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RESEARCH STUDY

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ANTISEMITISM ON THE RISE

NEW IDEOLOGICAL DYNAMICS

April 2024

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CHAPTER 1

RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

Gustav Gustenau/Florian Hartleb

Why this (another) book about a specific and sensitive topic? Antisemitism is incompatible with Europe's core values. It represents a threat not only to Jewish communities and to Jewish life, but to open society, to democracy and the European way of life. Therefore, antisemitism is an alarming trend. There are six key factors of an increasing threat as the following study shows. The fundamental developments of the rise of antisemitism in Europe, with a special focus on Germany and Austria are the following:

- (1) The Middle East conflict as a possible permanent escalation scenario. Therefore, there is a direct influence in terms of growing antisemitism.
- (2) The rise of conspiracy narratives, old and new. They strike a more or less antisemitic tone, as observed during the Covid-19-pandemic.
- (3) The significant role of antisemitism as a bias in all radical political ideologies and the mutual inspiration and influence. The more radical ideologies grow, the more antisemitism rises.
- (4) The new dynamics in various virtual platforms used to distribute antisemitic content.
- (5) Anti-globalist populism has an antisemitic impact. Open antisemitism is growing, also within and among woke-centered elites.
- (6) There is a dominant role within political Islam including imported antisemitism in Europe.

With the assumption of growing antisemitism, security risks are the consequence:

- (1) Growing attacks at Jews in person or towards symbols und properties.
- (2) Radicalization as a feature in public discourse striking an antisemitic tone.
- (3) The rise of Islamism and political Islam if some correlations with other ideologies occur.
- (4) The influence of foreign policies within Europe towards Israel and the Islamic states.

The EU and individual European countries are not bystanders to the "Israel-Palestine conflict" but enmeshed in it both historically and today. Antisemitism is on the rise in Europe and globally, threatening Jewish individuals and communities, as well as the very fabric of democracy and the security of societies. In recent years, Jews in many European countries have reported an increase in hate incidents and say they feel increasingly unsafe.

OCTOBER 7, 2023

A new September 11, 2001? At least a historic moment for the world since the September 11, 2001 attacks (Taguieff 2023: 1). As of October 7, 2023, the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel has bolstered the existing "world disorder" in a barbarian manner. Further, it ushered in the era of a new war. The Gaza War has impacted us immediately. Some 3,000 terrorists burst across the border into Israel from the Gaza Strip by land, air and sea, killing some 1,400 people and seizing over 240 hostages of all ages under the cover of thousands of rockets fired at Israel. The attack came as a surprise and obviously represents a huge intelligence failure (Bartos/Chin 2023). It prompted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to declare war against Hamas which he sees now to be continued in 2024 and 2025 (The Times of Israel 2024). As a result, there have been considerable

demonstrations in many countries. These events have been rarely directed against Hamas. Most demonstrations have focused on the reactions expected from Israel. There has been talk of an incipient "genocide" against Palestinians. These events have been rarely directed against Hamas. There has been talk of an incipient "genocide" against Palestinians. There are organisations within the Islamist extremist spectrum whose primary aim is to fight the very existence of the State of Israel. These include the Palestinian Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Both organisations fight against Israel using military and terrorist means while frequently calling for the complete annihilation of Israel in their propaganda. Existing conspiracy theories about Jewish control of political, media and financial institutions were applied to the conflict. The pervasiveness of the ideology of Palestinian liberation and of anti-Israel and antisemitic thinking that accompanies this ideology cannot be overestimated.

Demonstrators have chanted the hate slogan "child murderer Israel". In addition, the idea of the annihilation of the State of Israel has been conjured up verbally. "From The River To The Sea, Palestine Will Be Free," a mainstay of pro-Palestinian marches, and the wearing of the black-and-white keffiyeh, or scarf, which is now associated with Palestinian Arabs, have been ubiquitous at these gatherings and marches. The events of 7 October 2023 plunged the Middle East into chaos once again and have brought the issue of global antisemitism, both on- and offline, to the forefront of public attention.

There have been possible historical parallels: After the Six Days War of June 1967, a "new anti-Semitism" began its worldwide career as the French intellectual Pierre-André Taguieff analyzed (Taguieff 2004: 62). In the current conflict (war)-constellation, there have been signs that a new wave of antisemitism has emerged. It was on November 5, 2023, that the European Commission expressed its concern. In analogy to the media coverage, the idea was to awake the European public: "The spike of antisemitic incidents across Europe has reached extraordinary levels in the last few days, reminiscent of some of the darkest times in history. European Jews today are again living in fear. We have seen a resurgence of antisemitic incidents and rhetoric in the European Union and worldwide: Molotov cocktails thrown on a synagogue in Germany, stars of David sprayed on residential buildings in France, a Jewish cemetery desecrated in Austria, Jewish stores and synagogues attacked in Spain, demonstrators chanting hate slogans against Jews" (European Commission 2023). In February 2024, the Catholic Pope Francis stated: "We, Catholics, are very concerned about the terrible increase in attacks against Jews around the world. We had hoped that 'never again' would be a refrain heard by the new generations" (Reuters 2024).

One hypothesis could be formulated: Whenever conflict arises between Israel and the Palestinians, Jews in all parts of the world will suffer some level of hate violence. Indeed, antisemitic and anti-Israeli fake news and disinformation have become abundant online as well as offline. This applies to the propagandist fake news that Israel has been targeting Palestinian children to kill them. Propagandists call the October 7th, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack an Israeli "false flag" operation and label the Israeli military operation in Gaza a genocide. There is a tendency in the Arab world to forget the extreme violence involved with anti-Israeli propaganda, while Arab radio stations regularly broadcast calls for murder such as the following little ditty (Taguieff 2004: 64):

> "Slit their throats, slit, slit, and show no pity.
> Slit, slit, slit, and throw their head in the desert.
> Slit, slit, slit, as much as you like."

In June 2007, Hamas (Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya; Islamic Resistance Movement) took over the Gaza Strip from the Palestinian Authority after having won the parliamentary elections. Hamas emerged in 1987 during the first Palestinian uprising or intifada, as an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood´s Palestinian branch. It focuses on armed resistance against Israel and the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state in Israel´s place. In 2019, Fathi Hamad, a senior member of Hamas, encouraged Palestinians across the world to kill Jews: "Seven million Palestinians outside,

enough warming up, you have Jews with you in every place. You should attack every Jew possible in all the world and kill them (Voa 2019)." In January and February 2024, an Imam in Vienna, Mohamed El S., called for murder of Jews via social media (Der Standard 2024).

The new wave of antisemitism is vast. As Lars Rensmann stated in 2020: "Especially in recent years antisemitism is aggressively resurfacing – verbally and often violently – in autocratic regimes and liberal democracies alike, as well as global society at large. (…) from antisemitic marches overtly calling for the death of Jews to Islamist and radical rightist acts of terrorism against Jews and synagogues, to coded cultural stereotypes or innuendo among parts of the intelligentsia; from viral 'grassroots' antisemitism spreading on global social media, reinforcing anti-Jewish attitudes, to institutional antisemitism, including government-sponsored Holocaust denial and eliminationist threats against Jews and the Jewish state; from proliferating antisemitic conspiracy myths 'explaining' the global age to antizionist antisemitism demonizing the Jewish state as the most evil "threat to humankind"" (Rensmann 2020: 84).

THE ROOTS AND HISTORY OF ANTISEMITISM

Finding examples of hostility towards Jews in classical sources is not difficult (Laqueur 2008; Hainzl 2022; Voigt 2024). In this way, antisemitism, or hostility towards Jews, is an old concept. Its roots can be traced back to ancient times, with examples of discrimination and persecution throughout history. In this sense, the researcher Lorenzo Vidino has a crucial point: "We do see antisemitism as a phenomenon spanning virtually all extremist ideologies. It is not entirely a new phenomenon, as cross-ideological pollination of antisemitism is a centuries-old cancer" (quoted after "The GW Hatchet 2023"). Hostility toward Jews often takes two different forms, which, radicalized, illustrate, on the one hand, the universalist type of Judeophobia, based on the denial of Jewish identity and, on the other hand, the differential type of Judeophobia, which includes denial of their humanity, that is exclusion of Jews from the human race (Taguieff 2022). The Jews therefore are the eternal outsiders, the perpetual wanderers, the pariah on the periphery of culture. The famous politician and lawyer Cicero, 106-43 BC, once reminded a jury of "the odium of Jewish gold" and how they stick together" and are "influential in informal assemblies" (Pergola 2022: 22). And this is a reservoir which has built up over centuries, even over millennia. There are three key elements in this:

1. Judaism has been superseded by Christianity (the notion that Jews have a particularistic and narrow morality is one consequence of that idea);
2. Jews are forever conspiratorial and up to something against the common good;
3. the connection of Jews with money. These ideas have been repurposed over centuries in multiple political contexts.

Fast forward to the 11th and 12th centuries and we find Jewish communities stigmatized and persecuted as traders and moneylenders. Financial success bred resentment leading to the expulsion of Jews from England by King Edward I in 1290. Jews were also wrongly blamed for poisoning wells and causing the Bubonic Plague of the mid-14th Century, which killed one-third of Europe's population. They made for easy scapegoats not only due to the pre-existing stereotypes but also because many lived in ghettos, had rituals of cleanliness, and therefore were not equally infected by the plague. The "classic" antisemites in modern Europe blamed the Jews for their universalism, their "cosmopolitanism", which made them foreigners everywhere and made them unfit for any kind of national life. Radicalized antisemitism refers to the idea that Jews are a distinct "race" of people who have fixed traits that they are born with, traits which make them inferior to white, Christian people. This false idea developed in fifteenth-century Spain, where all Jews, even those forced to convert to Christianity, were forbidden from entering universities, enlisting in the military, taking on certain government positions and marrying non-Jews.

The term "anti-Semitism", though, appears only in the second half of the 19th century. It was coined in Germany ("*Antisemitismus*") in the 1879 work *Der Sieg des Judenthums über das Germanenthum* (*The Victory of Judaism Over Germanism*) by journalist Wilhelm Marr. Marr himself used it as an anti-Jewish pamphlet (Taguieff 2004: 126, Fn. 6).

The turn of the 20th century saw the development and establishment of the conspiratorial component of antisemitism. Perhaps the most important influence on this view was the 1903 publication of the "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion" in tsarist Russia. Often referred to as a work of forgery, the document, a full fiction, is better understood as an elaborate hoax. It claims to contain proof of a Jewish conspiracy in the form of minutes of a meeting of powerful Jews planning the downfall of civilization. Their so-called manipulation refers to the various levers of power in their control, including the economy and education. This work, more than any other, contributed to the cementing of the notion of Jews as parasites who exploited honest, hard-working white people for their own evil ends (Benz 2008). Adolf Hitler referred to the protocol in "Mein Kampf" (Hitler 1941: 337). The Hamas charter also refers to the protocols: "The Zionist plan is limitless. After Palestine, the Zionists aspire to expand from the Nile to the Euphrates. (…) Their plan is embodied in the Protocol of the Elders of Zion" (cited after Taguieff 2004: 65).

Antisemitism reached a peak during the Holocaust from 1933-1945 when the totalitarian system of national socialism was implemented. Hitler cultivated support for the Third Reich by capitalizing on old, embedded myths to stoke fears that Jews would taint the superior Aryan race. Once again, Jews served as convenient scapegoats for a major crisis: Germany's humiliation and financial ruin after World War I. The anti-Semitic positioning by Hitler and the Nazi party fuelled discrimination and violence against Jews, and ultimately facilitated genocide. With the Nazi rise to power in 1933, anti-Jewish economic boycotts started, as well as book burnings from Jewish writers, and the implementation of discriminatory anti-Jewish legislation. In 1935, the Nuremberg law racially defined Jews by "blood". On the night of 9th November 1938, the Nazis destroyed synagogues and shop windows of Jewish-owned stores throughout Germany and Austria (the Kristallnacht pogrom).

The Holocaust was documented in ways unlike any prior global genocide and shocked the world. In its aftermath, outward expressions of antisemitism diminished but antisemitism itself never went away. The Holocaust is unique because it was the unlimited *Vernichtung der Juden um der Vernichtung willen* (extermination of the Jews for the sake of extermination itself), distinguished from the limited and pragmatic aims of other genocides. It is the first time in history that a state had set out to destroy a people solely on ideological grounds. It was thus a *Zivilisationsbruch* (civilizational rupture), creating the moral foundation of the nation, as the German-Israeli scholar Dan Diner proposed (Diner 1988). With the concept of the *Zivilisationsbruch*, Diner sought to describe the singularity of the Nazi genocide of European Jews as a rupture with basic post-Enlightenment assumptions of rationality, utility, and universality. The Hebrew word Shoah (disaster, catastrophe, visitation or also 'downfall') also stands for the extermination of the Jews. The term also appears in Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence.

Holocaust denial as a part of right-wing extremist ideology could survive with figures such as Robert Faurisson, Ernst Zündel and David Irving (Lipstadt 1993). Until today, right-wing extremist groups and parties still have an antisemitic agenda, nowadays in the framework of "white supremacy" (Camus 2011). Even after the Holocaust, the Soviet Union and its satellites brutally destroyed a significant part of Jewish culture in Eastern and Central Europe, abolishing Jewish schools, synagogues and cultural institutions, in addition to exiling and even murdering rabbis and Jewish intellectuals (Donskis 2006: 20).

Islamic tradition tells of Muhammad's attempts to convert three Jewish tribes to his faith. When his efforts failed, armed clashes broke out, ending in the military defeat of the tribes. These events

provide the background to the Koran passages that are critical of Jews. The main accusation is that the Jews allegedly broke the covenant with Allah and the Muslims by not accepting Muhammad as the prophet chosen by God. Anti-Semitism has played a central part in the Islamist outlook since its inception with the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. That is, it should be noted, 20 years before the founding of the state of Israel. So, seeing Islamist anti-Semitism as simply a reaction to Israel's actions is not tenable. After the Second World War, antisemitism had settled firmly in the Middle East. The loss of the 1948 Arab–Israeli war by the Arab states and the establishment of the state of Israel caused antisemitism to take a new dimension.

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammed Amin el-Husseini, for instance, maintained close contact with the German National Socialists, openly agitating against Jews on the radio. Another example is the spreading, from the 1930s, of the Arabic translations of European anti-Jewish writings among the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB), where they met with full approval. The most influential Muslim Brotherhood ideologue, whose influence later spread worldwide, was Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966). Ismail draws on two of his works to help reconstruct his anti-Semitic worldview, The first was *Our Struggle Against the Jews*, a short pamphlet which describes Jews as a 'cosmic Satanic evil'. The other is *In the Shade of the Koran*, Qutb's multi-volume great work. Qutb's outlook still provides the core of Islamist ideology. In his view Muslims had suffered from the machinations of Jews and double dealing since the inception of Islam in the year 610. Jews had waged a constant war against the *ummah* (the Muslim community of believers) as part of their conspiratorial drive to dominate the world. The survival of Islam from this perspective depended on waging a religious war – in which killing was morally sanctioned – to defeat the cosmic evil of the Jews (Schroeter 2018).

Talking about antisemitism and how to tackle it today is far away from being "anachronistic", as Theodor W. Adorno predicted in 1962 when he gave a famous lecture (Adorno 2024: 11). Many school textbooks throughout the Arab and Islamic world teach the Protocols of Zion as fact. This is also true of political speeches and children`s cartoons. As applies to other forms of hate propaganda, the advent of the Internet and social media – namely Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok – has led to an explosion in the prevalence of the Protocols in the Arab world. Antisemites assume or even believe that Jews have a powerful influence on politics, economics, capitalism, communism, the COVID-19 pandemic (Weimann/Masri 2020), and any number of conflicts and current events. During the Covid pandemic and the wave of demonstrations against the so-called "Corona-dictatorship", traditional anti-Jewish myths found new areas of support:

- The conspiracy myth of the "Jews as masters of the world" establishing a "health dictatorship".
- The myth of the criminal and poisoner Jew, who uses the vaccine as a lethal weapon.

Many protesters pinned yellow Stars of David to their chest in order to suggest that they are victims of persecution similar to that suffered by Jews in the Nazi era. And the impact of today´s antisemitism is deeply related to the grotesque assumptions of the Islamist world: Jews are, from this warped perspective, engaged in an evil conspiracy against the entire global Muslim community. Scholars have identified three main forms of contemporary antisemitism (Lange/Mayerhofer 2022: 2):

1. classic antisemitism
2. the denial of the Shoah or the relativization of it
3. the delegitimization and demonization of the state of Israel.

In other words, antisemitism as such is a symptom or syndrome of hate and ignorance. Alongside "anti-Jewish conspiracy myths", there are "Holocaust denial and relativization" and "hatred of Israel" which also play a crucial part in antisemitism (Rensmann 2020). We depict the components of antisemitism in a table.

Components of antisemitism		
Anti-Jewish conspiracy myths	Holocaust denial and relativization	Hatred of Israel

Table inspired by Rensmann 2020

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance is the only intergovernmental organization mandated to focus solely on Holocaust-related issues. The alliance's Committee on Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial built international consensus around the following non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism, which many institutions and organizations worldwide have endorsed and adopted (Holocaust Remembrance Alliance 2016):

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

The problem of antisemitism continues to resist easy incorporation into a general theory of prejudice. Anti-Israel Sentiment predicts Anti-Semitism in Europe as empirical studies reveal (Kaplan/Small 2006). In this case, populism also plays a role in terms of identity politics and a new cleavage: "Globalist" is a term with an anti-Semitic history, and it's often understood as a code for Jews. Antisemitism therefore easily fits within the populist narrative within the mainstream: Jews, some claim, are quintessential members of traditional elites – the elites of commerce, culture, academia, media especially located in the United States of America – and care not a whit for those they control and exploit. The rise of identity politics makes Jews more vulnerable in three ways. First, in an age of particularism, with society no longer held together by universal beliefs, with tolerance for others disappearing, and with groups competing for attention, it is more acceptable and common to criticize and attack anyone who does not share your identity, for that reason alone. Criticism and prejudice are simply politics as usual. In this sense, antisemitism seems more natural and acceptable, and flourishes more easily, than ever before. Second, identity politics is exclusionary. It accentuates the idea of the Jew as the proverbial "Other". Third, attempted assimilation into the broader community, a long-standing technique of Jewish minorities, is much more difficult in the age of identity politics. Meaningful broad communities that welcome others and ignore distinctions are dying rather than developing (Slayton 2023).

The political landscape itself is changing in Europe. Because humans often divide our societies into "in" groups and "out" groups (Müller 2017), antisemitism is constantly repackaged to reach new generations in new contexts. In this case, a populist antisemitic dichotomy is entering mainstream politics. The "Jews" are therefore the "perfect" scapegoat" or target:

– *Vertical dimension of populism: We against "The elites" (Jews) – politics of anti-elitism*
– *Horizontal dimension of populism: We against "The others" (Jews) – politics of exclusion*

It could be formulated that the anti-globalist populism in these dimensions is causing open or latent antisemitism. The Islamic antisemitism can cause uncertainties in terms of security. Antisemitism has also a far-right tradition which is at times referred to as "ur-fascism": "The main characteristics of this "ur-fascism" are the cult of tradition and the rejection of modernization; irrationalism and anti-intellectualism; an appeal to the frustrated middle class; an obsession with conspiracy and anti-Semitism" (Krastev 2007: 58). Hating America and Jewry often go hand in hand. They sometimes replace valid criticism (Burridge 2007). Certainly, there is a link between conspiracy thinking and antisemitism. Antisemitism is a global spectre which cannot be explained rationally (Pohl 2010). This can be observed in brutal dilemmas, which entail huge sacrifices to advance an antisemitic agenda.

Hamas is ready to accept the killing of its own population in Gaza. Obviously, Hamas has both an antisemitic and an apocalyptic mindset. The idea is to steer the global public towards indignation in the face of an ever-escalating conflict. In addition, Hamas lacks respect for human lives. The Islamist terrorist organization wants to engender even more anti-Israeli sentiment (Strozier 2024). Against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas conflict, antisemitism on the online platform Reddit has seen a surge. The controversy has intensified since the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack. The related discourse centres around antisemitism and anti-zionism (Chen et al.: 2024). Internationally, antisemitic online comments have gone viral. Hence, a strategy is required to counter online antisemitism (Ascone/Placzynta/Vincent 2023). The notion of imported antisemitism is flawed. Besides its rootedness in the relativization of the Holocaust, it serves anti-Muslim and racist stereotypes. This is why it is a thorny issus to be touched on in German public discourse (Leistner/Johann 2020: 3). Since the 2015 refugee crisis, the related discourse has profited right-wing populist and extremist parties (Öztürk/Pickel 2022: 191). The term "imported antisemitism" is primarily a German expression. As such, it has rarely been addressed in international discourse (Özyürek 2016). At European level, the security of Jews has been a major concern only since the antisemitic and Islamist terrorist double attacks. Murderous attacks took place in Paris and subsequently in Copenhagen in 2015. The terrorist attacks at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo and a kosher supermarket in Paris as well as a Copenhagen synagogue attracted much publicity. As a consequence, there has been growing interest in both the fight against antisemitism and the security of Jews (Dudek 2023).

The government under *Benjamin Netanyahu* has received elaborated criticism. The demonization of Israel as a Nazi-like country, the accusation against Israel of the most heinous crimes against humanity might be an indication that, after the Second World War, "respectable antisemitism" has often been voiced in the form of anti-Zionism and anti-Israelism (Gallner 2016). On the other hand, not every criticsm towards Israel in terms of politics can be a priori classified as being antisemitic.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS VOLUME

According to the European Union Agency of Human Rights (FRA 2018: 24), antisemitism on the Internet including social media is causing the biggest problem for the Jewish community, bigger than hostility in the streets, hostility in public life, vandalism against Jewish buildings or institutions or the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. Hashtags on Instagram conveying strong anti-Israeli attitudes – such as #zionistagenda – regularly appear in conjunction with #devilworshipper and #newworldorderagenda. Similarly, #israhell is found with #saturndeathcultkiller (a historic antisemitic trope relating to Jews worshipping the planet Saturn). And antisemitism plays a big role in all debates on the future of social media and artificial intelligence (see the contribution of Weimann in this volume).

In the light of the recent developments and beyond, the following aims for a deeper understanding of two central aspects:

- It seems that the virtual dimension affects the current antisemitism a lot. Several authors here take a closer look into this tendency.
- Antisemitism plays a (bigger) role in all different political phenomena. This could affect current and future forms of political violence, extremism and, additionally, terrorism even in a hybrid way.

Indeed, antisemitism has various facees, right, left and islamistic (Herf 2024), and even beyond these assumptions. This collection comprises the following articles: *Lars Rensmann* maintains that antisemitism and Judeophobia have become major factors in many countries' public discourse. Despite the Holocaust, it has been not only authoritarian countries that have suffered antisemitic

backlashes. Antisemitism can be called the conspiracy myth sui generis. Antisemitism has undergone modernization, profiting from the digital world, e.g. social media. Thus, it has become part of global society. Surely, antisemitism has recently been related to racism, another global spectre. There are analogies to many international atrocities.

Gabriel Weimann probes the online realm of antisemitism. The World Wide Web has spawned many media, platforms and networks. The unofficial sibling of the Internet, the Dark Net, helps disseminate toxic antisemitic propaganda. Furthermore, there are coded languages which substitute and disseminate antisemitism. So-called "dog whistle" communication fuels antisemitism online. "Dog whistle" stands for a coded language which tries to trigger the missing antisemitic hate speech.

Online antisemitism is closely linked to new opportunities in the digital world. It benefits from the role of gamification and uses unconventional tools to spread antisemitic messages. Many online games have provided far-right antisemites with spaces to nurture antisemitism. With gaming being a very popular pastime, antisemites can tap large audiences online. *Wyn Brodersen* and *Maik Fielitz* show the paramount importance of Nazi and pro-Palestinian propaganda in promoting modern-day antisemitism. According to their analysis, far-right antisemitism is more prevalent online compared to other types of antisemitism.

Armin Langer explains key antisemitic narratives. During the COVID pandemic, antisemitic conspiracy myths obviously gained traction. There are huge spaces on the Internet that allow antisemitic narratives to spread. This trend has also been displayed by the propaganda related to the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine. In addition, the war between Israel and Hamas has propped up antisemitic propaganda. According to Langer, it is time for civil society to find digital responses to disinformation and antisemitism.

Stefan Goertz examines if there has been a cross-front of different types of political extremism and fundamentalism. In the aftermath of the October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorist attacks on Israel, political violence in Gaza has been escalating out of control. The State of Israel has ramped up violence to react to the atrocities Hamas committed largely against civilians. As a result, German schools, streets and the media have been hit by a wave of antisemitism. As is evident, both Turkish and German right-wing extremism are a danger to Jews in German society.

Florian Hartleb and *Christoph Schiebel* shed light on the nexus between antisemitism and lone-actor terrorism. A recurring theme in so-called lone wolves' communications networks, antisemitism has become a decisive motive for far-right terrorism. Loose ties profit lone-actor terrorists, who want to wreak havoc on society. What is more, they are determined to intimidate and murder Jews. Undoubtedly, far-right political violence is rooted in antisemitism.

Nina Scholz issues a cautionary note on Islamic antisemitism. Compared to other groups of immigrants, immigrants with an Islamic background are significantly more likely to subscribe to antisemitism. Antisemitic stereotypes and propaganda are distributed by foreign media such as Arab and Turkish TV stations. Evidently, there is a jihadist appeal. Following the Hamas terrorist attacks against Israel on October 7, 2023, Israel started a military operation, which has fuelled antisemitic propaganda. There has been an enormous antisemitic backlash, but the situation in the Middle East caused considerable antisemitism even before. Scholz spoke of an antisemitic tradition.

Armin Pfahl-Traughber analyses many parts of left-wing extremism. There are Marxist roots of antisemitism. Money and capitalism are associated with the power of Jewry and Israel. Furthermore, small left-wing extremist parties and terrorist groups have been motivated by antisemitism. Left-wing extremists refer to international solidarity and the suffering of the Palestinians to justify their antisemitic protest. Truly there has been more left-wing protest directed against Israel than there

has been against Hamas after October 7, 2023. There are more intersections between the far right and Islamism, which makes left-wing antisemitism a special case.

Antisemites, Reichsbürger and state deniers are difficult to define and to discern, on the one hand. They intersect in their anti-government extremism, on the other hand. *Florian Hartleb* and *Christoph Schiebel* demonstrate that antisemitism has become an integral part of a toxic concoction aiming to subvert liberal democracy. Reichsbürger and state deniers are driven by bizarre narratives and conspiracy myths. They seek legitimation in far-right ideologies, while they are not always dyed-in-the-wool right-wing extremists. Reichsbürger and state deniers leave room for selfish and idiosyncratic motives. Overall, they cast doubt on Germany's political and legal legitimacy. Obviously, antisemitism can lead to adjacent far-right terrorism and, in general, political violence. There is a trend of radicalization among Reichsbürger and state deniers.

The contributions bring a deeper understanding of what we need to tackle today: The vectors of the new antisemitism – Holocaust denial, the antisemitism of the extreme left, antisemitism in the Islamic world, anti-Zionism as antisemitism, even anti-racism as antisemitism – all have a fairly long history. What has changed are the role of information technologies and the geo-global context in which they function. These technologies have both facilitated the global dissemination of antisemitism as well as furnishing new means of combatting it. The new wave of antisemitism brings in several security aspects. In Germany, Federal Minister of the Interior Nancy Faeser banned the terrorist organisation Hamas and the international organisation Samidoun – Palestinian Solidarity Network from all activity in Germany. Samidoun celebrated October 7, 2023 on the streets (Press release 2023). In this sense, there is no doubt, that this conflict is "amongst us", as the study reveals. In a world already tensely polarized – consider the so-called world disorder (Neumann 2024) – the war has fomented ugly divisions not simply described as pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict often inspires hate crimes. Antisemitism, including death threats to Jewish groups and organizations, is on the rise in many ways. It goes hand in hand with new processes of radicalization and new (antisemitic) narratives such as the so-called deep state (Hartleb/Schiebel 2023).

Recent antisemitism is also a reflection of destructive forces tearing at American and Western European societies, where stability and democracy are already under pressure. In Iran, antisemitism is widespread and often institutionalized. Iranian leaders regularly make anti-Semitic statements, including denying the Holocaust and calling for the destruction of Israel. Additionally, the government sponsors antisemitic media outlets and events, including Holocaust denial conferences and cartoons that depict Jews in an inflammatory manner. In Egypt, antisemitic conspiracy myths and hate speech are common in the media and on social media platforms. There have also been instances of physical assaults on Jews and the desecration of Jewish graves and synagogues. Similarly, antisemitism is widespread in countries such as Tunisia and Libya. Some predict that the threat from jihadi terrorism could increase as a result of the conflict escalation as (Freidel 2023). The Islamic State and al-Qaeda have both already taken advantage of the moment to call for individuals to act against Jewish targets in Europe and North America. The terrorist threat could also increase from the far right, as accelerationist groups and white supremacists amplify both antisemitic and Islamophobic content to further their agenda. Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has instructed the security service Mossad to act against Hamas leaders "wherever they are." This opens the door for possible targeted Israeli operations outside the Middle East (cited after The Times of Israel 2023).

As the great Lithuanian Jewish intellectual and philosopher Leonidas Donskis predicted in 2006, there could be a new European disease: an exaggerated anti-Israeli stance, which misrepresents the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and attempts to delegitimize the State of Israel (2016: 24). Critics of Israel should apply responsibility in discourse and action by addressing both their associative context and organizational affiliations with these campaigns of criticism. One of the solutions to address growing antisemitism is to include an accurate representation of Jewish history, life

and culture across various subjects. We need to address the complexity of the phenomenon of antisemitism tied to critique of Israel, and the danger of repressing an important democratic debate. Two major challenges and responses can be pointed out:

– Antisemitism pervades the public sphere, especially in the light of the developments. Reproducing and engraining negative stereotypes about Jews is widespread. Some member states such as Germany have responded by appointing coordinators (via state or federal units) on combating antisemitism.
– There is a very low reporting for antisemitic discrimination in all ideologies. The question has to be raised how much antisemitism enters the mainstream in times of a new conflict (cleavage) between identity and globalism.

To tackle antisemitism has therefore several dimensions due to the increasing polarization in politics and society. It needs a common effort in terms of "zero tolerance". The current laws have to be in focus, as well as antisemitic incidents in terms of an "early warning system". In this regard, a deeper look at the dynamics and interactions of antisemitism in all the (old and new) ideologies. In this context, the political discourse needs to be protected beyond the ongoing debate about fake news. Antisemitism still creates the effects of being a dangerous conspiracy theory. Jews have served as scapegoats – those who are irrationally blamed for societal problems – for over two thousand years.

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CHAPTER 2

GLOBALIZED ANTISEMITISM
DESIGNING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RESEARCH ON JUDEOPHOBIA IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Lars Rensmann

RESEARCHING ANTISEMITISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Antisemitism has a long history, dating back to ancient times (Wistrich 1991). Yet antisemitism, as an ideology and cultural code, has also particularly benefitted from, and even thrived on, massive socio-economic and cultural transformations as well as societal conflicts and crises that have shaped the modern world (Rensmann 1998; Salzborn 2010; Volkov 2006). In the course of the 19th century, the historical matrix of anti-Jewish stereotypes became molded into a full-fledged modern, yet ideologically anti-modern world-view that charges Jews with secretly orchestrating all actual or imagined social, political and individual evils of modernity and its crises. Merging century-old anti-Jewish religious and other traditional resentments with modern conspiracy propaganda in a variety of politico-cultural and religious contexts, including post-Christian and Islamic societies (Becker 2020), during the first globalization – since the end of the 19th and by the early 20th century – antisemitism had turned into a wide-spread global conspiracy myth with broad appeal in different communities and social strata across the globe. In the course of the 20th century, then, hatred of Jews even mutated into a totalitarian Nazi ideology motivating the extermination of the European Jews in the Shoah.

That antisemitism could outlive the unprecedented mass atrocities of the Holocaust and would ultimately resurge as a global political and social force, is both shocking and astonishing. In many post-War democracies and beyond, overt antisemitism had become politically delegitimized over the years in the wake of the Shoah and its memory – even though the emergence of anti-antisemitism and the discrediting of Jew-hatred remained embedded in public controversies, faced denial of national guilt and resentment (Barkan 2000), and went through an often conflictual processing mirroring a seesaw between learning and forgetting (Friedlander 2000; Judt 2005).[1]

Yet, against the backdrop of antisemitism's history, simultaneously it seems hardly surprising that Judeophobia could experience a large-scale public and political comeback in the current global age. First, social research based on longitudinal diachronic data and measures has shown time and again that antisemitism had never really disappeared but remained a powerful "societal undercurrent," as Max Horkheimer had once called it, in many societies and continued to travel globally. This applies to authoritarian states with an official antisemitic ideology, such as Iran or Qatar, but also to consolidated constitutional post-Holocaust democracies, where authoritarianism and ethnocentrism never vanished while wide-spread antisemitism kept lingering and occasionally erupted in public debates.

Second, since the turn of the century, the current period of the 'second globalization' (Markovits/Rensmann 2010), which has evolved since the end of the Cold War, is marked not only by rapid, accelerated, and intensified changes and general globalizing effects in the realm of culture, society, economics, and communication. Most strikingly, our era is characterized by socio-political and economic instability, uncertainty, and crises that have dramatically eroded political systems and citizens' trust in democratic institutions, governance, and party systems. In the past, such systemic crises emboldened precisely the broad autocratization trends, international military conflicts, and forms of asymmetric warfare which we see today, but also the successful social

and political mobilization of an antisemitic world-view interpreting them. After all, antisemitism primarily functions as an ideological conspiracy fantasy using broad historical reservoirs of often contradictory resentments constituting the modern anti-Jewishness: It pretends to 'explain' the societal transformations, conflicts, social antagonisms, and wars of the modern world by pointing to imagined secret actions of Jewish collectives. Antisemitism thus offers a handy lens to make sense of the contradictions and complexities of the modern world by making '(the) Jews' responsible for, and the collective personification of, its negative effects and crises. And indeed, antisemitism's recent forceful public resurgence marches in step with these crises and violent conflicts as well as a third global "wave of autocratization" (Lührmann/Lindberg 2019) emboldening autocracies and endangering democracies since the first decade of the 21st century, even though to vary varying degrees.

Serving as *the* conspiracy myth sui generis, today we witness that antisemitism's historical matrix has made a significant return, albeit at times in modernized forms, onto the global stage by means of new, often transnational communicative arenas and media ecosystems, old and new political actors (including states, parties, and other non-state actors), and globally travelling authoritarian 'partner ideologies.' But we still know too little about these factors and dynamics.

The remainder of this article briefly outlines four current research areas which are the subject of some new and innovative studies, yet also point to many open research gaps and desiderata: research exploring and theoretically conceptualizing different forms and manifestations of antisemitism, old and new, and the politico-cultural opportunity structures for its mobilization; research on new (trans-)national political antisemitism, its main actors and arenas; research on the spread of antisemitism on social media, 'alternative' media ecologies, and new digital publics; and social science surveys and experimental studies examining the scope and motivations of antisemitism's appeal in global society.

UNDERSTANDING ANTISEMITISM: IDENTIFYING ITS NATURE, FORMS AND FACTORS

Proper conceptual and theoretical frameworks are required in order to develop social research designs that allow us to (1) understand the nature of antisemitism as a specific ideology and set of resentments, (2) develop robust criteria and indicators for its appearance, (3) analyze contemporary antisemitism in its various old and modernized forms, manifestations, and scope, as well as (4) examine the factors and conditions contributing to antisemitism's relevance in politics and society today.

DEFINING ANTISEMITISM

(1) It is important to understand the phenomenon of contemporary antisemitism in its general and specific dimensions in order to develop meaningful research designs. Antisemitism carries both features that are analogous and features that are distinct from other social resentments against minorities (Marcus 2015; Rensmann 2017a: 145-214). Similar to, for instance, colonial racism, antisemitism collectively discriminates against, denigrates, devalues, and dehumanizes human beings by using stereotypes vis-à-vis a minority or a group. But antisemitism is also profoundly distinct from racism, which rigorously looks down on the group that is subjected to denigration. Antisemitism, by contrast, denigrates Jews, yet also *looks up* to them: it attributes secret power if not world control to the Jewish minority, imagining Jews as a string-pulling global elite and community that is made responsible for conflicts, war, social change and upheaval, disunity, exploitation and existential threats to communities, peoples, and humankind at large. In fact, no other ideology or cluster of resentments embodies a similar, all-encompassing, hermetic conspiratorial worldview as (modern) antisemitism.

Most contemporary social research seriously engaging with the subject recognizes that antisemitism serves as the historical conspiracy fantasy par excellence; it functions as the conspiracy myth *sui generis*. This key function of antisemitism is to handily explain all social processes, transformations, conflicts or issues experienced as a subjective or "social malaise" (Leo Lowenthal) in the social world by pointing to the alleged machinations of "the Jews." This specific function can be traced backed to the (ancient and modern) history of various culturally reproduced anti-Jewish images – from fantasies about all-powerful global bankers, the "Rothschilds," to inventions of "Jewish secret plans" for "world domination," as in the infamous forgery of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* to constructions of "rootless Jews" as a cosmopolitan, deceitful, "parasitic" and conspiratorial and globally networking community lacking any legitimate homeland. The "pure fantasy" (Schwarz-Friesel 2019a) of antisemitism as a conspiracy myth functions comprehensively as an anti-modern, "reified, personified, total explanation of all the misunderstood 'evils' of modernity and all the negatively marked socio-cultural processes of change." Until this day, such objectifying perception fundamentally distinguishes antisemitism from other resentments, other similarities notwithstanding (Rensmann, 2004: 31, 128).

Think of, for example, the transnationally transmitted "Great Replacement" myth which has been disseminated and popularized by the global far right in recent years. The myth suggests that autochthonous 'white' populations are currently being "replaced" by (especially Muslim) non-white migrants. Yet migrants hereby do not appear as subjects or independent actors of such migration. Rather, they are fantasized as objects of a major scheme designed and orchestrated by "globalists", a "global cabal" led by the Jewish philanthropist "George Soros", or explicitly by "the Jews." Ever-present in global cultural history and a million times globally reproduced today on the internet and social media, antisemitism time and again offers an empty vessel and infinite projection matrix making 'explaining' the world by means of collective personification and making Jews responsible for everything that may go wrong in today's world.[2] This function also explains its particular appeal in different communities, social strata, and political groups around the globe – paving the way for its newest, most recent globalization by digital means.

The matrix of this conspiracist worldview, which is constitutive for the specificity of antisemitism and cannot be found in any other racist ideology, is often historically and empirically accompanied by the existential wish for the complete destruction of the perceived "Jewish enemy." Of course, we know from the history of genocide that racism may take on exterminatory forms as well; the global history of racism has not been limited to oppression and discrimination (see, among others, Priester 2003). Antisemitic ideology, however, is intimately linked to the redemptive idea that the entire world must be "cleansed" of the Jews in order to ensure a nation's or humankind's survival (Friedlander 1998). The closely related two dimensions of a world-conspiracy fantasy ascribing secret string-pulling power to a global(ist) Jewish cabal, on the one hand and, on the other hand, the exterminatory idea that the troubles and strife of a community, a nation, and the world necessitate the dissolution of Jewish life, Jewish communities, and the existence of a Jewish state, are distinguishing trademarks of antisemitism in its "Western tradition" (Nirenberg 2014). It attributes all or most of the world's evils to Jews and simultaneously, calls for their disappearance or destruction as the "solution" or means to "liberation." Contemporary social and political research designs, both quantitative and qualitative-reconstructive, need to take note of antisemitism's particular functions and history, and the specific nature of anti-Jewish resentments and their cultural codes, innuendos, connotations, and associations beyond the immediate semantic content – otherwise researchers may neither recognize nor be able to analyse antisemitism when they face it.

DEVELOPING INDICATORS AND CRITERIA FOR RESEARCH

(2) As with other subjects of the social sciences, both definitions of and criteria for what constitutes antisemitism vary within a continuously developing field. However, narrow definitions limiting themselves to overt Jew hatred, or hatred against and persecution of Jews "as Jews," are as

outdated and inadequate as definitions and criteria limiting racism to overt racial hatred and racist name-calling or persecution. Such definitions may in advance exclude institutional, modernized, camouflaged or coded forms of antisemitism. Yet, while few scholars today would apply such narrow definitions of racism and deny the existence of institutional or camouflaged racism, there are still proponents of such narrow definitions of antisemitism, even though they are marginalized in most serious scholarship examining contemporary Judeophobia. Narrow definitions downplay most forms of contemporary antisemitism, including those forms using hatred against Israel and "Zionists" to advance hatred against Jews. Those definitions are fuelled by public controversies about the Jewish state, and especially by wide-spread claims in public discourse that Jews allegedly "weaponize", "misuse" or "instrumentalize" antisemitism charges, i.e. deliberately make false antisemitism accusations in order to shield Jews and Israel from criticism. In his cutting-edge research on contemporary left-wing antisemitism, David Hirsh calls this claim the "Livingston formulation" after the former left-wing mayor of London who attempted to discredit antisemitism charges against him by claiming Jews had made them in bad faith in order to advance illegitimate collective interests (Hirsh 2018). The Livingston formulation suggests that Jews illegitimately raise and construe antisemitism where there is none, and they do so in bad faith to advance their own or Israel's purposes.[3] Such attacks against Jews for raising issues of discrimination, exclusion, and violence against them and for presumably "weaponizing" antisemitism remain common in the public sphere.[4] But they should have no place in serious scholarship examining contemporary antisemitism, and in mainstream scholarship on antisemitism those tropes and frames are increasingly marginalized alongside all too narrow definitions of antisemitism nurturing its denial.

