict, are consistently neglected. A cautious approach to the matter is necessary given the controversial topic, but this does not justify the fact that the documents dealing with antisemitism have progressively eliminated the word “Jew” or “Judaism.” Finally, UN agencies fail to condemn specific manifestations of antisemitism, while mentioning the abstract phenomenon, they avoid any controversy that practical examples may lead to.

This evolution is evident in the work of the General Assembly, UNESCO, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Webman, “The Challenge of Assessing Arab/Islamic Antisemitism,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 5 (2010): 677–97.

<sup>3</sup> Back in 2005, Matti Bunzl explored the connection between antisemitism and anti-Zionism, and he draws a distinction between antisemitism and Islamophobia as phenomena, even if connected by the developments in the Middle East. Cf. M. Bunzl, “Between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: Some Thoughts on the New Europe,” *American Ethnologist* 32, no. 4 (2005): 499–508.

## The General Assembly

The General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions that directly or indirectly tackle the issue of antisemitism, defining the general policy of UN agencies on this issue. From an initial recognition of antisemitism as a result of the world's development in the Middle East, the General Assembly has devoted major attention to Holocaust denial and extremist, far-right hate speech, while even the reference to the word Jew has progressively disappeared. Furthermore, the attention to Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment as a consequence of perceptions regarding Middle East conflicts is far more extensive than any reference to antisemitism.

In 2004, the General assembly adopted Resolution 59/199,<sup>4</sup> which condemns religious intolerance and “recognizes with deep concern the overall rise in instances of intolerance and violence directed against members of many religious communities in various parts of the world, including cases motivated by Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and Christianophobia.”<sup>5</sup>

Subsequently, the General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions recognizing the importance of Holocaust remembrance and denouncing Holocaust denial.

A major step was the adoption in 2005 of Resolution 60/7,<sup>6</sup> which establishes January 27 as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, “*Rejects* any denial of the Holocaust as an historical event, either in full or part”<sup>7</sup> and “*Condemns* without reserve all manifestations of religious intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, wherever they occur.”<sup>8</sup> Tellingly, the words antisemitism, Judaeophobia, or Jew-hatred, the wicked forces that led to the Holocaust, do not even appear in the document. Two years later, the UN established “The Holocaust and the UN Outreach Program” with Resolution 61/255 of 2007,<sup>9</sup> which “*condemns* without any reservation any denial of the Holocaust,” and “*urges* all Member States un-

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4 Cf. Resolution 59/199, “Elimination of All Forms of Religious Intolerance,” adopted by the General Assembly on December 20, 2004, [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/59/199](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/59/199).

5 *Ibid.*, par. 9.

6 Cf. Resolution 60/7, “On the Holocaust Remembrance,” adopted by the General Assembly on November 1, 2005, <https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/res607.shtml>.

7 Resolution 60/7, par. 3.

8 *Ibid.*, par. 5.

9 Cf. Resolution 61/255 “On Holocaust Denial,” adopted by the General Assembly on January 26, 2007, <https://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/res61.shtml>.

reservedly to reject any denial of the Holocaust as a historical event, either in full or in part, or any activities to this end.”<sup>10</sup> Even in this document, direct mention of antisemitism or other forms of Jew-hatred is omitted.

The other relevant step was the adoption of Resolution 69/160 of 2014,<sup>11</sup> which condemns the glorification of Nazism and denounces neo-Nazism and other nationalist ideologies. The resolution does not mention the word “Jew” even once, whereas it includes expression such as “victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Second World War by the Nazi regime.”<sup>12</sup> The omission of any reference to antisemitism is particularly deplorable since the document refers to the 2001 Durban Conference, whose goal was to establish a world platform for combating racism and xenophobia but instead was misappropriated by groups that promoted virulent anti-Israeli narrative including antisemitic motives.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, Resolution 68/150 of 2013, which also condemns neo-Nazism, does not once mention the word “Jew” or “antisemitism.”<sup>14</sup>

Antisemitism is therefore referred to in relation to Islamophobia, Christianophobia, and bigotry, whereas it disappears even when the focus is Holocaust remembrance, Holocaust denial, or the resurgence of Nazi ideologies.

