Decoding Antisemitism

A Guide to Identifying Antisemitism Online

Edited by
Matthias J. Becker · Hagen Troschke
Matthew Bolton · Alexis Chapelan

OPEN ACCESS

palgrave
macmillan

Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse

Series Editor
Johannes Angermuller, School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse engages in the exchange between discourse theory and analysis while putting emphasis on the intellectual challenges in discourse research. Moving beyond disciplinary divisions in today's social sciences, the contributions deal with critical issues at the intersections between language and society.

Edited by Johannes Angermuller together with members of DiscourseNet, the series welcomes high-quality manuscripts in discourse research from all disciplinary and geographical backgrounds. DiscourseNet is an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers which is open to discourse analysts and theorists from all backgrounds.

Matthias J. Becker · Hagen Troschke ·
Matthew Bolton · Alexis Chapelan
Editors

Decoding Antisemitism

A Guide to Identifying Antisemitism Online

palgrave
macmillan

Editors
Matthias J. Becker
Centre for Research on Antisemitism
Technische Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Hagen Troschke
Centre for Research on Antisemitism
Technische Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Matthew Bolton
Centre for Research on Antisemitism
Technische Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Alexis Chapelan
Centre for Research on Antisemitism
Technische Universität Berlin
Berlin, Germany

Cover illustration: Westend61 GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Acknowledgements

Contents

vii

Notes on Contributors

Dr Laura Ascone's research focuses on computer-mediated communication, on the expression of emotions, as well as on hate speech. She defended her PhD in Linguistics at the Université Paris-Seine. Her thesis on "The Radicalisation through the Expression of Emotions on the Internet" dealt with the rhetorical strategies used in both jihadist propaganda and institutional counter-narrative. She then conducted postdoctoral research at the Université de Lorraine on online hate speech against migrants. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at the Technische Universität Berlin in the international project Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. She is also part of various research networks dealing with social issues, such as R2DIP (Research Network on Institutional and Political Discourse), R2S (Risks, Society and Security), and Draine, a research group established as part of the Horizon 2020 European project PRACTICIES (Partnership against violent radicalisation in the cities).

Dr Matthias J. Becker is a linguist specialising in pragmatics, cognitive linguistics, (critical) discourse analysis,and social media studies, with

a particular emphasis on research in prejudice and hatred. He studied linguistics, philosophy, and literature at Freie Universität Berlin and has contributed to several research projects focusing on the use of language in political and media campaigns. His doctoral dissertation, published with Nomos in 2018, analyses the linguistic construction of national pride, antisemitic stereotypes, and demonising historical analogies in British and German discourses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. An English version of the book, titled "*Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*," was published with Palgrave Macmillan in 2021. A consistent theme across all his research is the investigation of how implicit hate speech—seemingly accepted within various milieus of the political mainstream—is constructed and the conditions that facilitate its production. Matthias is the creator and lead of the "Decoding Antisemitism" research project.

Dr Matthew Bolton is a researcher, lecturer and writer focusing on conceptual history, critical theory, antisemitism and genocide studies. He received his PhD in Philosophy from the University of Roehampton, London in 2020, with his thesis exploring the relationship between the development of the concept of justice and the capitalist state form. Before joining the Decoding Antisemitism team, he was an Associate Lecturer in Politics and Philosophy at the University of Chichester. In 2018 his co-authored monograph on the ideological underpinnings of the Corbyn movement, Corbynism: A Critical Approach, was published by Emerald Books. His articles have been published in British Politics, Political Quarterly, the Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism, and Fathom, and his work has received widespread media coverage in the UK.

Alexis Chapelan is a current PhD candidate, enrolled in a joint international PhD programme at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris, France) and the University of Bucharest (Romania). In 2019, he graduated with a Master of Political Science degree with a concentration in political theory from the École de Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. He also holds a position as a teaching assistant at the University of Bucharest. He is mainly interested in exploring the intersection of intellectual history/history of ideas and sociolinguistics, applied

to a broad array of research objects such as political extremism, far-right ideologies, hate speech, conspiracy theories and populism. His doctoral thesis draws on the Begriffsgeschichte and semantic history approaches, and undertakes a genealogical survey of the concept of "culture wars" from the 19th century to present-day debates. His work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as The Journal of Transatlantic Studies, The Romanian Review of Political Sciences and International Relations or Studia Politica, or in collective research volumes in Romania and Sweden. In addition, he is a member of the DiscourseNet network, of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) and of the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR).