More often than not, contemporary antisemitism is not just directed against Jews "as Jews," but it refers to resentments against Jews *because they are Jews*. Consequently, limiting antisemitism to social phenomena overtly directed against Jews as Jews would ignore or in advance deny most forms and expressions of contemporary antisemitism. Antisemitism, in fact, can also be expressed in perceptions of Jews by means of innuendo, as "globalists" or "the Rothschilds." Another well-established method modernizing antisemitic ideology is to talk of "the Zionists" rather than "the Jews," or of a "worldwide Zionist lobby" instead of a "Jewish world conspiracy" while otherwise employing the standard antisemitic repertoire – from the anti-Jewish stereotypes of "unscrupulousness" or "vengefulness" to the alleged conspiracy-mindedness and media-sustained manipulative power of "the Jews." The virulent cultural-social reservoir of antisemitism, which has never fully lost its appeal, can reappear even when Jews are not named as Jews. An example is the QAnon movement, which originated in the USA, but which has now also found an audience in Europe. It disseminates the antisemitic image of a secretly working and diabolical "deep state" run by "the elite," who allegedly drink the blood of children that they torture. The presence of antisemitic imagery and ideology is connotated here even when it is not spelled out. Moreover, any scholarly definition that can actually be operationalized in research has to be focused on antisemitism's 'objective', i.e. intersubjectively and transnationally transmitted social content, meanings, and connotations. The subjective and objective *causes* for antisemitism may very well vary, but judging what antisemitism is and what it is not cannot be dependent on external factors such as collective "identities" (e.g. 'as a German-Palestinian, he actually wanted to protest against Israel and Zionism'), diffuse general "contexts" ('in the context of the Middle East conflict, this is not meant in an antisemitic way') or presumed subjective "intentions" (e.g. 'did she mean what she said in an anti-Jewish way or does she just hate "the Zionists"?'). Such conflation of explanandum and explanans, or of the subject to be explained with the explanatory account explaining the phenomenon, would constitute a cardinal sin of the social research.[5]

Finally, indicators and examples of antisemitism need to be reflective of the empirical transformations and mutations of antisemitic expressions and hate speech today, which especially find wide-spread dissemination in various new media ecosystems. They include charging Jews or the Jewish state of Israel with ritual murder or Jewish Israelis being "child murderers;" exclusively denying Jews any right of political self-determination and/or denying the Jewish state's right to exist (unlike any other state); equating Jews with Nazis or Israel with Nazism; excluding individuals from public

events only because they are Jewish or Jewish Israelis; or using classical antisemitic stereotypes such as "greedy for money" or "treacherous" when talking about Jewish groups, organizations, or the Jewish state. As such, of course, neither criticism of Israel nor the Israeli government is antisemitic. And neither the IHRA definition (IHRA 2020), which is by now widely accepted in many liberal democracies and among civil society institutions and has been adopted by the EU Parliament, nor any serious antisemitism scholar would claim that it is. However, criticism of Israel is *not* a priori immune from being antisemitic or promoting antisemitic resentments, either, let alone that anti-Zionism cannot be construed as antisemitic (see Hirsh 2018). It *can be* antisemitic. The Jewish state can serve as a projection matrix for seemingly more 'legitimate antisemitism.' And using hatred against Israel and singling out "the Zionists" (or attacking, in dehumanizing antisemitic phrasing, "Zionist dogs") are currently among the most common means to express hatred against Jews (Schwarz-Friesel 2019a; 2019b).[6]

FORMS OF ANTISEMITISM, CONVENTIONAL AND MODERNIZED

(3) In addition to such (i) *Israel-related or anti-Zionist antisemitism*, which uses the Jewish state as a target and as means of expressing hatred against Jews by applying classical anti-Jewish stereotypes and construing the Jewish state as exceptionally evil or particularly illegitimate compared to all other nation-states, (ii) *Holocaust relativization and denial*, and (iii) multiple *new antisemitic conspiracy myths* explaining social conflicts and crises, from Covid-19 and new military conflicts to financial crises and problems related to global capitalism, are the major, most prominent forms through which antisemitism has resurged globally in the public and political arena. Thus, the updating of antisemitic ideology production today finds particular expression in hostility to Israel or Israel-focused antisemitism, Holocaust relativization, and new or reconfigured conspiracy fantasies.

Of course, these major empirical forms, which cut across political camps and affiliations, can be analytically distinguished, yet they are not mutually exclusive but interrelated and overlapping. They often appear together. For instance, a statement such as "What the Jews in Israel do to the Palestinians is similar to what the Nazis did to the Jews, but the global Zionist media cover it all up" combines Israel-related antisemitism with Holocaust relativization and modernized antisemitic conspiracy thinking, incorporating the age-old antisemitic myth that the Jews control the media.

Recent contemporary antisemitism research registers a rise of overt antisemitism transgressing hitherto established boundaries of the sayable, yet also addresses modernized forms and latent resentments which may under certain conditions become manifest. The concept of *modernized antisemitism* refers to the particular adaptability of antisemitic forms of expression that "have responded to the changed … conditions after the Holocaust with ideological coding and modifications (and on the supply side develop new and "legitimate" antisemitic mobilization strategies) without necessarily breaking with modern antisemitism as an interpretative framework" (Rensmann, 2004: 79; see also Rensmann, 2017a: 169).

There are various distinct forms, motivations, and contexts which contemporary antisemitism research has conceptualized and which are currently researched. The concept of *post-Holocaust antisemitism* refers to all manifestations of Jew-hatred that take place despite the Shoah but also includes specific motivations related to the history of anti-Jewish persecution during the Shoah. *Secondary antisemitism* is such a motivation of anti-Jewish resentments. It is related to the history and memory of the Holocaust. This type of antisemitism exists not despite but *because of Auschwitz* (Adorno 1971). Secondary antisemitism, first conceptualized and analyzed by the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research in the 1960s, is motivated by the unconscious desire to overcome the remembrance of one's own countries' perpetrator history.

By means of transferring guilt to Jews and turning them into perpetrators, the burden of the past and the shame associated with national guilt is alleviated. Antisemitism is here a means for this

alleviation. The denigration of Jews is motivated by the wish to downplay, reject, or split off the past and associated guilt from one's identity. By construing Jews either as guilty for their own past persecution or as just as bad and guilty today as those who committed past crimes against the Jews, the hierarchy between Jews as victims and non-Jews who committed crimes against them vanishes. Such a reversal can also motivate the desire to construe the Jewish state of Israel as just as "colonialist" or just as bad as and just as genocidal as Nazism. The perpetrator-victim reversal is, to be sure, also a historical pattern of antisemitism in general. Antisemitism always holds Jews responsible for their own discrimination and persecution, which are viewed as mere defense actions against alleged Jewish power.

Other ideological modernizations of antisemitism may include ideologically hermetic, particularly Manichaean versions of anti-imperialism, which have a long track record in leftist post-War history (Kloke 2006; Haury 2002), and post-colonialism (see Klävers, 2019; Elbe 2024). Following the fallacies of 'anti-imperialist' history writing dividing the world into "good" oppressed and "evil" (Western) oppressor peoples (while classifying the imperialist Soviet Union, which invaded Afghanistan, and China as 'non-imperialist'), some post-colonial activists misconceive the state of Israel as an "imperialist" country or, more recently, "settler colonial state" – notwithstanding Israel's historical origins in ancient Jewish lands and the fact that Israel is largely a refugee nation populated by long-time native residents, refugees from the Holocaust atrocities, and refugees from persecutions in the Arab world and elsewhere. Antisemitism may benefit from post-colonial narratives which construe Israeli Jews as "white supremacists" or "settler colonialists," while perceiving the Palestinians are as colonially oppressed "blacks" (see e.g. Hirsh 2018), no matter how widely shared anti-black racism there is in Palestinian communities and how brown or black most Israelis are. According some post-colonial narratives, local Jews have become "white" and they have been transformed from an oppressed and persecuted minority into "white settler colonialists" rather than having been stateless refugees who have found refuge in a small part of the Middle East (after being persecuted in Europe and then expelled from most Arab Middle Eastern countries).

Postcolonial antisemitism, then, views the small Jewish state of Israel, a liberal democracy hosting around 1/1000 of the world population, as the most evil force in global politics. Based on homogenizing narratives falsely suggesting that Israeli Jews, the majority of which are Mizrah Jews coming from the region alongside black Ethiopian Jews, are "white colonizers" while Palestinians are "black," postcolonial antisemitism, hence, obsessively attacks the multicultural and multiracial Jewish state in a way that denies Jews the very right to exist in Israel, refuses to acknowledge Israeli Jews' right to even defend their lives, and at times openly justifies terrorist atrocities against Jewish civilians by framing the terror against Jewish (and Arab) Israelis as "resistance." This has happened especially after the October 7 massacres committed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, even though these organizations openly declare that they want to remove the Jewish "filth" from the "sacred land" of Palestine (cited in Hubbard 2023).

Some self-declared 'post-colonial' reactions, especially in parts of the academic world, included defenses of Hamas and silence about their crimes, pointing to a stunning lack of empathy for the Jewish victims of mass rape and mass murder in the global left (Ilouz 2024) coalescing with the moral and cognitive unwillingness or inability, in Hannah Arendt's words, to think and judge. Reminiscent of leftist idealizations of the Khmer Rouge genocide squads killing a third of the Cambodian population in the 1970s, glorifications of antisemitic terrorists, who aim to eliminate Jewish life and Jews, as "resistance," fighters and construing Hamas, which is also known for executing dissidents, non-believers, and members of the LGBTQ* community alongside demonizing and killing Jews, are paired with an ideology-driven Manichean view of history distorting basic facts and excluding virtually all contradictions. Such a peculiar, dogmatic, post-factual and anti-intellectual view of a regional conflict sacrifices any nuance, understanding, and complexity in its overarching desire to put all blame for violence on Jews and the Jewish state. In so doing, century-old antisemitic tropes, such as the child murderer trope, can freely resurge within a post-factual ideological outlook that is often promoted by Western intellectuals self-righteously

claiming uncompromising moral superiority over Jews in Israel as well as Palestinians living under Hamas, a majority of whom rejected the group in the past (PEW Research Center 2010).

Historically, such anti-intellectualism has often marched in step with antisemitism and authoritarianism, in its rightist and leftist variants. New research designs investigate the relationship between contemporary antisemitism and misogyny as well as racist ideologies (e.g. Stögner 2020). Many scholars have come to note that it is no coincidence that the current rise of anti-democratic, authoritarian, anti-feminist and anti-liberal ideologies and regimes is accompanied by the resurgence and spread of globalized antisemitism.

These different forms and ways through which antisemitism is articulated and mobilized today resurge in various current political movements, which have only recently begun to become the subject of political research (see discussion below). They are widely present in societies across the globe, apparently benefitting from new social media and digitally restructured public spheres facilitating the distribution of misinformation, new and modernized "rumors about the Jews" (Adorno 2001), and century-old anti-Jewish conspiracy myths which had never fully disappeared.

POLITICAL-CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

(4) In order to better understand antisemitism´s globalized and increasingly global traction, but also variations of appeal among different socio-political milieus and political cultures, new theory-guided social research explores multiple origins and factors causing the resurgence and unleashing of antisemitism as a social and political force. As in social and political research in general, even exploratory new designs should not be driven by methods and their application, but guided by good, theoretically grounded yet heuristic research questions that, of course, can be subject to empirical falsification. There are historical and social theory explanations, for instance, why conspiracy myths reifying and personifying societal problems have such a broad appeal in an increasingly complex and globalized world, and why Jews are the primary target of such myths given the cultural persistence and historical matrix of (modern) antisemitism.

A dynamic approach accounting for the processual interplay of a variety of factors – and both structure and agency as well as the interaction of supply and demand side. Such an approach studies, for instance, antisemitism and the rise of other ideological narratives within the context of political-cultural opportunity structures (Couperus et al. 2023, Rensmann 2004). Rather than explaining the current rise of antisemitism by one straight-forward causal mechanism that can be isolated, the political-cultural opportunity structure (PCOS) model examines and reconstructs the dynamic interplay between a variety of social, political, and public actors (including political parties, movements, governments, influencers and agitators) advancing or restricting antisemitism and its legitimacy, on the one hand; and on the other hand, historical cultural legacies in a distinct (trans-)national context and constitutional, institutional and systemic conditions; different sets of social attitudes and values in a given society (which actors can reinforce, sanction, or help polarize), actual social conflicts and societal inequalities and, last but not least, the evolution of cultural and political discourses and tropes in relation to antisemitism in digitally restructured public spheres (originally Rensmann 2004). Analyses of antisemitism within the framework of a dynamic understanding of political-cultural opportunity structures point well beyond, and incorporate a much broader set of factors than, conventional political opportunity structure (POS) approaches within political science and social movement research, which focus on institutional and systemic opportunities and obstacles. The analysis of politico-cultural opportunity structures and the role of political agency with regard to spreading, reinforcing, or restricting the growth of public and political antisemitism should be applied in a global comparative perspective today, addressing the appeal of antisemitism and the conditions for its rise within democracies as well as dictatorships. Yet little systematic work has been done yet in comparative political research on contemporary antisemitism.

THE GLOBAL RE-POLITICIZATION OF ANTISEMITISM: EXAMINING CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL ACTORS AND SPACES

Undoubtedly, the current globalization of antisemitism is fostered by, i.e. intensified and accelerated through, the global repoliticization of antisemitism by various political actors, parties, governments, and movements around the world. In various political spaces, they generate, reproduce, and advance antisemitic ideas, tropes, myths and codes across territorial borders, groups, publics, and political boundaries. Political actors have arguably reinvigorated the overall presence of antisemitism, the convergence or 'synchronization' of antisemitic ideology, and the social acceptance of anti-Jewish tropes that also takes shape in broader publics (Rensmann 2020), that is: there is a globalized mainstreaming of antisemitism (Hirsh 2018: 113).

As argued above, three elements of globalized antisemitism feature most prominently across the aforementioned political spaces: anti-Jewish conspiracy myths; Holocaust denial or trivialization; and antisemitic hatred of Israel. The re-emergence of the "Jewish question" in the twenty-first century, then, is driven especially by three different types of political actors, some of which, however, display striking ideological overlap when it comes to antisemitism: political actors on the right, Islamist political actors, and political actors on the left. These "three faces of antisemitism" (Herf 2024), other political differences notwithstanding, also interact, overlap, and often convergence on the antisemitic question and within the dynamic evolution of contemporary antisemitism, which deserves more rigorous and sober academic research beyond public commentaries in a highly charged public sphere. A special focus should be on the spaces or arenas and the discursive horizons in which these actors operate and seem to flourish, i.e. which politico-cultural opportunity structures are particularly favorable – including cultural legacies and the communicative public realm – and how these actors can utilize both national and global public arenas or ecosystems generated by digital means.

Social and political research on antisemitism, hence, has recognized that antisemitism, on the one hand, developed as a *political* ideology, in which ideological social ideas and explanatory frameworks are harnessed to political ends. On the other hand, antisemitism exists as a more broadly shared social ideology or societal undercurrent. Its explosive force, however, evolves through the interplay between both (on "right-wing" and "left-wing" antisemitism today and in modern history, see, for example, Botsch 2019, Kloke 2006, Haury 2002, Kistenmacher 2016, Herf 2016). Understanding the interplay of various types of antisemitic actors with their national and transnational environments and among those actors is not just in itself a relevant subject of political science and social research. It is also a key endeavor in order to better grasp the current crisis of democracies, and the politico-cultural dynamics at large, because the phenomenon points to a broader politico-cultural revolution against liberal, pluralistic democracy, universalism, and modernity. Actors on the right, the left, and Islamists all take part in this revolution. Its current enormous political, social, and public appeal and its origins deserve much closer scrutiny than initial studies have provided.

POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM ON THE RIGHT

The global radical right has provided a significant political space in which antisemitism is mobilized and articulated continuously since World War II, and today again increasingly so. Largely discredited and politically marginalized in much of the Western world after the Holocaust against the Jews of Europe and the military defeat of Nazism and fascism, various radical right and right-wing populist movements and parties have had a forceful comeback in recent decades (Bar-On 2018; Norris 2009; Rensmann 2011a). Since the 1980s and 1990s, several new radical right parties have emerged, while others re-branded or re-invented themselves in search of a broadened popular appeal and of regaining public legitimacy (Mudde 2013; Betz 2018; Ignazi 2003). By now, radical right actors have re-entered the broader public sphere, celebrated many electoral successes, and gained seats

in democratic parliaments the world over; in some democracies radical right populist parties even govern today. Following a 'populist turn' and ideological modernizations, some of these actors distanced themselves from classic fascist, racially antisemitic symbols, rhetoric, and tropes (Ignazi 2003). Yet certain key ideational features and undercurrents have remained the same over time, and they are shared by all types of radical right actors – from radical right populist parties to extremist, openly anti-system fascist groups and white supremacist or neo-Nazi terrorists. These intertwined features are ethnic nationalism (Bar-On 2018), overt or coded racism and anti-immigrant views, authoritarianism (Mudde 2003), as well as overt or coded antisemitism (Wodak 2018). The latter is, and has always been, a constitutive ideological trait of the radical and extreme right (Rensmann 2004, 2011; Salzborn 2018).

The nostalgic glorification of one's nation or national identity, the construction of Jews as the quintessential or existential "enemies of the nation," and the conspiratorial personification of all perceived evils of the modern world in 'globalist' Jews are historically interlinked. They mirror each other like megalomania and paranoia. Such conspiracy myths constitute a core element of radical right ideology and its mobilization – and is a striking, preeminent feature of globalized contemporary antisemitism. Despite antisemitism's central significance among the old and new radical right and among radical right actors across the globe – and particularly the prominent role of anti-Jewish conspiracy fantasies – there has been surprisingly little research focusing on contemporary radical right antisemitism (Salzborn 2018; Wodak 2018). However, the antisemitic conspiracy myth that Jews control the media, political institutions, the government, international organizations, and the global economy – and indeed 'steer' processes of societal globalization against (ethno-)national interests – is salient among the radical right and its supporters. It is on display in speeches on the radio shows of the far right conspiracy ideologue Alex Jones,, who sees Jewish billionaire George Soros as "the head of the Jewish mafia" trying to derail the Trump presidency (Ben-Ami 2018); in the transnational radical right "identitarian movement," in various radical right populist parties, as well as among the neo-Nazi fringes and right-wing terrorist groups assaulting synagogues. An especially significant example of such antisemitic conspiracy thinking on the radical right is the, by now, globalized myth that 'globalist' Jews orchestrate global mass migration waves into ethnically predominantly white nation states. Originating in radical pre-World War II antisemitism and later in neo-Nazi and white supremacist fringes, this nationalist rightist conspiracy fantasy advances the myth that Jews would deliberately and secretly seek a 'great replacement' or 'white genocide.' [7]

At times, the "Great Replacement" fantasy does not directly point to a 'global Jewish plot', but to imagined conspiracies by 'corrupt international elites' or 'globalists' (in the jargon of the French author Renaud Camus who helped popularize the "Great Replacement"). However, these terms often also work as stand-in codes for Jews, and American far rightists and neo-Nazis collectively yelled "Jews will not replace us" at a torch march in Charlottesville in 2017. More frequently, the Jewish philanthropist George Soros is identified and fantasized as the string-puller behind the alleged "replacement" through global migration. This trope has long migrated into more mainstreamed authoritarian-nationalist populist vocabulary, from that of Victor Orbán's FIDESZ (the ruling party in Hungary), the tweets by US President Donald Trump, or Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage. Attached to a racist and antisemitic emergency mode and a readiness to commit violence, this trope has recently motivated right-wing terrorist acts from the US to Norway and New Zealand (see, for a more extensive initial discussion, Rensmann 2020). Holocaust relativization, which constitutes another main element of globalized antisemitism, features prominently on the radical right as well. Radical right populist parties have tried to reach out to Jewish voters (Taub 2017), or praise Israel for its 'fight against Islamism.

Tensions within the right on Israel notwithstanding, antisemitism in partly overt and partly camouflaged or modernized forms is an integral part of a nostalgic, anti-modern, politico-cultural nationalist, 'anti-globalist' counter-revolution across the globe (Rensmann 2017b). Parties which share core populist-nationalists ideological tenets – including white ethnic nationalism and some

variation of the "great replacement" conspiracy myth – frequently also show open sympathy for the more extreme racist and antisemitic types, or 're-tweet' their slogans. It is through these parties and actors with their, by now, broad public appeal that ethnic nationalist friend-enemy thinking and antisemitic conspiracy myths directed against 'globalist' Jews as the white nation's existential other, an 'alien' cosmopolitan enemy of the nation, have re-entered the center of public debates even in democratic countries.

ISLAMIST POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM

With the rise of radical political Islamism over the last three decades, antisemitism has found another aggressive, increasingly globalized platform, or a second political space, in the contemporary world. Radical Islamism shares with ethnic nationalism, and the nationalist radical right, the glorification of an illiberal authoritarian order; the nostalgic idea of a purified collective identity finding salvation by way of violent elimination of those declared the in-group's enemies; and antisemitism as a constitutive ideological feature (Küntzel 2018). Yet while Islamism puts antisemitism at center stage, it also provides an ideological alternative to ethnic nationalism and it has proven its truly trans-national appeal far beyond the Middle East. All variations of radical Islamism, distinctions and violent internal conflicts notwithstanding, aim at some sort of religious-based global domination in a world that is "liberated" from modern Western "decadence," infidels – and especially from Jews and "Zionists." The origins of Islamism can be traced back to the beginnings of the 20th century. Ideologues like Sayyib Qutb and Hasan Al-Banna, the founding fathers of the Egyptian "Muslim Brotherhood," advanced a movement and world view influenced by both modern totalitarian and backward-looking religious elements that were molded into a comprehensive yet eclectic ideology that is rigorously anti-Jewish (Herf 2009; Webman 2015). Traced back to the 1930s, as Jeffrey Herf has demonstrated, there was already a first totalitarian, antisemitic "alliance borne of shared enemies and shared ideology … between the radical Islamist, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, and the Nazi regime" (Herf 2007: 65). Islamism's distinct elements as a "counter-cosmopolitan" (Appiah 2006) – that is, a global, non-ethnic but rigorously identitarian, exclusivist and violent-ideology calling for Islam and Sharia as the foundations of government, find expression in a variety of often competing movements, states, and non-state actors.

Three types of Islamist political formations which promote antisemitism and violence against Jews are especially salient today: globally operating radical Islamist groups like ISIS and Al Qaeda; regional Islamist terrorist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah, financed by Iran and various other governments and, especially supported by Iran, the Houthis in Yemen; and Islamist governments themselves, in particular Iran, which sponsors such trans-national Islamist groups and non-state terrorist actors. The Hamas Charter remains aggressively antisemitic and contains references to the notorious, century-old Russian anti-Jewish conspiracy myth, the forgery of "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion"; later to be used as Nazi propaganda. The charter accuses Jews "of relying on secret societies to foment global economic and political disasters" and calls on Hamas followers to "prepare for 'the next round with the Jews, the merchants of war'" (Lipstadt 2014). Third, radical Islamist antisemitism is nurtured by Islamist governments who over the last decades have seized power in various countries and reshaped national political cultures accordingly, including in Chechnya, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Indonesia, among others. Antisemitism and antisemitic anti-Zionism are hereby official policy, and part and parcel of the political doctrine by which these regimes govern. The Iranian "Islamic Republic" serves as a particular case study. Even though it is somewhat less apocalyptic than many other Islamist, non-state actors, revolutionary anti-Zionism is a key pillar of Iran's radical Islamist ideology. The regime represents the most radical antisemitic, anti-Zionism in the Muslim Middle East, depicting the Jewish state "as 'Little Satan,' as a 'cancerous tumor' that has to be removed" and promoting "the official slogan that 'Israel has to be wiped out'" (Litvak 2007: 150).

Islamist movements, non-state terrorist actors, and governments have broad appeal among Muslim communities in the Middle East and abroad, including Europe (Jikeli 2014). Despite much, often polarized public debate on the subject, however, much more sober social research is needed to better understand the particular legacies, roles and relevance of antisemitism as social glue and mobilizing force in the construction of radical Muslim religious identities.

POLITICAL ANTISEMITISM ON THE LEFT

A third political space in need of more rigorous research is the radical left. It has been nurtured by classical "anti-imperialist" and more recently aforementioned "post-colonial" narratives, both of which have an in-built tendency to divide the world into "good" and "bad" states and peoples. Despite progressive and emancipatory credentials, here, too, we find contemporary antisemitism frequently tolerated, articulated, or even mobilized – often now alongside hatred against modern universalism, replicating classical right-wing hatred of universalism. There is, to be sure, no inherent link between the global radical left and antisemitism. Nevertheless, it is equally misguided, as Robert Fine and Philip Spencer (2017) point out, to think antisemitism and the left are intrinsically at odds with each other, and thus that there could be no such thing as 'left antisemitism.'

Three ideological trajectories have nurtured antisemitic ideas on the left: first, there are still virulent, centuries-old traditions of a reified "anti-capitalism" identifying Jews with capitalism, which has recurrently resonated in left-wing movements (Postone 1986).[8] Second, there is a leftist tradition of a Manichaean or binary "anti-imperialist" world view. Based on nationalistic and anti-pluralistic conceptions of societies, it divides the world into mean-spirited oppressing groups or nations (representing Western liberal capitalist democracies) and whole nations designated as essentially good but oppressed (Hirsh 2018: 3). Third, and closely related to this world view, there is the evolution and normalization of a radical anti-Zionism as part of the twentieth and twenty-first century cultural and post-colonial left. Being categorically against Israel, originally only a marker of Nazism, the radical right, and Islamism, has thus often turned into a feature or marker of radical left self-understandings as well (Markovits/Beyer 2018; also Wistrich 2012). Antisemitic anti-Zionism, which is of course not limited to left-wing groups and movements, attributes secret global political and media power to "Zionists". It entails demonizing Israel, its actions, and its citizens, while denying the Jewish states – and only the Jewish states – the very legitimacy to exist and, as seen, may even views Israeli children as "oppressors" and the legitimate targets of terrorist violence and murder. The world's only Jewish state is hereby ideologically denigrated as an "artificial state," an "apartheid state", or even a "genocidal project," [9] – and these claims about "genocide", which were raised long before Israel even responded to the Hamas terror attacks, are now part of post-colonial antisemitic movements after October 7, 2023. Consequently, this subjects the Jewish state, its institutions, citizens, and any Jew viewed, portrayed or labeled as a "Zionist," or any supporter of Israel (i.e. the vast majority of Jews), to double standards, boycotts, defamations as "racist settler-colonialists", and physical exclusions up to celebrating terror against Israeli citizens as "armed resistance" – while largely ignoring racism and antisemitism among groups such as Hamas or Hezbollah and "peoples" designated as "the victims of Zionism". Leftist anti-Zionism, then, is embedded in a binary narrative in which Israel epitomizes all evils of colonialism, Western modernity, and liberal democracy, whereas terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah are either glorified as "resistance" movements, replicating their self-description, or portrayed as void of all responsibility for violence – in spite of their wide-spread support for religious extremism, terrorism, homophobia, misogyny, hatred of LGBTQ+, and authoritarianism. This binary world-view points to an *inverse orientalism* that dehumanizes groups by means of collective idealization (Rensmann 2011b: 459), just as it demonizes Jews. Anti-Zionist narratives hereby often do not stop short of employing classic antisemitic imagery about a shrewd, ruthless, malevolent string-pulling, war-mongering and conspiratorial cabal of Jews as 'enemies of humanity' – or such imagery is tolerated as 'understandable' reactions to Israel (Schwarz-Friesel/ Reinharz 2017). Particularly the history of radical left justifications of terrorist violence against Jews around the world – from

Tel Aviv to Buenos Aires and Munich (Herf 2016) – as self-defense are mirrored in current manifestations of antisemitism on the left.

The three aforementioned components that are especially characteristic for current judeophobia are also present in parts of the left. We find (i) anti-Jewish conspiracy myths (about an allegedly world-wide, extremely powerful "Israel lobby" or "Jewish lobby" controlling governments and the media); (ii) Holocaust trivialization (for instance by equating Israel with Nazism, or Palestinians with the victims of the Shoah, or recently in slogans such as "Free Palestinians from German guilt"); and (iii) hatred of the Jewish state and its citizens, portrayed as the sole source of all conflicts and violence in the Middle East, or as an exceptionally brutal and ruthless collective in opposition to 'humanity' (for a critical analysis, see Nelson 2019). A fourth, and maybe particularly striking element of leftist antisemitism today, is *antisemitism denial*. When directed against the (radical) left, charges or criticisms of judeophobia tend to be fiercely rejected, given the left's anti-racist self-identification. Moreover, such charges are often viewed to be made by powerful Jews with hostile intentions. Yet it is exactly this self-immunization and self-exculpation mechanism tabooing discussions about antisemitism, refusing any willingness to investigate one's prejudices, and blaming the (Jewish) messenger – that enables leftist antisemitism to flourish.

Advocates of left-wing antisemitism today include various LGBTQ+, feminist, and post-colonial activists from Latin America to the US, South Africa and Europe. They are embedded in a specific type of identity politics and ideological campism, or a "politics of position" (Hirsh 2018: 3), in which Israel and Israelis are categorically viewed as extraordinary human rights violators or enemies of humanity. One of most significant examples of radical anti-Zionism merging into postmodern antisemitism that has emanated from the cultural discourses of the left is the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement (Lipstadt 2019: 177-183). Originally an invention by British left-wing anti-Zionist activists in the early 2000s (Hirsh 2018: 100-101), BDS has gained global traction by now and is supported by antisemites across the political spectrum, including a wide range of radical rightists, ethnic nationalists, neo-Nazis, Islamists as well as pan-Arab nationalists alike. BDS boycotts Israel, including the country's citizens and academic and cultural institutions, as well as Jewish institutions and individuals not willing to pass a loyalty test and distance themselves from Israel or their Israeli-Jewish identity (see Nelson 2019). BDS creates a narrative of the Israeli-Arab conflict that is exclusively focused on Jewish Israelis as perpetrators. This means that the agency, authoritarianism, and brutality of Hamas or Fatah are never criticized and seemingly play no role in the conflict, as BDS also displays no solidarity with the Palestinian victims of Hamas' terror, including gays and dissidents, or thousands of Palestinians murdered by the Assad regime (Tsurkov 2018). Moreover, the campaign provides a culture in which verbal antisemitism is hardly ever negatively sanctioned – to the contrary, leading BDS activists have repeatedly made antisemitic statements without negative sanctions by the campaign and movement. In addition to denying Jews political self-determination (and the Jewish state altogether), its lack of distancing towards brutal authoritarian groups like Hamas, as well as the broadly accepted uninhibited antisemitism of many of its advocates and supporters, the BDS movement actively discriminates against individuals with a Jewish-Israeli background by virtue of their ethnicity. For instance, in 2015 the Oslo human rights film festival rejected a documentary simply because it was produced by an Israeli. Unless the Israeli makes films about the "illegal occupation," his films would "not be shown" (cited in Anderson 2015).

Political antisemitism has forcefully resurged and publicly resurfaced over the last two decades, and particularly proliferated in the global public sphere over the last ten years. The antisemitic massacres committed by Hamas on October 7, 2023, and later on Israel's military responses, have given such political propaganda and mobilization another boost. Yet little systematic research has been dedicated to the contemporary process of the globalization of political antisemitism, though anti-Jewish myths have been repoliticized, globally engendered, and ideologically 'synchronized' in the three political spaces discussed above, and beyond these spaces. This process has also contributed to the process of normalization of anti-Jewish hostility. While antisemitism plays an

increasingly important role again in a broad variety of globalized radical movements around the world, it is neither limited to the political margins nor strictly speaking to the political sphere. A significant factor in the contemporary process of antisemitism's politicization, transnationalization and mainstreaming in global society, including robust Western liberal democracies, are new and largely digitally transformed global publics – and the significant rise of online antisemitism, which still largely remains an underresearched *terra incognita*.

GLOBAL ONLINE ANTISEMITISM: RESEARCHING JUDEOPHOBIA IN THE GLOBALIZED DIGITAL PUBLIC

As indicated, the global rise and reinforcement of antisemitic views – its current globalization – is strongly related to the *global digital structural transformation of the public sphere*. It has allowed for a globally intensified publicization of Jew hatred and related misinformation, spreading bottom up and top down, and features contemporary antisemitism's reinvigorated anti-Jewish global conspiracy myths, Holocaust trivialization, and hatred of the Jewish state. As Monika Schwarz-Friesel has shown, new digital media help dramatically disseminate, radicalize and normalize antisemitic conspiracy myths in the wider public (Schwarz-Friesel 2019a: 16). Antisemitism is hereby especially articulated in everyday communication processes on various regular online platforms – and, notably, mostly by ordinary users rather than primarily on extremist websites (Schwarz-Friesel 2019a: 18, 45). This happens also by means of publics restructured by digital means enabling unfiltered hate speech avoiding physical encounters. Moreover, private corporate quasi-monopolies like Facebook and Google, guided by their profit-maximizing algorithms (van Dijck/Poell/de Waal 2019), generally facilitate the consumption of post-factual, ideologically closed media bubbles. Add to this in recent years the Chinese platform TikTok, which has around one billion users world-wide and is also the most popular social medium among teenagers and young generational cohorts (*Generation Z*) in Western liberal democracies, which is today's beacon of misinformation and hate speech, and even less regulated for Western consumers than the aforementioned US commercial platforms and search engines.

Over years, unregulated profit-based social media platforms, search engines and fake news sites have emboldened unfiltered hate speech, for which they provide public platforms that favor such attention-drawing speech over nuanced reflection or factual journalism, and fostered fake news blurring all differences between facts and fantasies – and in particular antisemitism is the historical prototype of fake news *sui generis* since antiquity. In doing so, these social media and search engine corporations have transformed the public cultural climate globally, massively accelerating a long unfolding process of "expanding the domain and boundaries of the sayable" in public discourse, also vis-à-vis antisemitism (Rensmann 2004: 499).

Arguably more relevant than the use of digital media for terrorist activities, networking, and groups spreading violent antisemitic propaganda are social media and – increasingly AI-generated – antisemitic social media content reaching hundreds of millions of users in the general public. The way new social media function and create 'communities' and their effects on 'educating' especially young generational cohorts across the globe in the digital age, shaping their consciousness for generations to come, is in urgent need of more systematic, big data research. In spite of some innovative new research designs and projects (Hübscher 2020, Hübscher/von Mering 2022; Becker/Bolton 2022, Weimann 2024 in this volume)[10], there are many gaps especially in this subfield and especially in view of a global comparative and transnational horizon.

A special focus should be TikTok, and the role of influencers on this particularly prominent platform – as indicated, the most popular among young users worldwide. TikTok, with its endless stream of short videos and opportunities to comment, is still underresearched, and its meaning and significance are hardly understood. Although limited to a relatively small sample, a recent study by Eva Berendsen and Deborah Schnabel at the Anne Frank Educational Center in Germany

focusing on TikTok content on, and reactions to, the Hamas terror attacks against Israeli citizens provides initial indicators for the scope and depth of new verbal online antisemitism, its bluntness, and the way it reaches and shapes the views of increasingly younger audiences. The research shows how wide-spread and radical antisemitic hate speech freely unfolded after October 7, 2023, creating what the authors of the study call "the TikTok Intifada". They indicate that the TikTok algorithm favors terror propaganda, antisemitic hate speech, and misinformation. For young and very young and thus very vulnerable users, it offers a kind of "algorithmic radicalization" (Berendsen/Schnabel 2024: 34). For instance, 14.4 million viewers saw a video by influencer Abir El Saghir, who is prominent for offering cooking recipes, distributing sweets on the streets and celebrating after the Hamas atrocities committed at against Israeli youths, women, children and citizens (Berendsen/Schnabel 2024: 17).

Other influencers offer antisemitic hate speech next to beauty advice to young girls on how to best put on your daily make-up. AI-generated content on TikTok fabricating images of dead Palestinian children at the hands of Jews both spreads the antisemitic trope that the Jewish state of Israel aims at "murdering children," while simultaneously the actual deliberate murder of Jewish children by Hamas is either justified (or, in some videos, the very fact that the Hamas massacres happened at all is questioned). In videos shared millions of times, the Holocaust is trivialized and relativized by equating Auschwitz and Gaza, violence against Jews is glorified, and TikTok filters generate antisemitic facial images with long noses and bloated lips. 70 percent of TikTok users are between 16 and 24 years of age. But the research project also collected reactions by even younger children at schools, some of them holding antisemitic views even though they are not even 10 years of age (Berendsen/Schnabel 2024: 31). A 14-year old student, then, openly thinks "it's okay to kill Israeli children" (quoted in Marschall 2024; Berendsen/Schnabel 2024: 30). The long-term effects of such widely disseminated antisemitic propaganda in the digital age can hardly be underestimated, yet systematic big data research on this largely remains a desideratum.

REPRESENTATIVE SOCIAL SCIENCE SURVEYS AND NEW EXPERIMENTAL DESIGNS

Quantitative social research and surveys on antisemitism suffer from various gaps on various fronts. In part, this is due to a lack of institutionalization of such research in the social sciences, which is coupled with a lack of both academic interest in the subject and funding. There are only a few surveys that are based on long-term data and repeated questionnaires offering some diachronic, longitudinal data and allowing for comparisons over time to better understand how antisemitism develops globally; only the ADL and, less regularly and often in a very general fashion in the context of "religion-based hostility," the PEW Research Center, as private organizations, collect data and repeat surveys with a global horizon at all. The ADL's Global 100 survey regularly – every 4 years – surveys attitudes towards Jews and antisemitism among over 4 billion citizens in 101 countries across the world. Data is a result of 53,100 total interviews among citizens aged 18 and over, across 101 countries and the West Bank & Gaza (ADL 2023). In 2023, before the October 7 terror attacks by Hamas, the Global 100 survey registered a global "26 % index score". The index score represents the percentage of adults who answered "probably true" to a majority of the antisemitic stereotypes tested (ADL 2023). While most regions hereby display, on average, support for antisemitic views among a fifth to a third of the population, the mast dramatic geographical variation is between Oceania (14 %) and the Middle East and North Africa, where 74 % of the populations surveyed harbor significant antisemitic resentments. The ADL's tested items primarily target classical forms of antisemitism; of 11 questions in total, they feature one question about loyalty to Israel statements but mostly items about Jewish "control" over global affairs, the business world, or global media.

Representative public surveys which are exclusively based on the same standardized questionnaires, however, often fail to grasp and measure how antisemitism transforms and modernizes. They still

provide useful insights and indicators. But antisemitism has the distinct quality to mutate, serving a variety of seemingly contradictory functions in different shapes and in different societal contexts while appearing in ever new forms and guises. Here there is the need for more new survey tools responding to the modernization of antisemitism, which becomes manifest, for instance, in new conspiracy myths in relation to 'globalists,' Holocaust trivialization directed against Jews, or in antisemitic collective denigrations singling out or demonizing Jewish Israelis. If survey research does not evolve alongside the transmutations of verbal antisemitism's changing articulations, only overt forms of judeophobia will be captured and measured – which, to be sure, is also on the rise, as survey data suggests. It is the task of antisemitism research to understand different forms of hostility and resentments against Jews in their various, partly subtle or camouflaged shapes in the process of developing survey research designs. And if you lack a historical understanding of the specific historical and contemporary matrix of antisemitic resentments, stereotypes, codes, and social functions, you are unlikely to recognize antisemitism and to develop research designs seeking to illuminate the scope and meaning of anti-Jewish social phenomena. In addition to overt or manifest antisemitism, modernized or camouflaged antisemitism, attention should also be paid to *'tolerated antisemitism.'* By this, I mean the social acceptance of antisemitic hate speech expressed by others or free of negative sanction within institutional contexts, from organizations to a constitutional democracy at large. Such tolerated antisemitism, the support or acceptance of antisemitism in social and institutional contexts, functions indirectly but lends support to antisemitism.

Research designs will also have to better address the different scope and functions of antisemitism in specific social, political, religious, and cultural milieus and contexts. Moreover, new tools should be developed to incorporate the effects of visual media and other digital media. Finally, new empirical research tools need to address situational anti-Jewish behavior and conditional support of antisemitism that may rise or fall dependent on the assumed views of majorities vis-à-vis Jews. Some initial social science experiments and promising studies also point to the international and global context (Beyer 2019).

More and better quantitative representative social research and data collections may help better measure the scope of contemporary antisemitism in comparative and global contexts and, moreover, identify valid specific causal mechanisms favorable to its appeal. Yet such social research alone also faces various limitations in a dynamic research field. It will also hardly grasp the enormous emotional force associated with antisemitism or the socio-psychological dynamic which antisemitism often unleashes among individuals and groups, especially now through images on visual digital media – none of this can be reduced to a simple causal mechanism to be tested. Representative public surveys and quantitative social research tools are more likely to develop their full diagnostic and analytical strength in combination with theory-guided qualitative, reconstructive social and political research.

AFTER OCTOBER 7, 2023: CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the four research areas discussed here, and research on contemporary antisemitism at large, we find some very innovative recent research projects and findings illuminating the current scope, dynamics, and socio-political force of judeophobia around the globe in the digital age. However, despite of its global societal significance and destructive potential in global society, the study of contemporary antisemitism still largely remains at the margins of institutionalized academic social research and funding. The highly important, yet underresearched field of antisemitism in contemporary global society's democracies and autocracies also suffers from politicization in a highly charged, polarized political climate, in which the existence of antisemitism is frequently denied by public activists from the right and the left and more often than not antisemitism researchers themselves are subjected to resentful hostility. Moreover, the objects of antisemitism – Jews – and their experiences are often marginalized as well (see Bernstein 2020; Botsch/Kopke: 2012).