## UNESCO

The major focus on Holocaust remembrance is reflected also in UNESCO, which carries out considerable actions for preserving the memory of the Holocaust and

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**10** Ibid., par. 1.

**11** Cf. Resolution 69/160, “On Combating Glorification of Nazism, neo-Nazism and Other Practices that Contribute to Fuelling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,” adopted by the General Assembly on December 18, 2014, <http://undocs.org/en/A/RES/69/160>.

**12** Ibid., par. 13.

**13** For a thorough recount of the happenings during the 2001 Durban Conference from a direct witness, see D. Porat, “Another Kind of Attack on Israel and the Jewish Nation: The First Anniversary of the UN World Conference Against Racism in South Africa,” *Kivunim Hadashim* 7 (2002): 51–60 [Hebrew].

**14** Cf. Resolution 68/150, “Combating Glorification of Nazism and Other Practices that Contribute to Fuelling Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance,” adopted by the General Assembly on December 18, 2013, <https://tandis.odhr.pl/handle/20.500.12389/21964>.

educating for tolerance and equality.<sup>15</sup> In this framework, UNESCO tends to address antisemitism only contingently; in other words the phenomenon is mentioned usually in the frame of activities organized in partnership with other institutions. For instance, in 2009, UNESCO organized the conference on Combating Intolerance, Exclusion and Violence through Holocaust Education, whose proceedings refer to different “dimensions of antisemitism,”<sup>16</sup> including racial antisemitism, Christian anti-Judaism (blood libel), Holocaust denial,<sup>17</sup> as well as anti-Zionism and anti-Israel speech (such as accusation of apartheid).<sup>18</sup> Yet, the last two phenomena are not addressed by policy advice or operational lines.

Even more striking is the study issued in 2015 on Holocaust teaching in textbooks,<sup>19</sup> which reveals that in certain states, both Central European and Middle-East countries, the Holocaust is exploited to advance anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli sentiment through minimization, trivialization, and veiled reference to conspiracy theories.<sup>20</sup> While pointing to a certain vision of the Holocaust in the analyzed countries, two points are significant: first, certain countries, directly involved in the conflict with Israel, and promoting forms of antisemitic speech such as Iran, are missing in the study; secondly, no measure was taken to lead the change.

Between 2016 and 2017, UNESCO organized a series of events focusing on how to combat on antisemitism, also in cooperation with other institutions,

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**15** Resolution 34c/61 on Holocaust Remembrance of 2007 reaches out to the Secretary General in order to foster inter-institutional cooperation for advancing Holocaust Remembrance. Cf. Resolution 34c/61, “Holocaust Remembrance,” adopted by UNESCO on November 1, 2007, during the 34<sup>th</sup> Conference, October 16, 2007–November 2, 2007, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000156046.page=78>.

**16** Cf. the presentation by OSCE’s ODIHR Adviser on Antisemitism Issues, N. Hinterleitner, “Combating anti-Semitism through Holocaust Education,” in *Combating Intolerance, Exclusion and Violence through Holocaust Education: Proceedings of the Conference on May 27–29, 2009* (Paris: UNESCO, 2009), 33–46, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186689>.

**17** Cf. *ibid.*, 36–37.

**18** Cf. *ibid.*, 38.

**19** Cf. P. Carrier, E. Fuchs, and T. Messinger, *The International Status of Education about the Holocaust: A Global Mapping of Textbooks and Curricula* (Paris: UNESCO, 2014), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000228776>.

**20** For instance, Egypt portrays the Holocaust as Zionist propaganda; Iraq explains Jewish immigration to mandatory Palestine as result of British policy due to Jewish terror groups and makes no reference to Jews as victims of the Holocaust, portrayed as violation of international law due to war context; Poland portrays the Holocaust as a consequence of the German occupation of Poland, minimizing concentration camps as the central element of the Holocaust; Syrian textbooks talk in general terms about the Holocaust and refer to Zionism as a Western colonial enterprise, resulting in British encouragement of Jewish settlement; Yemen does not even mention the Holocaust and defines Zionism as a consequence of World War II.