Dr Jan Krasni is a researcher and a lecturer focusing on multimodal discourse analysis, media studies (especially media ethics), and infrastructure studies. He received his PhD in German and Media Studies from the University of Konstanz, Germany, in 2015. While his thesis analyses the construction of guilt in the digital discourses of German media, his later work deals with the representation of minorities and minority languages in the media, with the problem of ethics in digital media infrastructure for processing personal information, and with the problem of fake news. Before joining the Decoding Antisemitism project, where he leads the German team, he worked as an assistant professor at the University of Niš (Serbia), as a researcher at the Cultural Trends Lab with Lev Manovich at the University of Tyumen (Russia), and as an assistant professor at the Webster University. His work on digital infrastructure and processing of private data in the scope of art-science-activist projects of Share Lab brought him and his team widespread media coverage around the world.

Karolina Placzynta is a linguist with a background in pragmatics, sociolinguistics and critical discourse analysis, as well as political sciences. She holds an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the Manchester Metropolitan University, and an MRes degree in Politics and International Studies from the University of Bath (PoLIS). Her research is centred on the mainstreaming and marginalisation of discourses in the media, and the normalisation of bias. She also explores how language reflects and influences social identities over time, for example through shaping or reshaping in groups and out groups, othering, and labelling. Before

joining the UK team of the Decoding Antisemitism project, she researched the patterns of discursive representations of immigration in the British press, in the process examining online media debates within the political mainstream, using a mixed methods approach. Also, while working as a research assistant in the MMU project UrBEn-ID (Urban British English and Identity), funded by The Leverhulme Trust, she engaged with the sociophonetic approach to researching group identities. Apart from discourses of migration, racism and antisemitism, she is interested in the language of misogyny and gender inequality, language of social class dynamics, as well as the intersections of discriminatory discourses. She is a member of the DiscourseNet association.

Marcus Scheiber is a linguist with research interest in social semiotics, corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis and multimodality research. He started his academic career at the Universities of Heidelberg and Bern, and as a visiting researcher and lecturer at the University of Mumbai. He received his M.A. from the University of Heidelberg in 2018 with a thesis about internet memes. Since 2020, he has been pursuing a joint PhD project at the University of Vechta and University of Vienna entitled "The reality construction potential of multimodal communicative units in antisemitic communication", examining internet memes as communication formats in antisemitic communication strategies. In addition to his academic pursuits he was employed as a data analyst at Amazon, where he was responsible for the further development and improvement of Alexa through qualitative annotation and transcription of speech data.

Hagen Troschke conducts interdisciplinary research on current developments of antisemitism. Based on an M.A. in History, Psychology and Media Studies, his fields of activity include the history, language and iconography of antisemitism, hate speech, racism, and far-right ideologies. He investigated antisemitism in social media for six years as a researcher at the Department of General Linguistics and at the Centre for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA), both at Technische Universität Berlin. Besides scientific analysis he is engaged in preventive work. He was a consultant for the Action Weeks against Antisemitism, and he created teaching materials on antisemitism and Salafism as a research assistant

in an educational project. In addition to having provided information to the public in the form of brochures, exhibitions and videos with social media influencers, he is involved in scientific consulting.

Chloé Vincent is a linguist working on the French team of the Decoding Antisemitism project. She completed her M.A. in Linguistics at Queen Mary University of London in September 2020. She specialised in sociolinguistics, learning both quantitative and qualitative methods. Her master's thesis consisted in analysing the attitudes of native French speakers towards French regional accents. In the previous years, she had completed her undergraduate degree in anthropology at Lumière University Lyon 2, and a degree in French language teaching at Grenoble Alpes University, while working as a software developer. She also holds a Master of Engineering degree from Grenoble INP Graduate School of Engineering.