This contribution has therefore also pointed to a broad area of research desiderata in dire need of more systematic empirical studies on the subject. Most prominently, more qualitative and quantitative social research into the commercially restructured, partly globalized digital public sphere and its societal effects is needed. Especially social media platforms such as TikTok seem to enable the more or less unhindered dissemination of antisemitic ideology in both its traditional and modernized variants. Many activists, agitators, governments, and influencers currently use the digital world to also advocate outright violence and massacres against Jewish civilians, some of it morally camouflaged as "resistance" against "globally upheld Zionist terrorism" (SOAS Centre for Gender Studies 2021). There is an identifiable erosion of the boundaries of the sayable in digital ecosystems when it comes to antisemitism. It is nurtured by disinformation on Jews and Israel and often sponsored by authoritarian governments. There is growing, multi-fold evidence that new social networks in a transformed public and semi-public sphere contribute to the dissemination and reinforcement of antisemitic ideology – and to corresponding violent transgressions (Topor 2019; Hübscher 2020). Social media and the normalization of antisemitism in (alternative) media from below and by authoritarian government media from above have already done serious harm to democratic political cultures, and to global society as a whole. Yet the scope, mechanisms, functions and socialization effects on young generational cohorts constitute still largely a terra incognita.

The research field is dynamic also for political reasons. The global repoliticization and re-ideologicalization of antisemitism have recently gained traction and a broadened audience in different political contexts. Classical antisemitic propaganda by Islamist dictatorships and terror groups like the Houthis in Yemen as well as reinvigorated radical movements and parties advancing political antisemitism benefit, however, from new forms of decentralized everyday antisemitic propaganda in the digital age. They include seemingly innocuous producers of antisemitic content such as influencers who are supported by hidden algorithms driven by profits or by the interests of authoritarian regimes. The new global radical right and authoritarian-populist international (Rensmann 2011a; Subotic 2021), Islamists, and the radical left in its old-fashioned anti-imperialist and new, post-colonial identitarian variants politically advance antisemitic tropes and conspiracy thinking as a way to 'explain' the world's socio-cultural conflicts and wars. All of this reaches deeply into the chattering classes across the globe, where antisemitism finds new legitimacy as a profoundly irrational ideological response to rapid cultural change, multiple social, political, military and economic crises, and societal conflicts in the twenty-first century.

The global responses to the antisemitic violence on October 7, 2023, then, displayed new eruptions and escalations of globalized antisemitism, starting on the day the massacres were committed and facilitated through digital publics but also various movements, governments, and non-governmental organizations in both democracies and autocracies. Examples of new antisemitic practices include the world of sports: In autocratic Turkey, the Jewish professional soccer player Sagiv Jehezkel was forced to quit his job and leave the country only because he showed a Star of David and harmlessly remembered the 100th day after the anti-Jewish massacres – an antisemitic measure that found unanimous support by his own club, which dismissed him, and by the Turkish soccer federation. After the October 7, 2023 attack and Israel's military response, Cricket South Africa suddenly demoted the Jewish captain of its under-19 team only because he is Jewish and allegedly due to fears over "protests related to the war in Gaza" before the Cricket World Cup, while the female Irish national basketball team refused to shake hands with their Israeli opponents in a EuroBasket qualifying game.

Social and political research needs to face these new realities and examine their origins. The 'rumour about the Jews' persists, and today it resurges with enormous social and emotional force the world over. Once again, various public, political, and digital arenas and actors across different political camps and milieus construe Jews, a tiny minority of less than 0.2 % of the world's citizens, as existential enemies of humanity and receive broad resonance doing so around the globe. Yet the scope, driving forces, and dynamics of antisemitism's current globalization need to better researched and understood.

NOTES

1 Indeed, it was also in response to the atrocities of the Holocaust that international law fundamentally transformed. Since the Nuremberg trials and the signing of the UN Charter, the legacy of the antisemitic mass murder of the Shoah engendered a profound challenge towards the notion of absolute national sovereignty, discredited crimes against humanity, promoted human rights and established binding genocide conventions, and thus also helped delegitimize new genocides and the history of colonial crimes.

2 An understanding of antisemitic ideology based on the state of the art of historical, social, and political research compares commonalities, parallels and differences between antisemitism and other resentments. However, some researchers still avoid systematic comparisons disclosing both generalizable and specific features of antisemitism but, instead, advance sweeping *equations* between antisemitism, racism, and other prejudices and claim, for instance, that antisemitism has been replaced by Islamophobia (e.g. Bunzl 2005). There is scarce or no empirical evidence for such claims, which suggest profound misconceptions about the nature of antisemitism both in conceptual and empirical terms. Instead, empirical comparisons and social research show time and again: Neither do antisemitism and anti-Muslim resentments serve the "same purpose," nor has the latter replaced the former.

3 The "Livingstone formulation", according to Hirsh, means that if anyone raises the issue of antisemitism in the left or problematizes the demonization of Israelis and Israel, he or she does so inevitably in bad faith, purposely conspires in a secret plan to silence criticism of the Jewish state, and belongs to the camp of 'the right' (Hirsh 2018: 23). This automatically presupposes that the 'real' problems are always unjustified antisemitism charges by Jews – rather than expressions of antisemitism against them, and it categorically takes side with those who are allegedly "unjustly accused of antisemitism" (as stated in a University and College Union [UCU] motion, quoted in Hirsh 2018: 148), rather than with the victims of antisemitism.

4 The indignant repudiation of an allegedly unjustified and ubiquitous accusation of antisemitism even before anyone has made it (but by which one feels oneself harassed and besieged) while one laments the influence of powerful, omnipresent Jewish (or "Zionist") lobby groups that allegedly control public opinion and the government – such pre-emptive defences against imagined antisemitism charges have been part of the antisemitic arsenal for centuries. This also applies to the charge that Jews are themselves responsible for antisemitism, or the idea that "the Jews" use antisemitism in bad faith for material or political gain and that they have profited from their own persecution.

5 A recent so-called "Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism" (JDA) directed against the well-established and by now widely accepted IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Association) Definition and examples of antisemitism does exactly that. The JDA argues that presumed intentions and identities need to be "sensitively" taken into account in order to judge if an expression is antisemitic or not, or if an expression of hostility articulated by Palestinians or others is just "a reaction to a human rights violation" or an "emotion … on account of their experience at the hands of the State [of Israel]" (JDA 2020). To be sure, subjective intentions, collective identities, and general contexts can be factors to be reconstructed by social science in order to *explain* antisemitism. But they should not be conflated with definitions of what is to be explained. The JDA also limits antisemitism to prejudice directed against "Jews as Jews." Rather than illuminating and understanding modernized, veiled or coded forms of antisemitism, the JDA, like other recent political declarations and manifestos, appears to suggest that most antisemitism charges raised by Jews, Jewish groups, or Jewish Israelis are not or "not per se" antisemitic, and that the IHRA definition and criteria seem to construe antisemitism where there is none – and thus allegedly threatens an "open space about the vexed question of the future of Israel/Palestine," which the JDA declares needs to be "protect[ed]" (JDA 2021) from false antisemitism charges.

6 Scholarship has to cope with misinformed, yet mostly unsubstantiated claims circulating in the public sphere and even in quality media regarding perceptions of Israel and antisemitism. Among the most common tropes is suggesting that innocuous "criticisms of Israel" would often unjustifiedly be labelled "antisemitism," that "criticism of Israel" would be "stifled" by means of antisemitism charges, or that righteous "critics of Israel" are "banned" from speaking in some contexts, including American universities or Germany as a whole. These framings have a large appeal, yet they gravely distort the facts and regularly do not stand up to closer inspection. Two examples from the *New York Times* demonstrate this. First, Vimal Patel and Anna Betts write a long essay on a presumed "campus crackdown" with an allegedly "chilling effect on Pro-Palestinian speech." (Patel/Betts 2023). Among other things, as evidence for this claim they insinuate that "the most prominent pro-Palestinian campus group, Students for Justice in Palestine, has been suspended from at least four universities…including George Washington" for "being supportive of Hamas." The group, the authors said, deny those "allegations." Yet, in their long essay insinuating wide-spread intimidation of pro-Palestinian activists on campus, they fail to mention that the SJP-chapter at George Washington University was banned for projecting pro-Hamas slogans on the university library immediately after the antisemitic atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7, including "Glory to Our Martyrs" celebrating the Hamas crimes. Neither do the authors mention the chilling effect on Jewish students would a university administration simply tolerate such hate speech endorsing indiscriminate violence against Jews, including mass rape and the murder of children. Second, pretending to provide factual evidence, Jennifer Szalai writes that in "Germany, regulations on how the Holocaust is remembered are so restrictive that criticism of Israel gets branded as antisemitic." (Szalai 2024) As a source for this dubious claim, the writer refers to a highly subjective and highly controversial essay by Masha Gessen were she draws emotional, yet unsubstantiated parallels between the Holocaust and the war in Gaza. In fact, no such German regulations of memory culture branding criticism of Israel as antisemitic exist. To the contrary, numerous studies show that no other country apart from Russia is more often and more rigorously criticized in the German public than Israel (Schwarz-Friesel 2019a). There is even a popular German noun for it: "Israelkritik" ("criticism of Israel"), which does not have an equivalent term in the case of any other country. What is subject to political calls for public defunding (but no banning), epitomized in a non-binding statement endorsed by the majority of the German national parliament, is not criticism of Israel, but demands to wipe the Jewish state off the map ("from the river to the Sea"), and other forms of antisemitic propaganda, some of which uses hatred of the Jewish state as a medium.

7 For the concept "the great replacement" the French writer Renaud Camus takes responsibility. His attacks on international policies advanced by "replacist" liberal and global elites – void of attacks against Jews, though the fear of 'materialistic globalism' and conspiring global elites aligns with anti-Jewish codes – have widely resonated. The "great replacement" narrative has been absorbed by both the populist and the extremist and terrorists wings of the radical right, and, alongside the idea of a 'white genocide by substitution,' popularized by think tanks, radio and tv hosts around the world – is often construed as a 'global Jewish plot.'

8 The radical right, of course, has amplified the antisemitic topos that Jews epitomize both capitalism and communism.

9 The latter is a phrase used, among many others, by New York anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who claims that Israel commits a "carceral genocide" against Palestinians, a "genocide by confinement, concentration and starvation. The historical prototype of this is to be found in the Nazi concentration camps" (Appadurai 2018).

10 It is noteworthy that in many dictatorships, like Russia and China, major Western platforms are banned and access to social media is both highly restricted and regulated. However, there are no restrictions on the spread of antisemitism, especially on the Chinese platform TikTok.

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ONLINE-ANTISEMITISM FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER 3

NEW TRENDS IN ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

Gabriel Weimann

INTRODUCTION: NEW ANTISEMITISM MEETS NEW MEDIA

Antisemitism has been referred to as history's oldest hatred and it is extremely adaptable. In 1873, Wilhelm Marr, a German political agitator coined the term "anti-Semitism", arguing that Jews were conspiring to run the state and should be excluded from obtaining citizenship. Following the Holocaust, antisemitism became less accepted; whilst it did not vanish, the events of WWII drastically inhibited its expression. Theodor Adorno, a German philosopher, outlined the basic features of antisemitism in his definition from 1950: "This ideology [of antisemitism] consists . . . of stereotyped negative opinions describing the Jews as threatening, immoral, and categorically different from non-Jews, and of hostile attitudes urging various forms of restriction, exclusion, and suppression as a means of solving 'the Jewish problem.'" (Adorno et al. 1950: 71).

Since Adorno's definition of antisemitism in 1950, the basic features which he presented have endured, such as the stereotypes of Jews or the fear of perceived Jewish power. Yet, new forms of antisemitism emerged and are mostly directly linked to Israel – accusing Israel with various charges including blood libels and using power to take control of the world. Thus, when historians refer to the rise of "new antisemitism" in the 21st Century, it is evident that its core beliefs are formed of traditional notions of antisemitism. The new antisemitism also consists of the synthesis of antisemitism and anti-Zionism, disapproval of Israel, with Israel depicted as the source of all evil. In 2005, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) published a working definition of antisemitism which has been adopted by the U.S. State Department since 2010, amongst other government bodies worldwide. The definition states that "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities" (IHRA, 2005). Accompanying the IHRA definition are eleven examples that may serve as illustrations, ranging from Holocaust denial to holding Jews collectively responsible for the actions of the state of Israel and historical tropes.

The online presence of antisemitism has developed rapidly over recent decades, using websites, bulletin board systems, online forums, and, more recently, most social media (Becker and Bolton, 2022; Schwarz-Friesel, 2019; Zannettou, 2020). The growing presence of extremism and hate groups in cyberspace is at the nexus of two key trends: the democratization of communications driven by user-generated content on the Internet; and the growing awareness of modern extremists of the potential of the Internet for their aims. Terrorists and extremists have used the Internet, as several studies have revealed, for numerous purposes (Weimann, 2006; 2015). The network of computer-mediated communication is ideal for hate groups: it is decentralized, cannot be subjected to control or restriction, is not censored, and allows free access to anyone who wants it. The typical, loosely knit network of cells, divisions, and subgroups of modern extremist organizations finds the Internet both ideal and vital for inter- and intra-group networking (Weimann/Masri 2023). The great virtues of the Internet – ease of access, lack of regulation, vast potential audiences, fast flow of information, and so forth – have been converted into the advantage of hate groups. The anonymity offered by online platforms is very attractive for modern radicals, terrorists and antisemites. Due to their extremist beliefs and values, these actors require anonymity to exist and operate in social environments that may not agree with their particular ideology or activities. The online platforms, from websites to social media and the Dark Net, provide this ideal combination

of easy access and global reach, with the option to post messages, to e-mail, to upload or download information – and to disappear into the dark.

These advantages have not gone unnoticed by antisemitic groups and individuals who have moved their communications, propaganda, and even training to the cyberspace. The antisemitic online presence is not restricted to a single type of online platform or space but is instead a patchwork of various types of platforms and spaces, from websites to social media and even the Dark Net and Artificial Intelligence modules. Thus, antisemitism has become increasingly visible on almost all digital platforms: Despite the constraints faced by researchers and Jewish community organizations due to the limited data provided by companies, antisemitic content can easily be found on all major social media platforms (Mulhall: 2021). Given these circumstances, the topic of antisemitism online has been elevated among Jewish institutions and communities, policymakers, legislators and academic researchers. Research has shown that antisemitism online has not only increased in volume, but also severity (Schwarz-Friesel: 2018). In this chapter I will review some of the new trends in online antisemitism, as revealed in recent studies, including mine. These trends include the migration to and within social media, the use of the Dark Net, the use of coded language online, the use of online archives and cloud services, and finally the artificial intelligence modules and their alarming potential.

THE MIGRATION WITHIN SOCIAL MEDIA

The Internet, which served in the late 1990s and early 2000s as the primary platform for spreading antisemitic contents, was gradually replaced by the rise of social media. These platforms, which are user-based, allow for posting and sharing content, interactivity, and feedback. Thus, communication on social media is fundamentally different from that on the traditional Internet, which is relatively stable, hierarchical, and less interactive. As a result, social networking online has become more attractive for various vigilantes and hate groups. These types of virtual communities are growing increasingly popular all over the world, especially among younger demographic groups. Extremist groups specifically target youth for propaganda, incitement, and recruitment purposes (Weimann: 2016a). Consequently, antisemitic contents have spread all over social media platforms like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. Thus, for example, in October 2023, CEP researchers located a Twitter/X video lauding Nazi Germany's economic policies and highlighting antisemitic conspiracy theories, which received more than 1.2 million views since it had been posted. CEP also located a website hosting more than 100 gigabytes of far-right books promoting white supremacy, antisemitism, anti-LGBTQ sentiment, and Holocaust denial, as well as instruction manuals to build explosives and other weapons (The Counter Extremism Project, CEP: 2023).

The growing concern that these social media have become the powerful instrument for spreading hate and violence has caused growing pressures to launch various countermeasures (Berger, 2015; Klausen, 2015; Weimann, 2014, 2016a). These measures included the deplatforming of hateful and violent extremist online content, interruption of their social media accounts, and pressuring social media companies to remove such contents. Consequently, tech companies and social media platforms have increased their capabilities to detect and remove such content (Ganesh and Bright, 2020). To support these efforts, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Microsoft, and Twitter have coordinated their deplatforming efforts through the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) to deny accessibility to terrorist groups and violent hate speech and to take down online accounts used for extremist purposes. Striving to overcome these countermeasures and maintain their online presence, hate groups and various antisemitic groups have had to move from mainstream online platforms to alternative online channels. They migrated to newer and less strict platforms such as Gab, Telegram, Parler, 4chan, 8chan, and TikTok to interact and spread propaganda items. A range of relatively new and highly accessible communication "applications" is another component of this trend.

Our series of studies on hate and antisemitism on new digital platforms revealed that slurs and hate speech, as well as Holocaust denial, has spread quickly and intensely to these new channels and applications. Thus, for example, various antisemitic contents can easily be found on TikTok, a social media platform hugely popular among young people (Weimann/Masri: 2023). Our findings derived from two studies, conducted in 2020 and 2021, applying a systematic content analysis of TikTok videos, comments, and even usernames. The findings highlighted the alarming presence of extreme antisemitic messages in video clips, songs, comments, texts, pictures, and symbols presented in TikTok's content. TikTok's algorithm is even more disconcerting, since it leads to a spiral of hate: it pushes users who unintentionally view disturbing content to view more. Considering TikTok's young demographic, these findings are more than alarming; TikTok even fails to apply its own Terms of Service, which do not allow content "deliberately designed to provoke or antagonize people, or are intended to harass, harm, hurt, scare, distress, embarrass or upset people or include threats of physical violence".

Another study focused on TamTam, a relatively new application with millions of users, built around state-of-the-art encryption technology, which ensures that all user data is encrypted and secure. This means that users can communicate with confidence, knowing that their conversations are private. TamTam was launched in May 2017 by the Russian company Mail.ru Group (which also owns Vkontakte, Odnoklassniki, and ICQ). TamTam's liberal policies, easy access with no registration required, growing reach, and multimedia services also attracted terrorists and violent extremists. TamTam services have been used by neo-Nazis, accelerationists, and other violent extremist groups. In November 2022, a Counter Extremism Project (CEP) study found 13 channels on TamTam that promoted terrorism and neo-Nazi accelerationism, including bomb-making instructions (CEP, 2022). Our study revealed several TamTam channels posting terrorist and violent extremist contents (Weimann/Pack: 2023). These included extreme right wing and antisemitic channels (named Siege Library, Saint-Posting, Rooney, Nat Soc Death Squad, Potassium Nitrate Pilled, and Hatelab) and even ISIS-related channels.

GOING DARKER: USE OF THE DARK NET

Think of the Internet as a huge iceberg. The tip of the iceberg, which most people can see, is the open net or the Surface Web that has been crawled and indexed and is thus searchable by standard search engines such as Google or any web browser. But most of the Internet lies below the metaphorical waterline, unsearchable and inaccessible to the public. These concealed parts of the Internet are known as the Deep Web. The Deep Web is approximately 400-500 times more massive than the Surface Web. The deepest layers of the Deep Web, a segment known as the Dark Net, contain content that has been intentionally concealed and includes illegal and anti-social information. Thus, the Dark Net can be defined as the share of the Deep Web that can only be accessed through specialized browsers (like the Tor browser).

Terrorists and extremists have revealed the advantages of the Dark Net and started using its secretive platforms (Weimann, 2016b; 2018). The uses of the Dark Net are similar to the Surface Web. The key differences are in achieving anonymity and avoiding regulation and censorship. It is certainly harder for authorities and social media companies to act against far-right activity on the Dark Web. Indeed, several surveys of Dark Net platforms have revealed a rising presence of far-right postings. Thus, for example, an exploration and analysis of anti-Semitic activity on the Dark Net found a variety of white supremacist and Nazi-related items (Topor 2019; 2022). For instance, Dream Market offered Hitler gold coins, Nazi-themed clothes, stamps, pictures, artwork, and so forth. Far-right blogs on the Dark Web are another example of online racist propaganda and incitement. A typical example is a blog named White Will Survive, describing Jews as mentally ill, wanting to rape and kill everyone who is not Jewish.

The Daily Stormer case is a good example of the migration to the Dark Net. This was one of the most successful online neo-Nazi sites. Following the violent Charlottesville incidents, the website was removed from the Surface Web but soon emerged on the Dark Net. Thus, the blunt antisemitism of the Daily Stormer had not vanished but moved to the deepest layers of the net. The Daily Stormer continued, without any interruptions, on its dark web site. Consequently, the Daily Stormer helped gather racist supporters for a "Unite the Right" rally once again. Right after the rally, in an online article from August 13, 2018, Hether Heyer, the murdered woman in Charlottesville, was shamelessly and hatefully mocked.

Our search of the Dark Net for terms such as "Nazi," "Jews," "White," and various other anti-Semitic and race-related terms yielded troubling results (Weimann/Masri: 2020). For example, these extremists frequently use the Dark Net blogs to post, discuss, disseminate and search for items like Holocaust denial and Nazi propaganda. In addition, far-right groups use social networks on the Dark Net. These are similar to Surface Web networks such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, or Gab. After restrictions and bans on these social networks on the surface net, many extremists moved to Dark Net social networks. The Dark Net has several popular social networks for far-right activists to thrive in. There is even a Dark Net Facebook. These versions provide secrecy and anonymity. Once inside a Dark Net social network, a variety of pages, users, and posts can be found. Many of these Dark Net social media are used to disseminate racist, white supremacy, anti-Semitic propaganda. As noted by Topor (2019, 2022), the scale of anti-Semitic content on the Dark Net is unknown but it is unregulated, more transparent and can be displayed more shamelessly and aggressively. Thus, the real issue is not one of scale: while antisemitism on the open Surface Web can be dealt with, removed, and blocked, antisemitism on the Dark Net can hardly be regulated, removed and blocked.

"DOG WHISTLE": THE CODED LANGUAGE OF ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

The meaning of dog whistle is the obvious one: dog ears can detect much higher frequencies than our human ears can, so a dog whistle is nothing more than an exceedingly high-pitched whistle that dogs can hear, but that we cannot. However, a new use of the term dog whistle has surfaced recently: a coded system of communication, using words or phrases commonly understood only by a particular group of people, but not by others. Recently, far-right extremists including white supremacist, anti-Semite groups, racists and neo-Nazis started using the "Dog Whistle" method (Bhat/Klein 2020). Alarmed by security agencies´ and police efforts to find them online and by the attempts of the operators of social media to remove their contents, they try to use the new language of codes and doublespeak. A study conducted in 2019 revealed how white supremacists use coded language on social media networks to promote violence, hate and antisemitism (Anti-Defamation League 2019). The results reveal disturbing patterns of increasingly hateful rhetoric after the shootings such as in Pittsburg and Christchurch and highlight linkages between coded hateful words and conspiratorial ideas about Jews, showing how these ideas spread and mutate across the platforms. Experts argued that "Bowers and Tarrant were deeply conversant in the conspiratorial language of these echo chambers and used coded racist and anti-Semitic language to spread fear and attempt to recruit others into violent acts". On these online platforms, users frequently rely on coded, ironic language so that only "insiders" can discern their rhetoric's profoundly hateful intent.

The use of the new language involves substituting racist, anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi references with benign words that seem out of context in the postings. Researchers have discovered that anyone can trick hate speech detectors with simple changes to their language -- removing spaces in sentences, changing "S" to "$," or changing vowels to numbers. Thus, for example, the numbers 14 and 88, used in various combinations, are a code used by neo-Nazis and white supremacists to post online hate messages in a covert manner. The number 14 refers to David Lane, a notorious white supremacist leader and murderer, who at one point issued the 14-word statement: "We must

secure the existence of our people and a future for white children." The number 88 refers to the fact that H is the eighth letter of the alphabet, so 88 is HH. This stands for "Heil Hitler," the historic Nazi salute. Essentially, 1488 is a callback to these two figures and their racist ideologies. Another secret symbol of white supremacist groups, based on the 1488 code, is a symbol depicting two dice. These dice are positioned in such a way that the two faces on the first dice show a one and a four (representing 14), and the second two dice show a five and a three (eight total). Similarly, 109 or 109/110 refers to the idea of Jews being exiled from 109 countries. The "110" indicates the intent to ethnically cleanse Jews from another country. There are also acronyms such as 6MWE standing for "Six Millions Wasn´t Enough", signifying that 6 million Jews having being murdered in the Holocaust wasn´t enough or "GTKRWN" ("gas the kikes, race war now"), and hashtags like #tgsnt or "the greatest story never told" (code for "Hitler was right"), "ZOG", "ZIO," or "turbokike" used instead of "Jews."

Our study explored the emergence of this new online language, the system of code words developed by far-right extremists, racists, and antisemites (Weimann/Ben Am 2020). The ideal post for the purposes of our analysis was one which included one or more "digital dog whistle". As noted, dog whistles of all sorts are more prominent on mainstream social media outlets as a tool to avoid detection and communicate with like-minded individuals. As such, posts on niche platforms such as Chan imageboards, TamTam, Gab, Vkontakte, and Voat or closed groups and pages do not require dog whistles or require them to a lesser degree. Our survey of online hate contents revealed the use of visual and textual codes for extremists. These hidden languages, textual and visual, enable extremists to hide in plain sight and for others to easily identify like- minded individuals. There is no doubt that the "new language", the coded communication, used online by various far-right groups contains all the known attributes of a conventional language: It is very creative, productive and instinctive, uses exchanges of verbal or symbolic utterances shared by certain individuals and groups.

THE USE OF ONLINE ARCHIVES AND CLOUD SERVICES

One of the more sophisticated ways extremists and hate groups are using online communication to avoid detection is the use of virtual dead drops. The dead drop, a term taken from espionage terminology, was used to secretly pass information items using a clandestine location for interim storage. Recently, the physical dead drop has been converted to a digital one, mainly in the form of anonymous online sharing portals. Anonymous sharing portals are a catch-all name for online sites that are openly available, have no login requirement and thus provide anonymity and allow for sharing links of which content is to be collected, shared and mass distributed. Thus, these portals and sites act to build in redundancy and protect against widespread content loss due to deplatforming. Consequently, anonymous sharing portals such as JustPaste.it, Sendvid.com, and Dump.to have become some of the most-used sites by hate groups (Donovan/ Lewis/ Friedberg, 2018). By posting their content on anonymous platforms and directing users to them and to other platforms, extremists and terrorists make their online existence harder to detect and remove (Weimann/Vellante 2021: 2-21).

One disturbing case of an online archive is that of the Internet Archive. The Internet Archive, established in 1996, is a non-profit American organization using thousands of computer servers to save multiple digital copies of pages, videos, movies, etc. It allows the public to upload and download digital material to its data cluster, but most of its data is collected automatically by its web crawlers, which work to preserve as much of the public web as possible. Over 750 million web pages are captured per day in the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. As of December 2021, the Internet Archive holds over 34 million books and texts, 7.4 million movies, videos and TV shows, 797,000 software programs, 13,991,923 audio files, 4.1 million images, and 640 billion web pages in the *Wayback Machine*. But online archiving, open to all, raises serious ethical concerns. In recent years, neo-Nazis, antisemites, extreme right-wing groups and other white supremacist and racist

groups have been using the Internet Archive (archive.org) for posting, storing and distributing their propaganda and incitement online. Our study revealed the various uses of Internet Archive by various racist and extremist groups (Weimann 2022). We monitored this archive, searching for material of White Supremacy groups (e.g., American Freedom Party, Patriot Front); Neo-Nazi and neo-fascist groups (e.g., National Socialist Order/Atomwaffen Division (AWD), The Stormer, American Nazi Party, National Socialist Network, United Patriots Front); Racist hate groups (e.g., Blood and Honor, National Alliance); Neo-fascist groups (e.g., Proud Boys) and anarchist and accelerationist movements (e.g., Boogaloo Boys). The categorization is based on the monitoring and documentation of these groups by various organizations including the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the US Homeland Security Digital Library (HSDL), The Atlantic Council and the Counter Extremism Project (CEP). Our scan revealed that all these extremist groups and racist organizations studied have significant presence on the Internet. We found thousands of video clips, speeches, books, images and texts archived by these groups. Many of them contained neo-Nazi and antisemitic contents. As this study reveals, there is also a troubling, sinister and dangerous side to the Internet Archive.

One typical example is the National Socialist Order (NSO), known also as Atomwaffen Division (AWD), a nationalist and racist violent extremist group founded in 2015 in the United States. The NSO material on Internet Archive includes the videotaped discussion by Matt Koehl on "Examining Hitler's Social Policies and Goals, and Germany's Cultural, Financial, and Scientific Achievements". It highlights the economic advances of the Third Reich and National Socialism "which eschewed both Communism and Capitalism, two disastrous, speculative systems". Moreover, it argues that "the National-Socialist order was modern and progressive. The economy was efficient and productive, with full employment that generated a high standard of living for the working class. Mothers and children were honored, respected and cherished. There was free health care and free higher education for all. It was, indeed, a good society!" Another video is entitled "How Hitler Tackled Unemployment and Revived Germany's Economy". The Atomwaffen Division (AWD) is a terroristic neo-Nazi organization whose members can be described as accelerationists, believe that violence, depravity and degeneracy are the only sure way to establish order in their dystopian and apocalyptic vision of the world. This group has numerous propaganda and recruitment video and audio files on the Internet Archive. For example, the video entitled "The Sword Has Been Drawn" presents the group, some of its activities (mostly violent), ties to Hitler and Nazi ideology and pictures and names of members. A similar archived recruitment video is "Atomwaffen Division: Accelerating Vengeance". Both videos were produced and uploaded by AWD. An audio file in the archive is a taped message, from prison, made by Brandon Russel, an AWD operative sentenced to five years in prison for having explosive material. He too repeats the call for violence, using the slogan "the sword has been drawn, there is no turning back". Finally, there are numerous archived and open-to-all neo-Nazi's texts and publications on the Internet Archive, like "The Awakening Of A National Socialist", "Next Leap", and "DVX" (devoted to Mussolini; DVX is the Latin spelling of dux, or "leader"; Mussolini, who styled himself Il Duce or "The Leader" in Italian, used DVX to draw parallels between himself and ancient Rome).

AI-AMPLIFIED ANTISEMITISM

One more concern to add to the long list of fears stoked by the rise of online antisemitism is the notion of artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential. Three-quarters of Americans are very concerned about the potential harm that could arise from the malicious use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, according to a survey published by the Anti-Defamation League in May 2023. The advent of artificial intelligence has been widely perceived as one of the most important technological game-changers in history, which will have a far-reaching impact on all aspects of human life. The "AI revolution" is based mostly on the unprecedented quality of the content such tools generate, something which attracts masses of Internet users. ChatGPT alone gained more than 100 million users in just two months, generating 13 million unique visitors daily in January 2023 (Hu 2023).

ChatGPT and similar AI services are chatbots based on AI; with them users can ask questions or ask for information. These AI-based content-generating platforms have triggered a worldwide discussion on how these technologies may be used for the benefit of humanity. Yet, there are also potential risks and threats: this remarkable application can be used for malicious purposes, too, for example, by terrorists and violent extremists.

Already in 2020, McGuffie and Newhouse (2020) highlighted the potential for abuse of generative language models by assessing GPT-3. Experimenting with prompts representative of different types of extremist contents, they revealed significant risk for large-scale online radicalization and recruitment. In April 2023, the EUROPOL Innovation Lab issued a report that presented some of the ways in which Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT, can be used to commit or facilitate crime, including impersonation, social engineering attacks, and the production of malicious code that can be used in cybercrime (Europol 2023). Another study, published in August 2023 by ActiveFence, a firm whose mission is to protect online platforms and their users from malicious behavior and harmful content, examined whether gaps exist in the basic safeguarding processes of AI-based search platforms. The researchers used a list of over 20,000 risky prompts designed to assess specific strengths and weaknesses of the safeguards. They used these prompts to get risky responses related to misinformation, child sexual exploitation, hate speech, suicide, and self-harm. Their alarming findings reveal that models can be used to generate harmful and dangerous content and to provide advice to threat actors. As the study concludes, "This is not only a societal problem but also a reputational risk for businesses creating and deploying LLMs. If left unchecked, it could cause widespread harm; negatively impact user adoption rates; and lead to increased regulatory pressures" (ActiveFence 2023: 5). Recently, the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT) released a report about the threats posed by extremists and terrorists using generative AI (GIFCT, 2023).

Our study on "Generating Terror: The Risks of Generative AI Exploitation" revealed the potential risks of the use of AI search bots by extremists, terrorists and antisemitic groups and individuals (Weimann et al. 2024). We used an experimental design to test commands that can be used to effectively "jailbreak" the defense of various AI chatbot platforms. The information we asked for was from five key categories of activities that could potentially be of interest to malicious actors, specifically violent extremists. These included: (1) Polarizing or Emotional Content; (2) Disinformation or Misinformation; (3) Recruitment, which could be utilized for expanding membership, gaining followers, or gathering support; (4) Tactical Learning, which might be sought for gaining knowledge or skills; and (5) Attack Planning, which could be used in strategizing or preparing for attacks. The results of this study, which included analyzing data from five distinct generative AI platforms and a total of 2,250 instances, revealed an overall success rate of 50 % ("success" is defined as the ability to get information from AI platforms, thus bypassing their defenses).

The intersection of AI and antisemitism is an alarming trend. AI systems, based on large datasets, can inadvertently reflect and perpetuate existing biases and disinformation present in those datasets. If these datasets contain biased information or historical prejudices, the AI algorithms can inadvertently learn and replicate these biases. Antisemitism, rooted in historical discrimination and stereotypes, is not immune to this phenomenon. Therefore, the deployment of AI in various applications, from hiring processes to social media algorithms, can unintentionally perpetuate antisemitic biases. Algorithms employed by AI-based platforms can unintentionally amplify antisemitic content. AI algorithms designed to maximize user engagement may prioritize sensational or controversial content, including antisemitic narratives. The rapid dissemination of such content can contribute to the normalization of antisemitic ideas and stereotypes, further perpetuating discrimination. As society continues to embrace AI, it is imperative to address and mitigate the inadvertent amplification of biases, including antisemitic tendencies.

CAN WE FIGHT BACK?

This chapter reviews some of the alarming new trends in online antisemitism. The history of the Internet and related technologies has taught us that multiple unanticipated effects are likely to arise, so unexpected side effects of innovation may have most significant consequences. But can we limit the abuse of these new online channels and platforms by new antisemitism? For some time, a game of cat and mouse has been played between various organizations, governments and state agencies fighting online racism, antisemitism and hate speech (see for example the IDI-Yad Vashem "Recommendations for Reducing Online Hate Speech": 2020). But the fight should be pre-emptive, fighting the wars of tomorrow and not of yesterday. As both sides are trying to out-maneuver each other, a vicious cycle of innovations and countermeasures is taking shape. It is necessary to break this cycle with a new long-term strategy defined as a set of combined preemptive measures that will thwart antisemitic actors before they strike first.

The first step involves monitoring the new trends, the new channels and the new platforms. When new technologies emerge, they are largely ignored by security and law enforcement, as initially was the Internet. A Europol report noted that "legislating for new technology is often compared to driving a car only using the rear-view mirror. It is often done in retrospect, and by that time new dangers are ahead of you, it is too late" (EUROPOL: 2022). Thus, monitoring and deplatforming antisemitic content is crucial and can be improved using new online technologies like algorithms and Artificial Intelligence. Algorithms and Artificial Intelligence may be used to continuously comb social media platforms, identify content that promotes hate and stereotypes against Jews and automatically report such content to social media companies and the authorities (Bjola/ Manor 2020). Today there are attempts to develop specialized algorithms, leveraging the power of Artificial Intelligence, for fighting online antisemitism. The innovative algorithms enable efficient and instantaneous monitoring of antisemitic expressions within the network, thereby enhancing the capacity to report and remove such posts.

The second step should involve early identification: During the early phases of the development of any new online platform, the foundations are laid based on prerequisites established by the developers. Thus, redesigning a system to satisfy certain requirements is far more challenging than incorporating these requirements from the start. This allows both sides to understand how to make the future channels more secure, less vulnerable to racists, extremists and antisemites. Then comes the optional measure of user identification. At present, it is quite easy for cyber-savvy individuals to commit unethical or illegal activities online and evade consequences because the appropriate authorities cannot identify them. There should be a method by which individuals' identities can be confirmed before being permitted to use future online channels. The joke about Web 1.0 was that "no one knows you are a dog." Web 2.0 tried to solve the identity problem by authenticating users, starting with Facebook's "real name" policy. Requiring individuals to identify themselves when creating their accounts and avatars may reduce the likelihood of abusing cyberspace for the dissemination of hate and violence. And finally comes the need for user education. Educating users must play an important role: Ignorance is a significant obstacle to containing and pushing back the proliferation of antisemitism. Schools have been shown to be the most suitable location for obtaining adequate information and training to immune young users against hate speech and extremism. Because young people are often keen to learn, the knowledge they gain can assist them in defending themselves and others. Moreover, such defensive education should not be limited to school-age populations: firms and companies as well as advanced educational systems like colleges and universities may be involved in such digital education.

Online antisemitism is as old as the Internet. The emergence of new online platforms with growing global reach and less control or regulation has led to the repackaging of age-old antisemitic tropes with the features of new antisemitism. As this chapter suggests, we should look to the near future and concentrate on the efficient ways to accurately detect toxic speech patterns and counter them. The new channels and digital platforms, from social media to Artificial Intelligence, can serve

not only the promoters of hate and violence; they can be the tools of countering them. Thus, for example, Artificial Intelligence-powered tools can be used for combating various forms of antisemitism. A European team launched the "Decoding Anti-Semitism" initiative, which relies on an AI-driven approach to detect more nuanced forms of antisemitism in English, French and German (Margit 2020). To be able to recognize and combat implicit antisemitic contents faster, the international team, comprised of discourse analysts, computational linguists and historians, is developing a highly complex, AI-driven approach to identifying online antisemitism.

As the global online community grows, so does the need to properly identify the emerging trends in hate speech and antisemitic content online. Understanding the new directions and developments in the digital world is crucial for devising effective counter-strategies.

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CHAPTER 4

THE OMINOUS ALLURE OF ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

AMBIVALENT PARTICIPATION IN THE PRACTICE OF DIGITAL HATE

Wyn Brodersen/Maik Fielitz

INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital media has granted antisemitic tropes unprecedented global reach. While antisemitic resentment, narratives and myths draw on a centuries-old history of bigotry, the same hatred is now being repackaged in digital formats – reinforced by digital (sub)cultures and amplified by influential online figures. In particular, since the Hamas massacre in October 2023, antisemitism is once again gaining (digital) ground, with the massive spread of hatred against Jews used as a pretext for criticizing Israeli policies (Becker et al. 2023). Despite the recent eruption of hatred, this pattern has been a constant presence in the digital mainstream as well as openly flourishing in online fringe communities.

A great deal of material circulating in present-day online culture, including tropes of online antisemitism, originates from fringe platforms such as 4chan. The anonymous, accelerated communication offered by this platform has nurtured extreme online practices that repeatedly turn on marginalized communities and women (Munn 2019). The openness toward hate content recently attracted extremists in the context of the Gamergate affair in 2016 (Nagle 2017). While there are well-established groups and individuals who circulate visceral hate against Jews, much of the propaganda stems from dispersed users, following organic dynamics rather than strategic planning.

When considering activities such as forwarding memes, spreading rumors, sharing jokes, unveiling supposed conspiracies or Zoombombing Jewish safe spaces, we note that the (visual) language and practice of online antisemitism resonates strongly with the destructive logics of digital cultures. People acting in a swarm-like way target and stigmatize Jewish voices in public and consider their own actions as merely a type of fun, trolling and entertainment – devoid of any consequences. This chapter focuses on forms of antisemitic habituation across online communities. We argue that antisemitic hate is free-floating in digital environments, meaning that it finds its true believers without a formal procedure of recruitment by political actors.

Much of the literature on contemporary antisemitism addresses its ideological foundations as well as the structures of the different political milieus that spread it (Hübscher/Mering 2022). In the context of a digital habituation of ideas and positions, we argue that the menacing allure of online antisemitism can today best be comprehended by analyzing its practice, allowing us to uncover what attracts those who would otherwise not consider themselves to be antisemitic – let alone political. This argument draws on the approach of ambivalent participation formulated by Melody Devries, aiming to better understand how users join dynamics of digital hate (Devries 2021). We expand on this approach to online antisemitism by arguing that this form of hate resonates more effectively by tapping into the functioning of online cultures that enable low-threshold engagement.

We begin by introducing different facets of online antisemitism before introducing the idea of the collective avatar and ambivalent participation. We then consider three cases to explore different modi of participating in antisemitic online dynamics, namely: antisemitism in games and the collaborative creation of antisemitic visual material based on artificial intelligence. Delving into these cases allows us to draw conclusions as to how a collective avatar can turn antisemitic.

AT A CROSSROADS: ANTISEMITISM AND ONLINE CULTURE

Antisemitism has a long tradition of low-threshold engagement. Rather than a fixed ideology, it has been described as "a rumour" (Adorno 2005: 110) or "collective feeling" (Schwarz-Friesel 2019) that overshadows the perception of the world and can recur as long as its social and socio-psychological causes persist (Kirchhoff 2020). The very fact that scholarly debates abound as to the definition of antisemitism (Rensmann 2023) shows that the essence of this phenomenon is vague and highly contested. The complexity inherent to defining antisemitism also owes to the fact that it offers an entire model for explaining the modern world in an anti-modern way (Salzborn 2022, 16). It denies principles of reality and marks the limits of enlightenment (Claussen 2005). Antisemitism arises from "pathic projections" (Adorno/Horkheimer 2002: 156) that reveal more about an antisemitic mind than about the Jews who actually exist. Sartre has also described antisemitism as the obsessive passion of antisemites; the image of the Jewish enemy exists *a priori*, leading him to argue: "If the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him" (Sartre 1995: 8).

Following this line of thought, antisemitism must also constantly reinvent itself to adapt to contemporary social and political contexts. Antisemitism has assumed new guises through the development of media technologies. Today, the hugely expanded reach of antisemitism cannot be understood without considering the proliferation of digital platforms (Munn 2018). Through just a few resources, antisemitic material has reached mass circulation in mainstream social media, especially through algorithmic amplification (Hübscher 2023). Even though Silicon Valley CEOs have more recently committed themselves to taking action, Holocaust denial has only been banned from social networks like Facebook since 2020 (Guhl/Davey 2020). In contrast, antisemitism such as Holocaust denial remains a constant on unmoderated fringe platforms (Zannettou et al. 2020). Much of today's material stems from sites like 4chan, which proudly designates itself as "the cesspool of the internet" (Hagen 2023).