such as the 2016 Roundtable “How to Respond to Antisemitism through Education, Culture and Communication?”<sup>21</sup> organized in cooperation with IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance), convened experts and officials in order to address contemporary manifestations of antisemitism.<sup>22</sup> Other projects, carried out in cooperation with the OSCE devoted to education, include references to antisemitism in connection with the Holocaust and contemporary manifestations of antisemitism, such as “The Teacher’s Guide on the Prevention of Violent Antisemitism” of 2016, which contains a reference to antisemitism as the driving force that led to the Holocaust,<sup>23</sup> and the “Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers” of 2018,<sup>24</sup> which comprises contemporary examples such as the “situation in the Middle East as a justification for antisemitic acts.”<sup>25</sup>

Finally, in 2017, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova addressing the 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress declared that there is “there is also – this must be very clear – a new anti-Semitism today expressed in the form of a demonization of Israel, through the hateful and systematic criticism of a country, and seeking to de-legitimize its very existence,”<sup>26</sup> but this admission seems to be formulated for the specific audience to which it was addressed and does not reflect the agency’s work, which has adopted a series of controver-

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**21** “Round-Table: How to Respond to Antisemitism through Education, Culture and Communication?” December 6, 2016; for the announcement of the event, see <https://en.unesco.org/events/round-table-how-respond-antisemitism-through-education-culture-and-communication>.

**22** Another event, in which fifty experts convened “joint development of a guide for educational policy-makers,” was organized in 2017 with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; for the announcement of the event, see [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/experts\\_meet\\_on\\_how\\_best\\_to\\_address\\_anti\\_semitism\\_through\\_ed/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/experts_meet_on_how_best_to_address_anti_semitism_through_ed/).

**23** See, UNESCO, *Teacher’s Guide on the Prevention of Violent Antisemitism* (Paris: UNESCO, 2016), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676>; section 3.4 “Topic to address violent extremism” mentions antisemitism and the Holocaust as an historical example, cf. *ibid.*, 31.

**24** UNESCO and OSCE, *Addressing Anti-Semitism through Education: Guidelines for Policymakers* (Paris and Warsaw: UNESCO and OSCE, 2018), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000263702>.

**25** *Ibid.*, 24.

**26** I. Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, “On the Role of UNESCO in Countering Anti-Semitism and Preserving the Legacy of the Holocaust—on the occasion of the launch of UNESCO’s guide on Holocaust Education and Genocide Prevention,” address to the 15<sup>th</sup> Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress, New York, April 24, 2017, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000248102>.

sial resolutions blamed for denying the Jewish link to Jerusalem and therefore mining Jewish claims of statehood in the Land of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

## The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) is perhaps the main UN institution that could effectively combat antisemitism because of its mandate and its multiple instruments. The institution's work on antisemitism, however, tends to be limited to combating Holocaust denial. Indeed, antisemitism does not appear as a specific thematic issue on the OHCHR's agenda; occasionally, it appears in the work of the Special Rapporteurs on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Minority Issues, and on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief dedicated a consistent part of its 2003 report to the analysis of Islamophobia and increasing anti-Muslim sentiments,<sup>28</sup> while referring to the parallel Jew-hatred only by quoting the EU human rights body,<sup>29</sup> which points to increasing hostility against Muslims and also to “acts of vandalism in synagogues and verbal and physical attacks on Jews, in parallel with the renewed crisis in the Middle East.”<sup>30</sup>

Between 2004 and 2008, the annual reports mention antisemitic episodes in the world, twice in Belarus,<sup>31</sup> involving cemetery vandalism, and once in

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<sup>27</sup> That same year, UNESCO World Heritage Committee adopted a resolution, which confirms two previous resolutions in 2015 and 2016 referring to Jewish sites in Jerusalem and Hebron by their Arabic names. The adoption of these documents sparked a heated debate on international de-legitimization of Israel's claims to Jerusalem and the historical ties of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. “Civil and Political Rights, Including Religious Intolerance,” Report submitted by Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/40, E/CN.4/2003/66 of January 15, 2003, [https://digital.library.un.org/record/488167/files/E\\_CN-4\\_2003\\_66-EN.pdf](https://digital.library.un.org/record/488167/files/E_CN-4_2003_66-EN.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> The EU human rights body was then called the European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which later became the FRA Fundamental Rights Agency.