1

Introduction

Matthias J. Becker, Hagen Troschke, Matthew Bolton, and Alexis Chapelan

This book provides a systematic overview of the key concepts, stereotypes and topoi that make up antisemitic discourse online today. It outlines the distinguishing characteristics of 46 antisemitic concepts or stereotypes, ranging from classical or 'canonical' stereotypes that have existed for hundreds of years, to newer concepts that have emerged in the wake of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel. Each concept

M. J. Becker (✉) · H. Troschke · M. Bolton · A. Chapelan
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: mjb@decoding-antisemitism.eu

H. Troschke
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

M. Bolton
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

A. Chapelan
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.unibuc.ro

or stereotype in the book is illustrated with a series of example statements that express that concept in a range of ways, and explanations as to how they should be interpreted. In contrast to the many other academic books on antisemitism, this lexicon was created with practical purposes in mind. It can act as a reference guide for anyone who has encountered a statement, text or image, that they suspect to be antisemitic, helping them to precisely identify both the antisemitic idea (or ideas) contained within it and the linguistic mechanisms through which that idea is expressed.

Why is such a guidebook needed? Its starting premise is that antisemitic forms of communication are becoming more widespread today, and more acceptable in the public sphere. While this trend has been clear for specialists over the past decade or so, the explosion of antisemitic discourse that followed the atrocities inflicted on Israeli civilians by Hamas on 7 October 2023, and the subsequent Israeli war on Hamas in Gaza, has brought the issue to the forefront of public and political attention (Becker et al. 2023, 2024). Our contention is that the new communicative conditions created by social media are a significant factor in these troubling developments. But despite the prevalence of antisemitic ideas, both online and offline, identifying them as antisemitic is not always a straightforward task. Antisemitism can be communicated directly, but more often it is expressed in disguised, implicit or 'coded' ways which may not be obvious to non-experts. This 'coded' character, we contend, is particularly common in antisemitism found online. Hence the title of this book and of the research project of which it is a part: *Decoding Antisemitism*.

By clearly setting out the content of each antisemitic idea, and by using real-life examples drawn from contemporary web discourse to show the different ways in which the same idea can be expressed, readers will be able to apply the methods of the book themselves to 'decode' the antisemitic meaning of comments and statements they encounter both online and offline. In so doing, the book will make an important contribution to efforts to combat the spread of antisemitic speech and ideas. We hope it will be of use to anyone who wants to get an overview of contemporary forms of antisemitism, and/or is confronted with the issue of antisemitism in the context of work against discrimination,

hate speech, or radicalisation and extremism. This might include anyone working in education, politics, the law, police and security services, social media moderation, the tech sector developing AI-based tools to counter hate, and civil society.

In this introduction, we first sketch out how the new communicative conditions of online spaces contribute to the spread of antisemitism, and in particular new modes of implicit or coded antisemitism that can make identifying it as such difficult. Next, we explore some of the challenges in researching internet communication, specifically difficulties in ascertaining the intent, motivation and personal identity of the speaker or writer; we suggest that being forced to move away from these questions allows for a clearer focus on the linguistic meaning of the comment and its form of expression. The third part of the introduction introduces the work of *Decoding Antisemitism* in more detail and sets out our position on the controversial issue of how to define antisemitism. The final part presents the structure of the book as a whole and of each chapter within it.

Antisemitism and the Internet

Tackling antisemitism in the age of the internet requires different tools from those used in the pre-internet age. The various studies which show the growing prevalence of antisemitic speech online testify that this challenge is not yet being met (see Judaken 2008; Hacohen 2010; Topor 2019; Schwarz-Friesel 2020).[1] In previous eras, antisemitism—in textual form at least—was often a top-down phenomenon, driven by public figures: intellectuals, politicians, journalists and religious leaders. Supported by their social position and institutionalised authority, individuals and organisations were able to influence the worldviews of their audiences through the transmission of anti-Jewish ideas in religious texts, public speeches, newspaper articles, plays and songs, philosophical and political tracts, and party announcements. This remains the case: media

---

[1] https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d73c833f-c34c-11eb-a925-01aa75ed71a1/language-en (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

outlets, political figures and celebrities remain able to leverage their position and public visibility to disseminate and legitimise antisemitic topoi.