From a cultural understanding, antisemitism has been described as falling in line with the functioning of digital subcultures (Tuters/Hagen 2019). Online communities, as they appear on imageboards such as 4chan, play with nebulous accusations, conspiracy exposures and organized (digital) raids – practices that are well-known in antisemitic contexts. The users communicating on the basis of anonymity are bound together less through common ideologies than through common (online) practices (Coleman 2014). Trolling and sharing memes, in particular, serve as cultural techniques in which participation demands an immersion into the predominant communication culture and literacy in the codes and symbols being used (Phillips 2015). To outsiders, these codes are often difficult to decipher at first glance; for example, Jewish or supposedly Jewish names are marked with three brackets – the so-called triple parentheses, such as (((they))) (Tuters and Hagen 2019: 2218-19). Why does antisemitism thrive in these communities? We identified three mutual elements that characterize both digital cultures and online antisemitism.

First, we can recognize a proclivity for visual communication in both antisemitic prejudice and digital cultures. Antisemitic positions have traditionally been expressed through pictured material: A mix of visual codes, metaphors and cartoons constitute a repertoire of anti-Jewish propaganda made for memetic purposes (Kirschen 2010). From the Czarist conspiracy of the "Elders of Zion" and Nazi propaganda regarding the "eternal Jew" to contemporary George Soros caricatures, visual material is effective in nurturing antisemitic convictions. This repertoire is easily translated into online memes: (mostly) visual snippets of culture that combine different messages made for viral distribution (Shifman 2014). Online memes and antisemitic tropes are semiotically open in that they play with ambivalence and obscurity. Moreover, they are evolutionary in nature and constantly evolve, as is evident in the most common of the memes: The Happy Merchant (Qu et al. 2023). Fused with elements of meme culture, (online) antisemitism holds the potential to go viral.

Second, humor acts as a sort of symbolic glue in both online communities and antisemitic propaganda. It has been a continuous strategy to convey antisemitic hate and disguise underlying

intentions of social exclusion (and, potentially, extermination). Antisemitic jokes, cartoons and pranks are wide-spread forms of ridiculing and disparaging Jews and their culture. They distinguish a targeted out-group that is exposed and shamed by an amused in-group that is supposedly entertained by the potential suffering of others (Billig 2005). Similar dynamics can be observed in online communities. Irony and humor are used strategically to vilify others and, at the same time, protect the initiators when things get out of hand (Bogerts/Fielitz 2019). "It was just a joke" is a catchphrase that typically follows these phenomena.

Third, online antisemitism and the anti-social behavior of online communities are marked by disinhibition. The public tabooing of antisemitism in post-war Europe concealed overt manifestations that subsequently moved into the sphere of the private. The concept of communication latency (Bergmann/Erb 1986) was established in antisemitism research, referencing this difference between a politically mandated, democratically based consensus and the actual attitude of the population. Online culture, on the other hand, is taboo-breaking in essence. It seeks to assume "the subtle art of acting obnoxiously" (Beran 2019) and turn it into a virtue. Along with the tendency towards disinhibition on the Internet allowed for by anonymization (Suler 2004), the social taboo of openly practicing antisemitism can be repealed in broader digital spheres (Becker 2020).

When taking these three elements together, we see that digital cultures provide fertile ground for antisemitism. As much of these are structure- and leaderless, it would be short-sighted to assume that those who participate in online antisemitism are full-fledged ideologues. Rather, in many cases, the ideology comes second (Theweleit 2019; Miller-Idriss 2020). More important, as we argue, is the allure of recognition in these toxic environments. That said, the collective formation of online antisemitism can be understood through the dynamics of its performance. To this end, we propose the idea of a collective avatar to approach participation in antisemitic online interactions.

THE COLLECTIVE ANTISEMITIC AVATAR

Modes of digital communication have profoundly changed the procedures of political engagement and activism. The idea of hierarchical modes of recruitment seem (especially to young people) as remnants of the past. The digital spheres in which much of Generation Z has been socialized provide allegedly horizontal spaces with little formal guidance or commitment. Hence, political communities have gained traction by betting on ambiguous affect and emotion rather than strict ideological convictions. One cultural technique that has been employed to capitalize on these politics of affect (especially by extremists) is trolling. Trolling communities have often walked a fine line between crude humor and hate, and it is evident just how little it takes for extremists to turn a politically indifferent group into a stable ideological conviction (Moore 2018).

Collective activities such as sharing memes, playing games or mocking those who are particularly upset have today become a potential gateway to extreme ideologies (Brodersen/Fielitz 2024). Through largely anonymous communication, it is often impossible to clearly identify who is trying to recruit new members for an extreme movement or who is being recruited – just as it is impossible to determine who radicalizes and who is being radicalized, who is ideologically committed and serious or who is "just" trolling and seeking to offend other users. This level of uncertainty in online interactions comes from the lack of non-verbal cues, tone and context that are otherwise present in analog face-to-face communication. The absence of these guideposts in digital communication creates a challenging environment in which the lines between genuine ideological commitment, sarcasm and provocative behavior are increasingly blurred (Phillips/Milner 2021).

This fuzziness and reciprocity in online interactions have been addressed by affect theory. Michael Kimmel, for example, has traced *aggrieved entitlement* among white males while Simon Strick has illustrated how these feelings of supposed inferiority are specifically addressed by the Alt-Right (Kimmel 2017; Strick 2021). Although this perspective is promising on a socio-psychological or

micro-political level, it does not take into account the fact that the Internet is not merely a passive medium that influences people's attitudes but rather a highly interactive one in which people can act together "as a social unit" (Chayko 2008: 7). In contrast to mobilized masses, we may imagine the swarm as a mode of convergence in our digital worlds that is comprised of isolated individuals (Han 2017: 10). As such, the swarm cannot develop a common "we", at least not in the sense of a defined ideology; the word of the ideologue has no more weight than that of a phrase-monger (Fielitz/Marcks 2020: 172).

As intent and motivation behind online interactions cannot be definitively deciphered, we need a better understanding of the practice of online antisemitism. We therefore turn to the idea of a *collective avatar*, as formulated by communication scholar Melody Devries, offering a theoretical framework for transcending the common dichotomy between random and intentional by understanding both sides as necessary parts of a collective practice (Devries 2021: 238). In the online world, an avatar has a broad-ranging meaning.[1] For Devries, it is not about understanding the avatar as an individual placeholder of a real existing person (as known from gaming environments or virtual reality). Rather, the *collective avatar* is understood as a collaborative and relational process that leads to an embodied group subjectivity. Though all users who join this shared practice incorporate a part of themselves and their views into the avatar, they are simultaneously shaped and influenced by the ideas of others (Devries 2021: 240).

In this sense, the immersion into online antisemitism occurs via seemingly dispersed individuals. Since antisemitism was strongly socially tabooed in post-war Europe, it can free itself of this stigma through others. If it is packaged in a playful or humorous way, it overcomes its cultural blockade – for which a (jesting) community is essential (Dogru 2021: 20-21). The collective avatar relates to Butler's concept of performativity. It refers to this theoretical view in that the production of identity is not carried out by the individual alone but depends on interactions with others, who are also part of performed identity. The production of an identity takes place in the interplay between attributions by others and one's own reproduction of these attributions. In Butler's sense, performativity is the constant repetition of the actions and language that produces and constructs social identity (Butler 1991: 200). In contrast to this view, however, the collective avatar does not rely on external validation: instead, it provides the framework for these performative interactions within which antisemitism can spread.

With the perspective of the collective antisemitic avatar in mind, we assume that users either do not regret or they deny the harmful effects of their collective actions, as their own impact on the whole seems to be so small and barely noticeable; unlike with the individual avatar, the user´s behavior is no longer tied to themselves as discrete persons. They are therefore not perceived as ideologically or even politically motivated but rather as a joke without any significant consequences (Devries 2021: 238): "But there are no longer any anti-Semites" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002: 165). In the case of collective antisemitism, the question of intention is secondary, as this highly ambivalent assemblage creates its own group identity through performative actions. Applied to its digital form, the *collective avatar* approach makes it possible to participate in antisemitic activities while avoiding the accusation of antisemitism, as it is trivialized and de-ideologized by the collective – or at least by parts of the collective. Disinhibition and permission are provided by loose connections to the others.

Based on Devries' theoretical perspective, we argue that, in order to grasp online antisemitism, antisemitic actions should be taken seriously without focusing too much on each specific individual involved. Similar to far-right online radicalization, online antisemitism no longer emerges as a unified whole but draws potency from its amorphousness. As online antisemitism is difficult to pinpoint, the perspective should move away from characterizing largely anonymous users as "being" antisemites and toward an analysis of "doing" antisemitism (Devries 2021: 240). The collective antisemitic avatar is not the characteristic of a person that manifests itself in their attitudes and thinking but rather emphasizes the active production and representation of antisemitism as an

online practice, which likewise applies to digitally-mediated offline action. Far-right terrorists who radicalized in digital subcultures have, for instance, been described as members of a collective avatar who are isolated individuals that influence one another in their actions – online and off.

TWO CASES OF "DOING" ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

Having outlined the basic cross-functioning of online antisemitism and digital cultures and applied the collective avatar approach to antisemitism, we now move on to probing ambivalent participation in antisemitic online practices. To do so, we turn to four different yet interconnected phenomena that encompass recurring facets of expressing and performing antisemitism. These can be seen, on the one hand, from an internal logic of community building and, on the other hand, from the patterns of targeting Jews and manipulating a broader public. We first consider antisemitic play frames through the example of participative virtual-world-building in the online game Roblox. We then delve into one of the most notorious antisemitic memes and its continuous progression.

A. THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN ANTISEMITISM AND CONTEMPORARY GAMING CULTURE

Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that gaming has evolved from a niche topic to a profitable branch of the entertainment industry, we may note that hate, violence and counter-practices have become an increasingly pressing issue. The problem, however, should not be understood as a purely technical one but rather as one related to hate's (and specifically antisemitism's) ability to adapt its form to a new environment and assume a particularly versatile nature (Munn 2023). The interplay between antisemitism and gaming has come into stark perspective in the latest wave of right-wing terrorist violence. Terrorists specifically use references to gaming culture to relativize the brutality of their attacks through cynical humor as well as to offer potential new copycats a low-threshold template. This connection has recently been discussed in the context of the "gamification of terror" (Ebner 2020).

Gamification is generally understood as "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al. 2011). The sheer number of such elements that appear in the context of right-wing terrorism is so great, they cannot be described in detail here. Some of these attacks are not (or not primarily) motivated by antisemitism. For some, antisemitism is one motive among others and, for others, it is a guiding principle. This was the case for one of the first in a series from the late 2010s, when a user posted on Gab before killing 11 people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. Many elements connected these actions together: Not only have many of the attackers, such as those in Christchurch, Halle and Buffalo, worn helmet cameras that create a first-person shooter perspective (Hartleb 2020: 132), but their cynical references to video games remove any doubt as to the fact that this was no coincidence. Even the Oslo and Utøya shooter ironically pointed out in his pamphlet that the game Call of Duty Modern Warfare is a good alternative or supplement to training with real weapons (Sieber 2020: 53). In an almost copied style, the Christchurch gunman wrote that *Spyro the Dragon* had brought him ideologically closer to ethno-nationalism and that Fortnite had turned him into a killer. In fact, he was in a Steam group named after the Munich shooter (an attacker that was not considered right-wing extremist for a long time) and announced that he was starting an "AMOKALYPSE" (Kaiser 2021: 23). The terrorist of the El Paso attack gave tactical advice on target selection also by referring to the first-person shooter game Call of Duty, and the Poway attacker compared firebombing a synagogue to the difficulty level of Minecraft.

The most obvious comparison between antisemitic terror and gaming can be seen in the Halle attack, where the attacker was obsessed with the conspiracy theory about the ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) (Hartleb 2020: 6).[2] He streamed his attack via the platform Twitch that

is primarily used to broadcast video games, and called his account "spilljuice" in reference to the meme *Hipster Hitler*, which can be translated as killing Jews. The uploaded archive of the attack contains 88 files, which is also a code referring to "Heil Hitler" (Schwarz 2020: 131). In his manifesto, he explains choosing a Jewish holiday for his attack because even non-religious Jews would come to the synagogue on this day. Attached to the document is a list of goals called "achievements" that the terrorist had set for his attack. In the context of gaming, an achievement is the completion of a specific task within a video game.

Though the shooters have names and faces, the killings were achieved for the approval of the faceless and anonymous community from which they emerged. It is uncertain who will strike next, because there is no collective schedule. Their connectivity is made clear by antisemitic tropes, codes and imagery that are difficult for outsiders to interpret. Jeff Sparrow, for example, addresses the collective aspect by arguing that attackers should not be named, as this denies them the recognition they so crave and emphasizes their individual interchangeability (Sparrow 2019): their collective action as an anonymous mass serves as the main driver.

The connection between antisemitism and gaming is not limited to playful elements but can also be seen in the games themselves. The concept of the collective antisemitic avatar is easily found here due to the fact that Devries developed it with video games in mind. She uses the example of a raid, in which countless users took over the avatar of the character called *Ugandan Knuckles* from the comic *Sonic the Hedgehog* and racially harassed the other users in VRchat (Devries 2021: 245-47). Raids are semi-organized attacks that aim to massively disrupt another website or players. These attacks are usually collective by nature, arising from calls for action under specific hashtags or even in comments. The aim of a raid is to provoke so-called lulz: "an aggressive form of laughter derived from eliciting strong emotional reactions from the chosen target(s)" (Phillips 2012). Another early example of these raids is the attack on the game Habbo Hotel. There, mainly white players dressed up as black players, gave their avatars Afros and business suits, and tried to provoke the alleged racial profiling of the moderators with racist allusions with the aim of creating "an obvious parody both mocking opponents' prejudices and joyfully affirming Black Power" (Asenbaum 2021).

Radicalization research makes a very basic distinction between extremists using top-down strategies to recruit new members and those created by the digital hate cultures themselves (bottom-up) (Schlegel 2021: 5). In today's gaming world, this distinction is becoming increasingly blurred. The gaming platform Roblox, for example, plays a leading role in this confusion. Developed in 2006, Roblox is unique since it allows users to create their own games for others to play. Players can also buy virtual items or participate in mass events such as concerts (Weimann/Dimant 2023). The platform emphasizes the customizable avatar, which has been especially popular among younger players since the Covid-19 pandemic, when interaction with others was mostly limited to the home screen.

The issue with platforms like Roblox, which allow users to create their own environments, is that they are particularly vulnerable to antisemitic imagery – a fact that was also apparent before October 7th. Concentration camps were copied in Minecraft, and, in Roblox, it was even possible for the Lego-like avatars to visit a digital gas chamber completed with Nazi artifacts (Munn 2023; Howes/Bennett 2022). Since October 7th, rhetoric has been emerging that is specifically directed against Israel. Digital pro-Palestinian rallies have generated a great deal of media coverage and have gone viral on X (formerly Twitter) and TikTok. One of them was visited by over 270,000 avatars. Roblox itself had to react quickly to the events and was confronted with the problem of distinguishing between antisemitic slogans and expressions of solidarity with civilians in the Gaza Strip (Silberling 2023). Elsewhere on Roblox, antisemitic avatars have emerged of orthodox Jews with hooked noses carrying money bags, burning Israeli flags, SS signs, calls like "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" and Islamist flags (Krieger 2023a; 2023b).

While games like *Fursan al-Aqsa: The Knights of the Al-Aqsa Mosque* (in which users fight as a terrorist against the IDF (Metzger 2023) leave no doubt that they were created by extremists, this distinction

is impossible to make on Roblox. Here, antisemitic avatars appear together and are lost in the crowd. The platform provides infrastructure that blurs the lines and roles between developer and user: Everyone is just another avatar among many and their intentions remain uncertain.

B. THE EXPLOITATION OF GENERATIVE AI IN THE AFTERMATH OF OCTOBER 7TH

Another example, or tool, of *doing antisemitism* as a collaborative online action is the use of generative AI. Just one day before the Hamas terror attack on Israel, the Bellingcat research network published a detailed report on how generative models are used to create images on 4chan as well as how security measures have attempted to prevent exploitation by extremists. They showed that the software's policies prevent very obvious prompt commands for creating antisemitic visual content but also highlighted that there are simple work-arounds that can be used to generate respective images by default. For example, by using various text-to-image generators, they were able to make Winnie the Pooh visit a concentration camp as an SS officer and make the character appear to be beheading a hostage under an IS flag (Koltai/Lee 2023).

Image 1: A comparison of four different AI services generating images from natural language descriptions, conducted by Lee and Koltai for Bellingcat.[3]

Gaps like these are often exploited by antisemitic actors. In the aftermath of October 7th, toxic online communities quickly began creating memes related to the massacre. 4chan /pol/ plays a central role here, too. Although this board is well-known for its far-right ideology (Beran 2019), a large number of Islamist images have been found here lately. Despite ongoing racist hate against Muslims, most users do not seem to mind supporting Hamas terrorists; on the contrary, antisemitism provides a common goal through which these contradictions can be endured, if

not overcome (Cauberghs 2023). Historians have also noted intersecting ideological prejudices between right-wing extremism and Islamism (Michael 2006; Küntzel 2003). As such, it is not surprising that the imagery stands in the clear tradition of the Alt-Right, merely adapted to the context of the MENA region. *Pepe The Frog* is no longer wearing the neo-Nazi clothes of a right-wing terrorist but, since the beginning of October, the figure has been quickly changing between a Hamas terrorist and a SS uniform (Koblentz-Stenzler, Klempner, and Chavez 2023).

In the case of the Russian war against Ukraine, the positioning on 4chan's /pol/ board is still disputed.[4] However, when Hamas attacks Israel, the situation is clear: Pepe now appears in Hamas outfits and the board /chip/ "(comfy happenings in palestine)" is the only general thread that characterizes the war in the Middle East. This thread was recreated between 10 and 20 times a day in October and was first established a few hours after the Hamas attack. Its archetype-post carries articles from al-Jazeera, RT.com as well as Hamas and Hezbollah propaganda-channels, and a large number of antisemitic memes are posted under every copy. "Total Kike Death" (TDK) has established itself as an antisemitic catchphrase on /pol/ (WJC 2023).

Image 2: Antisemitic meme on /pol/ after Hamas Attack on Israel.[5]

Services from OpenAI, Midjourney, Microsoft Bing and many others are important generative tools that have recently become available for reacting via visuals. Microsoft, for example, launched image generation via its chatbot Bing in the first days of October and, just a few days later, some users on /pol/ were using it for entering a memetic war. On October 9th alone, there were at least five collective meme challenges with a clear antisemitic tone. The main topic is "/mwg/ – Memetic Warfare General". The last thread of the day is a "TKD EDITION", as the original poster (OP) says.[6] The motto here is: "We make propaganda for fun. Join us, it's comfortable". In addition to the image of a Hulk destroying a Jewish temple and another one showing Adolf Hitler as a DJ with "Drop the Gas", a different meme also created by generative AI. Made just a few minutes later on the same thread (Image 1), this meme shows an antisemitic caricature of an Orthodox Jew with a long nose, sidelocks and a kippa. He is crying and holding a walkie-talkie. The meme is connected to the antisemitic online slogan "The Goyim Know/Shut It Down".[7] In this new

variation, different paragliders can be seen in the sky. The message is clear: the Jewish state is crying out for help but, this time, their alleged almightiness will not help them because Hamas is about to wipe it or them out.

Memes like these are created every minute and their motifs tend to be similar. This is likely due, in part, to the added instructions attached to each thread about how to create memes using AI. They describe which images are provocative and get emotional reactions, on which platforms these memes spread best, which prompts work well with DALL E-based models, and how to use Bing's image generator for creating offensive content. There is also a draft of the original post and some security warnings, allowing the next user to start right away. Essentially, this is a DIY manual for a swarm-like movement. The *collective antisemitic avatar* enables its members to avoid exposure and hide behind the almightiness of collective action. By *doing antisemitism*, it is no longer clear who has antisemitic views, who is a well-organized Islamist or merely one user among many, or who is joining to consume edgy and toxic content – everyone can participate in TKD.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In digital contexts, antisemitism is most effectively conveyed by adapting itself to language and actions in current practice that resonate with online communities. As shown, much of the antisemitic material is produced and circulated by online users that perform antisemitism without necessarily being recruited by conventional groups and movements. In order to make the allure of online antisemitism for this swarm-like entity more tangible, this chapter drew on the theory of the collective avatar, underlining new forms of collectivization that digital media have brought about. To support this argument, two case studies demonstrated that "doing" antisemitism digitally goes hand in hand with a routinization of abusive online behavior developed in disinhibited online communities.

As is evident, the toxic online culture found in fringe corners of the Internet is highly compatible with how antisemitism has been traditionally expressed. The dissolution of a clear sender-receiver relation as represented in the collective avatar implies an autonomization of antisemitism, which makes it difficult to grasp. The focus on the online practice of antisemitism and its underlying mechanisms is, in our assessment, a key to better understanding the ambivalent forms of antisemitic communication.

In the future, the multiplication of antisemitic material through generative AI will open new frontiers for research on antisemitic extremism (Qu et al. 2023). As major platforms will certainly respond to these strategies, it is uncertain whether such imagery can be produced with their services today. What is certain, however, is that the collective antisemitic avatar will use all of its creativity to figure out how to keep up these methods. Fringe platforms are already making progress in rendering their users more independent from big tech companies, if they adapt their moderation strategies. GAB[8] and 8kun[9], for example, are already working on developing models that will not be restricted through moderation (Gilbert 2023). Summaries of current research (Simon, Altay, and Mercier 2023) suggest that generative AI is not (yet) having a major impact on our current information economy.[10] However, examples such as these ignore the manipulative tendencies among some political milieus, thereby systematically overlooking the dangers of a collective antisemitic avatar. In the end, antisemitism is more than a technological problem to be solved: It is a human factor that reinvents itself under progressing technological conditions.

NOTES

1 This generally refers to a digital representation of a user in the form of an artificial image or figure that is intended to be recognized by other users of the same service. The term is very general and can refer to any visual identification, regardless of how it was created or provided. It can be a simple profile picture, a self-created gaming character or a visual appearance of computer-controlled intelligence. Miao et al. reviewed a number of different definitions and found that the average avatars are "digital entities with anthropomorphic appearance, controlled by a human or software, that are able to interact" (Miao et al. 2022).

2 A term that also appears in The Turner Diaries, an antisemitic book from the neo-Nazi William Luther Pierce. The book's ideology is connected to the Oklahoma City bombing and was adapted by German neo-Nazis in the 1990s (Sieber 2020, 50).

3 https://www.bellingcat.com/app/uploads/2023/10/image-1200x1200.jpeg. We would like to thank Bellingcat for permission to use this image (accessed on 9th March 2024).

4 There are two main continuous threads called "general threads" (Jokubauskaitė and Peeters 2020), as content on imageboards such as 4chan is not archived and ephemeral (Bernstein et al. 2011). /chug/ (comfy happening in ukraine) and /uhg/ (ukraine happening general) are having an ongoing competition. Nevertheless, both threads have an undifferentiated and manipulative view of the war and use anti-Semitic rhetoric. There are also allusions to The Happy Merchant meme, which implies that the pro-Ukrainian support is part of a Jewish world conspiracy (Stenmann Baun et al. 2022).

5 https://i.4pcdn.org/pol/1696703601141221.png (accessed on 9th March 2024).

6 https://archive.4plebs.org/pol/thread/444023680/ (accessed on 9th March 2024).

7 Most memes using this dog whistle (see Weimann in this collection) show an orthodox Jew shouting the slogan into a two-way radio. It refers to a supposed conspiracy that has been debunked by a goy (non-Jewish person), and the Jews are trying their best to keep the cabal alive and hide it. See URL: https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/the-goyim-know. (accessed on 9th March 2024).

8 https://gab.com/AI (accessed on 9th March 2024).

9 https://aiproto.com/ (accessed on 9th March 2024).

10 First reports have shown that alternatives like those to GAB are on average not as precise as the originals, but users don't have to deal with any moderation restrictions (McGee 2023).

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CHAPTER 5

ANTISEMITIC MYTHS ON THE WEB AMIDST GLOBAL CRISES OF THE EARLY 2020s

FROM THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AND THE ISRAEL-HAMAS CONFLICT

Armin Langer

INTRODUCTION: ONLINE ANTISEMITISM AND GLOBAL EVENTS

In recent years, the digital landscape has witnessed a surge in online antisemitism, marking a trend that transcends geographical boundaries and cultural contexts. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected through the internet, the proliferation of antisemitic speech has emerged as a significant challenge, posing online and real-life threats alike. The rise in online antisemitic speech has been fueled by a combination of factors such as political polarization, social unrest, and, notably, the global events that have unfolded in recent times. The confluence of recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict has amplified the prevalence of antisemitism on the internet, with the Jewish population experiencing targeted discrimination globally.

This article analyzes recent patterns of online antisemitism in the context of the events mentioned above. It is important to note that deciphering antisemitic language is often a challenging task, as it can manifest varying degrees of implicitness (Becker/Troschke 2023). Frequently, individuals promoting antisemitic views employ dog-whistle politics, using language that is understood differently by those familiar with antisemitic narratives, while remaining unrecognized as antisemitic by the wider society, thus evading immediate social condemnation and censorship (Langer: 2022a). Nevertheless, the examination of antisemitic trends holds profound significance as antisemitism represents a stark violation of the fundamental human right to live free from discrimination.

Analyzing latest trends in online antisemitism reveals that, instead of existing in isolation, antisemitic speech is intricately linked to the broader socio-political dynamics. Sociological theories of antisemitism argue that periods of economic downturns and instability can breed resentment (Cahnman 1957). In the search for scapegoats, individuals may resort to discriminatory speech, targeting specific minority groups perceived as responsible for societal challenges. Economic anxieties, when manipulated, become a fertile ground for the cultivation of discriminatory narratives, including antisemitic ones. This connection has been also established by studies looking at the correlation between Hitler's rise in popularity and the failures of the German economic sector (Doerr et al 2022).

This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in contemporary times, attributable to the rise of social media and online platforms, whose significance cannot be overstated in the proliferation of online antisemitism (McNerney et al. 2022). The anonymity afforded by these platforms frequently emboldens individuals to express prejudiced views. Social media echo chambers tend to reinforce existing biases, creating an environment where discriminatory speech becomes normalized, spreading rapidly and eluding detection due to the absence of traditional media gatekeepers. Furthermore, the social media companies' algorithms geared toward maximizing engagement inadvertently contribute to the escalation of harmful content (Langer 2022b: 19, 30). Recognizing the interplay between trends in online antisemitism and global events is imperative for developing

comprehensive strategies aimed at dismantling the roots of antisemitic speech. In the subsequent sections, this article will elucidate how three recent global events – the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the 2023 Israel-Gaza conflict – have led to the resurgence of antisemitic narratives.

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When this article was written, the COVID-19 pandemic is an ongoing global health crisis. As of December 2023, the pandemic has caused almost 800 million cases and over 7 million deaths, ranking it fifth in the list of the deadliest epidemics and pandemics in history. It has prompted extensive public health measures, including lockdowns, vaccinations, and international efforts to mitigate its effects. As the world grappled with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including economic difficulties, a parallel surge in the propagation of conspiracy myths [1] and misinformation unfolded. One alarming manifestation has been the unfounded conspiracy myths linking Jews to the origins and spread of the virus (Gerstenfeld 2020).

The connection between pandemics and scapegoating is not new. Throughout history, ethnic and religious minorities have been targeted during times of crisis, blamed for the crises, and portrayed as malevolent forces (McCauley et al.: 2013). During times of heightened stress, such as a pandemic, individuals may resort to familiar cognitive shortcuts, relying on pre-existing prejudices to navigate uncertainty. This theory is known in social psychology as representativeness heuristics. While heuristics can "make us smart," it can also be a fertile ground for stereotypes (Gigerenzer and Todd 2000). In the latter case, heuristics are a detrimental coping mechanism, providing a semblance of order and control in chaos.

Jews became frequent targets of COVID-19-related conspiracy myths – although Jews were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic just like non-Jews. Orthodox Jews, whose religious observance requires group prayer and study and prohibits using digital technologies on Shabbat, were especially impacted by the lockdowns. Yet, these factors did not stop the creation of several antisemitic narratives around the origins of the virus (Sundberg/Mitchell/Levinson 2023: 429, 435). The pandemic-driven shift towards remote work, increased screen time, and heightened reliance on online platforms has provided a fertile ground for the escalation of antisemitic harassment. Canadian conspiracy myth website Centre for Research on Globalization asserted that the pandemic lies in a population-reduction scheme orchestrated by the Rothschilds, aiming to enable a small elite to live longer and more comfortably with Earth's diminished resources by reducing the overall number of people (Langer 2022a: 158). Even though conspiracy myths around the Jewish banking family's power have been around for two centuries and the Rothschilds have long lost their historical relevance, the notion of the Rothschilds' alleged control still resonates today, as evidenced by this publication (Langer 2022a: 163).

Blaming known Jewish individuals – or families in the case of the Rothschilds –, instead of blaming the Jews as a collective is a common strategy of post-Holocaust antisemitism. While prior to the Holocaust it was not a social taboo to collectively blame Jews for crises, in the aftermath of the genocide antisemites have refined their message. Instead of collectively blaming Jews, they made use of the rhetorical tools of code words and dog-whistling. This way they could continue emanating their antisemitism without being explicitly antisemitic and immediately facing general condemnation (Langer 2023: 234-235). Such code words and dog-whistling do not only refer to the Rothschilds, but very often to Hungarian-born American philanthropist and businessman George Soros as conspiracy myths around his figure have been around for three decades and provided a fertile soil for newer, COVID-19-related explanations (Langer 2021). Swiss far-right Christian group Organic Christian Generation disseminated a flyer claiming that the virus was a biological weapon unleashed by Soros. A similar idea was also shared by Austrian far-right leader Martin Sellner from the organization The Identitarians who accused Soros's Open Society

Foundations of spreading the virus (Gerstenfeld, 2020: 42). These narratives reached absurd levels: In the Netherlands, after a soccer championship was shut down because of the lockdowns, antisemitic soccer fans alleged on Twitter that this situation was orchestrated by Ajax, a Dutch professional soccer team that is traditionally perceived as a Jewish team, in order to avoid defeat in the championship (Seijbel/van Sterkenburg/Spaaij 2023).

Many of the perpetrators of antisemitic myths blamed Jews not for creating the virus but for spreading it. Such myths affected Ultra-Orthodox Jews in particular (Sundberg, Mitchell, and Levinson, 2023, p. 435). In the UK, various online antisemitic discussion posts and even printed tabloids accused the Ultra-Orthodox Jewish community in London's densely populated Stamford Hill area of being a main reason for the viral spread of the virus. While this community's infection and death rates were higher than the national average, they were not higher than in other densely populated neighborhoods (Szendrői 2020). Nevertheless, such accusations struck a nerve as about one-fifth of the English population were reported to believe that Jews and/or Muslims were responsible for the pandemic (Freeman et al. 2022). But online antisemitism transcends the virtual realm, impacting the real lives of individuals and communities. Jewish communities around the world have become targets of discrimination and hostility, facing a resurgence of antisemitic sentiments and crimes. Jewish institutions and individuals have found themselves victims of discrimination, highlighting the consequences of conspiracy myths on the lives and well-being of marginalized minorities (US DOJ: 2022).

The increase in antisemitism during the pandemic is not solely attributed to the growing reliance on the internet but is also connected to the resurgence of nationalist sentiments and policymaking in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic triggered a heightened focus on national identity and further highlighted perceived differences between the in- and the out-group (Wamsler et al., 2023). Nationalism and antisemitism have been linked together for centuries (Stoegner/Hoepoltseder 2013). This relationship became more obvious during the pandemic, when pre-existing nationalist tendencies were not only amplified but normalized. Borders were closed, travel restrictions imposed, and a palpable sense of "us versus them" permeated public discourse, fostering an environment where prejudices against outsiders gained traction. This surge in nationalist influence is exemplified by the European Union's failure to create a unified pan-European response to the pandemic. Instead, it left national governments to devise fragmented answers, resulting in additional chaos on the continent (Pitty 2022).

The rise in nationalist sentiments did not solely affect the Jewish minority. While this essay concentrates on online antisemitism, it is important to acknowledge that various other minorities faced discrimination and crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic, both online and in real life. Using the virus's origins in China as a justification for their anti-Asian racism, many accused Asian immigrants and their descendants in Western countries, in the US in particular, of being the reason for the pandemic (Zhang et al. 2023). Beyond the Asian community, minority communities in general have been accused of being responsible for the disease or its spread. Examples include Muslims in Germany (Rose 2021), Haitians in Chile (Bonhomme/Alfaro 2022), and Somalis in Finland (Finell et al. 2021). Ethnic and racial minority communities in the US were disproportionally affected by the virus, which shows disparities in the healthcare system (Tai et al 2021). The situation of these minorities during the pandemic shows the entanglement of various forms of discrimination and the need to think antisemitism together with other forms of discrimination.

THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

Next to the COVID-19 pandemic, another global crisis at the time of writing this article is the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War that began in 2014, Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, marking the largest attack on a European country since World War II. The invasion resulted in tens of thousands of civilian and military

casualties in Ukraine, with Russian troops occupying around twenty percent of Ukrainian territory by the summer of 2022. The conflict led to Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II, environmental damage, and contributed to global food crises.

The invasion witnessed a surge in disinformation campaigns, with antisemitic narratives being strategically employed as a tool of psychological warfare. Conspiracy myths about Jewish involvement in geopolitical events exploit the conflict's chaos to manipulate public opinion and fuel animosities. Noteworthy instances include Dmitry Popov's article in the daily newspaper *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* labeling well-known Russian Jews as "foreign agents," and the pro-war think thank Strategic Culture Foundation using classical antisemitic language against French Jewish thinker Bernard-Henri Lévy, a vocal critic of the invasion. In early 2023, pro-Russian Telegram channels disseminated anti-Israel and antisemitic propaganda, with Russian military blogger Roman Saponkov calling for the "demilitarization of Israel." While Putin avoids antisemitic comments – and in the first years of his leadership, open antisemitism was decreasing in the country (Yablokov 2019) –, the Russian strongman quotes figures like nationalist philosophers Alexander Dugin and Ivan Ilyin and maintains close ties with the antisemitic "Night Wolves" motorcycle gang (Klauber 2023: 44-45).

On the Russian side, antisemitic narratives were intertwined with justification of the invasion itself. Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine under the pretext of the alleged need to 'de-Nazify' the westernizing nation. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, on May 1, 2022, rejected claims that it made no sense to accuse Ukraine, whose president is Jewish, of Nazi inclinations. Lavrov, in an interview with Italian television broadcaster Rete 4, went on to assert that some of history's most fervent antisemites were of Jewish descent, including Adolf Hitler, whom he claimed had "Jewish blood." Subsequently, the spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry accused Israel of supporting "the neo-Nazi regime in Kyiv" in response to Lavrov's comments (Gershovish 2023: 22).

Supporters of the invasion abroad, including participants of pro-Russian rallies in Germany (antisemitismus-melden.koeln, 2023), also repeated this argument. These statements not only aim to discredit the Ukrainian state and its president but also address an apparent logical gap in portraying Ukraine as a "Nazi state." The argument aims to prove that a country with a Jewish president can be subjected to what Kremlin propaganda terms "de-Nazification", as supporters of the Russian invasion reframe the identities of "Jewish" and "Nazi" as compatible. This is a clear example of victim blaming, which refers to the psychological or rhetorical strategy where the roles of perpetrator and victim are reversed. In instances of victim blaming, individuals or groups who are responsible for harmful actions try to portray themselves as the victims, while simultaneously casting the actual victims as the wrongdoers (Ryan 1971).

Apart from the conspiracy myths propagated by Russian authorities regarding Ukraine and Zelensky being labeled as 'Nazi Jews,' various antisemitic narratives surrounding the conflict have been disseminated within online far-right circles. Followers of QAnon, a collective that originated among pro-Trump supporters and incorporates antisemitic codes in its messaging (Langer 2022b), celebrated Putin's invasion of Ukraine as a long-anticipated strike against the 'deep state.' This shadowy group is perceived as a cabal of liberal and Jewish elites believed to control global affairs. Before the invasion, QAnon supporters had been fixated on Ukraine for years, driven by various conspiracy myths related to Joe Biden's son, Hunter, and his alleged involvement in the country (Wallner 2023: 3). Conversely, other far-right movements, particularly those associated with Neo-Nazi ideologies, viewed the conflict as a white-on-white confrontation – a war between brothers – and vehemently opposed it. Within these Neo-Nazi circles, the scapegoat for the war was readily identified: the Jew dividing and manipulating the two white nations into armed conflict with each other (Wallner 2023: 4).

The consequences of the propagation of antisemitic narratives were felt acutely by Jewish

communities in Ukraine and Russia. According to Ukrainian rabbis, Russian invaders stole relics from the Pidhaitsi and Chortkiv synagogues, which ended up being exhibited in a Moscow museum (Poletti 2023). During the shelling of the Kyiv TV Tower on March 1, 2022, the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center was damaged, affecting the museum building and adjacent cemetery (Roik and Pankiv 2022: 279). An opponent of the war, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, President of the Conference of European Rabbis and exiled Chief Rabbi of Moscow, argued that antisemitism and the targeting of the Jewish community in Russia is state sponsored. He referred to the state's distortion of the Holocaust, official accusations against Ukraine of "Nazism," and Lavrov's comments about Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Jewish heritage. Goldschmidt also addressed state efforts to close the Jewish Agency and restrict Jewish emigration from Russia and characterized the current state of the Jewish community in Russia as one facing significant distress (US CIRF, 2023, p. 3). Goldschmidt, like thousands of other Russian Jews, left Russia in opposition to the war (Bou/Vapne 2022).

The antisemitic conspiracy myths surrounding the war were also felt beyond Ukraine: according to the Berlin-based Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Antisemitism, about 11 percent of antisemitic incidents in Germany in 2022 were related to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. One of their examples includes the experience of a Jewish passenger in a Berlin taxi who was confronted with the driver's statement that Americans and Israelis were profiting from the war because it was about power and money (RIAS 2023a: 18). As these developments show, geopolitical conflicts can become breeding grounds for the resurgence of historical prejudices. The propagation of antisemitic narratives during this crisis underscores the enduring nature of antisemitism and the importance of confronting it.

THE 2023 ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

At time of writing this article, the 2023 Israel-Hamas war is an ongoing armed conflict which has occurred mainly in and around the Gaza Strip, with additional clashes in the West Bank and on the Israel–Lebanon border. In October 2023, Hamas launched a surprise attack, involving rocket barrages and breaching the Gaza–Israel barrier, which was met by Israel through extensive aerial bombardment and a ground invasion (Zanotti/Sharp 2023). The 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict fueled geopolitical tensions and resulted in a rise of antisemitism. Social media platforms have become breeding grounds for the dissemination of Hamas's extremist ideology, fostering an environment where polarization intensifies, and nuanced dialogue is not possible anymore. Hamas shares graphic footage of their acts, often through social media, reaching the families of those murdered or abducted. This use of social media has led to the identification of numerous victims through video and visual materials. By spreading their atrocities online, terrorists aim to broaden the impact, directly affecting more people and instilling grief and fear among Jews both in and outside of Israel (RIAS 2023b: 8). Similar digital dissemination tactics have been employed in the past by far-right terrorists such as by the perpetrators of the 2019 attacks in Halle or Christchurch (Langer 2023: 244).

Already in the immediate aftermath of the Hamas attack in October 2023, antisemitic speech spiked on the internet (Rose/Guhl/Comerford 2023). Admittedly, it is arguable when criticism of Israeli policies towards Palestinian is antisemitic (Keskinkiliç/Langer 2021: 205-207). Nevertheless, the current conflict exposed several clearly antisemitic conspiracy myths. Some antisemitic extremist circles, including the antisemitic Goyim Defense League in the US, celebrated the murder of Jews on their social media platforms (Maharshak et al. 2023: 12). Other antisemitic social media users argued that contemporary Jews are not the descendants of the Israelites and are not real Jews but only descendants of Khazar converts, and thus have no legitimate connection to the Land of Israel (Rose, Guhl and Comerford 2023).

However, other antisemites saw a Jewish conspiracy behind the attack of Hamas. Just like in the

case of 9/11 conspiracy myths, these users argued that the attack was an inside job, since Israel did not prevent it. Some were arguing, especially in QAnon circles, that this was a "Jewish false flag attack" or a "false flag attack orchestrated by Mossad." Users claimed that this was because Israel wanted to start World War III. Others suggested that Israel wants to use this attack as a justification for an ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza (Koblenz-Stenzler/Klempner/Chavez, 2023: 5-6, 12-13). During the Israel-Hamas war, there was an increase globally in Holocaust denial and distortion. Such examples included the defacing of a Holocaust memorial mural in Thessaloniki, Greece with a tag equating Jews with Nazis and a statement calling for the liberation of Palestine (ADL 2023b). Such comparisons trivialize Holocaust atrocities and undermine the specific historical suffering of the Jewish people. The Holocaust was a unique and unprecedented genocide targeting Jews, among other groups, with the aim of their systematic extermination. Drawing parallels between unrelated situations and invoking Nazi imagery diminishes the gravity and historical specificity of the Holocaust (Gerstenfeld, 2007). Well noted, Holocaust distortion is not only used by antisemites: for instance, Israeli far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza as Nazis (Keller-Lynn/Magid 2023).