<sup>30</sup> E/CN.4/2003/66, par. 101.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir,” to the General Assembly A/59/366 of September 16, 2004, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533589/files/A\\_59\\_366-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/533589/files/A_59_366-EN.pdf); and “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir—Addendum Summary of cases transmitted to Governments and replies received,” to the then Commission on Human Rights,



Yemen,<sup>32</sup> involving threats to the local Jewish community. Interestingly, in an antisemitic episode taking place in Pakistan and involving the use of word “Jew” to slander opponents,<sup>33</sup> the Special Rapporteur did not consider it as a form of antisemitism, raising concerns about freedom of expression in the country. In 2007, the annual report mentions the country visit to UK states that “World politics also have repercussions at the domestic level, for example the impact of developments in the Middle East on the situation of the Jewish community,”<sup>34</sup> avoiding the word antisemitism. However, the Rapporteur failed to mention that the antisemitic episodes occurred in the context of the anti-Israeli demonstrations in Europe, such as in the summer of 2014, during the military operation “Protective Edge.”<sup>35</sup> In 2019, the Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed dedicated the annual report to antisemitism, warning about the growing antisemitism, including violent incidents, and the widespread perception of insecurity among Jews. Remarkably, the report notes that “hostility, discrimination and violence motivated by antisemitism has received scant attention as a human rights issue,”<sup>36</sup> ac-

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E/CN.4/2005/61/Add.1 of March 15, 2005, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/543795/files/E\\_CN.4\\_2005\\_61\\_Add.1-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/543795/files/E_CN.4_2005_61_Add.1-EN.pdf).

**32** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir Addendum Summary of cases transmitted to Governments and replies received,” to the Human Rights Council, A/HRC/7/10/Add.1 of February 28, 2008, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/622413/files/A\\_HRC\\_7\\_10\\_Add.1-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/622413/files/A_HRC_7_10_Add.1-EN.pdf).

**33** Cf. the report submitted to the then Commission on Human Rights, E/CN.4/2006/5/Add.1 of March 27, 2006, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/572357/files/E\\_CN-4\\_2006\\_5\\_Add.1-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/572357/files/E_CN-4_2006_5_Add.1-EN.pdf).

**34** “Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief,” to the General Assembly, A/62/280 of August 20, 2007, [https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/607111/files/A\\_62\\_280-EN.pdf](https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/607111/files/A_62_280-EN.pdf), par. 26, 9.

**35** The Israeli military Operation Protective Edge was launched to destroy the tunnels built by the Hamas terrorist organization into Israeli territory in order to carry out attacks against the civilian population and as a response to the incessant firing of missiles from the Gaza Strip. As happens around important controversies regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict, civil society organizations in both Europe and the US have organized activities advocating in favor and against Israel. Among these are also mass demonstrations across Europe, in which different manifestations of antisemitism took place, including signs and language recalling Nazi antisemitic expression and attacks to Jewish sites. For a collection of images, please see the collection of pictures from the manifestation and of cartoons published by the Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry, accessed February 25, 2019, <http://www.kantorcenter.tau.ac.il/sites/default/files/Demos%20Gaza%20July-November%202014.pdf>. Regarding attacks on Jews and Jewish properties, see R. Wistrich, “Summer in Paris,” *Mosaic Magazine*, October 5, 2014, <https://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/2014/10/summer-in-paris/>.

**36** Cf. the report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Ahmed Shaheed submitted to the General Assembly, 74th session, September 23, 2019, A/74/358, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A\\_74\\_47921ADV.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Religion/A_74_47921ADV.pdf), par. 4.