However, new communication dynamics are fundamentally transforming the ways in which information flows across society, including antisemitic concepts, language and imagery. Blogs, wikis, micro-blogging (via platforms such as *Twitter/X*), social networking sites (*Instagram*, *Facebook*, etc.), video-sharing sites (*YouTube* or *TikTok*) and social news aggregators (*Reddit*, etc.), emphasise user-generated content, freely shared amongst peers (O'Reilly 2007; Towner and Dulio 2011; Blank and Reisdorf 2012). The interactive web significantly encourages the decentralisation and fragmentation of discourse, as now anyone with an internet connection and minimal computer literacy can become not only a consumer, but also a producer of information (Barns 2020). It has also weakened gatekeeping processes, by stripping large news organisations or established opinion leaders of their monopoly on what is being discussed in the public sphere. While these evolutions undoubtedly have their positive sides, they also create a discourse ecosystem where hate speech and prejudice can thrive. Potential factors include user anonymity, the difficulty of top-down regulation and, according to some studies (Brady et al. 2020), an in-built tendency towards moral outrage which favours extremist, aggressive behaviour in the cyberspace.

In terms of content, the social media age has proven fertile ground for the continual creative evolution of hate speech, through wordplay, allusions, rhetorical questions, irony, jokes, and memes. Antisemitism is by no means alone in this regard—all forms of hate speech have become subject to these new and ever-shifting forms of expression that characterise social media discourse (Zappavigna 2012). But antisemitism is particularly susceptible to being subject to such treatment: history has shown that antisemitic ideas have been adapted with extraordinary flexibility to the *zeitgeist*, the historical context and the social environment (Wistrich 1992; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017). From religious anti-Judaism to modern racial theories, antisemitism has found expression through a huge range of stereotypes and other concepts, at times deriving logically from one another, at others standing in direct contradiction. In the antisemitic imagination, Jews can simultaneously be the

secret all-powerful rulers of the world and cowardly sub-human vermin; they appear both as predatory arch-capitalists and revolutionary communist plotters and as the harbingers of 'progressive' modernity while also being the stubborn defenders of a reactionary status quo.

Due to this complexity, it is not always possible for the layperson to recognise antisemitic concepts, to take into account certain parallels of historical and contemporary discourse, or to justify the resulting interpretations. Even within those social and political movements which pride themselves on their commitment to anti-racist principles and activism, antisemitism is all too often left unrecognised or ignored, leading to claims that 'Jews don't count' as authentic victims of racism in anti-racist political circles (Baddiel 2021; Arnold 2022). The question of Israel and its relation to antisemitism is a primary factor here, as we will go on to discuss. But there are further thorny problems: how to clarify the relationship between antisemitism and certain modes of anti-capitalism, anti-elitism and non-antisemitic conspiracy theories? The existence of grey areas with regard to the relationship of these phenomena can hardly be disputed. Even leaving these issues aside for now, we can hypothesise a further potential reason for the recurrent difficulties in identifying antisemitism: the complexities of the form of presentation of antisemitic communication itself—the language or other patterns through which these concepts are carried into the discourse. It is certainly often straightforward to identify radicalised, i.e. unambiguous, hate speech in extremist milieus (online as well as offline), where the name of the target and the antisemitic concept are explicitly stated. Antisemitic discourse within mainstream spaces, however, is frequently characterised by implicit communication patterns which seek to disguise expressions of devaluation and exclusion and distract from clear messaging. Reasons for the omnipresence of implicit hate speech online include the desire to avoid social sanction and loss of face. But the unexcited, emotionless production of much discriminary speech also testifies to unconscious attitudes that have developed over many generations and found their

way into cultural memory.[2] The semantic gaps that make up implicitness can often be filled with the help of background, contextual and world knowledge—what is meant can be fathomed through chains of inference.

For example, few readers would fail to recognise that statements such as 'all Jews are greedy' or 'Jews control the world' are antisemitic. But other, more subtle—and yet at times even more extreme—antisemitic statements, where there is no longer a one-to-one relation between the mental concept (i.e. the stereotype) and the utterance communicating the concept, cause greater difficulties. The allusion in the request that "someone should give Soros a 'shower'" requires historical knowledge of the Nazi gas chambers. The rhetorical question 'who is holding his hand out again?' activates the idea of a Jewish instrumentalisation of the Holocaust in German contexts of utterance—but grasping this meaning demands knowledge of language, context and contemporary politico-cultural dynamics in order to infer the classic stereotypes of Jewish greed and immorality.