Just like in the case of conspiracy myths related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the amplification of online antisemitism during the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict has translated into real-world consequences for Jewish communities. Synagogues, Jewish schools, and community centers have become targets, creating fear and insecurity among Jews globally. The Anti-Defamation League collected several antisemitic incidents, which included the vandalization of synagogues, Jewish schools, Jewish-owned businesses, from Canada to Belgium, from Chile to Armenia and beyond (ADL, 2023b; Levitt: 2023). Antisemitic graffiti were seen worldwide – according to French police, these graffiti were often orchestrated by Russia, to further divide the West. This element also shows the connection between the various ongoing conflicts in the year 2023 (Leicester/Chan: 2023). It is important to acknowledge that in the context of the war, anti-Palestinian hate crimes and violence have also surged. The incidents include the murder of a young Palestinian American boy in Illinois by his landlord, who was angry about Hamas's attack on Israel, and several acts of vandalism against Palestinian and Muslim institutions and mosques, Palestinian flags, and the use of anti-Palestinian language against pro-Palestinian protesters (ADL 2023a). These developments show how the 2023 Israel-Hamas war has fueled discrimination of minorities, even beyond antisemitism.

DISCUSSION: CHALLENGING ONLINE ANTISEMITISM

This paper has highlighted the recent resurgence of antisemitic trends weaving through geopolitical conflicts and crises. The COVID-19 pandemic fueled existing prejudices, offering convenient scapegoats amid uncertainty and fear. The Russian invasion of Ukraine became a canvas for antisemitic narratives expressed through disinformation campaigns and nationalist ideologies. Turning to the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict, the amplification of online antisemitism, the global dissemination of discriminatory narratives, and the targeting of Jewish communities underscored the destructive impact of prejudice amid political strife.

A recap of these antisemitic trends reveals a common thread: the enduring nature of discrimination weaving through diverse global events. In fact, a 2022 case study from the German state of Thuringia has shown that a vast majority of antisemitic incidents documented were reflective of recent political developments (Zielenski/Jacobs 2023: 45). From the pandemic to geopolitical conflicts, antisemitism persists, adapting to contemporary contexts and finding new avenues of expression. Addressing these trends requires condemning antisemitism and a nuanced understanding of the complex factors contributing to its resurgence.

The digital age has bestowed unprecedented connectivity upon humanity, but it has also provided fertile ground for the rapid dissemination of discriminatory narratives, amplifying the impact of prejudice. Discriminatory narratives, once local, now traverse borders rapidly. This global interconnectedness requires a unified response that acknowledges the transnational nature of online discrimination and seeks solutions beyond individual countries. Moreover, the urgency stems from the potential long-term consequences of unchecked online hate. Discrimination, when left unaddressed, can permeate societal norms, and become normalized. Also, the spillover from online vitriol into physical attacks, harassment, and vandalism underscores the urgency of taking meaningful action to prevent the escalation of online hatred into tangible harm.

The evolving nature of online platforms and the ever-changing landscape of the digital world demand swift and adaptive responses. Social media algorithms, initially designed to enhance user engagement, inadvertently contribute to the amplification of harmful content. Collaborative efforts between technology companies, governments, and civil society organizations are crucial to developing and implementing robust content moderation policies. Education emerges as a powerful tool in the endeavor to challenge online antisemitism. Digital literacy programs should extend beyond technical skills to encompass critical thinking. Empowering individuals to navigate the digital realm responsibly, discern misinformation, and challenge discriminatory narratives contributes to the creation of a more tolerant and understanding online community. Governments, technology companies, and civil society organizations play pivotal roles in shaping the digital landscape and should prioritize policies and initiatives creating a safe online space (Langer 2022b: 28-30). The surge in online antisemitism, whether fueled by geopolitical conflicts or historical biases, necessitates a commitment to disrupt the cycle of prejudice.

1 Throughout this paper, I avoid using the term "conspiracy theory," because these narratives are not theories as they cannot be verified. Instead, I will refer to them as "conspiracy myths".

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THE PHENOMENA OF ANTISEMITISM

CHAPTER 6

ANTISEMITISM IN GERMANY – A (NEW) CROSS-FRONT[1]

Stefan Goertz

This article represents the personal opinion of the author.

INTRODUCTION – THE HAMAS TERRORIST ATTACK AGAINST ISRAEL ON 7 OCTOBER 2023

On 7 October 2023, hundreds of terrorists from the Palestinian terrorist organisation Hamas invaded Israeli territory, murdered their way through residential areas, massacred 360 young Israelis in an open area, killed a total of over 1,400 people, injured over 5,500 people, and abducted over 240 people, from small children to soldiers, in the Gaza Strip (Christ 2023).

According to initial eyewitness and media reports, the violence used by Hamas terrorists against the Israeli civilian population seems indescribable. According to reporter Nicole Zedek, published on 11 October 2023, for example, around 40 infants were found dead (Die Welt 2023). Remko Leemhuis, Director of the American Jewish Committee in Berlin, reported at the end of November 2023 on the atrocities committed by Hamas terrorists against Jews, infants and babies. Leemhuis reported, among other things, that it was not possible to identify 300 people, mainly women and girls, because the condition of the bodies did not allow this. In one kibbutz, an Israeli baby killed by Hamas was found in an oven, where it had been burnt (Speer 2023). According to ZDF journalist Ninve Ermagan, the violence perpetrated by Hamas terrorists in the form of rape, torture and desecration of corpses was specifically directed against women. Hamas videos show exposed, tortured and mutilated Jewish women, which are uploaded to professional Hamas Telegram channels for the whole world to see (Ermagan 2023). The kidnapping, slaughter and rape of Jewish women and young Jewish children and babies has never been seen before on such a scale, explained Rebecca Schönenbach, chairwoman of the Women for Freedom organisation. In addition, Hamas – just like the "Islamic State" before it – is pursuing a strategy of recruiting and further radicalising further members with the recordings of this cruelty and the subsequent display on social media (Ermagan 2023). Excerpts from interrogations of Hamas terrorists prove that there was a military order to rape women. The abduction of hostages to Gaza is also said to have been rewarded with a flat and 10,000 dollars (Ermagan 2023).

Immediately after 7 October 2023, critics of Israel and anti-Semites began to relativise the bestial, terrorist acts of Hamas terrorists and compare them to air strikes by the Israeli armed forces against Hamas military facilities.

Since Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, numerous anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli fake news and disinformation have been spreading both online and offline. At several demonstrations in Germany, there have been openly anti-Semitic chants and calls for the end of the state of Israel.

This article takes an introductory look at antisemitic offences in Germany since the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, as well as antisemitic and anti-Israel demonstrations in Germany in autumn 2023. The focus is then on the question of whether there is a cross-front of antisemitism from the various extremist sectors and other antisemites in Germany, and what types of antisemitism there are.

1 This paper was translated from German to English.

(MILITANT) ANTISEMITISM IN GERMANY – AUTUMN 2023

Immediately after the Hamas terrorist attack on Israel, open anti-Semitism on German streets and in German schools also increased massively. This open anti-Semitism affects Jews in all areas of life, according to figures from the Rias Reporting Centre: 994 anti-Semitic incidents were reported to the Research and Information Centre on Anti-Semitism (Rias) nationwide for the period from 7 October 2023 to 9 November 2023 (Culina 2023).

The Central Council of Jews in Germany calls the current figures "frightening". They coincide with the experiences of the Jewish community, according to Central Council President Josef Schuster. "The path of an assertive, defensive constitutional state must continue to be vehemently pursued," Schuster explained, adding that there was a lack of "a united approach against hostility towards Israel and hatred of Jews on German streets" (Culina 2023). The slogan "From the river to the sea – Palestine will be free", which is commonly used at anti-Israel demonstrations, must be "criminalised across the board" – also to give the police a legally secure basis for breaking up anti-Israel demonstrations (Culina 2023).

The security authorities are also registering this increase. Since 7 October 2023, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has recorded a total of 3,744 criminal offences in connection with the events in Israel and Gaza. A total of 680 antisemitic offences have been reported to the BKA since 7 October 2023, 550 of them in connection with Hamas terror and the war in Gaza. At the end of November, the President of the BKA, Holger Münch, spoke of a high potential for escalation in Germany and feared increasing radicalisation as a result of developments in the Middle East (Culina 2023).

Of the anti-Semitic offences recorded across Germany, a good third occurred in Berlin. The Federal Criminal Police Office has recorded a sharp overall increase in offences since 7 October 2023. Since 7 October 2023, the German state criminal investigation offices have recorded more than 4,700 offences relating to the current Middle East conflict. These offences often involved incitement to hatred, offences of resistance against police officers during anti-Israel demonstrations and damage to property. Anti-Semitic offences are recorded separately under politically motivated crime (PMK). According to the Federal Criminal Police Office, this is "over 1000 to date" in the period from 7 October 2023 to 23 December 2023. However, the figure will be higher because the investigations by the state security services are still ongoing (Lutz 2023).

The Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Semitism, Felix Klein, speaks of an "avalanche of anti-Semitism" and currently emphasises: "We must protect Jews not only physically, but also in the digital space, because words quickly turn into deeds." A large part takes place online. He believes that internet companies have a duty to take action against this. "If they don't do this, the state has to make them do it", says Klein (Lutz 2023).

ANTI-SEMITIC AND ANTI-ISRAEL DEMONSTRATIONS IN GERMANY IN AUTUMN 2023

Shortly after the terrorist attacks by Hamas, which mainly killed civilians – including many children – the Hamas-supporting organisation Samidoun distributed sweets in Berlin-Neukölln to celebrate the atrocities committed by Hamas. The background to the distribution of sweets in Berlin-Neukölln is that whenever Palestinian terrorists have murdered Israeli civilians in recent months and years, cheering Palestinians in Gaza, Ramallah and elsewhere have distributed sweets to celebrate the murders. On 7 October 2023, the start of Hamas' terrorist offensive in Israel, these actions took place not only in Palestinian territories, but also in Berlin (ZDF heute: 2023).

The Samidoun organisation has been active in Germany for several years as a supporting organisation of the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" (PFLP), which is classified as left-wing extremist by the Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The Berlin State Office for the Protection of the Constitution currently states that "in recent years there have been regular anti-Semitic statements and demands, for example for the destruction of the state of Israel" in the context of demonstrations organised by "Samidoun". Demands for a "Palestine from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean" and the goal of "liberating" Palestine, including the territory of Israel, have been repeatedly found in "Samidoun" publications for years (Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sport 2023, 65). In addition, the Berlin State Office for the Protection of the Constitution had already reported in February 2023 on around a dozen demonstrations in Berlin at which there had been "repeated anti-Israeli chants and in some cases violent clashes with the police" (Berlin Senate Department for the Interior and Sport 2023: 66).

In recent years, the Samidoun organisation has caused uproar on several occasions with demonstrations glorifying Palestinian terrorism. In April 2023, participants in a demonstration organised by Samidoun in Germany shouted that they wanted to ensure "bloody bodies" and "liberate" the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. "Gather round, long live the weapons" and "Rockets rain freedom" were other slogans at the time. The ideology of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), of which the Samidoun organisation in Germany was an upstream organisation, is based on anti-Semitism and Marxism-Leninism (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2023). The organisation calls itself secular and strives for a "socialist state of Palestine" on the territory of Israel, but also works together with the Islamist-terrorist Hamas (Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat 2023).

On the weekend of 4 November 2023, disturbing images and videos were shown at pro-Palestine demonstrations in Germany, including in Essen, Düsseldorf and Berlin. Chants from the demonstration in Essen calling for a "caliphate", IS flags and the call to "defeat the infidels". Posters relativised the Holocaust and denied Israel's right to exist. In Berlin, Starbucks customers were mobbed and branches spat at by demonstrators because the chain allegedly supports Israel. Demonstrators climbed the Neptune Fountain in Berlin, not far from the Rotes Rathaus and Alexanderplatz, waving Palestinian flags and chanting anti-Semitic slogans. The Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia, Hendrik Wüst (CDU), declared that "boundaries were crossed": "It is completely unacceptable that Islamist extremists are promoting their goals on the streets of our country and calling for a caliphate. We will not tolerate this" (Merkur 2023).

The German police spoke of several thousand people taking part in demonstrations in several cities. In Essen, there were calls for the establishment of an Islamist caliphate in Germany. This was called for by the Islamist organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been banned from operating since 2003. At the rally in Essen, it turned out that the pro-Palestine theme had been a pretence, explained a police spokesman.

At the demonstration in Berlin on 4 November 2023, which was attended by over 8,500 people, the Berlin police initiated 30 investigations, 16 on suspicion of incitement to hatred. Several pro-Palestinian groups had called for the demonstration. According to the Berlin police, "many from the left-wing political spectrum who have already called for a 'revolutionary 1 May demonstration' this year" had also mobilised (Merkur 2023).

In Berlin-Neukölln, three men forced their way into a café, pushed the owner aside and tore a poster from the wall showing a 90-year-old woman who had been killed by the terrorist organisation Hamas on 7 October 2023 during the attack on Israel. There were other people waiting outside the café who, according to witnesses, celebrated this action loudly with anti-Israeli shouts (Dinger/ Casper 2023).

On the same day, around 17,000 people gathered in Düsseldorf for a demonstration similar to the one in Berlin. At the beginning of the demonstration, the police seized several posters that relativised the Holocaust.

To summarise: the numerous pro-Palestine demonstrations were not only attended by the approximately 28,000 Islamists in Germany and around 12,100 members of Turkish right-wing extremism ("Ülkücü", "Grey Wolves"), but also by left-wing extremists, as well as numerous people who are not classified as extremists. There was offensive anti-Semitic agitation, and some demonstrations and participants also openly rejected the Federal Republic of Germany and its free democratic basic order.

CURRENT ANTI-SEMITIC FAKE NEWS AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGNS

"*The flood of digital images in social media, often paired with fake news, contributes to emotionalisation and can act as a radicalisation factor.*" Thomas Haldenwang, President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, end of November 2023 (Klaus 2023).

Since Hamas' terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, numerous anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli fake news and disinformation have been spreading both online and offline. For example, the propagandistic false report that Israel is deliberately killing Palestinian children, that the terrorist attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023 was staged ("false flag" operation) or that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, that the Israeli government is responsible for the knife attack in Dublin on 24 November 2023 and for the terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October and for the attack in Brussels on 17.10.2023 (Reveland 2023). Fake news and conspiracy narratives such as these claiming that the Israeli government knew about planned terrorist attacks, allowed them to happen or even orchestrated them, demonise Israel. Numerous posts claim that the Israeli government does not even shy away from murdering its own population, even profits from it or wants to implement "secret plans". "This narrative turns Israel from a victim into a perpetrator," explains Samuel Salzborn, Berlin's anti-Semitism commissioner (Reveland 2023).

Salzborn goes on to explain that the current fake news that Israel is deliberately killing Palestinian children ("Israel as a child murderer") is an old, religious anti-Semitic stereotype. The Recherche- und Informationsstelle Antisemitismus e.V. Bayern (RIAS) writes in its information sheet "From the river to the sea": "The motif of Israel murdering children goes back to the medieval anti-Semitic legend of ritual murder, according to which Jews murder children in order to use their blood for ritual purposes." The labelling of Israel as a "child murderer" clearly shows how anti-Semitic stereotypes are applied to Israel, which thus becomes a "collective Jew". The portrayal of Israeli politicians and soldiers as "bloodthirsty" beasts is also often in this tradition (RIAS Bavaria 2021: 58).

On the contrary, in every military operation, the Israeli armed forces place a special focus (legitimacy of democratic armed forces) on sparing the Palestinian civilian population, especially children, and preventing civilians from being attacked, injured or even killed. Against the background of the bestial murders committed by Hamas terrorists against Israeli civilians, babies, children and adolescents, the accusation of "child murderer Israel" is particularly perfidious.

Although the Hezbollah-affiliated TV station "Al-Manar" has been banned in Germany for some time, it can still be received online. When anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli social media accounts are closed, new offshoots often appear online shortly afterwards.

ANTI-SEMITISM BY RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS, "REICH CITIZENS" AND "SELF-ADMINISTRATORS" AS WELL AS BY DELEGITIMISERS IN GERMANY

ANTI-SEMITISM AMONG RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS IN GERMANY

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, in right-wing extremism, membership of an ethnic group, nation or "race" determines a person's worth. In such an ethnically and racially defined "national community", the central values of the free democratic basic order of the Federal Republic of Germany are disregarded. Nationalism, group-based misanthropy such as racism and anti-Semitism, historical revisionism and hostility towards democracy characterise right-wing extremist agitation, the German constitution protection authorities currently declare (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 48).

According to the German constitutional protection authorities, anti-Semitism is a unifying factor in German right-wing extremism across all scenes, which – in various forms and in different stages of radicalisation – ranges from resentment at the attitude level to murder at the action level. Neo-Nazi and violence-orientated right-wing extremists in particular publicly and clandestinely refer to anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives that suspect Jews behind global elites as criminal "masterminds" with a claim to world domination. As the attack in Halle on 9 October 2019 – a planned attack on the synagogue by right-wing terrorist Stephan Balliet – showed, such anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives can be a motive for attack and murder (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 64).

For right-wing extremist parties in Germany, anti-Semitism has for many years been a key ideological identification feature – in varying degrees – and a broad field of agitation. Classic party themes such as "anti-asylum agitation" or the alleged "Islamisation" of Germany remain dominant, but are often combined with anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives, such as the conspiracy narrative "Der große Austausch"/ "The Great Replacement". According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the coronavirus pandemic and the associated "criticism of government measures" as well as the Middle East conflict have recently provided a particular opportunity for right-wing extremist parties to spread anti-Semitic narratives and conspiracy narratives (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022). For strategic reasons, right-wing extremist parties and their members often utilise coded anti-Semitism. With regard to the Middle East conflict, however, anti-Zionist anti-Semitism is also openly conveyed by members and politicians of right-wing extremist parties. The spread of the anti-Semitic conspiracy theory of the "Great Reset" – especially in connection with the coronavirus pandemic – plays a vital role within the right-wing extremist group "New Right". The great danger of right-wing extremists utilising the connectivity of anti-Semitic positions for their own purposes has become particularly apparent in connection with the coronavirus pandemic and the associated government measures to combat it. The pandemic has offered and continues to offer right-wing extremist and anti-Semitic actors the opportunity to instrumentalise protests from the very heterogeneous spectrum of coronavirus deniers, those who criticise government measures and those who reject vaccinations in order to increase the reach and acceptance of their own arguments (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 64-65). The example of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine illustrates the dynamics of anti-Semitism in right-wing extremism and, in particular, of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories in right-wing extremism. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the current events of the war in Ukraine were reinterpreted in anti-Semitic terms by right-wing extremist actors immediately after the start of the war of aggression. Stories according to which, for example, the war in Ukraine is part of an alleged "Jewish" strategy to achieve world domination are being spread on social media and elsewhere. Reference is made to alleged "Jewish" control of either Ukraine or Russia or both states (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 69).

ANTI-SEMITISM OF "REICH CITIZENS" AND "SELF-ADMINISTRATORS" IN GERMANY

The "Reichsbürger" and "Selbstverwalter" extremist groups are characterised by ideological elements, some of which are influenced by anti-Semitic views and linked to conspiracy narratives. Individual groups hold anti-Semitic views. Some individuals belonging to the scene also harbour entrenched anti-Semitic views. These are often expressed in corresponding posts on the internet or social media or through the repeated sending of letters with relevant content. Anti-Semitism among "Reich citizens" and "self-administrators" affects all of the manifestations described above. Above all, the anti-Semitic narrative that there are Jewish forces that allegedly control and influence the fate of the world from the background and by means of financial power is spread. In various forms – above all with reference to the Rothschild family and their alleged exercise of power – conspiracy theory views are sometimes also linked to current affairs and socio-political issues (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 67-71).

Radicalisation processes of "Reichsbürger" and "self-administrators" also take place primarily online, mainly in social media. "Echo chambers" have also been established on various platforms in this extremist phenomenon, where extremist narratives and ideological elements are spread unfiltered and mobilised for activities in the real world. According to the constitution protection authorities, strongly inhumane or violence-orientated statements made by individual members often go unchallenged or are even actively supported (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 123).

ANTI-SEMITISM BY DELEGITIMISERS IN GERMANY

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, delegitimisers ("constitutionally relevant delegitimisation of the state", a new phenomenon of extremism in Germany since 2021), also known as state deniers or state objectors in Austria and Switzerland, aim to "suspend essential constitutional principles or impair the functioning of the state or its institutions" (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 116). In doing so, they disparage democratic decision-making processes and institutions or call for official or court orders and decisions to be ignored, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution currently explains. This form of delegitimisation often does not take the form of an open rejection of democracy as such, but rather a constant disparagement of and agitation against democratically legitimised representatives and institutions of the state. Agitation of this kind is contrary to fundamental constitutional principles, in particular the principles of democracy and the rule of law. Delegitimisers have various references to and ideological overlaps with other extremist phenomena. During the coronavirus pandemic, delegitimisers also spread anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution currently explains. Common conspiracy narratives received by delegitimisers include narratives such as the "Great Reset" or narratives about a "New World Order" (NWO) supposedly planned by the elites (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 116-117).

ANTI-SEMITISM BY ISLAMISTS IN GERMANY

As an enemy, as an opponent, "the Jews" form an essential common denominator in the ideology of all Islamist groups and movements. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Islamists and Salafists are orientated towards the "anti-Jewish traditions of Islam", but "the anti-Semitic narrative in Islamism can also be traced back to European sources and not least to National Socialism" (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 91-92). For example, the ritual murder legend, according to which in "Judaism children's blood is needed to make matzos for Passover", originated in the "Christian Middle Ages, but it is still being taken up in Islamist circles and re-imported to Europe today", the Federal Office for the Protection of

the Constitution currently states (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 92). Anti-Semitism in the extremist phenomena of Islamism, Salafism and Islamist terrorism appears in different guises. With reference to religious sources such as the Koran, for example, "Jews in Islamism are often regarded as murderers of their own prophets and thus as rebels against God, whose fight is to be understood as a kind of divine mission", analyse the constitution protection authorities (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 92). In addition, Jews are often seen as vital players in the international financial world at the level of social anti-Semitism. The conspiracy narrative, according to which "international Jewish conspiracies are directed in particular against the Islamic world", is particularly powerful here. The conspiracy narrative of a "war of annihilation" by the Israeli state against the Palestinian population is considered "a consensus in large parts of Arab-Islamic societies" and goes far beyond the realm of Islamism. This anti-Semitic hatred can take on extremist traits in individual cases, according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 92). Such anti-Semitic conspiracy narratives and associated narratives, which according to the German constitution protection authorities are present in the population of Middle Eastern countries, are also finding their way to Germany and other European countries via a variety of modern communication channels. Here, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution also refers to TV channels that have a direct link to an extremist organisation, such as "al-Manar" or "Hizb Allah", but also content from preachers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi. Yusuf al-Qaradawi's globally disseminated sermons illustrate the dual strategy of parts of the Islamist spectrum to export core elements of their ideology, such as anti-Semitism, to Europe. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution already stated in April 2022 that this phenomenon described above was gaining further significance "especially against the background of the increased influx of Muslims to Germany in recent years", as many of these people come from countries "in which anti-Semitic attitudes have been commonplace for many decades" and are "propagated even by their governments" (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 92).

ANTISEMITISM OF "GREY WOLVES" IN GERMANY

The right-wing extremist Turkish "Ülkücü" ("Idealist") movement, which also includes the "Grey Wolves", originated in Turkey in the middle of the 20th century. According to the German constitution protection authorities, it is based on "an extreme nationalist to right-wing extremist ideology that is significantly characterised by elements such as racism and anti-Semitism". Within this movement, the ideological spectrum ranges from references to myths from pre-Islamic times to nationalist Kemalism and the fringes of Islamism. The aim of the movement is the defence and strengthening of Turkishness. The ideal is the establishment of "Turan" – an ethnically homogeneous state of all Turkic peoples under the leadership of the Turks. To this end, the settlement areas of all Turkic peoples are to be incorporated into "Turan". Depending on the ideological interpretation, these areas extend from the Balkans to western China or Japan, according to current statements by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The symbol and best-known distinguishing mark of the "Ülkücü" movement is the "grey wolf" ("Bozkurt") and the so-called wolf salute derived from it, in which the fingers of the right hand on the outstretched arm form the head of a wolf. Followers of the "Ülkücü" movement are therefore often referred to as "grey wolves" ("Bozkurtlar") (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 254-255).

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, anti-Semitism is a "core ideological element" of Turkish right-wing extremism ("grey wolves"). The ideology of Turkish right-wing extremism is characterised by "an exaggeration of Turkishness while simultaneously devaluing other nations, ethnicities and religions" (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 94). "Hostility towards Jews" has long played a particularly important role in this, explain the German constitution protection authorities. Some concepts of the enemy are based on territorial competition, while others are more ideological (for example, the USA as the

epitome of "the West"). According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution's analysis, the anti-Semitism of the "Ülkücü" followers is based on largely irrational ideas, religious misinterpretations, conspiracy narratives that are contrary to the facts and "biologically derived attributions of inferiority". This is combined with a decided hostility towards Israel.

According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, around 10,500 of the approximately 12,100 supporters of the "Ülkücü" movement living in Germany are organised in three large umbrella organisations. These organisations represent elements of the "Ülkücü" ideology in various orientations and forms. Some of the associations are foreign organisations of extreme nationalist Turkish parties. The large associations endeavour to present a rather moderate image to the outside world and tend to communicate their right-wing extremist ideology internally, especially in the associations belonging to them, the German constitution protection authorities currently explain (Federal Ministry of the Interior and for Home Affairs 2023: 254-255).Supporters of the "Ülkücü" movement, the "Grey Wolves", who are not organised in the large associations, often live out their mostly racist and anti-Semitic enemy images openly, for example on social media, but also in public encounters with their political opponents, such as PKK supporters.

ANTI-SEMITISM BY LEFT-WING EXTREMISTS IN GERMANY

The German constitution protection authorities state that anti-Semitism is neither an essential characteristic of left-wing extremism nor an elementary component of its ideology. However, according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, this does not rule out individual anti-Semitic attitudes and recourse to anti-Semitic stereotypes among left-wing extremists. There is an "anti-Semitic tradition" in German left-wing extremism, starting with the early socialists and the labour movement through to attacks carried out by left-wing extremists against Jewish institutions at the end of the 1960s and an anti-Israeli attitude among members of the first RAF generation, according to the German constitution protection authorities. This anti-Semitism was motivated by anti-capitalism, among other things, and was historically based on an equation of "Jews" and "capital". The BfV analyses that German left-wing extremists currently do not generally hold decidedly anti-Semitic positions, but rather anti-Israeli ones, with "criticism of Israel" also being linked to criticism of capitalism (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 80).

Within German left-wing extremism, anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic narratives are mainly represented by the so-called anti-imperialists. Anti-imperialist groups, such as "Rote Aufbau Hamburg", are mainly represented in Hamburg, but also in Bremen and Berlin. Anti-imperialists condemn Israel as the "extended arm" of the "imperialist" USA, particularly in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Anti-Semitic stereotypes – including the terms "apartheid regime", "Holocaust", "pogrom", "war of extermination" and "genocide" – are also used in connection with Israeli actions against the Palestinians. In this respect, anti-imperialists equate Israel's policies with the crimes of National Socialism. Against this background, Israel's right to exist is also negated (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 81). In 2011, the independent expert group on anti-Semitism of the German Bundestag had already stated the following about the context of post-colonialism, left-wing extremism and other areas of extremism: "Against this background, anti-Zionist and anti-American attitudes combine to form a pattern of prejudice that misuses legitimate criticism of Israeli policy to express anti-Semitic dispositions in a supposedly legitimised form. The confluence of these motifs serves the critics of colonisation and globalisation on the extreme left, the traditionally anti-Semitic right-wing extremism and parts of the Muslim/Arab population with a migration background. Classic anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism and also post-colonial traumas are combined here to create a world view that is highly explosive for society (German Bundestag 2011).

The President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, Josef Schuster, declared on 6 December 2023 that he was seeing "increasingly active anti-Semitism from the left": "Since 7 October, we have been experiencing more anti-Semitic statements and actions from left-wing, unfortunately also academic circles" (Welt 2023b).

ANTISEMITISM OUTSIDE THE AREAS OF EXTREMISM IN GERMANY

The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) had already stated in April 2022 that anti-Semitism was detectable in all extremist phenomena, but not only there. Anti-Semitic attitudes are widespread in German society, including in its centre, explained the BfV (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 17). The latest results of long-term studies conducted since 2002 support this finding. According to the survey known as the Centre Study, a total of 4.3 per cent of those surveyed currently agree with the classic anti-Semitic statement "Even today, the influence of the Jews is still too great" in a manifest way and 15 per cent in a latent way (Zick/Küpper 2022: 86 f). The so-called Leipzig Authoritarianism Study arrives at significantly higher rates, according to which 10.2 per cent of respondents manifestly agree and 24.6 per cent latently agree (Decker/Brähler 2020: 225). The picture is similar with regard to statements that equate Israel and the Nazi regime. The statement "What the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians today is in principle no different to what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich" is agreed with by 18.3 per cent manifestly and 26.7 per cent latently, according to the data from the Mitte study (Zick/Küpper 2021: 88 f). According to the authoritarianism study, the figure for a comparable statement ("Israel's policy in Palestine is just as bad as the Nazis' policy in the Second World War") is 30.3 per cent in manifest form and 39.4 per cent in latent form (Decker/Brähler 2020: 227). Anti-Semitism in the centre of society is available and accessible via its stock of images and symbols, including the supposedly typically Jewish "hooked nose", the "puppet master" or the "octopus" (an octopus that has been engulfing the world has been frequently used as an anti-Semitic metaphor for years) (Martus 2023). Terms such as "well poisoner" or "ritual murder" are just as much a part of this arsenal of anti-Semitic narratives as the attributes of greed, striving for power or cunning attributed to Jews. In addition, there are allegories such as the geographical term "East Coast" (which stands for the allegedly Jewish-controlled financial centre of the USA), people such as the entrepreneur George Soros (who is stylised as the epitome of the profit- and power-hungry destroyer of non-Jewish peoples) or terms and buzzwords of various kinds, including "elites", "globalists" or an ominous "New World Order", which always remain undefined (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution 2022: 18).

Jews in Germany are under greater threat than they have been for a long time, explained Felix Klein, the Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Semitism, at the presentation of the anti-Semitism situation report on 7 November 2023 (Daniel 2023). The situation has worsened since the terrorist attack by Hamas on 7 October 2023. However, previous surveys had already shown that anti-Semitic attitudes in Germany were on the rise again, including in the middle of society and especially among young people (Daniel 2023). Social psychologist Beate Küpper from the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences lamented the "lack of regular monitoring of anti-Semitic attitudes in the population" during the presentation of the situation report. However, existing studies indicate how widespread anti-Semitic stereotypes are in large parts of German society, even in its centre.

On 13 December 2020, the Bertelsmann Stiftung stated that, against the backdrop of the Middle East conflict, the increasingly open manifestation of anti-Semitism in Germany, which is also reflected in a rise in anti-Semitic attacks, is a cause for concern. In addition to "left-wing and right-wing anti-Semitism", "anti-Semitism among the Muslim population in particular has become

the focus of public debate", according to the Bertelsmann Stiftung. This statement is based on the Religion Monitor 2023, although it should be noted that the figures for the current Religion Monitor were collected before 7 October 2023. The Religion Monitor 2023 had already shown before 7 October 2023 that "Israel-related anti-Semitism" was particularly acceptable in Germany. In the current Religion Monitor, a total of 43 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that "what the state of Israel is doing to the Palestinians is in principle no different to what the Nazis did to the Jews in the Third Reich" (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2023). In addition, "Israel-related anti-Semitic attitudes are found to a greater extent among people who have immigrated and grown up in a country that is less sensitised to the significance that the Holocaust has for the German self-image and the responsibility that has arisen from it", explains the Bertelsmann Stiftung's latest Religion Monitor. The Bertelsmann Stiftung's latest Religion Monitor also explains that "Muslims who practise their religion more frequently also display anti-Semitic attitudes" and that in "some countries of origin of Muslim immigrants, anti-Semitism is partly justified on religious grounds" (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2023).

CONCLUSION – AN ANTI-SEMITIC CROSS-FRONT IN GERMANY?

"*Anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel are unifying elements between Islamists, German and Turkish left-wing and right-wing extremists and supporters of extremist Palestinian organisations*" Thomas Haldenwang, President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), end of November 2023 (Klaus 2023).

The "common enemy image of Israel" could give rise to links between some of these players "that could lead to stronger cooperation in individual cases in the future", says Haldenwang (Klaus 2023).

A cross-front of extremist phenomena in Germany has existed for years in terms of ideological similarities with regard to anti-Semitism. There is not a cross-front in terms of personnel and organisation between *all* extremist phenomena, but there is currently already a cross-front between right-wing extremists, "Reich citizens" and "self-administrators" as well as delegitimisers; the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution speaks of a new mixed scene. There is also a cross-front of Islamists, Salafists, members of foreign extremism ("Turkish right-wing extremists" and secular Palestinian extremists) as well as some left-wing extremists ("Boycott, Divestment & Sanctions").

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CHAPTER 7

FAR-RIGHT LONE-ACTOR TERRORISTS AND THEIR ANTISEMITIC JUSTIFICATION

Florian Hartleb/Christoph Schiebel

INTRODUCTION – FAR-RIGHT LONE-ACTOR TERRORISM AND ANTISEMITISM

Famously, J. M. Berger describes the essence of extremism as "the belief that an in-group success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against the out-group" (2018: 44, 155, 172). Violent extremism is often referred to as terrorism (Berger 2019). Nonetheless, there is "no hard consensus on a definition of terrorism", as Berger claims and is also the case with extremism. As opposed to extremism, there exists at least a "soft consensus" (Berger 2019, 3). Right-wing lone-actor or lone-wolf terrorism should be considered as a special type of violent extremism. As Florian Hartleb puts it (2020: 45), lone-wolf terrorism has five features: 1) Lone-actors operate as individuals. 2) They profess that they act out of political conviction. 3) They are not part of any terrorist organization, at least in the classical sense, but can be part of virtual networks. 4) They do not receive commands or pledge allegiance to any hierarchy. 5) They disseminate propaganda and/or extremist ideology.

What makes lone-actor terrorists right-wing is controversial, but, in general, certain characteristics are salient: "nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and a desire for a strong state" (Bouhana et al. 2018: 152 f.). Moreover, antisemitism plays a crucial role in lone-actor right-wing terrorism (Lange 2023) which can be regarded as a growing threat in a global context and within a new virtual reality (Simon 2016; Hamm/Spaaij 2017; Hartleb 2020).

The central thesis of this article is the following:

– All (alleged) antisemitic terrorists of the last few years were involved with antisemitic online communities and spread antisemitic conspiracy theories by themselves.

Therefore, we analyze the linkage between right-wing lone-actor terrorism and antisemitism. Antisemitism is a dangerous concoction of ancient and modern narratives which not only span over centuries but even over different political camps (Rensmann 2019; 2020; 2021). For many observers, there is a striking similarity between antisemitism and populism. In essence, they both overstress a Schmittian distinction between friends and enemies (Stanley 2011; Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020). We build upon a thin-centered concept (Freeden 2001) of antisemitism in the first place (Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020) and extend the conceptual range given the complexity of the subject addressed, thereby comparing it to another and more complex set of definitions (Rensmann 2020). The thin-centered concept of antisemitism is put forward by Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. (2020). They claim that there are two motivations lurking behind antisemitism in the United States (US): 1) The first aim of antisemitism is to use a division between an in-group and the Jewish out-group to pinpoint clear targets of violence or different hostile actions. 2) The second function of antisemitism is to delve into conspiracy myths. Otherization consequentially contributes to the blame game which denigrates the out-group for acting unfairly. Thus, a search for scapegoats is started to forge an ideology which offers simplistic explanations for injustice inflicted upon the in-group. The in-group the related antisemites identify with benefits a hatred of Jews, who are depicted as the enemies in its construction (Meleagrou-Hitchens et al 2020: 6). To be brief, the (il-)logic of antisemitism comprises three steps and ultimately results in political violence:

"1) the Jewish people are the enemies of their in-group of extremists, 2) their extremist group is the only entity that is carrying out "the righteous struggle" against Jews, and 3) that hostile action, including violence, is the only acceptable response to perceived grievances against the Jewish community. This cocktail of narratives is at the root of why multiple groupings of extremists in the United States have conducted violent attacks against the Jewish community." (Meleagrou-Hitchens et al 2020:6).

Lars Rensmann likens these conspiracy myths to megalomania and paranoia, which assist in the mobilization of right-wing radicals (Rensmann 2020: 85f). Rensmann (2020) shows that antisemitism is most pervasive among the radical right, although it, additionally, leaves a mark on Islamist and even radical left-wing ideologies. Granted, antisemitism has merged with populism in recent years, introducing another Manichean feature and forging an unholy alliance more complex than right-wing extremism (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2017: 14, 23). When it comes to detailed research into right-wing terrorism and related justifications, the narrative analysis by Fredrik Wilhelmsen on lone-actor terrorists stands out (2022), as does a book by Tore Bjørgo comparing different acts of right-wing terrorism throughout the world (2014) does. The author refers to antisemitism as a central piece of motivation for right-wing terrorists (Bjørgo 2014). Moreover, antisemitism has been linked to the QAnon conspiracy myth in recent years. The story goes that Jewish celebrities such as George Soros and the Rothschild family are accused of conspiracy for child sex-trafficking. The QAnon conspiracy myth has run viral in the US and Europe with Donald J. Trump seen as some sort of deliverer. Former US President Trump incited some of his supporters, including many people believing in the QAnon conspiracy myth and right-wing radicals, to invade the American Capitol violently on January 6, 2021. These people made the effort of preventing Joe Biden from becoming US President (Beirich 2021). Obviously, there is a link between far-right ideologies and political violence. We focus on right-wing terrorists. These terrorists are characterized as lone actors, but they refer to common antisemitic narratives.

In the light of their online networks, lone-actor terrorists make use of participant narratives which tap the resources of many more extremists (Topor 2019). Our key research interest is the connection between antisemitism and right-wing lone-actor terrorism. Obviously, the Internet is awash with hatred, conspiracy myths, and even antisemitism, and different types of far-right propaganda. This includes Nazism and white supremacism (Topor 2022), on the one hand, and the search for enemies, on the other hand.

ANTISEMITIC FAR-RIGHT LONE-ACTOR TERRORISM ON THE RISE

In recent years, there have been several antisemitic lone-actor terrorist attacks in the Western world. We deliver a summary of these examples of lone-actor terrorism. It becomes clear that antisemitism has been integral in planning major terrorist attacks. This type of terrorism has gripped several Western countries such as Germany and caused anxiety there. There are several elements which deserve a closer look.

- **QANON – A CENTRAL CONSPIRACY MYTH**

An anti-Jewish terrorist attack shattered Germany on 9th October 2019 during the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur: The Halle terrorist attack disconcerted German politicians and society as well as the Jewish community (Benz 2020b: 6). The Halle terrorist had been gripped by antisemitic resentment, particularly the QAnon conspiracy theory. Stephan Balliet connected the QAnon conspiracy theory with alleged Jewish manipulation of the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank. The right-wing terrorist linked his claim to the Jewish billionaire George Soros. The story went that Soros had promoted migration to Germany for the sake of establishing a

multicultural state (Langer 2023). Hence, conspiracy thinking made a substantial contribution to Balliet's terrorist narrative. These narratives are inseparable from the antisemite's Holocaust denial, which we deal with now.

• HOLOCAUST DENIAL – ANOTHER IDEOLOGICAL INCENTIVE

We have found three cases of Holocaust denial by right-wing terrorists: The first case refers to the attack on the Holocaust Museum, Washington DC, in the US, on June 10, 2009. 2) The second case relates to the attack on the synagogue in Halle, Germany, on October 9, 2019. 3) The third case of a Holocaust-denying lone-actor carrying out a terrorist attack happened in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, on October 12, 2022.

Holocaust denial plays a decisive part in the ideological justification of lone-wolf terrorism: A Holocaust denier, 88-year-old (!) James von Brunn violently entered the Washington DC Holocaust Museum, where he killed a black sentinel (Simon 2016: 57-59). Von Brunn's ideological background is obvious: He had been in contact with the notorious German Holocaust denier Horst Mahler (Spiegel online 2009). In his video introducing his terrorist attempt, Stephan Balliet, another lone-actor terrorist, also denied the Holocaust: "Hello, my name is Anon, and I think the holocaust never happened" (Balliet 2019).

• CURRENT ANTISEMITISM AND ITS DEEP ROOTS

On October 9, 2019 a terrorist attack at the Halle synagogue failed. The lone actor behind the attack was Stephan Balliet. The failed attempt was driven by antisemitism. After the failed entry thanks to a blocked door, the far-right terrorist shot two people. A woman passing by and a person at a döner kebab takeaway were shot to death by the far-right terrorist. Interestingly, Balliet refers to the QAnon conspiracy theory, which is meant to revitalize antisemitic conspiracy thinking. Balliet failed at committing a terrorist attack at the synagogue of Halle, Germany. His motivations were undoubtedly antisemitic (Langer 2023). Since Trumpists' attack on Capitol Hill to deny the US presidency to Joe Biden, the then-President-Elect, the QAnon conspiracy theory has gone viral. In 2017, the QAnon conspiracy theory had started by mentioning alleged plots against then-President Trump. The conspiracy myth was spread on fringe platforms such as 4chan and 8chan, but even Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram. The key ingredient of the QAnon conspiracy theory was that there was a Democratic-led global child sex-trafficking ring. Q and Trump, sometimes seen as one, were said to be fighting this group of Democratic and government elites, and Hollywood actors. The narrative gained fame and traction during the COVID19-pandemic (Hoseini et al. 2023). Digitalization has helped antisemites re-encode resentment towards Jews and build upon new conspiracy myths like the QAnon conspiracy theory. Zionists and Jews such as the Rothschild family and the Hungarian-born American philanthropist George Soros, but even Bill Gates have been subjects of conspiracy narratives. Thus, economic and political elites are suspected of implementing sinister plans to establish a new world order (Steffen et al. 2023).