knowledging Jew-hatred inspired by extreme right and radical Islamist ideologies,<sup>37</sup> also expressing concern for the increase of left-wing antisemitism.<sup>38</sup> This report is unprecedented for three reasons: first, it is the first comprehensive work of a UN agency on antisemitism; secondly, it addresses the multifaceted aspects of contemporary antisemitism, including Israel-related antisemitism; finally, it formulates policy advice for all actors involved in the combat against antisemitism. In this respect, the Special Rapporteur supports the use of the 2016 IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism; urges the adoption of a human rights-based approach for dealing with the phenomenon of Jew-hatred; and, as far as the UN is concerned, suggests the appointment of a focal point for the dialogue with Jewish communities as well as the monitoring of antisemitism.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the Special Rapporteur recommends that other human rights bodies address antisemitism in their work. This report may be considered groundbreaking because it emphasizes the relevance of human rights bodies in the fight against antisemitism. Ahmed Shaheed has recently condemned the spike in online hate speech connected to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Coronavirus crisis has proved to be a fertile ground for the return of classical Jew-hatred, mainly expressed through online hate speech, such as the antisemitic accusations of Jews or Israelis as plague-spreaders, the portrayal of Jews as a virus, and conspiracy theories accusing Jews of creating or capitalizing on the pandemic. The Special Rapporteur has urged states to take measures against the spread of hate speech, including the antisemitic expressions of conspiracy theories “claiming that Jews or Israel are responsible for developing and spreading COVID-19 virus to reduce the non-Jewish population and to control the world.”<sup>40</sup>

The Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues does not deal with antisemitism, and Jewish minorities are apparently not included in the monitoring of the Expert, although its mandate includes *inter alia* the promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities and of best practices by States. The only time in which antisemitism is

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pars. 16–18.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, par. 63.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pars. 89–90.

<sup>40</sup> “Rise in Antisemitic Hatred during COVID-19 Must be Countered with Tougher Measures, Says UN Expert,” UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, issued April 17, 2020, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25800&LangID=E>.

mentioned is in the 2015 report to the Human Rights Council,<sup>41</sup> which refers to neo-Nazi antisemitic speech in online media.

The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reports to the General Assembly majorly focus on far-right antisemitism, while forms of contemporary antisemitism are quoted from “external submissions.”

Between 2006 and 2008,<sup>42</sup> antisemitism was analyzed as a result of “the developments in the Middle East” but always connected to Christianophobia and Islamophobia, with an emphasis on the latter. As a consequence, this approach failed to identify the multi-faceted ways in which Jew-hatred began manifesting itself as fueled by anti-Israeli sentiment.

Between 2010 and 2012, the reports describe measures to combat antisemitism taken by certain states;<sup>43</sup> encourage Hungary to adopt policies against antisemitism;<sup>44</sup> and mention one case of antisemitism in Latvia.<sup>45</sup>

Besides mentioning countries’ measures against antisemitism, the 2013 report refers to the IAJLJ (International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists) submission on Greek Golden Dawn antisemitic speech.<sup>46</sup> Tellingly, the 2014 report mentions an episode of antisemitism that occurred during a football

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**41** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák,” A/HRC/28/64 of January 5, 2015, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/000/32/PDF/G1500032.pdf?OpenElement>.

**42** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/61/335, of September 17, 2006, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/519/04/PDF/N0651904.pdf?OpenElement>; and “Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/62/306 of August 24, 2007, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/490/48/PDF/N0749048.pdf?OpenElement>.

**43** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/147,” A/65/323 of August 24, 2010, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/493/25/PDF/N1049325.pdf?OpenElement>.

**44** Cf. “Interim report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/66/313 of August 19, 2011, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/458/18/PDF/N1145818.pdf?OpenElement>.

**45** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 66/143,” A/67/328 of August 22, 2012, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/470/32/PDF/N1247032.pdf?OpenElement>.

**46** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/68/329 of August 16, 2013, [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A-68-329\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A-68-329_en.pdf).

match between Britain and France but did not mention antisemitic episodes that occurred during the anti-Israeli protests against the military operation “Protective Edge.”<sup>47</sup>

Somehow different is the 2017 report,<sup>48</sup> which, after reiterating the narrative of antisemitism linked to extremist right-wing,<sup>49</sup> and supremacist groups,<sup>50</sup> and to Holocaust Denial,<sup>51</sup> brings two major novelties: first, it includes national initiatives to combat antisemitism, quoting also the Swiss “Coordination intercommunautaire contre l’antisémitisme et la diffamation,” which denounces jihadism as a major antisemitic threat and calls upon human rights organizations to monitor and contrast neo-Nazism, antisemitism, and Holocaust denial.<sup>52</sup>

The Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reports to the to the Human Rights Council contain other insights on the monitoring of antisemitism. After an initial mention of new antisemitism in the early 2000s, the Rapporteur has consistently focused on Holocaust denial and far-right speech only.