Sentences such as these make up a substantial amount, if not the majority of antisemitic speech online (see Becker et al. 2021), and thus confront those seeking to find and combat antisemitic hate speech with a serious challenge. The need to closely focus on the language and other communication patterns used to articulate antisemitic concepts and to categorise them consistently arises from the fact that it is—apart from the dissemination and endorsement of antisemitic ideas—precisely the novel, elaborated or implicit form that makes the communication of antisemitic concepts more acceptable in the first place, and which legitimises it within mainstream debate culture. This is a problem which needs to be taken seriously, since—unlike radicalised language—it is usually not perceived in its severity, problematised or sanctioned, and therefore can freely circulate online and offline. To date, technical solutions for monitoring hate speech have proven to be insufficient (for implicitness and antisemitism cf. Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017; Becker 2021; Becker and Troschke 2023). Any form of AI or machine-learning

---

[2] We follow the INACH definition of hate speech, which asserts that hate speech concepts can be communicated unconsciously and do not need to show intent: https://www.inach.net/cyber-hate-definitions (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

method of content moderation—increasingly perceived as the key to countering antisemitic hatred online—needs to integrate the requisite contextual knowledge that enables a distinction to be made between the use of a word (such as 'Jew,' 'Israel,' 'Zionist,' 'shower' or 'hand') that produces an antisemitic meaning, one that is neutral, and one which seeks to counter antisemitism (perhaps through sarcastic repetition of an antisemitic term or phrase). Prior to any technical 'fix' then, deeper knowledge and contextualisation are key prerequisites to avert the danger of a creeping radicalisation of society through the spread and normalisation of antisemitic hate speech, but also to avoid premature censorship of public debate and critical expression.

Antisemites or Antisemitism? From Identity to Meaning

In view of the potentially radicalising and polarising impact of social media, there is an urgent need for academia, state policy and civil society to come to terms with how communication on the internet can produce real-life political effects. This communicative context presents those researching hate ideologies, including antisemitism, within contemporary societies with new problems—but also new opportunities.

Data from internet-based communication provide authentic perspectives and statements: through systemic corpus analysis of social media posts, comment threads and online discussions, it is possible to gain an insight into how people think away from the formal structure of a survey. Rather than finding a random set of people and asking them questions about a particular subject, here a pre-existing 'real-world' data set—written texts, messages, voice recordings, images and so on—is collected and analysed. By starting with what already exists in the world, including its online dimension, rather than artificially creating a communicative space to produce the targeted content, corpus analysis offers the possibility of getting much closer to authentic speech and behaviour—how people actually act and speak when they are not conscious of being observed—than the more formal setting of an interview or survey. The downside of such a fine-grained approach is that broad, society-wide

claims cannot be made without the assistance of complementary quantitative approaches. Nevertheless, corpus studies offer a means by which the diversity of thinking and communicating can be taken into account such that, with the right analytical procedures, results can be brought to light that are much closer to a reliable description of everyday speech situations.

There are further specificities of internet communication which distinguish this analytical process and its results from more traditional methods. Unlike surveys, which attempt to construct representative results by collecting information from various known social, age and ethnic groups, it is not possible to empirically verify the identities of web users when conducting analysis of web comments. There is no ethical way to show that a web user is, in fact, who they say they are. This means that certain modes of historicisation, ethnography and contextualisation that are central to other forms of social science research are not (yet) available to internet corpus studies. Yet the inability of internet studies to speak concretely to these issues (at least without the kinds of detective work which risk breaching ethical boundaries with regard to the web user's right to privacy) can be turned into its strength.

In the seemingly never-ending series of recent antisemitic scandals involving public figures—from Jeremy Corbyn and Kanye West to member of the U.S. House of Representatives Ilhan Omar—again and again particular aspects of personal identity (whether political, racial, ethnic, intellectual or cultural) are used as a means of mitigation. Jeremy Corbyn, we were told by his supporters, could not possibly have done or said anything antisemitic because he was a 'life-long anti-racist' without a 'racist bone in his body' (Bolton and Pitts 2018, (Chapter 3 and 6); for left-wing antisemitism cf. Kloke 1994; Stein 2011; Wistrich 2010, 2011; Betzler and Glittenberg 2015; Hirsh 2017; Fine and Spencer 2018; Arnold 2022). Antisemitism within Black or Muslim communities (Simes 2009; Jikeli 2015; Ehsan 2020) is said by some to be qualitatively distinct from that within other ethnic and religious groups (cf. Afridi 2023; Kirchick 2023); the list can continue.