On that front, antisemitic conspiracy theories turned up, with the message clearly underpinning Balliet's violent intention: "The only way to win is to cut off the head of ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government), which are the kikes. (…) After all, if every White Man kills just one, we win." (Balliet 2019: 10). Interviewing himself, the far-right terrorist wondered if he was insane and answered: "No, I am just an individual. (…) By the way, psychology is a Jewish trick" (cited after Hartleb 2020: 19). The failed Halle terrorist assault, a targeted attack on Jewish life in Germany driven by Judeophobia, led to trepidation among Germany's polity and society (Benz 2020b: 6). In the video proclaiming the attack, the Halle terrorist introduced his crime by introducing himself as an Anon. As we discussed above, he linked his motive to the QAnon conspiracy theory (Langer 2023).

- **THE LIMITS OF LONE-ACTOR TERRORISM**

Antisemitism feeds current types of right-wing violence, as can be observed in the case of right-wing terrorism. A new type of right-wing terrorism, hence, has emerged. A lone actor profits from his virtual network, but strikes on his own (Hartleb 2023). Centered around antisemitism, the linkage is undeniable as regards the international phenomenon. The online trend has led to mutual inspiration and the build-up of the international dimension (Coester et al. 2023). The case of Timothy McVeigh is a salient one: he is not categorized as a lone-actor terrorist only because he had an accomplice. On April 19, 1995, McVeigh committed the mass attack with the greatest casualties in American history. The Oklahoma City bombing was inspired by the antisemitic "Turner Diaries", a racist novel written by far-right activist William Pierce (Berger 2016). The book about a race war remains popular and pervasive among the far-right. 168 people were killed in the terrorist attack and a further 680 injured (Beirich 2021: 2).

On October 27, 2018, the right-wing extremist Robert Bowers shot eleven people attending the service at a Jewish synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He opened fire, shouting "All Jews must die" (Benz 2020a: 419). Bowers had an aversion towards the HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), as can be observed in a posting one hour before the terrorist attack (Lange 2023: 407). His biography published on the social media platform "Gab" read "Jews are the children of Satan" (Lange 2023: 408). Bowers claimed that then-US-President Trump was controlled "by Jews". This inspired John. T. Earnest to murder on April 27, 2019. Earnest entered the Chabad Synagogue in the Californian city Poway, crying out "Jews are ruining the world" (Benz 2023a: 419). Following the two attacks, the FBI warned for the first time explicitly against antisemitic conspiracy theories engendering terrorist attacks (FBI 2019). In his manifesto, the terrorist defines the codeword "Anon", which stands for other "anonymous" users of the popular imageboard website "8chan". Earnest´s manifesto displayed his antisemitic views: "I hate anyone who seeks the destruction of my race. Spics and niggers are useful puppets for the Jew in terms of replacing Whites. Of course, they aren't intelligent enough to realize that the Jew is using them and they will be enslaved if Europeans are eliminated. Do they actively hate my race? Yes, I hate them" (Earnest 2019: 4).

On May 14, 2022, the 18 years old Payton Gendron murdered ten black and three other people at a supermarket. Interviewing himself, he asked the question: "Are You an Antisemitic? The answer: Yes! I wish all Jews to the hell" (Gendron 2022: 7). Later, Gendron displayed the conspiracy theory of a Jewish world conspiracy in his terrorist manifesto, making use of images and "statistics". A single paragraph ("About Jews") builds upon this conspiracy theory and leads up to genocidal violent fantasies: "We outnumber them 100x, and they are not strong by themselves. But by their Jewish ways, they turn us against each other. When you realize this you will know that the Jews are the biggest problem the Western world has ever had. They must be called out and killed, if they are lucky they will be exiled" (Gendron 2022: 24). According to the terrorist, there was a struggle against Jewish Bolshevism and the financial system. Gendron additionally makes use of antisemitic pictures on several pages (Gendron 2022). It shows the dangerous subcultural spread of antisemitism attracting a young man who got bored during the pandemic, as he himself pointed out (ibid.).

ANTISEMITIC PICTURES JUSTIFYING FAR-RIGHT LONE-ACTOR TERRORIST ATTACKS

Analyzing antisemitic imagery is important to understand the dimension such pictures assume in justifying terrorist attacks. What is more, Jews and synagogues are often the immediate target of those attacks.
This picture shows the dichotomy: Allegedly, "Jews" are against "white culture", pouring a bucket full of lies, paranoia, etc., into the canon of Western values: loyalty, family, truth, etc. In the right-hand picture, a Rabbi is blamed for himself spraying a svastika on a temple.

Image 1 "Jews as scapegoats for all" (Gendron 2022: 24)

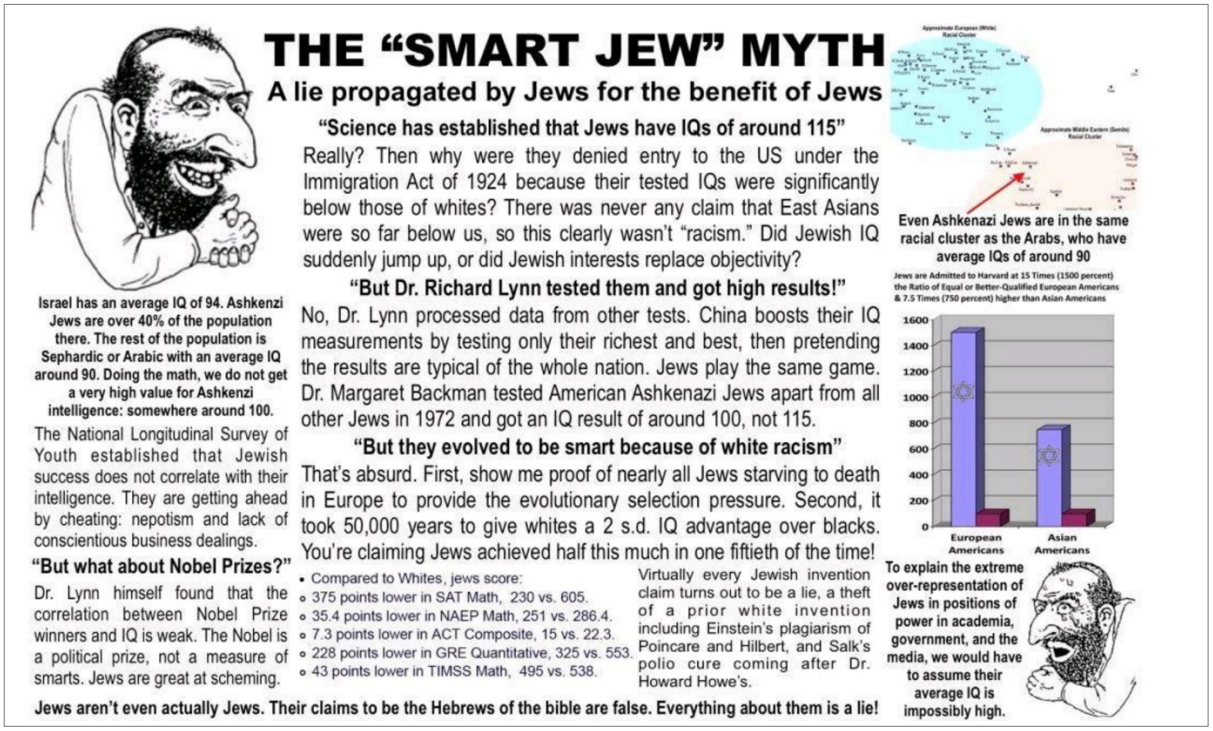

Image 2: "myths of smart Jews" (Gendron 2022: 36)

This picture is supposed to defame Jews. It is maintained that disproportionate intelligence among Jews is a lie and solely due to "extreme overrepresentation" in powerful positions (in science, government, and the media). Such pictures have been re-emerging on infamous fora, e.g., 4chan. This includes a frog generated by artificial intelligence, portrayed as a terrorist. Behind the frog, there are dead Israeli soldiers (Koblentz-Stenzler et al. 2023: 7). Self-evidently, hatred of Israel plays a considerable role in far-right terrorist propaganda.

Figure 3 - Illustration of Pepe the Frog as a terrorist from the Hamas military wing, Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades launching rockets (4chan; October 14th, 2023)

Figure 4 - AI-Generated image of Pepe the Frog as a terrorist with dead Israeli soldiers in the background (4chan; October 16th, 2023)

Image 3 and 4: Pepe the frog in the light of the Hamas attacks

This picture is supposed to illustrate the "alleged overrepresentation" of Jews at leading American universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. It is remarkable that a teenager dealt with the leadership of leading universities with such an antisemitic stance.

Image 5: Alleged overrepresentation in science (Gendron 2022: 38)

On the following picture hatred of LGBT people, especially transgender ones, is portrayed, and they are blamed on the Jews.

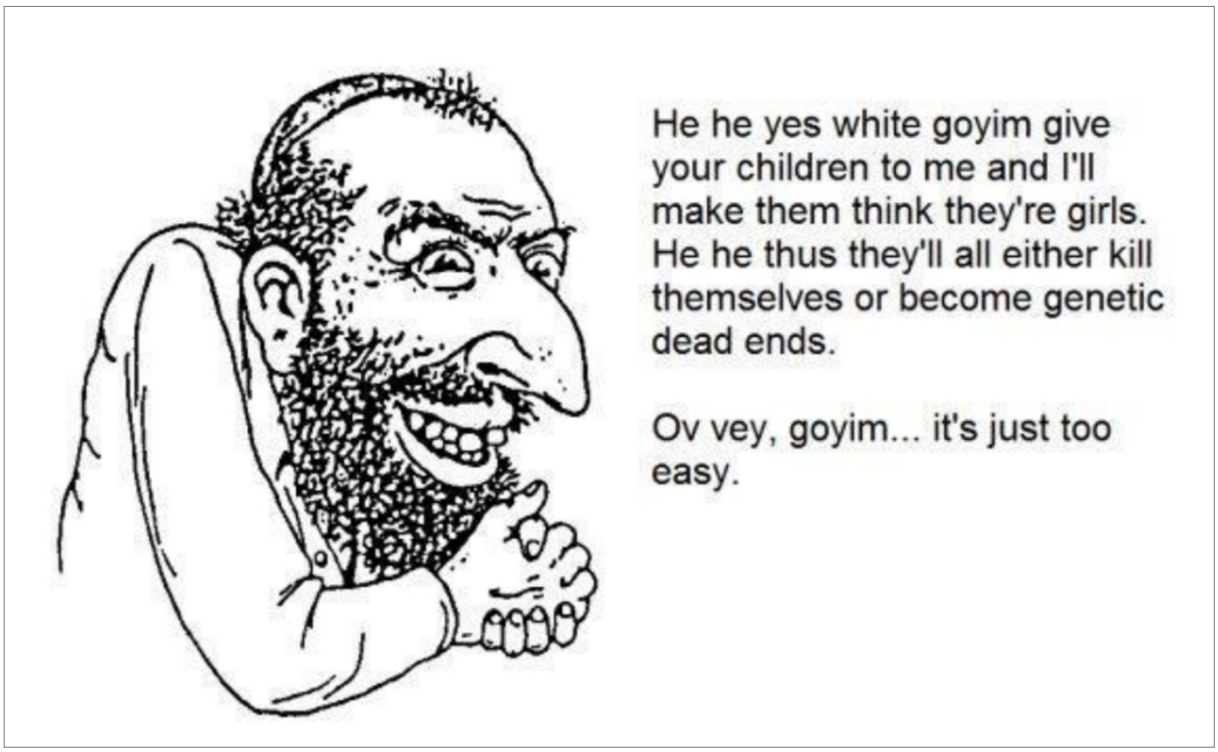

Image 6: Jews and transgender (Gendron 2022: 45)

Juraj Krajčík, a nineteen-year-old Slovak, shot two young people and injured a woman in front of a LGBT bar in the city center of Bratislava. He was motivated by homophobic and antisemitic hate speech. In his manifesto, the terrorist denied the Shoah and expressed general violent fantasies: "It never happened. But if it did, they deserved it. Shame that the job wasn´t finished though. Now it´s up to us to fix that little error. 6 million was just the prologue, 20.7 million next time!" (Krajčík 2022: 47). Time and time again, the leitmotif that nobody is fighting the ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) can be found. Krajčík saw 8chan as a place of enlightenment. Furthermore, the terrorist attacks of Poway and Christchurch inspired him (Krajčík 2022: 47). The first page of Gendron's and Krajčík's manifestos show the Black Sun, as the Christchurch muss murderer Brenton Tarrant, who killed 55 people on March 15, 2019 in two mosques, did ion the cover of his manifesto. Tarrant, who followed the ideas of white supremacy and the "Great replacement", can be seen as idol and "trigger" for the Halle attacker (Hartleb 2023).

This symbol is contrived as three svastikas laid upon each other or as a wheel made up of twelve "Sieg" runes. The origin and creation of the Black Sun has, however, not definitely been clarified. Presumably, the term goes back to the antisemitic occultist Helena Blavatzky. She established theosophy and root race theory. The Black Sun was derived from the image of a central sun created by the original Aryan people. Against this background, the Black Sun assumes the meaning of the original source of Aryan power among right-wing extremist and esoteric circles.

Comparing the terrorist attacks, we can see a nexus between antisemitism and mysogynism, especially marked in the case of the Halle terrorist. On the last page of his manifesto, there is a techno-barbarian girl meme (Balliet 2019: 11). Far-right terrorists benefit from the dissemination of their messages on websites such as Gab, 8chan, and Endchan, and further encoded channels (US Department for Homeland Security 2019).

Table 1: Right-wing inspired lone actors with antisemitic motivation (hatred ideology)

Attack	Target (groups)	Number of dead people	Publishing/ Framing	Announcement	Livestream
October 2018 Robert Bowers 46 years	Jews	11 people	One hour before the attack: posting against HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society)	Platform Gab (many postings before)	
April 2019 Poway (USA) John Timothy Earnest 22 years	Jews (Muslims)	1 person (stopped by force early)	"manifesto", labeled as an open "letter"	Imageboard 8chan	Failed livestream
October 2019 Halle (Germany) Stephan Balliet 27 years	Jews Muslims people of color	2 people (the perpetrator couldn't enter the door of the Jewish synagogue in which dozens of people had gathered)	"manifesto" – the terrorist's antisemitism (Holocaust denial) – target: Jewish synagogue	Imageboard megua.org	Livestream via Twitch
May 14, 2022 Buffalo/New York (USA) Payton Gendron 18 years	People of color Jews Transgender	10 people (largely people of color)	"manifesto"	Imageboard 4 chan	Livestream via Twitch
October 12, 2022 Bratislava (Slovakia) Juraj Krajčík 19 years	Homosexuals Jews	2 men, homosexuals (crime scene: LGBT bar)	"manifesto"		Tweets on the day of the attack hashtags used: #bratislava, #hatecrime, #gaybar and "feeling no regrets, isn't that funny"

In addition, there are terrorist networks such as "Atomwaffen Division" and "Feuerkrieg Division". The latter one had a thirteen-year-old "Kommander" from Estonia. From an Estonian village, the boy, whose identity has not been revealed for reasons of youth protection, shared instructions for building a bomb and proposed concrete targets of terrorist attack. Places of Jewish life in particular were the subject of debate. Moreover, the thirteen-year-old revealed the addresses of far-right-terrorists Anders Behring Breivik and Tarrant. After meticulous planning, the lone actors had murdered dozens of people, and the "Kommander" suggested the sending of birthday and Christmas cards to them because of that (Hartleb 2023: 165 f). These cases demonstrate that antisemitic codes play a special role in the new online subculture and create a basis of legitimization for the new international and virtual forms of right-wing terrorism.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Antisemitism has played a crucial part in several substantial and consequential attacks on Jews, homosexuals, and Muslims. It combines conspiracy myths, Holocaust denial, and hatred of Israel. What is more, we examined both written terrorist manifestos and imagery. Manifestos particularly represented Holocaust denial and conspiracy theories such as QAnon. The QAnon conspiracy theory has partly assumed the role of older antisemitic resentment. The pictures were especially rife with hatred of Jews and Israel. Cartoons were used to defame Jews and their influence on global politics.

Lone-actor or lone-wolf terrorists are often antisemites after radicalization through the Internet where they find antisemitic material on social networks and fora. We must ascertain that antisemitic propaganda is commonplace among the far right and has inspired their crimes. Terrorist attacks can be deduced from antisemitic resentment. Many ideas and narratives nurtured by the far right are interchangeable and reach beyond Jewish targets. Surely, Jewish worshippers and synagogues are preferred targets of far-right terrorist attacks. Nevertheless, antisemitic terrorists often attack Muslims and LBGT people likewise. Right-wing extremist hatred is not limited to Jews and their faith.

There are many more adherents of antisemitism than there are far-right terrorists. At any rate, far-right lone-actor terrorists profit from loose networks and social media ignorant of hate speech and political extremism. In conclusion, the availability of antisemitic material enables not exclusively far-right terrorists to radicalize quickly. Islamists and left-wing radicals also tap into antisemitism (Kopietz 2023; Müller 2023). Generally, the far-right peril is the largest one when it comes to antisemitism.

It remains to be seen how the terrorist antisemitic landscape will develop in the months to come given the Gaza conflict. The European far right appears to be divided upon this issue. Some Western right-wing radicals have realigned with Jews and Israel, and have begun to focus on rejecting Hamas, pro-Palestinian protest, and Islamism (Birchard 2023). Perhaps this will trigger a rearrangement of hatred and political alliances. In the case of the "Great Replacement", we can observe a shift towards anti-Muslim conspiracy theories. With antisemitism still playing a crucial role in this conspiracy theory, Jews' influence has been considered large in conspiracy myths (Pertwee 2020). Other political camps may also realign and resume antisemitism as a key feature.

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CHAPTER 8

ISLAMIC ANTISEMITISM IN EUROPE – A WORRYING DIRECTION [1]

Nina Scholz

INTRODUCTION

The rise in antisemitism since the Hamas terror attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 reveals a phenomenon that, although there is no lack of evidence from numerous studies, has less of a presence in academic discourse and politics than antisemitism from the radical right: widespread antisemitism within Muslim communities in Europe. These have two to three times higher levels than in other parts of the population, including other immigrant groups (Scholz 2021).[1] This means that there are two to three times as many people with anti-Semitic attitudes in a group of Muslims than in other groups.

It is mostly an anti-Semitism that has been handed down through parental upbringing and a social environment influenced by Arab and Turkish TV stations and social media channels, and is by no means only expressed in connection with the state of Israel, but affects Jews as a whole.[2] It is fuelled by religious arguments from Islamic tradition, which are transferred to today's Jews and display a level of hatred that has the potential to promote violence and in some cases openly incites violence. Islamist organisations, both violent, jihadist-oriented and legalistically operating ones, are passing on centuries-old and modern anti-Semitic narratives, often in combination, in order to legitimise current manifestations of hostility towards Jews or current events such as the Middle East conflict with reference to the accusations already present in Islamic tradition.

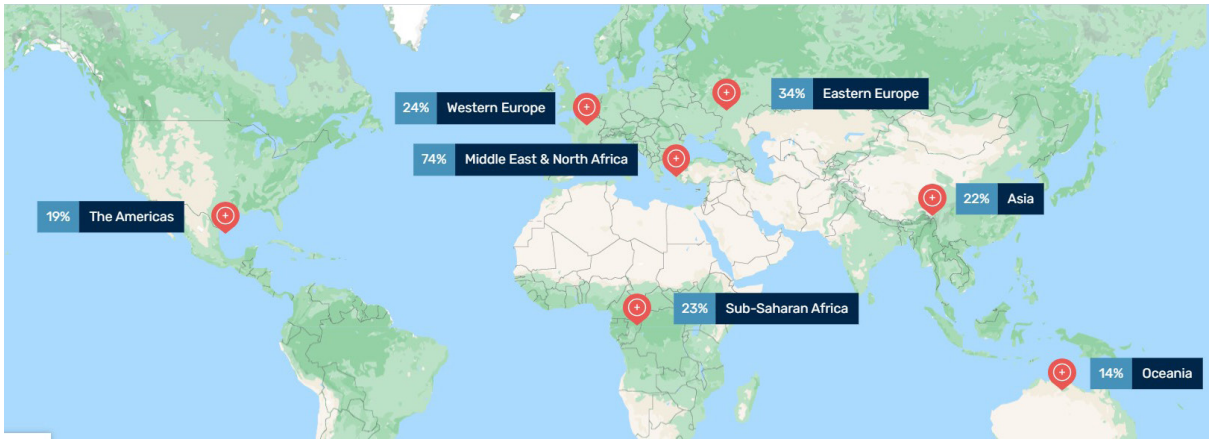
The Middle East conflict can undoubtedly be seen as a catalyst, but the corpus of prejudice is much older, as will be shown below.

In the last two decades, all deadly attacks on Jews in Europe have been carried out exclusively by radicalised Muslims. If the attacker in Halle, who wanted to break into the synagogue there, had been able to realise his plan, that would have been the only exception in this category. In France, where a particularly large number of violent and deadly attacks on Jews has occurred, we see only Muslims – organised groups, individual perpetrators and semi-organised small groups of friends and neighbours – as perpetrators. We cannot predict the future development of the increase of deadly acts of violence against Jews in other milieus – be it radical right-wing or radical left-wing – but the radicalisation and the now sometimes open threats of violence among supporters of the pro-Palestine and pro-Hamas demonstrations do not currently allow for an optimistic forecast, even for radical left-wing circles. In current statistics, the findings clearly point to Muslim perpetrators of violence. In the reporting statistics of the Jewish Community in Austria, for example, Muslims are clearly overrepresented as perpetrators in the categories "physical attack" and "threat". Of the 14 physical attacks in 2022, nine were perpetrated by Muslims, as were 11 of the 21 threats (Meldestelle 2023: 17).

According to a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, when asked to identify the perpetrator of the most serious antisemitic incident they had experienced in the past five years, 41 % of Jews surveyed in Germany stated that it was someone with a Muslim extremist viewpoint; in Austria, the figure was 35 %. Muslims were therefore significantly overrepresented with a population share of 5.7 % in Germany and 8 % in Austria (FRA 2018: 54).

1 This paper was translated from German to English.

Anti-Semitic attitudes are significantly more widespread in Muslim-majority countries than in all other countries. For example, the anti-Semitism index[3] determined by the global "ADL Global 100" study is significantly higher in predominantly Islamic countries than that all other countries. They have an average value two to three times higher than other regions of the world (ADL 2014-2023).



© ADL Global 100

As can be seen in the picture, the average value for Western Europe is 24 %, for Eastern Europe 34%, for North and South America 19 %, for Sub-Saharan Africa 23 %, but for the Middle East and North Africa 74 %.

If the index is broken down to individual countries, the differences are even more significant: Netherlands 5 %, Germany 12 %, Austria 20 %, Spain 26 %, and France 37 % (the highest value in Western Europe). Bosnia is the only predominantly Islamic country, with an index value of 32 %, which is in the (upper) range of Western Europe. The value for Turkey is 71 %, Saudi Arabia 74 %, Egypt 75 %, Morocco 80 %, Jordan 81 % and Iraq 92 %.

An anti-Semitism study regularly conducted by the Austrian parliament concludes that anti-Semitism is significantly more widespread "among people of Turkish or Arabic language" in Austria than in other parts of the population (Parlament 2023: 77 f.).

Studies among young people have revealed a similar picture in recent years. A study of young people in open youth work commissioned by the City of Vienna found that 47 % of the Muslim young people surveyed held anti-Semitic attitudes. Such attitudes were shared by 27 % of young people from Orthodox Christian families and 7 % from Catholic families (Güngör, Nik Nafs 2016: 48).

The University College of Teacher Education Vienna, on the other hand, analysed authoritarian tendencies among apprentices. Among the vocational school students surveyed who stated that they spoke Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian or Turkish at home, 48 % agreed with the statement that Jews have too much influence in Austria, – 32 % strongly agreed, and 16 % tended to agree (Lauß, Schmid-Heher 2017: 111).

In most Islamic countries, anti-Semitic attitudes are part of the widely internalised canon of values, if not the raison d'être of the state. Even if not all immigrants or refugees from these countries bring antisemitic attitudes with them, it must be statistically assumed that immigration from countries with a high antisemitism index increases the proportion of people with antisemitic attitudes in the overall population.

Politicians and society should face up to the fact that immigration from Islamic countries has added a historically new form of anti-Semitism, which in some European countries, such as France, the

UK and Sweden, has already led to a serious increase in violence and an exodus of Jews in the last two decades, as they run the risk of being attacked, harassed and inadequately protected in everyday life. This also applies to some so-called hotspot districts in Germany, such as Berlin-Neukölln, where dangerous situations for Jews, including assaults, have occurred repeatedly for years and have increased since 7 October 2023. In October 2023, the police union called for stricter action against anti-Semitism on German streets (Deutschlandfunk 2023). At the end of 2023, the Danish police announced that the threat situation in the country had increased to such an extent that their capacities were no longer sufficient to protect Jewish institutions to the necessary extent. The government decided to deploy the military to guard them (BILD 2023).

In order to understand anti-Semitism in Muslim communities, it seems necessary to take a look at history. In the following, this article deals with the question of the historical roots of Islamic anti-Semitism.

THE TERM ANTI-SEMITISM

It should be noted in advance that the term anti-Semitism is a relatively modern invention and was not common before the second half of the 19th century. It originates from the German journalist Wilhelm Marr, who founded the so-called Antisemiten-Liga with his like-minded comrades in 1879, which attracted attention with its anti-Jewish political programme.

The term was thus the positive self-definition of the members and sympathisers of this group and spread from there throughout Europe.

Today, the term is generally used as a collective term for all forms of hostility towards Jews, including those that go back much further in history. To describe the phenomenon, however, the terms "anti-Judaism" or "hostility towards Jews" will also be used here in analogy to historical research.

ISLAM APOLOGETICS PREVENTS CRITICAL DEBATE

The German and Austrian Islamic organisations generally deny a connection between Islam and hostility towards Jews.

They do not appear to be up to the task of analysing the problem, which is also due to the fact that they cannot fall back on critical historiography in Islamic countries in this regard. The interest in such research, also critical of sources and contextualising, appears to be low overall and influenced by the desire to paint a picture of Islam and the Muslim community (Ummah) as one without fault. The resulting inevitable tendency to play the role of victim leads to simple explanations and produces defence mechanisms. If anti-Semitism is recognised as a problem at all, its cause is usually sought outside of one's own history, one's own religion, one's own community. For example, the association "Muslim Youth Austria" presented the project "Muslims against anti-Semitism" at the beginning of 2018, but immediately declared: "For us, there is no Islamic anti-Semitism, but an Islamised völkisch anti-Semitism" (MJÖ 2018).

Some academics, such as political scientist Andreas Peham and sociologist Kenan Güngör, have a similar view of the phenomenon. Peham prefers the term "Islamised anti-Semitism", which means that its "origin is not religious, but völkisch". "Islamised anti-Semitism" is a "condensation of the various manifestations of European anti-Semitism" and cannot be described as a "souvenir" from the countries of origin. Peham's bold thesis is therefore that anti-Semitic positions among Muslim youths are less religiously than socially motivated and that Jews serve as a "projection surface for self-hatred" (Standard 2018; SOS Mitmensch 2019).

Güngör speaks of a "re-imported anti-Semitism". In the course of colonisation, anti-Semitic conspiracy theories were imported into the Islamic world and are now being re-imported to Europe through immigration (Sahin 2019).

Rather hasty conclusions seem to have been drawn here that disregard both Islamic tradition and the history of the Jews under Islamic rule.

In contrast to the historiographical studies of longstanding Christian hostility towards Jews, i.e. the phenomenon referred to as "Christian anti-Judaism", as presented by Friedrich Heer (1981), Hellmut Andics (1965) and many other researchers (e.g. Gerlach 2000; Heinisch/Scholz 2001), religiously motivated hostility towards Jews that has been passed down through the centuries is often excluded in the Islamic context. European völkisch anti-Semitism is thoughtlessly declared to be the actual cause of anti-Semitism among Muslims simply because it has influenced them. Such an analysis seems to dispense with knowledge of the history of religions and ideas, knowledge that underlies publications on Christian anti-Judaism. These were able to show that accusations against the Jews dating back to the early days of Christianity and made in a religious context constituted an enemy image that was constantly expanded and recombined over the centuries and, from the 19th century onwards, could be linked to modern, biological findings.

The reference to the Middle East conflict as the main cause of hatred towards Jews in Islamic countries and communities in the West is also not a viable argument. It undoubtedly represents a catalyst, but it cannot hide the fact that Jews were already declared enemies of Muslims in the literary Islamic tradition of the Quran, Sunnah (tradition of the words and deeds of Muhammad) and Sira (biography of the prophet Mohammad), and were discriminated against and repeatedly persecuted and murdered over the centuries. To this day, as will be shown later, the anti-Jewish narratives from Islamic tradition are handed down and linked to current events, whether in the speeches of cadres of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Turkish President Erdoğan or in slogans on the streets of Europe. Naturally, more modern anti-Semitic topoi from Europe are also incorporated into a centuries-old anti-Jewish narrative.

GENUINE ISLAMIC HOSTILITY TOWARDS JEWS

A look at the religious literary tradition reveals an old anti-Jewish tradition. It includes, for example, the story of three Jewish tribes in Medina who collaborated with Muhammad's enemies and refused to accept Islam. Muhammad is therefore said to have ordered the expulsion of two tribes; the men of the third, according to tradition, were liquidated, and the women and children were led into slavery (Rotter 2004: 180).

In a hadith (a saying or action attributed to Mohammad that is not in the Quran) we find a statement about the Jews that became one of the most popular anti-Jewish passages in the Sunnah. It reads:

"'The hour (of the resurrection) will not come until the Muslims fight against the Jews. The Jews will hide behind stones and trees and the stones and trees will cry out: 'O Muslim, servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him'" (Sahih Muslim, 5203).

The Quran itself contains a whole series of further accusations against Jews: they broke the covenant with God (4:155; 5:13), they denied God's signs, killed their prophets (2:61; 3:21, 112, 181; 4:155), were in breach of contract, committed treason (2:100; 5:13) and robbed others of their money (4:161; 9:34).[4] What we have here are stereotypes similar to those found in Christian medieval discourse about the Jews, for example in the so-called Adversus Judaeos texts (Schreckenberg 1989). In Islam, corresponding passages can already be found in the Quran itself. In view of the geographical overlap with Christian territories in the course of the great conquests by the Arab

armies, knowledge of the Christian theological discourse at the time of the canonisation of the Islamic tradition can be assumed.

The example of the aforementioned passage dealing with the Jews on the Arabian Peninsula, who are accused of not having accepted Islam and of having supported the enemies of Muhammad, reveals, as do numerous other passages, the foundations of Islam's own anti-Jewish tradition. They show, among other things, that Judaism, with its much earlier monotheism, was also a competitor for the emerging Islam in the competition for the right monotheism.

Christians are not exactly mentioned favourably in the Quran either. However, if one disregards the verses of the Quran that deal with "unbelievers" in general and only looks at those that explicitly deal with Jews or Christians, it is noticeable that Jews are mentioned more frequently and in a much more derogatory way. The Islamic tradition thus already paints a negative picture of the Jews that can be regarded as genuinely Islamic.

There are of course also verses in the Quran that are neutral towards Jews. These are mainly passages that have been (in a modified form) taken from the Hebrew Bible, such as the story of Moses. There, Jews are addressed as "children of Israel" and biblical stories are reproduced without judgement.

In today's Islamic mainstream, the stories of the expulsion and annihilation of the Jewish tribes and a famous battle against the Jews (see below) as well as the anti-Jewish quotations from the Quran are part of the self-evident repertoire that is taught worldwide in Quran schools and in religious education in Islamic countries and also repeatedly in European mosques and Islamic associations, as journalistic exposures and academic studies have shown (e.g. DPI 2022; Römel, Wolf 2023; Heinisch, Çiçek, Vömel 2023: 205f, 210-212).

The problem is that the Quran, Sunnah and the biography of the Prophet are still regarded by many Muslims today as exemplary in every respect and as socially normative, meaning that pejorative attitudes towards Jews, as they are anchored in this tradition, are passed on to today's Muslims without reflection. The role model character makes a critical examination and historical contextualisation difficult. If a collectivist imprint generally makes people susceptible to bans on criticism, this applies in particular to questioning and criticising beliefs. In societies or communities in which Islam is the decisive normative force, criticism or proposals to reject certain Quranic verses as no longer exemplary are quickly regarded as treason, although there are examples of adaptations that have been made, and slavery, for example, which is legitimised by the Quran, is only regarded as legitimate by some extremist groups such as IS.

THE POSITION OF JEWS AS DHIMMIS

For centuries, Jews, like other non-Muslims, were placed under special laws as so-called dhimmis – a euphemistic term that roughly means "wards". This special status determined their existence and made them pariahs and second-class citizens.

The special rights, which in turn were euphemistically referred to as a "protection contract", granted followers of the book religions, i.e. primarily Jews and Christians as well as Sabians, and after the conquest of Persia also Zoroastrians, a certain degree of security with regard to life, property and the practice of their religion, but this had to be purchased with a poll tax (Jizya) (Lewis 1987: 32). The "protection contract" was legitimised by Sura 9:29 of the Quran, which states that those who do not belong to Islam are to be fought "until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."

People who did not belong to these "protectorates"/book religions met an even harder fate; they were usually faced with the choice of converting to Islam or dying (Lewis 1987: 28).

The "protection contract" contained a series of specific humiliating rules aimed at showing Muslims deference and respect. If necessary, Jews and Christians had to give up their seats to Muslims, had to be the first to greet them, give way on the road and the like. Special dress codes applied to them, they were only allowed to ride donkeys and not horses and their houses had to be lower than those of their Muslim neighbours. The strict or lenient enforcement of the regulations always depended on the religious fervour of the respective ruler and varied depending on the place and time.

Forced conversions took place, even though they stood in opposition to the levying of the poll tax, when a ruler of particular fervour saw a need for them. For example, the Almohad Caliph Abd al Mumin "offered" Islam to the Jews of Tunis in 1159. "Those who became Muslims remained unmolested, those who refused were killed," the Muslim historian Ibn al-Athir (1160-1233) tells us (Ye'Or 2005: 95).

It goes without saying that the "protection contract" denied Jews any position of power in Islamic territory. Anyone with ambitions to rise in society had to become a Muslim.

A drastic example of what a violation of this prohibition could lead to has come down to us from conquered Spain in the 11th century, i.e. from Muslim Al-Andalus. Shmuel ha-Nagid, although a Jew, rose to become Grand Vizier in the Kingdom of Granada due to his friendship with the Islamic ruler. Even when the latter died and his son took over the throne, Shmuel ha-Nagid remained in the office of Grand Vizier. After his death, his son Joseph inherited the office of vizier. The situation now escalated. On 30 December 1066, a fanatical Muslim crowd stormed the palace, crucified the vizier and then marched through the Jewish quarter of Granada. Almost 4,000 people, almost the entire Jewish community, had to pay with their lives for the fact that a Jew had dared to take the second highest position in the empire. It is the oldest known pogrom on European soil (Gottheil, Kayserling 2021).

As early as 1033, 6,000 Jews had fallen victim to a pogrom in Fez. After the aforementioned massacre of Granada in 1066, 24 years later, in 1090, there was another pogrom in the city against the Jewish community, which had grown again. Pogroms against Jews are documented in the Islamic world from the High Middle Ages to recent history (Kohlhammer 2002, Heinisch, Scholz 2012: 58-60; Bensousson 2019: 35-67; Ourghi 2023: 47-67).

Josef Israel Benjamin (1818-1864), a Jewish explorer from Romania, describes the situation of Jews in Persia, which he visited in the middle of the 19th century. According to him, the Jewish population was forbidden, among other things, to pick up goods in a shop to inspect them; if they did, they had to buy them at any price asked. When it rained, Jews were not allowed to leave their homes. As they were considered "unclean" in the religious sense, the rain could have washed away their dirt and brought Muslims into contact with it (Lewis 1987: 39, 162 f.).

The abolition of the "protection contract" and the poll tax for dhimmis at the end of the 19th century was not the result of a debate within society; there was no socially relevant group that would have demanded it. The Ottoman Empire only abolished the discriminatory provisions when it was economically and militarily dependent on help from European powers and therefore had to make concessions.

LONG-TERM EFFECT

It is obvious that a special status practised for centuries, an everyday disparagement, discrimination and humiliation of Jews, which was also legitimised by law, has had an impact on the image of Jews. The history of discrimination, especially since it has never been dealt with, continues to characterise Muslims' view of Jews to this day and, alongside the anti-Jewish tradition, forms the

basis of an independent anti-Semitism. This is therefore neither the result of colonial history nor of the adoption of völkisch anti-Semitism, even if there were close links between the Islamic world and Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, and, in the course of history, some stereotypes and conspiracy theories from Europe supplemented Islamic hostility towards Jews. In particular, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, blended old Islamic anti-Jewish motifs with those of modern anti-Semitism during his close collaboration with Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany.

Just as modern European anti-Semitism is inconceivable without centuries-old Christian anti-Judaism and the perception of Jews as a special group that is hostile and alien to Christianity, the still virulent hostility towards Jews in the Islamic world is also inconceivable without the old and still traditional, religiously legitimised rejection of Jews and the tradition that fosters violence. And just as one can therefore speak of a hostility towards Jews that arose in Christian discourse, the emergence and development of an independent hostility towards Jews can also be traced in Islam, which from the 19th century onwards was also able to incorporate more modern motifs and stereotypes. In contrast to modern democratic states, hostility towards Jews in the Islamic world can still count on a broad social consensus, supported by state propaganda, today. All political and religious factions often agree on this issue.

ANTI-SEMITISM IN ISLAMIST ORGANISATIONS

THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

The ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood is exemplary of the recourse to Islamic tradition in the judgement of the Jews. Founded in Egypt in 1928 by the elementary school teacher Hasan al-Banna, it postulated a "renaissance of the Islamic world" that would lead to Islamic world domination under a caliphate. From the very beginning, the Brotherhood's ideology was permeated by anti-Semitism, with Jews being a central enemy. The Muslim Brotherhood's propaganda linked all negative historical and current events and developments to the Jews, so it is not surprising that the 'struggle for Palestine' was to become one of the most important building blocks of mobilisation from the outset and ultimately play a decisive role in the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to become a global mass movement (Scholz 2023: 32 f.). The recourse to the old religiously argued hostility towards Jews is also well illustrated by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), one of the most important theorists of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s.

In his programmatic essay "Our Struggle with the Jews" (Ma'rakatuna ma'a al-yahud), published in 1950, he wrote: "The Jews of today are like their ancestors at the time of Muhammad: they have shown hostility ever since the state of Medina was founded. They have carried out attacks against the Muslim community from the first day it was formed" (Scholz/ Heinisch 2019: 102).

Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, the chief ideologue of the Muslim Brotherhood who died in Qatar in 2022, was a famous Islamic scholar and televangelist with his own programme called "Sharia and Life" on the Qatari state broadcaster Al Jazeera. In the West, Al-Qaradawi became known above all for calling for the death penalty for apostasy from Islam, 100 lashes as punishment for homosexuals and advocating suicide attacks by Palestinians. He considered the Holocaust to be a punishment from God and Hitler to be the man who had succeeded in rebuking the Jews. "God willing," said Al-Qaradawi, "the next time this punishment will come at the hands of the believers" (ufuq 2009). His activities also extended to Europe, which he said he wanted to place under Islamic rule. He called on European Muslims to take action in a programme on Qatar TV on 28 July 2007:

"I expect Islam to conquer Europe without having to take up the sword or fight" (Manea 2018).

Al-Qaradawi is the founder of the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), based in Dublin, Ireland, with a branch in Frankfurt am Main. This fatwa council has set itself the goal of

giving advice to European Muslims and transferring Islamic norms to European conditions. The fact that it was possible to establish such a fatwa council in Ireland and Germany despite repeated criticism, including from critical Muslims, is representative of the naïve and helpless approach to extremist, Islamist and anti-Semitic organisations and individuals in Europe.

It is hard to imagine that an Austrian or German right-wing extremist with such anti-Semitic sentiments would be allowed to set up a committee that would give advice to Austrians or Germans.

HAMAS

Hamas, a Palestinian terrorist organisation that emerged from the Muslim Brotherhood, repeatedly invokes the anti-Jewish statements of Islamic tradition in its daily propaganda and already quoted in its charter the aforementioned hadith about the Jews who cannot hide behind any tree or stone and should be killed (Hamas 1988: 6).

Article 22 of the Charter contains an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory reminiscent of Hitler's "Mein Kampf": "They [the Jews] are behind the French Revolution, the Communist Revolution and most of the revolutions we have heard of" (Hamas 1988: 16).

The First World War and the founding of the League of Nations were also the work of the Jews. They also had the media in their hands and had founded numerous secret organisations, such as the Freemasons, the Rotary Club and the Lions Club, to assert their interests (Hamas 1988: 21).

Sheikh Muhammad Sallah, a member of Hamas, is an example of how Hamas supporters repeatedly refer to the Quran, Sunnah and the biography of the Prophet in their fantasies of violence. In his exhilarating sermons in front of cheering crowds in Gaza, he links today's events with Quranic events and calls for the murder of Jews:

"Therefore, brothers, let us remember what Allah did to the Jews. Let us remember what He did to them at Khaybar. My brothers: stab them! Stab the Jews in their heads with the myth of the Talmud. Stab the Jews in their hearts with the myth of their temple (...) We will stab and slaughter them all!"[5]

This alludes to a successful campaign by Muhammad against the Jewish-populated oasis of Khaybar (Chaibar, now Sadui Arabia), which is recounted in the Prophet's biography.

In recent years, and more recently since 7 October 2023, a slogan has been chanted in Arabic on European streets during anti-Israeli demonstrations that makes explicit reference to this battle and contains a threat to the Jews.