Between 2006 and 2008, the Rapporteurs three times mentioned new forms of antisemitism stemming from migrant communities in connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict,<sup>53</sup> as well as resulting from perceptions of Israel and Zionism. The 2009 report also condemns Islamophobia, antisemitism, and anti-Arabism,<sup>54</sup> but it does not call upon states to cope with this form of antisemitism. It is

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47 Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/69/340 of August 22, 2014, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A-69-340.pdf>.

48 Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/72/291 of August 4, 2017, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/245/50/PDF/N1724550.pdf?OpenElement>.

49 Cf. *ibid.*, point 78.

50 Cf. *ibid.*, point 80.

51 Cf. *ibid.*, point 91.

52 Cf. *ibid.*, point 93.

53 Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Doudou Diène, further to Human Rights Council decision 1/107 on incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance,” A/HRC/2/3 of September 20, 2006, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G06/139/90/PDF/G0613990.pdf?OpenElement>.

54 Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Githu Muigai, on the manifestations of defamation of religions, and in particular on the serious implications of Islamophobia, on the enjoyment of all rights by their followers,” to the Human Rights Council, A/HRC/12/38 of July 1, 2009, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/144/30/PDF/G0914430.pdf?OpenElement>

worth mentioning that the 2014 report,<sup>55</sup> which focuses on racism online, also associates anti-Muslim sentiment with antisemitism, stating that “the contemporary rise of anti-Muslim sentiment in various regions around the world highlights the vulnerability of religious minorities in communities where they are socially or politically constructed as outsiders. In that regard, one could also underscore the historical and lingering anti-Semitism in some parts of Europe.”<sup>56</sup> The report, however, does not mention why there is a connection and what it consists of. This document, however, expands its scope beyond the other reports and comprises also EU and OSCE policies on antisemitism as well as civil society organizations devoted to combating the phenomenon.

Besides condemning Holocaust Denial in 2015,<sup>57</sup> the Special Rapporteur in 2017 pointed to “the proliferation of anti-Muslim rhetoric and the rise of right-wing extremist parties” in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, which leads to increasing anti-Muslim racisms, and “at the same time, incidents of anti-Semitic hatred have also increased”<sup>58</sup> but fails to mention their nature and the relationship between the two phenomena. Likewise, the 2018 Report, which specifically addresses the political climate in the context of renewed nationalist discourse and migration policies, states that

the resurgent xenophobic and racist rhetoric and policies rooted in ethno-nationalism do not only harm non-citizens of any given nation. They also make formal citizens who are ethnic, racial or religious minorities vulnerable to discrimination and intolerance. For example, Islamophobic or anti-Semitic ethno-nationalism undermines the rights of Muslims or Jews irrespective of citizenship status.<sup>59</sup>

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ment. The Report focuses on the Durban Conference reviews and recalls the Durban Programme of Action.

**55** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/HRC/32/50 of May 13, 2016, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/097/20/PDF/G1609720.pdf?OpenElement>.

**56** *Ibid.*, par. 33.

**57** Cf. “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 69/160,” A/HRC/29/47 of April 13, 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/A-HRC-29-47.pdf>.

**58** “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/HRC/35/41 of May 9, 2017, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/113/80/PDF/G1711380.pdf?OpenElement>, par. 49.

**59** “Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance,” A/HRC/38/52 of April 25, 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/117/79/PDF/G1811779.pdf?OpenElement>, par. 44.

From this analysis, it appears that UN agencies have three tendencies in relation to antisemitism. First, the focus on Holocaust denial and Nazi glorification seldom mentions the connection with antisemitism (or even the word “Jew”) with the result that its inherent character of Jew-hatred is obliterated. Secondly, this kind of antisemitism is mostly associated with forms of hate speech typical of the Western extreme right’s rhetoric, and consequently overlooking how the same phenomenon takes place in other parts of the world and in different cultural contexts. Thirdly, contemporary forms of antisemitism correlated to anti-Israel sentiment are recognized, yet conflated with islamophobia and christiophobia: this trio of separate forms of hostility, however connected they may be, is not further explored and, consequently, they are ambiguously diluted without any clear stance against antisemitism.