"Khaybar, Khaybar, ya Jahud, jaysh Mohammed saya' du", in English: "Khaybar, Khaybar, oh Jews! The army of Muhammad will return!" (Zingher 2022)

Recent investigations and incidents in Vienna show that the anti-Semitic ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas is still virulent in Europe. A study by the Documentation Center for Political Islam was able to prove that an imam of the mosque of the Islamic Association in Austria (IVÖ), which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood, openly referred to Hamas fighters as role models for Muslims worldwide. (DPI 2022b: 20). In February 2024, several media outlets reported that an imam at another mosque affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood was inciting hatred against Jews on social media. He wrote, among other things: "Murder flows in their veins. These are the Jews. A despicable people, criminals, bloodshedders. (...) They only understand the language of blood and murder" (Daniel 2024, Marchart 2024).

MILLI GÖRÜŞ

Finally, we would like to mention one of the largest Islamic organisations in Europe and also in Austria and Germany: the Islamic Community Milli Görüş (IGMG), an Islamist movement originally from Turkey. The Austrian regional organisation of the IGMG operates under the name Islamic Federation. The IGMG is currently the second largest mosque organisation in Germany and Austria, with 320 and 52 mosques respectively. According to its self-portrayal, its global representation comprises 40 regional associations in 18 countries with a total of 127,000 members (IGMG 2020: 16).

Milli Görüş was founded in the early 1970s by Necmettin Erbakan, who died in Turkey in 2011, and developed into a mass movement. Persecuted by the Kemalists, the movement reorganised itself in the West and today has its headquarters in Germany. Erbakan is known for his anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, which does not detract from the admiration of him (Heinisch, Çiçek, Vömel 2023: 204-206, 219, 223-225).

Erbakan saw the EU as a construct of the Zionists to secure world domination by the Jews. The Jews' goal was to plunge all Muslim nations into chaos. Theodor Herzl had already formulated this goal (Heinisch, Çiçek, Vömel 2023: 73). Erbakan told the newspaper DIE WELT in an interview one year before his death:

"The Jews have ruled the world for 5700 years. It is a reign of injustice, cruelty and violence" (Kalnoky 2010).

Erbakan also called on all Muslims to unite on the basis of jihad and to fight against the secret world power of the Jews. According to Erbakan, the Jew wanted to extinguish the jihad spirit of the Muslims with all his power because he knew that the soul of Islam was jihad (Heinisch, Çiçek, Vömel 2023: 85-92).

Every year on the anniversary of his death, memorial services are held throughout Europe. Some statements on social media were deleted following public protests, as the IGMG leadership is endeavouring to shed the stigma of anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, the number of antisemitic "individual cases" is more than striking. One of these Facebook posts came from the youth organisation of the Islamic Community Milli Görüş/Region Hannover and was online until 2022 before it was deleted after being publicly scandalised. It states:

"Just as Satan knows the existence and power of Allah, so the Zionist Jew tries with all his might to extinguish the jihadi spirit of Muslims, because he knows that the soul of Islam is jihad." [6]

Children and young people from families close to Milli Görüş grow up in a milieu in which an anti-Semite is honoured like a saint. Erbakan's anti-Semitic works are distributed uncommented to members via the IGMG's own bookshop (Heinisch, Çiçek, Vömel 2023: 205). In addition to mosques, Milli Görüş also runs associated childcare groups, private kindergartens and currently a primary school, a new secondary school and a grammar school in Austria.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who himself comes from the Milli Görüş movement, has given it additional impetus and support in Europe.

CONCLUSION

As the examples cited from the Hamas charter, the statements from the ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood or the Milli Görüş movement and not least the slogans at the pro-Palestine demonstrations show, it is part of the legitimisation strategy of political Islamic actors to lend credibility to anti-Semitism through constant recourse to Islamic tradition, in particular to the statements and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, and to appeal to the emotions of Muslims.

Muslims are facing a similarly painful process of examining their own identity as the Christian churches had to go through. This would also include an apology, such as that made by the Catholic Church towards Jews at the Second Vatican Council. "Outbursts of hatred, persecution and manifestations of anti-Semitism" and their justification with an anti-Jewish theology were publicly deplored.

However, in order to come to terms with the past, even in predominantly Islamic countries, a historical science is needed that does not always glorify one´s own history of conquest and domination and blames others for one´s own mistakes. Muslims themselves have repeatedly voiced this criticism. In Austria, for example, Prof Ednan Aslan from the University of Vienna is confronting the problems. At an event organised by the Jewish Community on the subject of anti-Semitism, he regretted that there is still a "fierce rejection of Jews" in Islamic teaching today. He pleaded for internal Islamic reflection and an honest dialogue to come to terms with the past. The fact that Islamic textbooks "cultivate a lot of anti-Jewish content" is untenable, he said.

Ednan Aslan was backed up by Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, an Islamic scholar at the University of Freiburg. He also called for reforms. For example, it should be made clear how to deal with suras that call for violence. He also spoke out in favour of an "honest debate" in which "fingers must be put in the wounds". He warned against a "dynamic of collective repression".

Erdal Toprakyaran, a professor of Islamic history from Tübingen who also took part in the conference, called this extremism a threat to everyone. The question must be asked as to why the "enlightened spirits" that have always existed in the Islamic world have not gained the upper hand" (ORF 2016).

As long as the centuries-long devaluation of and hostility towards Jews remains virulent in Islam itself and influences the attitudes of further generations of Muslims in Europe, it poses a threat to Jews. Like any other resentment against groups of people, these attitudes jeopardise peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

NOTES

1 See, for example, the results of ten antisemitism studies in: Nina Scholz (2021). ÖIF comparative analysis, overview dossier on selected studies on antisemitic attitudes and prejudices in Germany and Austria. With special consideration of antisemitism in Muslim communities in Austria, ÖIF. file:///C:/Users/Lektorin/Downloads/OeIF_Vergleichsanalyse_Endbericht-7.pdf (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

2 The Turkish pro-government newspaper Yeni Şafak provided a vivid example in January 2024 with an article about the ritual murder legend according to which Jews bake Passover bread with the blood of Christian children. The title itself describes this anti-Semitic legend as a "bloodcurdling tradition" of the Jews: https://www.yenisafak.com/foto-galeri/dunya/sinagogun-altindaki-gizli-tunel-igneli-ficiya-mi-cikiyor-iste-yahudilerin-avrupaya-kabus-olan-kan-donduran-gelenegi-4594184/1 (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

3 For the worldwide ADL Global 100 study, a total of 53,100 interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2023 with over 18-year-olds in 101 countries, partly by telephone and partly face-to-face. To evaluate the individual countries, the ADL developed an anti-Semitism index, according to which a percentage of people with anti-Semitic attitudes is determined for each country. A total of 11 items were asked about in the questionnaire. If a person rated at least 6 of the 11 items as "possibly true", this person was categorised as anti-Semitic. The percentage of people categorised as anti-Semitic corresponds to the Anti-Semitism Index.

4 The Quran translation by Rudi Paret was used as a basis: Der Koran, Übersetzung von Rudi Paret, Stuttgart 9, 2004.

5 From a Friday sermon by Sheikh Muhammad Sallah ("Abu Rajab"), Al-Abrar Mosque in Rafah/Gaza 2015, https://www.memri.org/tv/rafah-cleric-brandishes-knife-friday-sermon-calls-upon-palestinians-stab-jews (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

6 See the post by Eren Güvercin on X: https://twitter.com/erenguevercin/status/1489948812596678661 (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

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CHAPTER 9

ANTISEMITISM AND HOSTILITY TOWARDS ISRAEL IN LEFT-WING EXTREMISM.[1]

AN ANALYSIS BASED ON DEVELOPMENTS IN GERMANY FROM 1967 TO THE PRESENT DAY

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INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Following Hamas' brutal attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, which ended in the massacre of 1,200 people, major protests took place in many countries. However, only a small proportion of these were directed against Hamas: the majority were against the reactions expected from Israel. There was talk of an imminent "genocide" of the Palestinians, the slogan "child murderer Israel" and calls for the destruction of the Israeli state. Nothing else is meant by the call repeatedly heard at such demonstrations: "Free Palestine – from the river to the sea". For such a statement refers to the Israeli territory, which is then to be replaced by a Palestinian state after the corresponding acts of violence. This would mean that the Jews living there would no longer have any state protection. The aforementioned demand would therefore have anti-Semitic consequences, as it is directed against Israeli Jews in a discriminatory sense. This view characterises the "pro-Palestinian" protests, at least subliminally.

In particular, demonstrators of Arab origin, both Islamist and nationalist, but also anti-imperialist German left-wing extremists from various organisational contexts took part. This observation raises the question of the extent to which we can speak of anti-Semitism among left-wing extremists. Their supporters indignantly reject such categorisations. According to them, they are merely demonstrating against the imperialist policies of the Israeli state. In addition, they claim to be dealing with a concept of international solidarity. Claims of anti-Semitism merely serve to defame such "criticism of Israel". Such statements by left-wing extremists are not new, as they have been around since the end of the 1960s. This raises the following question: what has happened to anti-Semitism and hostility towards Israel in German left-wing extremism since that time? The following explanations are intended to provide cursory and problem-orientated answers to this question.

This already indicates certain limitations for the present discussion, which cannot and does not claim to be exhaustive. In order to pre-emptively counter some objections in this regard, some relevant clarifications should be made here: this is not about anti-Semitism in a general sense, but primarily in relation to the anti-Israeli form of hostility towards Jews. A broader analysis would also have to include other variants of anti-Semitism to a greater extent, as these often form the substantive basis for anti-Jewish hostility towards Israel. However, there is not enough space for such discussions, as we can only give hints and clues here. Furthermore, the political left is not considered in its entirety, but only left-wing extremism as a sub-section of it. Important aspects such as the question of whether anti-Semitism stems from the currently fashionable "post-colonialism" are therefore also not the subject of reflections. And finally, it should already be made clear here: Hostility towards Israel is a problem even without anti-Semitism.

1 This paper was translated from German to English.

DEFINITIONS: ANTI-SEMITISM, HOSTILITY TOWARDS ISRAEL, LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

The working terms that are important for this essay should first be defined in more detail in order to avoid misperceptions of what is meant in the following considerations. "Anti-Semitism" is at the beginning: it is about hostility towards Jews as Jews, with the alleged or actual "Jewishness" forming the substantive motive for corresponding resentments and distorted images. Anti-Semitism can articulate itself in a declared open form, for example when all Jews are described as per se negative persons. However, anti-Semitism is also articulated in associations, terminology, codes or narratives that do not initially appear to be anti-Jewish opinions. These include discursive images of money and Jews in a derogatory sense. In addition, there are various ideological manifestations that range from religious to socio-economic and political to racist. The same applies to different forms of behaviour, which can range from attitudes to degradation and incitement to destructive violence.

"Hostility towards Israel" can be regarded as a particular ideological form, whereby we will first differentiate between "hostility" and "criticism". Objections to Israeli policy do not always have to be labelled with this term. What matters is the ability to differentiate and objectivity. However, if a blanket defamation of Israel is made with untenable generalisations that articulate themselves, for example, in an "apartheid" or "genocide" equation against the Jewish state, then such a view lacks a differentiated perception. Israel appears to be solely responsible for the Middle East conflict; other actors are not included in the analysis. Such hostility towards Israel may or may not have an anti-Semitic flavour. It can also be motivated by a one-dimensional viewpoint based primarily on an "anti-imperialist attitude" and an invoked solidarity towards the Palestinians. In such a case, one cannot speak of anti-Semitic hostility towards Israel.[1]

And finally, the third term we will look at is "left-wing extremism". The term has two elements: firstly, "extremism" refers to actions and positions that oppose the basic values of modern democracy and an open society, such as the principle of democracy, human rights, pluralism or the rule of law. The associated rejection can be based on different ideological principles: for right-wing extremists, for example, it is ethnicity; for Islamists, it would be religion. In contrast, equality is the fundamental value for left-wing extremists. These in turn can be divided into anarchists, who strive for a direct dissolution of the institution of the state, and Marxists, who envision a socialist dictatorship after a violent revolution (Pfahl-Traughber 2020: 15-42). These definitions also have consequences for the present study: it is not about all forms of anti-Semitism, but only about anti-Israeli anti-Semitism, and it is also not about all leftists, but only about the left-wing extremists in question.

CONTENT-RELATED STARTING POINTS FOR ANTI-SEMITISM AND LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

First of all, a special feature of this political current must be noted, as there are actually no points of contact for it in their ideology. In most cases, left-wing extremists distance themselves from anti-Semitism across the board, as the view in question is considered to be that of political opponents such as right-wing extremists in particular. This is because anti-Semitism is theoretically not found in the ideology of left-wing extremists, where the ethnic or religious identity of people is not important compared to their socio-economic status. In contrast, there are certainly points of contact in Islamist and right-wing extremist ideology, both in terms of religious characteristics and ethnic prioritisation. In other words: there, anti-Semitism can be derived directly from the respective ideology; people usually do not even distance themselves offensively from the attitudes of hostility towards Jews in their own political camp. This peculiarity also has consequences for the content of the following discussions.

This refers to "anti-Semitism among left-wingers", but not to "left-wing anti-Semitism". However, if the hostility towards Jews in question cannot be derived from the ideology, then there must be other reasons for this in left-wing extremism. If one looks at their ideological "classics" and their literature in this regard, the existence of anti-Jewish clichés can be proven time and again. This already applies to the early socialists, even before Karl Marx, as their criticism of capitalism was repeatedly accompanied by such resentment. Marx himself behaved in a similar way in his early writings, where he associated "Jews" and "hagglers". Marx even used racist stereotypes in his personal letters. Such views were even more pronounced in Michael Bakunin, the founder of modern anarchism. He gave free rein to anti-Semitic content in articles and books. However, it must be noted with regard to these "classics" that no demands were derived from their attitudes, for example to discriminate against Jews or even persecute them (see for example Silberner 1962; Brumlik 2014).

The "classics" in question evidently accepted socially circulating resentments without subjecting them to critical scrutiny as to their appropriateness. Nevertheless, these views were incorporated to a greater or lesser extent into their publications, more so in the case of Bakunin and less so in the case of Marx. The point of departure was usually the critique of capitalism, which was actually intended to refer to the economic structure and not to personal activity. Occasionally, however, the prejudices of the time would break through in the authors in question. Even in the present day, such resentments and prejudices can be identified in left-wing extremism in relation to this context. They are even more pronounced in commentaries on the Middle East conflict, where anti-Semitic consequences and stereotypes can sometimes be discerned behind the articulated hostility towards Israel. The following analysis concentrates on these aspects of positioning, without denying the existence of other anti-Jewish attitudes in left-wing extremism.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 1967 AS A HISTORICAL-POLITICAL DIVIDING LINE

The paper also deals with German left-wing extremism after 1967, as this year is considered a historical-political dividing line. This is because there is an assumption that no "left-wingers" were as pro-Israel before and as anti-Israel afterwards as the German representatives (Kloke 2007). This statement can certainly be agreed with, but not in relation to anti-Semitism. As the above remarks on the classics, for example, have already shown, anti-Semitism could always be identified as an attitude there. Nevertheless, relevant views did not play a significant role in the political self-image. Conversely, commitment to the Jewish minority was therefore not given high priority, as this was not more relevant in view of the fixation on the class struggle. The low level of sensitivity discernible in the "Communist Party of Germany" (KPD) also explains why anti-Semitic stereotypes were taken up and promoted in statements and press articles – at least this can be well documented for the Weimar Republic (Kistenmacher 2007; 2016).

After the founding of Israel, there was initially even greater sympathy, which can be explained by two motives: the kibbutzim that emerged were seen as a socialist project and the Soviet Union accepted the young state. The KPD in particular orientated itself to the guidelines coming from Moscow. In view of the subsequent developments, however, there was a change of direction, which was linked to the close relations between Israel and the USA. From the 1950s onwards, Israel was increasingly perceived as an imperialist forecourt, with the state being annexed to the capitalist West (Kloke 1990; Ullrich 2012). At the same time, there was closer contact with Egypt, where President Gamal Abdel Nasser spoke of "Arab socialism". And so the supporters of the now banned KPD sympathised with the Egyptian government, while a hostile relationship developed towards Israel. In this respect, there was already a change of opinion before 1967, which then found expression in the Sixty-Eight Movement and led to the aforementioned change of direction.

The "Six-Day War" of 1967 served as a formal point of reference for this, whereby a perpetrator-victim reversal could be recognised in the commentary of left-wing extremists. As is well known, Egypt had deployed its troops on the border with Israel and a threatened war of aggression against the Jewish state was imminent. Israel dealt with a pre-emptive strike, which led to the military defeat of many Arab states. Once again, the military endeavour to destroy the Jewish state had failed. Israel proved to be a proud military victor. It was precisely this that triggered a fundamental change of opinion on this issue, and not only among left-wing extremists in the Sixty-Eight Movement. The following statement by the "Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund" (Socialist German Student Association) illustrates this in its choice of words: "The war between Israel and its Arab neighbours can only be analysed against the background of the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab peoples against the oppression of Anglo-American imperialism." [2]

VIEWS AND ACTIONS OF SMALL COMMUNIST PARTIES

The "German Communist Party" (DKP), which was founded in 1968, was an indirect continuation of the KPD. In its "heyday" of the 1970s and 1980s, it was little more than an instrument of the Socialist Unity of Germany (SED) which has created the one party dictatorship. The DKP's dependence on the GDR was also evident in the question of how political developments in the Middle East conflict should be assessed. It positioned itself against Israel, which was seen as "imperialist", and supported its enemies in the Arab countries. The party, which today has around 3,000 members, continues to represent this basic view. The DKP is modelled on the "Communist Party of Israel", which, however, is politically completely insignificant. Although exaggerated accusations are levelled at the Israeli government, these do not appear to have an anti-Semitic basis. While "barbaric killings" and "massacres of the civilian population"[3] are attributed to the Israeli army, Islamist terrorism is hardly an issue.

Similar views could be found in the K-groups of the 1970s and 1980s, which were mostly Maoist and sometimes also Stalinist in character. Their political stance was also positioned on the Arab or Palestinian side, as they were seen as allies in the fight against "imperialism" and "capitalism". Israel, on the other hand, was seen as a "puppet" of the USA or an "outpost" of the West. This basic view took on even more extreme forms, as the existence and legitimisation of the Jewish state was denied. Barely concealed echoes of anti-Semitic discourse could be found in the K-groups' relevant publications. There was talk of the "parasitic character" or of "Zionist multimillionaires". They spoke clearly of a "bloodthirsty and power-hungry bastion against the people" and openly called for the "destruction of the Zionist entity" (Broder 1976; with quotes Haury 2001: 223; 227). Fragments of nationalist ideology were articulated here, which were even accompanied by a völkisch choice of words.

And finally, let's take a look at the "Marxist Leninist Party of Germany" (MLPD). It emerged from the K-group scene in 1982, has a pro-Maoist and pro-Stalinist character, has around 3,000 members today and usually receives no more than 0.1 per cent of the vote in national elections. The organisation has issued a clear statement distancing itself from anti-Semitism, although it does refer to Stalin.[4] It is known that he himself had an anti-Semitic attitude and had Jews persecuted. Due to its dogmatic behaviour, the MLPD is unpopular in protest movements, which prompted "Fridays for Future"" Dortmund, for example, to issue a statement. In it, the view is expressed that the MLPD propagates "anti-Semitic conspiracy theories"[5]. There are indeed no clear statements to this effect. However, there are conspicuous formulations in the party programme where the "international finance capital"[6] is mentioned, which is reminiscent of the "international Jewish finance capital" in the Nazi choice of words.

PERCEPTIONS AND ACTIONS OF LEFT-WING TERRORISTS

Anti-Semitism can also be found in the discourse and acts of violence of German left-wing terrorism.[7] There was a serious event right at the beginning: the planned bomb attack on the Jewish Community Centre in Berlin on 9 November 1969, where an event commemorating the "Reichskristallnacht" of 1938 was to take place. A bomb was found in the cellar and its explosion would have cost many lives. Only a technical defect ultimately prevented a massacre, whereby Holocaust survivors in particular would have been the victims. The left-wing terrorist group "Tupamaros West Berlin" later claimed responsibility for the plan, saying that they wanted to send a signal against Israel's Palestinian policy. A "Judenknax" restricted other criticism of it (Kraushaar 2005).[8] This attack plan also had an anti-Semitic dimension. The Berlin Jews were held responsible for the state of Israel, something which objectively created the image of the existence of a "world Jewry". Nevertheless, a confessor later did not articulate such attitudes and positions.

The German left-wing terrorists also had no problem cooperating with anti-Semitic Palestinian terrorists or legitimising them. The attack on the Israeli Olympic team in 1972, for example, was approved by the "Red Army Faction" (RAF). At the end of the same year, Ulrike Meinhof testified as a witness in a trial. She gave the following interpretation of the Holocaust: "Auschwitz means that six million Jews were murdered and carted off to the rubbish tips of Europe as what they were made out to be – money Jews." She also noted: "Anti-Semitism was anti-capitalist in nature."[9] Although there was no denial of the anti-Semitic mass murders here, such statements nevertheless reproduced the socio-economic form of hostility towards Jews. In such an interpretation, anti-Semitism is even considered to be an actual criticism of capitalism, which objectively means that it was a valorisation of what was meant.

And then there is an event that has not been clarified in detail: it concerns the 1976 hijacking of a French passenger plane that was forced to land in Entebbe in Uganda. A "Che Guevara commando", consisting of members of the German "Revolutionary Cells" (RZ) and the "Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" (PFLP), was responsible for this. The intention was to free imprisoned perpetrators of violence in various countries. Talks were held with the Israeli government, which later gave the successful order for the military release of the passengers. Prior to this, some of the hostages were released in groups, with the hijackers making a distinction. To this day, even researchers are not sure whether Israeli and non-Israeli or Jewish and non-Jewish passengers were separated (Selmaier/Anders 2013; Vowinckel 2004). However, former RZ activists later stated that it was an anti-Semitic act: "... that's where anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism come together" and: "The whole action was anti-Semitic."[10]

VIEWS AND ACTIONS OF THE AUTONOMOUS SCENE

There are also certain difficulties with regard to the assessment of the autonomous scene, although this does not apply to the general finding of a majority anti-Israel position. However, the question arises as to what extent an anti-Semitic attitude can be assumed here. A well-known example of a discussion in this regard is a large house inscription found in Hamburg's Hafenstraße in the 1980s: "Boycott 'Israel' – goods, kibbutzim + beaches. Palestine – the people will free you ..." (see for an illustration with this slogan, which ends with "Revolution until victory" Neidhardt/Bischof 2000: 183). Some aspects could speak in favour of an anti-Semitic background: The inverted commas were used to cast doubt on Israel's right to exist; the call for a boycott was reminiscent of Nazi slogans; and nationalist views were revealed in the reference to "the people". Nevertheless, a dualistic and one-dimensional "anti-imperialism" seems to form the ideological background, as there is no clear evidence of a determined front against "the Jews".

However, the "anti-Germans" among the Autonomen took a different view, as they adopted a pro-Israeli position in relation to the Middle East conflict. As is well known, this orientation

emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, when fears of a new "Fourth Reich" were circulating. The "anti-Germans" therefore orientated themselves towards the victims of the Nazi state and their descendants, i.e. the state of Israel. They regarded its Islamist and nationalist opponents as the current fascist and anti-Jewish protagonists. This view then led to fierce conflicts that arose between the pro-Israeli "anti-Germans" and the pro-Palestinian "anti-imperialists", who also split over this issue as a political collective at times. The former then accused the majority of holding anti-Jewish positions themselves. Meanwhile, the "anti-Germans" propagated such a broad understanding of anti-Semitism that they condemned deviations from their solidarity with Israel as anti-Semitic. An anti-Semitic orientation of the hostility towards Israel was often not substantiated.

An event some time ago in Hamburg illustrates the conflict within the scene: in 2009, an "anti-German" group wanted to show the film "Warum Israel?" (Why Israel?) in a trendy cinema. Due to its pro-Israeli orientation, "anti-imperialist" autonomists blocked the entrances to prevent the film screening. Leaflets labelled Israel "a racist project" that wanted to maintain "today's colonial culture" against the Palestinians. "You Jewish pigs" were also shouted during the action, but the blockaders denied this in a statement.[11] The "anti-imperialists" had obviously wanted to restrict freedom of expression here, as a view they did not share should not be publicly disseminated through a film screening. However, the question arises as to whether the activities described can be considered anti-Semitically motivated. There was no evidence for the exclamation, and even if it had been articulated, it would not have been shared by all autonomists. However, the activities documented a generalised hostility towards Israel, which is certainly characteristic of the majority of the scene.

VIEWS AND ACTIONS ON THE CURRENT CONFLICT

The Marxist-Leninist-oriented small parties also responded to the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023 mentioned at the beginning. The "German Communist Party" (DKP) and its official statement "Criminal occupation policy is the cause – a political solution is necessary" can be used as a starting point to address this fact. The Hamas actors were labelled as "Palestinian armed forces", which were also responsible for "victims among the civilian population". However, the "offensive" in question was "a direct consequence of decades of aggressive oppression by Israel". In this regard, there was talk of a "colonial and apartheid policy". Critics of these policies are "silenced with accusations of anti-Semitism". In contrast, the "responsibility for the escalation ... lies with the right-wing extremist Israeli government". The DKP is in solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people.[12] What is striking in this statement, apart from the continuity of the positioning, is that the Islamist Hamas and its brutal massacre are not really an issue.

This assessment was also formulated by the "Marxist Leninist Party of Germany" (MLPD), which is also isolated in left-wing extremism due to its rigid dogmatism. Nevertheless, a statement was published with the title: "DKP does not say a word about the attack and the massacre by Hamas", clearly distancing itself from the Islamist organisation and its crimes. There was even talk of "the fascist Hama"", which had killed 900 people, "some of whom were brutally massacred". The DKP was quite rightly criticised for not taking a stance, neither on the "reactionary character of Hamas" nor on the "cruel massacre of predominantly young people". In the Gaza Strip, the "Islamist-fascist organisation" rules with "oppression" and Israel is denied the "right to exist as a state".[13] The other statements also contain vehement objections to Hamas and Hezbollah, to which the DKP and other left-wing extremists tended to respond with relativisation or silence.

Small activist groups that oppose Israeli "occupation policies" on the one hand, but do not want to defend the "reactionary" Islamists on the other, are also faced with an associated dilemma. For example, "Kommunistischer Aufbau" has issued a statement regarding Israel: "Armed struggle against this racist, colonialist system is fundamentally legitimate". At the same time, it also states: "Our solidarity is with the Palestinian people, not with the claim to leadership of reactionary

forces."[14] The left-wing extremists in question are uncomfortable with such views because it is also difficult to defend the massacres carried out by Hamas. The group "perspektive Kommunismus" says: "There is no reason to legitimise the war crimes of Hamas and there is no reason to justify the ongoing massacre by the Israeli state!" However, the group also sees itself motivated to make a clarification regarding the former: "Against all anti-Semitism and religious fundamentalism ..."[15], so the group does not want to make common cause with this.

ANTISEMITISM IN RELATION TO THE BDS CAMPAIGN TO BOYCOTT ISRAEL

And then, as a final example, the BDS campaign to boycott Israel will be discussed (see for details Pfahl-Traughber 2023). First, however, a brief explanation of what is meant is required: BDS stands for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions". It is an international movement against Israeli government policy that is being implemented in the occupied territories against the Palestinians. There is talk of "colonisation" and "occupation", but also of "apartheid" and "racism". The views on BDS are polarised and fluctuate between two extreme poles in the discussion: one view sees BDS as a non-violent protest movement, while the other interpretation sees BDS as an anti-Semitic project. Offshoots have emerged in many countries, including Germany, where left-wing extremist individuals and organisations are also active. These include the DKP-affiliated "German Freethinkers' Association" and the aforementioned MLPD. Both are listed as political supporters of BDS Germany. In the latter case, this is also a pro-Maoist and pro-Stalinist minor party.

Are these political actors now reinforcing an anti-Semitic agenda? It is not easy to answer this question, as BDS is a complex phenomenon. Jewish groups are also among the supporters. Generalised statements cannot therefore be applied to every participant. The view that the boycott can be seen as a continuity of Nazi policy is not convincing in view of the different contexts. On the one hand, it was about the boycott of a minority by a state; on the other hand, it was about the boycott of a state's policies. BDS was officially founded in 2005 by "Palestinian civil society". However, it became known that it also included supporters of violent Islamist and nationalist groups under cover names. Other groups did not appear to have existed at all, as their offices could not be found. Such experiences indicate that a hidden campaign was initiated without an open target.

In addition, leading BDS activists with a Palestinian background have stated that they do not accept the existence of the state of Israel. This is also indicated by the three main demands: The occupation and colonisation of all occupied Arab land should be ended, which could include Israeli territory itself. The German BDS declaration restricts this to "the Arab land occupied in 1967", which is missing in the Palestinian declaration. The demand for equal basic rights for Palestinian Israelis seems absurd, given that such legal equality exists in the country. And the demand to implement a right of return for all refugees, including their descendants, would make a Jewish state impossible. BDS demands thus amount to an anti-Semitic consequence, even if this is not recognisable at first glance at the phenomenon (Hirsh 2018; Feuerherdt/Markl 2020). However, it is not only the German left-wing extremists among the supporters who refuse to recognise this.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM WITH SIMILARITIES IN CONTENT

When taking stock of the above descriptions, it becomes apparent that anti-Semitism is particularly relevant as a front against imperialism in left-wing extremism. It is therefore necessary to explain what is meant by this in a theoretical sense. First of all, it is worth recalling the general attitude of left-wing extremists, according to which they formally distance themselves from anti-Semitism as a rather "right-wing" ideology. The special attention paid to the attitudes of left-wing and right-

wing extremists also makes it clear that there are fundamental differences in form and content. While one can usually speak of a clear anti-Semitic enemy image among right-wing extremists, left-wing extremists formally distance themselves from such prejudices. Occasionally, therefore, they respond to criticism with accusations of "character assassination". There are also no direct references to anti-Jewish classics or statements, as what is meant is rather recognisable in latent positions and real actions.

Therefore, a differentiated view is required, which here refers in particular to left-wing extremist "anti-imperialism". The associated view forms a constitutive component of the political camp in question and can be derived from "anti-capitalism" as a substantive consequence: according to this, Western states dominated by capitalist corporations have established informal structural world domination, with which they seek to torpedo independent developments by independent countries. In the associated conflict, left-wing extremists see themselves positioned with the "weak", while for them the Western countries are on the side of the "strong". If this perspective is now transferred to the Middle East conflict, a corresponding categorisation is made: This sees Israel as the "strong", while the Palestinians are considered the "weak". They are oppressed by Israel as an imperial power, which results in anti-Israeli positioning and pro-Palestinian solidarity for left-wing extremists.

The extent to which this categorisation is appropriate or not should not be an issue here. The main question is whether it is accompanied by anti-Semitic views. At first glance, such content is not discernible, as it is supposedly not the Jewish but the repressive character of the Israeli state that is being criticised. And according to the differentiation made above, there can be both anti-Semitic and non-anti-Semitic hostility towards Israel, with anti-imperialism being of great relevance in the latter case. However, anti-imperialism and anti-Semitism need not be mutually exclusive, which makes the issue under discussion here a particular problem. Incidentally, this is shown by a classic on the subject by John Atikinson Hobson from 1902. The influential book in question, "Imperialism. A Study" contained numerous anti-Semitic stereotypes according to which Jewish financial interests controlled British politics (Allett 1987). This detail already illustrates that there need be no contradiction here.

ANTI-IMPERIALISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM WITH STRUCTURAL SIMILARITIES

Anti-imperialism and anti-Semitism certainly have structural similarities, which can explain the harmony between the two fronts among left-wing extremists. However, this does not mean that the different positions can be equated. Occasionally, there has also been talk of "structural anti-Semitism", which refers to corresponding ways of thinking. These consist firstly in the personification of social processes with conspiracy ideologies, secondly in the image of supposedly fixed collectives and thirdly in a Manichaeism characterised by the good-evil conflict (Haury 2002: 25-159). Such formal components of political attitudes also characterise positions that can be understood as left-wing, which provides a noteworthy set of analytical tools for anti-Semitic attitudes there. Nevertheless, an argumentative objection must also be raised: These are formal, not substantive characteristics. Therefore, such views can exist without reference to a "Jewishness", but they do not have to stand for an anti-Semitic position.

Nevertheless, with regard to the second and third criteria, anti-imperialism and anti-Semitism can be said to have these formal similarities in both cases. This can first be illustrated using the image of fixed collectives: these are social groups that are assumed to have a general homogeneity. They are sometimes regarded as innocent victims or sometimes as responsible perpetrators, whereby individual orientations and other orientations are abstracted. It is precisely this type of thinking that is inherent to hostility towards Israel in the defined sense: according to this view, the entire Middle East conflict is explained by the fact that the Israelis are the colonising perpetrators and the

Palestinians are the innocent victims. With such views, differentiation has no relevance. Left-wing extremists also believe that they have to take one side almost completely. This means that there are no longer any objections to the murderous practices of the alleged "weak", as they are considered to be the objective "good guys".

This is linked to a Manichaeism characterised by the good-evil conflict, which becomes clear in a polarised image of both parties to the conflict: on the one hand, "evil" is articulated in Israel, with "apartheid", "genocide", "colonialism", "Nazi" or "racism" categorisations standing for this. One can justifiably speak of a "demonisation" of the Jewish state, although the central motivation for this does not necessarily have to be characterised by this specific positioning. One-dimensional "anti-imperialism" can also exist without an anti-Semitic characterisation. It would be no less problematic without this characteristic, as it creates a distorted image in terms of content. On the other hand, this effect is exacerbated by the alleged "good guys", which generally refers to the Palestinians, who are regarded as innocent victims. The fact that their sometimes admired "struggle" is characterised by brutal terrorism is ignored in the assessment or relativised in terms of guilt. The pronounced anti-Semitism of, for example, the murderous and reactionary Hamas, which is also regarded as the "good guys", is also not an issue.

SUMMARISING ASSESSMENTS OF ANTI-SEMITIC INFLUENCING FACTORS

Finally, an assessment of the anti-Semitic influencing factors will be made. It is worth recalling the initial hypothesis that anti-Semitism does not actually have a point of reference in left-wing extremist ideology. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism does occur among left-wing extremists. There must be other reasons for its emergence than the ideology in question, which means that the focus is on socialisation through society. It is well known that there are widespread anti-Semitic prejudices not only in Germany, but also in many other countries. They are sometimes conveyed through everyday socialisation, for example in adolescence or childhood, which is then associated with relevant resentments or stereotypes. As there are certain sensitivities with regard to anti-Semitism in the public sphere, such attitudes are sometimes not articulated in a conscious form, but remain in the latency of private prejudices. However, there may be certain occasions that lead to manifest positioning. At present, this is particularly the case with the Middle East conflict.

Its interpretation in an anti-Israeli context allows anti-Semitic attitudes to be publicised in a concealed manner via this diversion. In this way, the alleged commitment to the human rights of Palestinians makes it all the easier to agitate against the Israeli state. This is because left-wing extremists supposedly stand up for the victims and the weak, while they can defame Israel as an inhumane and oppressive system. Double standards can often be identified, for example with regard to human rights violations: while they are loudly addressed in relation to Israel, there is silence regarding those of the Palestinians. This means that alleged or actual restrictions are not the real motives, as the outrage would then be directed against all relevant parties. In this respect, it is not the protection of fundamental rights but hostility towards Israel that is the decisive motive for the one-sidedness that can often be seen. One-sidedness cannot stand for credibility here; it is no coincidence that human rights are characterised by universalism. And anti-Semitism is the antithesis of this.

A latent form of this does not seem to be unique to German left-wing extremists. They often avoid openly anti-Jewish statements because they see themselves as "anti-fascist" and "anti-racist" activists. With such a commitment, left-wing extremists then categorise Israeli politics as having a "fascist" or "racist" objective. Their lack of credibility is also revealed by their co-operation partners, as they have no problems with their fixation on violence. Occasionally, left-wing extremists even speak of a right to "resistance". This term is used to position themselves in favour of Islamist groups that are not, however, striving to establish a society without domination and

class. Their aim is to establish an authoritarian to totalitarian system. And one starting point for this is the existential destruction of the Israeli state. This is exactly what the slogan "From the river to the sea" means, a slogan which left-wing extremists also shout at "pro-Palestinian" protests. Anti-Semitism would be a consequence of their realisation.

NOTES

1 The author therefore argues in favour of a differentiation of categories, which can be found in the following essay title: Armin Pfahl-Traughber (2015): Antizionistischer Antisemitismus, antiimperialistische Israelfeindlichkeit und menschenrechtliche Israelkritik. Kriterien zur Differenzierung und Einordnung von Positionen im Nahostkonfllikt, in: Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (ed.): Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung, Vol. 24, Metropol-Verlag: Berlin, pp. 293-315.

2 The conflict in the Middle East. Material submitted to the SDS by the 22nd DK, in: SDS-BV (ed.), Die XXII. ordentliche Delegiertenkonferenz des SDS. Resolutionen und Beschlüsse, pp. 48-54, here p. 48, quoted from Kloke, Israel und die deutsche Linke (Note 4), p. 77.

3 Thus the DKP's Federal Election Conference in a statement referring to the military action in the Gaza Strip in December 2008, cf. resolution of the DKP's Federal Election Conference: Immediate ceasefire and renunciation of violence! (10th January 2009), in: www.dkp-darmstadt.de (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

4 Cf. Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (ed.): "Antideutsche" – links blinken, scharf rechts abbiegen ..., Gelsenkirchen 2018, online at: www.mlpd.de, printout p. 20. Left-wing "anti-Germans" are portrayed in this brochure as political instruments of the Israeli Mossad, cf. p. 28f. No evidence is provided in the MLPD text.

5 Fridays for Future Dortmund, climate justice movement: Clearly against all anti-Semitism in the world! (2019), documented in: Fridays for Future: "The MLPD uses conspiracy theories" (8 October 2019), in: www.ruhrbarone.de.

6 Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (ed.): Programme of the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany, Gelsenkirchen 2016, p. 27f. and 59. Among right-wing extremist anti-Semites, the phrase is usually used as an anti-Jewish synonym for "international Jewish finance capital". A Marxist view is not only directed against finance capital, but against capitalism in general.

7 Cf. Wolfgang Kraushaar: Abspaltung und Potenzierung. Zum Verhältnis von Antizionismus und Antisemitismus in der militanten Linken der Bundesrepublik, in: Brosch (ed.): Exklusive Solidarität: pp. 326-346.

8 The following letter of confession contained the phrase "Judenknax": Schwarze Ratten TW, SCHALOM + NAPALM, in: Agit 883, No. 40 of 13 November 1969.

9 Quoted from: Peter-Jochen Winters, Ulrike Meinhof läßt sich nur die Stichworte geben, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung of 15 December 1972; Rote Hilfe West-Berlin (ed.): Reden und Mitschriften aus dem Mahler-Prozeß, Berlin 1973, p. 141.

10 Some Invisibles (ed.): Heartbeats. Gespräch mit Ex-Militanten der Revolutionären Zellen, Berlin 2022, p. 59f. Cf. Armin Pfahl-Traughber, „Die ganze Aktion war antisemitisch". Former members also comment on Entebbe (16th June 2022), in: www.hagalil.com (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

11 Cf. Sebastian Hammelehle, Regisseur Lanzmann „schockiert" über Krawalle bei Israel-Film (19th November 2009), in: www.spiegel.de; Doris Akrap, Wie halten wir's mit Israel, Genossen? Linker Antisemitismus (9th December 2009), in: www.taz.de (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

12 DKP Party Executive Committee, Criminal occupation policy is the cause – a political solution is necessary (9 October 2023), in: www.dkp.de (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

13 gis, DKP does not say a word about the attack and the massacre by Hamas (11th October 2023), in: www.rf-news.de.

14 Communist construction, The struggle against the Israeli occupation is legitimate! Peace between the peoples, war against the imperialists! Freedom for Palestine! (9 October 2023), in: www.komaufbau.org (accessed on 3rd March. 2024).

15 Perspektive Kommunismus, Without freedom for Palestine, peace is not possible! (19th October 2023), in: www.perspektive-kommunismus.org (accessed on 3rd March. 2024)

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CHAPTER 10

ANTISEMITISM AS A GLUE: REICHSBÜRGER AND STATE DENIERS IN FOCUS

Florian Hartleb/Christoph Schiebel

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NEW TRENDS IN EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: INTRODUCTION

The storming of the Reichstag in Berlin in August 2020, the US Capitol in January 2021, and the Brazilian Supreme Court in Brazil in January 2023 were all violent events where individuals and groups aimed to overthrow or challenge democratically elected governments. While the specific circumstances and motivations of each case differ, there are common action triggers, including: the pervasiveness of conspiracy theories; the successful misuse of social media for anti-government mobilization; and the mainstreaming of extremist and antidemocratic rhetoric through political legitimization (Molas 2023: 1). In this contribution, we define violent anti-government extremism closely related to terrorism and antisemitism.

The idea is to shed light on the linkage between both phenomena. We focus on German-speaking countries where there is a wave of state deniers and sovereigntists (Speit 2017; Hartleb/Schliefsteiner/Schiebel 2023). This does not apply to the general argument: Similar claims are widespread among sovereign citizen circles in the United States (US). These groups believe their country has become a corporation, although they disagree if this happened in the 1800s or when the US abandoned the gold standard. Anarchism can also play a role in terms of anti-state attitudes, valid until today (Greven 2023).