The failure to define and tackle contemporary antisemitism is even more palpable if one thinks that episodes of antisemitism in connection with the Middle East, such as the 2014 anti-Jewish incidents, are not mentioned and that certain aspects of antisemitism are relegated to quotations of external submissions.

## **Combating Antisemitism, What Else Could Be Done?**

This last section aims to suggest some possible ways to redress the UN approach to antisemitism.

A general look at how antisemitism is framed can shed some light on the effectiveness of its counter policies. While it is still unanimously considered a form of racism, antisemitism has progressively been expunged from the human rights world: no major human rights NGOs analyze antisemitic phenomena or deal with Jew-hatred. UN agencies deal with the phenomenon incidentally. While a major part of the problem is the anti-Israel sentiment, human rights actors that are engaged in the Arab-Israeli conflict refrain from addressing the problems caused by antisemitism. Consequently, antisemitism is mostly dealt with by Jewish organizations and often demoted to be part of what is considered pro-Israel lobbying or a means to silence anti-Israel criticism.

The failure to include antisemitism in larger human rights policies results in the marginalization of the phenomenon and the necessity to create other venues for opposing it—in this respect the IHRA, Jewish organizations, and pro-Israel forums serve as platforms to expose contemporary manifestations of antisemitism and elaborate strategies to contrast it. Yet, the appropriate place to do so should be the UN and the several agencies devoted to the promotion and protection of

human rights, as the 2019 Report of the Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Religion or Belief also emphasized.

In order to reach this goal, there are at least three major steps to take to reinforce and modernize policies against antisemitism.

First, the existing efforts to combat Nazi glorification and Holocaust denial should set straightforward that antisemitism played a paramount role in hate speech, rhetoric, and policies that led to the Holocaust. This point is essential to combat contemporary uses of Nazi speech against Jews and other groups alike—refraining from addressing antisemitism in any reference to Holocaust denial or Nazi rhetoric should be considered in itself a form of denial of the phenomenon itself.

Secondly, the UN should acknowledge that Holocaust denial and Nazi rhetoric are not a problem of the West only. While cooperation with the OSCE ODIHR projects can just strengthen the efficacy of these policies, the OSCE has a specific territorial scope that extends to larger parts of Europe but excludes other continents. Far from being a problem of the European or American extreme right groups solely, antisemitism should be addressed also by African, Middle-East, and Asian states. In this sense, the UN seems unwilling to bring up the issue with other States, where Holocaust denial is widespread or even promoted by governmental policies. Since these states are often in conflict with Israel, an overlapping issue emerges, which is the manifestation of antisemitism in relation to Israel.

Finally, as shown above, UN agencies acknowledge the existence of antisemitism in connection with the developments in the Middle East, which also lead to increasing Islamophobia and Christianophobia. Nonetheless, there is no clarity about what this connection is and how it manifests. By avoiding the exploration of this connection, there is no need to clarify and take a stance on controversial and politicized issues such as the increasingly overlapping semantic meaning of “Jew” and “Zionist” in anti-Israel narrative, or the use of antisemitic rhetoric to portray Zionism and Israel. In this respect, the IHRA definition of antisemitism can give an important contribution to the discussion on what contemporary antisemitism is.

The cause of antisemitism is not a Jewish cause only, but it is a cause for human rights that lies at the heart of the international system of values that has developed after the Second World War. Expunging antisemitism from this system and relegating it to what has become a solely Jewish cause is a betrayal of those principles that the international community determined to be the foundation of the post-Auschwitz world. Therefore, antisemitism needs to be brought back to the center of the human rights discourse in its entirety. However, the controversies around Israel and its real or perceived misbehaviors, obsessively inves-

tigated by the human rights community, as well as the heated discussion of what contemporary antisemitism is and how it is to be discerned from anti-Zionism or anti-Israel criticism, stand in the way. The recent work of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief goes in this direction, but a structural change is needed in the approach is needed.

There are laws, conventions, and definitions. There are monitoring and protection mechanisms of human rights. What we need is a renewed commitment to combat antisemitism, especially in a time of increasing anti-Jewish hatred and growing interdependence of antisemitism, anti-Zionism, and anti-Israeli sentiment.

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