In recent years, becoming a preferred form of political violence, anti-government extremism (AGE) has seen a comeback. Scholars, practitioners, and policymakers are compelled to discuss this substantial threat which transcends liberal democracy (Bjørgo/Braddock 2022). Beyond, political procedures, institutions, lawmakers, and government officials are challenged by anti-government extremism. Hatred from the cyberspace is infecting the non-digital world likewise. The boundary between both social realms is being blurred and is merging into a new reality. Thoughts are matched by deeds, and threats are followed by killings of politicians. Anti-government terrorists have conducted real-life assaults: On June 16, 2016, British MP Helen "Jo" Cox and, in the night of Jun 2, 2019, Walter Lübcke, the President of the Administrative District of Kassel in the State of Hesse, Germany, were killed by xenophobes. Evidently, in both cases there was an ongoing heated debate on migration which strengthened radical right-wing resentment. And hatred is pervasive: On November 9, 2023 the Spanish politician and former Vice-President of the European Parliament Alejo Vidal-Quadras was attacked in Madrid and seriously injured.

Granted, Lars Rensmann und Julius H. Schoeps provide detailed analysis of the dimensions of antisemitism and resentment (2011). Antisemitic resentment has to be seen in a different light after October 7, 2023. Our intention is to fill a gap in research, particularly when it comes to the Reichsbürger movement. We discuss anti-government extremism, which can lead to general violence for the purpose of fighting a government or political system, but not necessarily. The following two examples certainly display such aspirations. However, as soon as other ideological motives materialize, anti-government extremism no longer suffices as an explanation for political violence. Other issues then emerge (Jackson 2022). We cling to a broad definition of anti-government extremism which is inspired by Sam Jackson: "One form of AGE is *movements, networks*

and individuals that reject the legitimacy of the government as a matter of principle and refuse to obey or submit to any authorities and regulations"[1] (Bjørgo/Braddock 2022: 2).

A NEW MOVEMENT LEADING TO LARGE-SCALE TERRORISM? ANTISEMITIC ANTI-GOVERNMENT EXTREMISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

There have existed antisemitic terrorist cells, as we will demonstrate in this study. The level of escalation differs in far-right social movements. Interestingly, there were minor efforts of a plot. A group of a then 75-year-old retired female teacher, Elisabeth R., and four men were trapped by the police as they tried to obtain assault rifles, Type AK47. The group had been part of a chat group called United Patriots ("Vereinte Patrioten") where they had got to know each other and where people had written what they thought to be patriotic stuff, albeit at times radical and/or grotesque; a chat group with dozens of members. The Rhineland-Palatinate Agency for the Protection of the Constitution became aware of the planning by the group insiders who attempted to conspire against the Federal Republic of Germany. It appeared more radical than other groups of Original or Lateral Thinkers (Querdenker) and/or Reichsbürger. Therefore, other state and federal agencies were informed of the plotters. The five were led by Elisabeth R. in ideological terms, determined to trigger a civil war in Germany.

The main goal was to depose the German government. In addition, they sketched out a plan comprising three steps: First, they would aim to cause a comprehensive electricity failure. Second, following the blackout, the group wanted to abduct the German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, who has been considered by many to be the embodiment of German anti-COVID policies. If necessary, his bodyguards would be killed at one of Lauterbach's talk show performances. Third, under the codename "Klabautermann" (the German word for a ship's kobold and a play on the minister's name), an ostentatious constitutional assembly would take place. An actor was meant to fake the abdication of the German government, emulating the German Chancellor or President. "Operation Klabautermann" proves that there is a wave of anti-government extremism which has also changed the modus operandi of parts of what we call Reichsbürger (Schmidt/Götschenberg, and Bräutigam 2023). On trial, the now 76-year-old theologian Elisabeth R laid bare her own antisemitic convictions, which had obviously played a role in planning the overthrowal. She spoke of scientific sources of a three-thousand-year-old conspiracy by Jews ruling the world behind the scenes (Niewel, and Ramelsberger 2023: 3).

The most elaborate attempt at a coup d'état also had an antisemitic dimension. It was in the early morning of December 7, 2022, that a counter-terrorism operation was carried out by over 5,000 German, Austrian, and Italian police officers. 1,500 special units were among them. As a result, 150 properties were raided by the police and 25 people arrested. A total of 55 individuals came under investigation. Officials said that the police operation aimed to avert a plot by the self-proclaimed Patriotic Union ("Patriotische Union") to overthrow not only the German government of the day but the complete political system. Obviously, the ideology of the so-called Citizens of the Empire ("Reichsbürger") had played a crucial role in organizing a putsch. "Reichsbürger" have become the centerpiece of the milieu of sovereigntists and state deniers in Germany, although there are fine distinctions between these movements (Rensmann 2023). It goes without saying that this is a novel dimension of militancy and violence. Heinrich XIII Prinz Reuß, born in 1951, was at the top of the network and can be seen as some kind of figurehead of the movement (Baier 2023). According to the network, Germany is ruled by a deep state. An alliance, a technocratic and superior secret association of governments including Russia and the US, however, seek to intervene to save Germany. An attack by the deep state is impending (Schönberger/Schönberger 2023: 7). Reuß's argumentation was based on antisemitic conspiracy theories. Reuß said that the Jewish Rothschild family was accountable for financing wars and revolutions for the sake of removing monarchies. He added that the First World War had served the idea of expanding the Jewish population. Reuß

put forward these arguments at the 2019 Zurich WorldWebForum, an annual conference organized by a software company. First and foremost, the goal of the conference is business networking. Reuß delivered a fifteen-minute speech there. The speech bore the title "Why Blue-Blooded Elite Became Servants". At its core was the sorrow of his own noble family because of the loss of the monarchy. The expropriation of his family´s assets in the Soviet Occupational Zone and the loss of related lawsuits after German Reunification were represented as the conspiracy of a non-existent state (Schönberger/Schönberger 2023: 105 f.).

In both cases of right-wing terrorism discussed above, we see deep-rooted contempt for the German government and political system as well as antisemitism, which works as a recurring theme and a kind of glue. The anti-government extremists concerned are ready to use large-scale violence to achieve their aims. They are prepared to overturn a political system bound to liberal democracy. The following cases are more limited than the plots planned by Reichsbürger networks. They are even more idiosyncratic versions of the Reichsbürger ideology.

FINDING THE GLUE? ANTISEMITIC SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Antisemitism is a recurring theme and even ubiquitous in German society. The security agencies have been finding it hard to come to terms with the antisemitic challenges, on the one hand. They have underestimated the peril, on the other hand. This danger amounts to right-wing violence. In Michael Kraske's estimation, antisemitism is an ancient danger which has undergone different facelifts (2023: 1). Gideon Botsch and Christoph Kopke see a dual-track approach by antisemites who stick to their old stereotypes and resentment, while adding new ones (2019: 161). Therefore, we need to define anti-government extremism and antisemitism for the purpose of analyzing the nexus between both concepts.

Social movements challenge and disrupt the status quo. Thereby, they want to reshape the political system. Right-wing social movements tend to violence, terrorism, hatred, and intolerant behavior. Thus, they resort to ideas meant to connect them, offering a framework of identification (Futrell, Simi, and Tan 2018). We argue that antisemitism is at the very heart of this identification process when it comes to right-wing anti-government extremism directed against liberal democracy. Antisemitic anti-government extremism definitely has become a sub-movement of anti-government extremism, which is a more diverse movement.

Of course, Nazi propaganda was very effective among German youngsters raised in the Third Reich. Even long after the Nazi era, that generation was more likely to believe in antisemitism. Racial hatred turned out to be persistent (Voigtländer/Voth 2015). Obviously, antisemitism often accuses Jews of world conspiracy. Jews are then linked to both capitalism and communism. Moreover, antisemitism sees a close link between Jewish communities and Zionism. Recently, there has been much talk of Jews establishing a new world order. They are seen as the leading elites, i.e., puppet masters or those billionaires acting behind the scenes. Jews are often portrayed using defamatory stereotypes. The established collectives not only consist of Jews, but other, especially influential people, who are deemed as Jews and part of the conspiracy (Langer 2023: 237). The idea that Jews are omnipotent results in anger and subsequently hatred. In practice, we can observe this hatred in the shape of militancy and violence (Sucharewicz 2023: 472).

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance defines the core of antisemitism as follows (quoted after IHRA referring to the May 26, 2016, Budapest Plenary): "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

In the last few decades there have been some controversies about the German perception of Jews even in the face of antisemitism and anti-Zionism (Rensmann 2004). It is impossible to draw a line between antisemitism and anti-Zionism. Subject-related criticism of Israel is then replaced by a reference to omnipotent Jewish puppet masters and conspirators. The differentiation between antisemitism and anti-Americanism often gets blurred. Non-Jewish actors in US society are depicted as Jewish conspirators. Israel´s power is exaggerated. Israelis are altogether demonized as Jews. For this reason, it is also easy to distinguish between criticism of Israel and antisemitic resentment (Kopke/Botsch 2009: 161f.).

No doubt, antisemitism is part of an inhumane right-wing ideology (Rathje 2017). Modern antisemitism has been an abysmal, terrifying, and unparalleled success story since the second half of the 19th century. It can be considered as either a political ideology or an element of such. We observe antisemitism in groups, parties, and movements. Antisemitism is used to spread hatred against Jews. By so doing, antisemites make use of traditional antisemitic resentment. Not only Nazi antisemitism epitomizes a total and non-falsifiable ideology. Nazi race theory portrayed Jews as the very enemy of the German people, thereby making the distinction between an in-group and an out-group. The very antisemitism eventually led to the Shoah and cannot be reduced to racism. It was much more a set of conspiracy theories and ideology (Rensmann 2021a: 469).

Right-wing radicalism not only has features of Identitarianism and right-wing populism, but also of authoritarian nationalism (Rensmann 2021b). Right-wing radicals strive for their own cultural hegemony and to end political correctness. Racist resentment and antisemitic conspiracy thinking are supposed to change public political discourse (Rensmann 2021b: 7) Therefore, right-wing radicalism and antisemitism have been influencing the media and political discourse. They are interdependent and benefit from one another. Antisemitic and racist conspiracy theories are shared on 8chan and similar imageboards, fora, and social media, including the gaming platform "Steam" (Hunold/Peschke 2022; Hartleb 2023). They are even spread in the non-digital world, where there is no anonymity. Our article examines the role of antisemitism as a glue among right-wing social movements. The Internet contributes to the spread of antisemitism thanks to coded channels and anonymous users (Becker 2020).

International literature argues that antisemitism is a dangerous concoction of old and modern narratives which span over centuries and different political camps (Rensmann 2019; 2020; 2021). Similar to extremism, antisemitism overstates a Schmittian division into friends and enemies (Stanley 2011; Meleagrou-Hitchens et al. 2020). Such a dichotomy applies, however, also to other ideological concepts. Granted, political discourses and campaigns can lead to an unholy alliance with antisemitism and leads to right-wing extremism via Manichaeism (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2017: 14, 23). In the case of Reichsbürger the state itself has its own category and field of projection: The Manichaeism of the sovereigntist milieu encompasses not only its own identity as a victim but also the identity of state officers and others as perpetrators (Rathje 2022a: 55).

To this date, antisemitic stereotypes prevail in debates on conspiracy theories. Mainly, there are four versions:

a) There is talk of Jewish bankers and billionaires dominating the world. This worldview is based on the fake book "The Protocol of the Elders of Zion" (For detailed information see Benz 2020 a: 87-101; Katz 2011). Current versions claim that superrich people such as Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, or George Soros embody the ongoing conspiracy (Bührer 2022).
b) General criticism of capitalism and globalization (Financial elites, omnipotent East Coast Jews ruling the world in secret, sinister Wall Street banks and stock markets, interest farmhand shanks, Third-Reich propaganda (Plöckinger 2018).
c) Israelophobia (mixed with philosemitism) (Loewy 2005).
d) Misreading of the Shoah (denial, downplaying, relativization) (Wetzel 2003).

During US President Donald J. Trump's tenure, the myth of a deep state became pervasive – the narrative often bore antisemitic connotations (Hartleb/Schiebel 2023). A shadow government, represented by very powerful men and women (e.g., Bill Gates, George Soros, Barack Obama and/or Hillary Clinton) has allegedly been ruling the US, the world, and humankind. Like antisemitism, right-wing extremism also has an international dimension. J. M. Berger has made the effort of achieving an international definition of extremism. According to Berger, extremism assumes that there must be a victory of an in-group over an out-group in a political or violent battle (2018: 44, 155, 172). Berger says that there is no broad consensus on the components of extremism and/or terrorism while there is a vague consensus on both concepts. Truly, militant extremism amounts to terrorism (Berger 2019).

In addition, SARS-CoV-2, the cause of the COVID pandemic, was said to be produced by this shadow government ruling the world. A related right-wing conspiracy theory is about an anonymous insider, i.e., "Q", who fights against a secret, satanic, and globally active elite and the deep state. According to the so-called QAnon conspiracy theory, this elite and the deep state kidnap, torture, and murder children (Rensmann 2021a, b: 19). There are numerous codes and allusions on the Internet – sometimes a clear reference to the Nazi portrayal of rich and greedy Jews with huge paws. The "USreal" conspiracy theory maintains that Jews are the true rulers of the US. One of the most important antisemitic memes is the "(Le) Happy Merchant" meme, shared on the Internet in various contexts since the 2010s. It contains a cartoon originally posted on a far-right website. The cartoon shows a hunched Jew with a kippah and a big nose, rubbing his hands and bearing a malevolent smile. Since then, the meme has been used both in far-right and Islamist contexts (Schwarz-Friesel 2019: 43 f.).

According to Jan Schedler, far-right violence can be categorized as right-wing terrorism if 1) there is a symbolism which considers or does not exclude the death of humans 2) if it targets not only concrete casualties but also a broader target group and 3) if it is not instantaneous or spontaneous but a conspirative and prepared criminal act (Schedler 2019: 115). We can speak of far-right terrorist violence even if it is a single violent act prepared in the short run and, explicitly, even if the crime has been committed by perpetrators who do not belong to a politically organized group – as has been the case in many arson attacks against refugee homes (cf. Koehler 2017: 108).

Jan Rathje speaks of the proximity of the Reichsbürger movement to right-wing extremism and related violence (2022b): "It is true that not every Reichsbürger is immediately a neo-Nazi, but there is a dangerous connection between their ideology and right-wing extremism. Death threats and the discovery of explosives and weapons show the militancy of this special conspiracist scene."[2] There are no studies explicitly examining the close relationship between antisemitism and the Reichsbürger movement.

REICHSBÜRGER AND ANTISEMITISM – UNITED BY CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

Despite its extreme right origins and an almost continuous growth of the movement over the last decades, the *Reichsbürger* long remained a neglected, even ridiculed movement in German media, while operating largely unobserved by security agencies. It has become a topic more and more since there is a common strategy in the movement to file myriads of absurd applications to municipalities, or to hand back ID cards at the local registration offices and create new identification cards. But this so-called paper terrorism (Speit 2017), a misleading word, was regarded as non-violent. This estimation changed only in 2016, when more cases of *Reichsbürger* were documented, and in the October of that year, a *Reichsbürger* shot and killed a police officer in the Bavarian town of Georgensgmünd, as we deal with later (Rensmann 2023).

The more important it is to go back in history. The sovereigntist movement in Germany is very heterogeneous and older than the Federal Republic of Germany (which dates back to 1949) itself. There is no common leadership but, bizarrely enough, different self-appointed "kings," "chancellors," "special envoys," and other fantasy-titled key figures. The fundamental denial of the legitimacy of the German state can be seen as a core element. State deniers mostly do not regard themselves as "Reichsbürger". Decades ago, the West Berliner Wolfgang Ebel argued that Germany was no legitimate and sovereign state (Schönberger/Schönberger 2023: 31-39). Ebel had been working for the East German railway service "Deutsche Reichsbahn". Following Ebel's example and out of the conviction that they are entitled to, some people established their own state and official infrastructure, so-called governments of the empire. After being fired in the early 1980s, Ebel took part in several legal cases. Ebel issued his own documents of the empire and developed strategies to deal with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). By so doing, he laid the foundations to the proceedings of later actors of the Reichsbürger movement. His example worked as a blueprint for the social movement. As opposed to far-right Reichsbürger, Ebel had no expertise and was no lawyer. He definitely was not a right-wing extremist. Nonetheless, other Reichsbürger saw Ebel as a role model (Rathje 2022b). Ebel, who distanced himself from neo-Nazis, at least claimed that he had been acting on behalf of the Allies and had been asked to lead an interim government (Hartleb et al. 2023: 126). Overall, Reichsbürger cannot be equated with right-wing extremists, with the movement much lumpier and more diverse (Schönberger/Schönberger 2023: 48). It has been argued many times that there is no coherent ideology connecting the Reichsbürger movement. At least, there are connecting ideological fragments and negative narratives (ibid.: 2023: 71). Amongst other things, our study shows that antisemitism plays a vital role in current far-right social movements also representing Reichsbürger and sovereigntists.

It seems an insoluble task to differentiate between the radical and non-radical right when it comes to the movement of state deniers. According to Jan Rathje, the social group can be divided into four sub-milieus (2022a: 50).

a) Traditionally organized National Socialists, neo-Nazis, and right-wing extremists who have sought to restore the Third Reich and its ethnic community ("Volksgemeinschaft") since 1945. They were and are active in and around political parties (e.g., the Socialist Reich Party and the National Democratic Party of Germany) as well as other right-wing extremist organizations, networks, and/or publishing houses. Some adherents describe themselves as "Reichsbürger".
b) "Reichsbürger" who follow the tradition of the "Reich Chancellor" Wolfgang Gerhard Günter Ebel – people who had not previously held memberships in traditional right-wing extremist organizations. They form pseudo "Reich governments" and believe that they have, therefore, restored the legal framework of the German Reich.
c) Individual, group, and secessionist sovereigntists who do not (initially) want to restore a German Reich, but declare themselves sovereign as individual persons, families, groups, or state founders. They dissociate their "state territories" from the ones of the FRG.
d) "New Right" sovereigntists act as a link between conservative circles and other extreme right, sovereigntist, and conspiracist milieus. Superficially, they do not mention the Third Reich but lament the lack of sovereignty of Germany, which is not seen the same as the current territory of the FRG. The first members of the "New Right" openly called for the (re-)establishment of a new German Reich.

For long, narratives and ideas about the state being "merely a company" were much more prominent and visible among sovereigntists in Austria. The "Staatenbund Österreich" [Austrian Commonwealth] might serve as an illustrative example. It was established in November 2015 and operated by using terminology from the "One People´s Public Trust" (OPPT) in the US. Led by Monika Unger, a farmer from Styria, the Staatenbund argued that the Republic of Austria was merely a company. Real Austria, she claimed, was the Staatenbund, which, therefore, was the only legitimate subject of international law. In Unger's narrative there is a conspiracy of the powerful

elite against the "little people" to keep them poor and downtrodden. Unger's speeches sometimes attracted hundreds of people (Berlekamp 2017: 181-183). The self-proclaimed President for Life (Kurier 2022) was arrested with several others and convicted for the founding of an association hostile to the state and for directing others to commit high treason (Kurier 2020).

Certain influencers shaped Querdenken and built bridges to the Reichsbürger movement, which, in turn, was especially well-suited to absorbing the anger. The movement served as a catalyst for the protests against the restrictions during the COVID pandemic and the subsequent institutional reverberations. Evidently, there is a link between the pandemic-related conspiracy thinking of Querdenker and a general affinity towards conspiracy theories among Reichsbürger, with their respective antisemitism and rejection of the established liberal and democratic order.

Some protesters have replaced the word "Jude" (Jew) with the phrase "ungeimpft" (unvaccinated), equating COVID restrictions with the persecution of Europe's Jewish population by the Third Reich. The yellow Star of David has also been seen in protests in many countries and European capitals, from London to Tallinn. Conspiracy theorists say that the 2015/16 German migration crisis was planned and directed by elites, and the COVID pandemic was a plot by powerful Jewish actors such as Bill Gates or George Soros. Within Querdenken it was possible to order t-shirts with the inscription "Bill Gates – Vaccinator" (European External Action Service 2021). The conjecture was that Gates wanted to promote vaccination through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to bolster his own power. Ken Jebsen, a former journalist, uploaded a 30-minute-long video named "Gates hijacks Germany" (German original: "Gates kapert Deutschland") onto his platform KenFM on May 3, 2020. It was viewed almost three million times (Speit 2021: 44-45). In the meantime, the platform has disappeared.

Jebsen, additionally, gave a speech at a demonstration in Stuttgart. The protest was organized by *Querdenken711* (Backes 2021: 129). We must ascertain that antisemitism is a problem affecting entire societies. This is especially true in the case of Germany and cannot be separated from Nazi history. In a study called Motra-Monitor 2020 Uwe Ernst Kemmesies comes to the following conclusion (2021: 291): "The group least susceptible to Judeophobia are atheists and those most vulnerable are sociotheists and right-wing extremists. Furthermore, Israel-related antisemitism is more widespread among young sociotheists, Muslims, the left, and women than among men, atheists, and Christians."[3] One year later, Thomas Richter et al. said in the Motra-Monitor 2021 (2021: 226): "Because of its history, the German right is profoundly antisemitic, and Judeophobic attitudes are especially at the core of specific conspiracy narratives of newly forming groups."[4] According to Philipp Polta, conspiracy theorists have surfed on the wave of indignation about perceived constraints of civil right amidst the COVID pandemic. There was talk of a so-called COVID dictatorship ("Corona-Diktatur") (2023: 69) in light of anti-COVID measures. In the wake of Querdenken, conspiracy theories have been revitalized and have become commonplace. There has been much political discourse about backroom deals and elites trying to control humankind. The story went that Bill Gates was a key actor in COVID-related conspiracies. German Querdenken influencers such as Attila Hildmann, Eva Herman, and Oliver Janich tapped into these conspiracy theories. It was alleged that an omnipotent Bill Gates and other members of elites were making use of vaccination to implant microchips into people. The conspiracy theories aimed to establish a connection to networks of pedophiles. Polta explains how antisemitic narratives coined by Hildmann amongst others are combined with antifeminism and the idea of an extremely powerful Bill Gates as an enemy (Polta 2023: 74-76). Polta established that Hildmannn and Janich in particular, but also Herman had a tendency towards antisemitic conspiracy beliefs. They are convinced that the state is a puppet of Jewish elites and, in turn, suppresses the German people (Polta 2023: p. 76f.). In these cases, pedophilia is not explicitly associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory, a narrative about child exploitation. Curiously enough, it is oftentimes linked to Jeffrey Epstein, who was accused of child sex trafficking and committed suicide in custody (Polta 2023: 77f.).

After 2017, the QAnon conspiracy theory in particular escalated out of control (Langer 2023: 239). In the Western World, the QAnon narrative went viral. The conspiracy theory was above all used to mobilize and radicalize Trump supporters. The Democratic Establishment was accused of child sex trafficking. Bill and Hillary Clinton came especially under fire. The allegation went that the perpetrators were after children´s blood, similar to antisemitic resentment of Jewish rituals. As we discussed earlier in this article, a mysterious person called Q was supposed to be the deliverer. Trumpist conspiracy theorists identified Trump as Q. Social media, and services such as 4chan, 8chan, Parler, and Telegram led to a surge in the popularity of conspiracy theories. The philanthropist George Soros and the Rothschild family, associated with banking, were chosen as scapegoats (Rensmann 2021b: 18f.).

Reichsbürger have managed to bolster their political appeal. Within one year to March 2021 a Reichsbürger YouTube Channel's number of subscribers grew tenfold. This was due to the channel´s spreading of QAnon. On August 29, 2020, the second large-scale German demonstration of Querdenken involved unrest. Consequently, the police arrested the far-right Reichsbürger and antisemite Attila Hildmann. While, the building of the German parliament, i.e., the Reichstag, was stormed, some orators referred to QAnon; and this before the January 6, 2021 United States Capitol attack (Rathje 2021). Parallels are easy to be drawn. QAnon has turned into a global antisemitic phenomenon.

The Querdenken icon and organizer Michael Ballweg justified the participation of far-right, Reichsbürger and sovereigntist demonstrators, calling their ideologies private opinions. He also argued that people did not know about the meaning of the war flag of the German Empire (Reichskriegsflagge). The flag had been waved on the occasion (Backes 2021: 140). From Querdenken's beginnings, members of neo-Nazi parties. the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany, and Reichsbürger have taken part in its activities. Storming Reichstag is a perfect example of this (Hentges/Wiegel 2021).

A NEW DIMENSION OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE? REICHSBÜRGERS´ ANTI-GOVERNMENT EXTREMISM AND ANTISEMITIC RADICALIZATION

A Holocaust denier and former member of the far-left terrorist Red Army Faction, Horst Mahler is a convert from communism to neo-Nazism. He is affiliated with antisemitic and anti-American conspiracism, which has led to open hostility towards Jews (Fischer 2015).

Amongst neo-Nazis, Horst Mahler is a founder of the Reichsbürger movement (Hartleb/Schliefsteiner/Schiebel 2023: 126). Believing in a Jewish world conspiracy, Reichsbürger Manfred Roeder was also seen as an antisemite. What is more, Roeder believed in the continuity of the German Empire. For a long time, Reichsbürger were seen as rare German oddities: "In general, as noted above, the milieu of the "Reichsbürger" is decentralized and heterogeneous and for a long time its proponents – if they were not at the same time far-right activists and/or terrorists like Roeder and Mahler – were seen as "ridiculous conspiracy theorists"" (Hartleb/Schliefsteiner/Schiebel 2023: 127). After the last German Chancellor of the Third Reich, Karl Dönitz, had rejected Roeder's offer to cooperate in the continuation of the German Empire in 1975, the latter began revitalizing the Empire. Furthermore, he committed seven far-right terrorist attacks particularly with antisemitic and xenophobic motives in the 1980s (Rathje 2021). Icons of the Reichsbürger movement had both extremist convictions and an inclination for violence.

Reichsbürger are members of a very heterogeneous movement. Jochen Fuchs infers the following from this lumpiness: "The conclusion to be drawn, thus, cannot be much more than the fact that the movement deny the legal existence of the FRG and are convinced of the continuity of whatever a (German) Empire is meant to be" (2018: 24).[5]

In the last few years there have been acts of excessive violence on the part of German Reichsbürger and sovereigntists. We observe that these violent acts in Reuden in Saxony-Anhalt and in Georgensgmünd in Bavaria were, in part at least, motivated by antisemitism. The Reuden Reichsbürger and/or state denier Adrian Ursache believes in the conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement. In addition, Ursache sees Jews as the key conspirators behind the Great Replacement. He accuses them of an effort to annihilate the German people. Ursache assumes that there is an ongoing Muslim invasion in the shape of refugees. Highly indebted, Ursache called his own state into being. Moreover, he named the territory the "State of Ur". When a bailiff had to intervene because of substantial debts, Ursache went for the trouble of resisting the bailiff and the accompanying police (Rathje 2022a: 52).

At first, Ursache became known for his victory at the 1998 Mister Germany beauty contest. In addition, his wife was Miss Germany 2000. To earn his living, Ursache sold cell phones and worked in the solar sector. Ursache is of Romanian descent. He tried to defend his parents-in-laws´ house, a security for a mortgage, by proclaiming himself as "Administrator of the German Empire in its borders from 1871 to 1918"[6] and the real estate as independent territory. Thus, Ursache viewed the bailiff as an enemy of the Kingdom of Ur and himself. At the first confrontation, the Reichsbürger Ursache managed to avert the eviction thanks to a dozen supporters. On August 25, 2016, the bailiff wanted to achieve eviction of the occupants of the house Ursache had declared as the State of Ur two years before. Convinced that two groups of a hundred police officers and the additional special forces were part of the "FRG Corporation", Ursache decided to defend his Empire. Despite a firearm and the attempt to call for the Geneva High Committee of the Red Cross, Ursache failed. He was shot at several times by police officers (Fuchs 2018: 25). In 2019, Ursache was sentenced to seven years in prison for attempted murder. He was, additionally, convicted for the illegal possession of weapons and resistance against legal authorities (Könau 2019).

The Georgesgmünd Reichsbürger and sovereigntist Wolfgang Plan called his own state into existence in a similar manner. Plan believes in antisemitic conspiracy theories such as the Great Replacement, the Day X, and the Third World War. In addition, Plan regards himself as a fighter against the FRG and a Zionist world conspiracy. His Day X conspiracy theory entails the downsizing of the global population to 500 million people on the so-called Day X. Plan has talked of a secret war against Germans. Plan justified his shooting of a policeman out of his anti-Muslim paranoia which is due to Islamist terrorist attacks. He fired shots on his premise in the morning of October 9, 2016, supposing that special units had entered in the wake of a third world war. In both cases, i.e., those of Ursache and Plan, violence can be deduced from antisemitic conspiracy beliefs. Furthermore, there is a connection between both sovereigntists since Plan visited Ursache in Reuden in August 2016. In general, Plan backed other sovereigntists. Plan wanted to defend the Kingdom of Ur with other Reichsbürger (Rathje 2021: 53-55). The criminal court was convinced that Plan followed a concrete plan and vehemently attacked the operating police officers on his premise. The Federal State Court of Nuremberg-Fürth passed the verdict that Plan was guilty of murder in one case, attempted murder in two cases, and grievous bodily harm in one case. According to the court, Plan acted purposefully and grievously attacked the police. As a consequence, Plan was sentenced to life-long imprisonment on October 23, 2017. The special forces had tried to confiscate 31 rifles and handguns. Plan, wearing a bulletproof vest, sought cover and shot several times at the police officers entering the house, as the court had inferred from evidence. Plan's attorney argued that the Reichsbürger had assumed the presence of burglars, which is why he pleaded for negligent homicide resulting from self-defense. The police, however, had drawn his attention to their presence. What is more, Plan had stated that he would resist pressure from authorities and defend himself. The journalist Andreas Speit states that the case of Plan is the perfect example of an "underestimated danger". Speit makes this clear in an anthology bearing the German title "Reichsbürger – Die unterschätzte Gefahr" ("Reichsbürger – the underestimated danger") (Speit 2017: 7). Fuchs considers the hunter and sporting marksman to be a Reichsbürger. Plan had both a hunting license and a gun license. Before ending up jobless, Plan had run a martial arts school and was a master of Wing Chun. In the fall of 2015, Plan refused to make a sworn

declaration of his property. In early 2016, Plan was unwilling to conduct legal proceedings. As a result, Plan deregistered his residence although he still lived in the house he had inherited from his grandmother. Plan proclaimed his home as empire. Some kind of family coat of arms was supposed to be the flag (Fuchs 2018: 24). Plan's militancy and violence was a salient feature of his confrontations with legal authorities. His far-right terrorist vision is completed by anti-Muslim and antisemitic resentment and can be contrived as an extreme version of sovereigntism.

A NEW RIGHT-WING SOCIAL MOVEMENT? UNITED IN HETEROGENEITY

The term "social movement" is a creation of the post-1968, New Left-dominated theoretical landscape. Can "Reichsbürger" be regarded as members of new social movements or 'networks of networks' which aim to mobilize public support and represent a conglomeration of subcultural groups and groupuscules? Considering collective phenomena as the sum of individual behaviors, psychologically oriented theories define social movements as the manifestation of feelings of deprivation experienced by individuals, with aggression resulting from a wide range of frustrated expectations (Caiaini/della Porta 2018).

Reichsbürger are no monolithic block. Can we speak of a social movement even if its members are only loosely connected (Schönberger/Schönberger 2023: 10)? Using the radicalization theory of needs, narratives, and networks as a quest for significance (Kruglanski/Bélanger, and Gunaratna 2019), the process of becoming a Reichsbürger can be understood as a strategy of self-help and self-empowerment for satisfying basic human needs. Concerning their ideology, numerous irrational and inconsistent components invite pathologizing approaches; existing conceptualizations of radicalization cannot easily be transferred to Reichsbürger. German intelligence services regard them as a "phenomenon of extremism sui generis" (Goertz 2023: 211). In other words, it seems an insoluble task to differentiate between the radical right and the non-radical right when it comes to this movement. Besides all heterogeneity in terms of goals and ideology, there are also commonalities and intersections within and between the milieus. The social movement has been gathering pace: The number of German Reichsbürger and sovereigntists rose from 21,000 in 2021 to 23,000 in 2022. About 1,250 of these people are right-wing extremists and 2,300 of them approve of violence. The movement is, undoubtedly, aggressive: In 2022, people concerned committed 1,358 extremist criminal acts. 286 of these were violent acts. Compared to the year before, these figures all experienced sharp increases (Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution 2023). Not only are there state deniers in Germany, but also in Austria and Switzerland (Baier 2023).

The Federal Agency for the Protection of the Constitution and a study on behalf of the German conservative and partisan Konrad Adenauer Foundation say (KAS; Hirndorf 2022) that people tending towards the Reichsbürger movement are also more likely to have an inclination towards right-wing extremism and antisemitism. According to the study on behalf of the Konrad Adenauer foundation, it is only one in 20 Germans who share attitudes of the Reichsbürger movement. Supporters of the right-wing populist AfD are much more likely to do so, though (Hirndorf 2023). Analyzing the social movement of Querdenker and their interrelation with Reichsbürger makes it easy to see that there is a complex mix of radicalism, conspiracy theories, and extremism, of the anti-state variety in particular (Goertz 2022). An interesting aspect is the potential for so-called "stochastic violence, even terrorism" (Molly/Meloy 2021). We have discussed the discovery of the plans for a coup d'état, and some violent incidents that have even led to death. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that no terrorist attack rooted in the interrelation and dynamics between Querdenker and Reichsbürger has occurred so far. With the pandemic "largely over" such an attack seems less likely, but it remains to be seen if the dynamics and networks which developed during the acute health crisis will bear any violent fruits in the (near) future.

We and Paul Schliefsteiner (2023: 135) emphasize the antisemitic nexus between Querdenker und Reichsbürger: "Evidently, there is a link between the pandemic-related conspiracy thinking of Querdenker and a general affinity towards conspiracy theories among Reichsbürger, with their respective antisemitism and rejection of the established liberal and democratic order." The radical right makes use of antisemitism as a traditional metanarrative (Hartleb/Schliefsteiner/Schiebel 2023: 136). Stefan Goertz stresses the significance of the Internet and social media for the spreading of antisemitic content by Reichsbürger and sovereigntists. Coded ideological messages and content have conveyed the idea of a Jewish conspiracy causing the First World War. The Holocaust has even been denied by those antisemitic circles. Elaborating on the fine distinctions between Reichsbürger and sovereigntists, Goertz makes clear that Reichsbürger invoke the German Empire while sovereigntists intend to administer themselves and, at least, do not acknowledge the FRG (Goertz 2023).

There is another movement of sovereigntists which can be likened to the Reichsbürger: the esoteric and quasi-religious Anastasia movement (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam 2022b: 4). The movement has been labeled right-wing extremist (Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam 2022b). The Anastasia movement stems from a fictional book series by the Russian author Vladimir Megre. Comprising ten volumes published between 1996 and 2010, the books are about Anastasia, a fictional character who lives in the Russian taiga. Anastasia possesses supernatural powers. The movement derived from this fiction has abandoned the modern lifestyle and intends to live in a self-subsistent way. Their way of life is reminiscent of that of sovereigntists who do not recognize modern states. In several volumes of Anastasia there are antisemitic forces framed positively, with Jews described as dark forces with negative motivations. Jews are portrayed as fraudulent and treacherous, which are ancient antisemitic stereotypes. Anastasia defends the century-old persecution of Jews and claims that such events can only happen with reason. In addition, she also talks about Jews who are greedy for money, which is meant to be due to the Jewish tribe of Levi (Pöhlmann 2018; Dokumentationsstelle Politischer Islam 2022a). In a few of the ten books, some antisemitic elements can be found: "Historians both ancient and modern have said that the Jewish people have conspired against authority," reads a passage from *Book Six: The Book of Kin*. "That they have aspired to deceive everyone, from the least unto the greatest. In the case of the poor, to try to trick them out of at least a little, in the case of the rich, to bring them to utter ruin." In *Book Seven: The Energy of Life*, Megre adds, "Jews have been persecuted for centuries in various countries of the world. Persecuted for what? For using any means they can to make as much money as possible. And many of them are successful." The Anastasia movement is based on the concept of self-subsistent family or tribal farms. The movement is decentralized, and its practices vary from settlement to settlement, which, nevertheless, share core values. Members reject modern science and technology, and practice organic gardening and herbal medicine. The movement with Russian origins has owned over 44 hectares in Brandenburg. The movement is broadly regarded as racist, antisemitic, and antidemocratic (tagesschau.de 2023). There are five family or tribal farms in Brandenburg alone. Obviously, there are connections abroad, i.e., to Switzerland and Austria. The Agency for the Protection of the Constitution of the State of Brandenburg considers the Anastasia movement and its related family or tribal farms to be right-wing extremist (Spiegel.de 2023).

Remarkably, the Reichsbürger establishment has overlapped with the Anastasia movement. The Brandenburg Agency for the Protection of the Constitution has observed a disconcerting expansion of Reichsbürger in Rutenberg. Evidently, more and more real estate is being acquired by extremists. The Reichsbürger and self-proclaimed Emperor Peter Fitzek are the driving force behind the New Kingdom of Germany (tagesschau.de 2023). The New Kingdom has had an expansionist drive: The Agency for the Protection of the Constitution of the State of Saxony has warned citizens not to sell their property to Peter Fitzek, who has been convicted for his business practices and has already obtained premises in two Saxonian villages, allegedly to establish a village for the common good. Hence, Fitzek has infringed some laws and adheres to a right-wing extremist ideology, which he also imposes upon his subjects (ntv.de 2022).

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

The topic has a geopolitical aspect: delegitimization (as the new category of German intelligence) and destabilization an also be seen in other countries. This delegitimization and loss of government authority challenge and undermine liberal democratic institutions and promote distrust of the very concept of a state. Hence, anti-government extremist groups create echo chambers where their distrust is shared and amplified. Not only are harmful narratives disseminated in those networks, but they are confirmed by others who share similar views. Reichsbürger are a powerful example. Surely, antisemitism is a glue for many Reichsbürger, sovereigntists and state deniers, and fosters political violence. The promotion of far-right antisemitism and terrorism go hand in hand. As far as the related social movements are concerned, antisemitism plays a crucial role.

In a speech, Russian President Vladmir Putin said that Germany was not fully sovereign and claimed that US troops there were still occupation forces – fully utilizing the most basic Reichsbürger narrative.[7] Defining anti-government extremism seems to be as challenging as it is to effectively address it in policy and practice. The heterogeneous nature of this emerging threat makes it indeed difficult to concisely delineate. Questions on its causes, its push and pull factors, its differences, and commonalities and intersections with other forms of violent extremism, and how institutions can create resilience against anti-institutional extremism require further exploration. This is where antisemitism shows up – with the growing claim that there is a deep state with Jewish influencers who have the "real" power in their hands.

In this context, new categories for this kind of anti-government extremism have been created in Germany and Austria and the criminal codes, thus, have been modified: groups are now classified as "staatsfeindlich" (hostile to the state) in Austria or "staatsverweigernd" (state-rejectionist) in Germany.

Germany, in response to the developments during the COVID pandemic, has added a new category that addresses "delegitimization of the state relevant to domestic intelligence" ("Verfassungsschutzrelevante Delegitimierung des Staates"). This new category has been criticized by some as being too broad and ill-defined (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz 2021; for criticism: Gowin 2021). Even if empirical research is still in its beginnings, there are implications as to what makes the ideology of Reichsbürger attractive.

It is about conspiracy theories and people's role in an ever-more complicated world order. Some people no longer trust the state, with Reichsbürger and others not believing any more in the rule of law and even seeing a surge in injustice. It is an open question if their motivation is criticism of the state, hatred, or even a pathological aversion to the state. Certainly, this poses a major challenge to be addressed not only by state bodies. Having public institutions and governments collaborate with local law enforcement to build an interdisciplinary and evidence-based risk assessment tool may facilitate the gathering and cross-referencing of useful information on new threats (Molas 2023). Growing online instructions for becoming a sovereign citizen have created a groundswell of adherents from a variety of communities and backgrounds. Another challenge is the social isolation which some self-centered sovereigntists live in. Most deradicalization initiatives work with a systemic approach, meaning they include relevant persons from the social environment of the client in the work. In this case, this is rather tricky as we are referring to a social movement without a common social network. Categories such as rehabilitation and reintegration, therefore, hardly apply in the "brave new world" of echo chambers and conspiracy theories. Not just the state is regarded as an enemy, but society itself – and as always "the Jew" as a scapegoat.

NOTES

1 Also originally partly in Italics.

2 German original: „Zwar ist nicht jeder „Reichsbürger“ gleich ein Neonazi. Doch es existiert eine gefährliche Verbindung zwischen Reichsideologie und Rechtsextremismus. Morddrohungen sowie Sprengstoff- und Waffenfunde zeigen die Gewaltbereitschaft dieser besonderen verschwörungsideologischen Szene.“

3 German original: „Die am geringsten anfällige Gruppe für Judenfeindlichkeit die der Atheisten und die am gefährdetsten ist die der Soziotheisten und Rechtsextremisten. Zudem zeigt sich, dass ein israelbezogener Antisemitismus unter jungen Soziotheisten, Muslimen, Linken und Frauen verbreiterter ist als unter Rechten, Männern, Atheisten und Christen.“

4 German original: „[D]ie deutsche Rechte [ist] historisch bedingt zutiefst antisemitisch und antijüdische Haltungen stehen speziell bei sich neu konstituierenden Gruppen im Kern jeweils spezifischer Verschwörungsnarrative.“

5 „Es bleibt als Fazit also nicht viel mehr als die Feststellung, dass die Akteure dieser Bewegung sich nur insofern einig sind, als sie die legale Existenz der BRD verneinen und von der (Fort-)Existenz eines wie auch immer gearteten (Deutschen) Reiches überzeugt sind.“

6 Verweser des „Deutschen Reichs in den Grenzen von 1871 bis 1918“

7 Without Author (2023): Putin claims US “occupation troops” still in Germany, in: Yahoonews, 25th January https://news.yahoo.com/putin-claims-us-occupation-troops-130326987.html; Without Author (2023): Putin says US troops in Germany occupation forces in legal terms, in actuality, in: tass.com, 25th January https://tass.com/politics/1567019 (accessed on November 8, 2023).

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