What often follows the question of identity is the question of the speaker's intention. Did the speaker or author consciously *mean* to say something antisemitic? Are they really an *antisemite*—understood as

someone who deliberately and whole-heartedly engages in antisemitic speech and actions due to an explicitly recognised hostility towards Jews? While there are circumstances when intent and/or motivation is of the utmost importance, a debate which is fixated on identifying and counting the number of *bona fide* antisemites risks missing the bigger picture, namely the prevalence of antisemitism, or antisemitic ideas, across society as a whole (Gidley et al. 2020). If it is accepted that anti-Jewish ideas and presuppositions within Western/Christian societies have existed for generations, deeply inscribed within its foundational religious, philosophical and political concepts (Nirenberg 2013; Bergmann 2016; Weitzman et al. 2023), then it becomes possible to view antisemitism as an objective, that is non-subjective, structure of thought (Hirsh 2017), reducing the significance of explicit intent. Rather, the question becomes one of if and how people can unconsciously pass on an antisemitic stereotype due to its foundational status within their respective cultural frames of reference. Given that antisemitism has been an integral part of the collective imaginary for centuries, it should be no surprise to see it serve as a meaning-constituting element for parts of a public confronted with events as varied as the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic or currently the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. Antisemitic ideas can take on this role without speakers necessarily being aware of the function, adaptability or content of their own antisemitic statements or worldviews.

At present, internet studies cannot provide us with concrete information about either the identity or the subjective intention of a web user based on the data we can ethically glean from web comments. But this limitation can be turned into an invitation to move away from the vexed, and in many ways unresolvable, questions of identity and intent, and instead turn our attention to *what was actually communicated*: i.e. to take into account the utterance and its contextual meaning (in the sense of the immediate linguistic context, the thread or discussion itself, or the news story to which the comment refers). Rather than speculating about whether a person is a 'true' antisemite or not, the focus should be on whether their utterance can be—contextually or not—understood as antisemitic. This shift from identity and intent to linguistic meaning, structure and context is of even greater importance when it comes to

analysing the increasingly dominant role of anonymous web discourse in public debate (for the topic of antisemitism online cf. Schwarz-Friesel 2020; Becker 2021; Hübscher and von Mering 2022; Milanović 2022). In the light of these multiple issues, we can set out a series of questions which need to be asked when confronted with potentially antisemitic statements online:

– (a) Is it an antisemitic statement? What aspect of the statement suggests that it is not merely a critical contribution (*grey area problem*)?
– If so, (b) what antisemitic concept is discernible (*content*)?
– Finally, (c) what verbal, visual or audio-visual patterns convey the concept(s) in the contribution (*form*)?

The communicated meaning of a statement, which always has to be placed both in the immediate context of its articulation and in the broader cultural and political context, is always carried by content (b) and form (c). This meaning can only be answered through a qualitative approach, in which expert knowledge is able to answer questions about content-related concepts and the verbal-visual structures through which the former are communicated. This book aims to equip readers with the essential tools for conducting analyses to uncover online antisemitism.

Decoding and Defining Antisemitism

Since 2020, the *Decoding Antisemitism* project, an international and interdisciplinary team of researchers at the Centre for Research on Antisemitism (ZfA) at the Technische Universität Berlin has sought to bring clarity and specificity to the task of identifying antisemitic speech online. Over the course of the project, researchers have developed a series of classification templates, setting out the key identifying characteristics of 46 antisemitic categories. These templates have been employed in empirical in-depth analysis of more than 130,000 comments posted online in response to mainstream media reporting of incidents judged to be potential triggers of antisemitic speech in the UK, Germany and France over the past four years. This book presents the full range of identification

templates used by *Decoding Antisemitism* researchers in their day-to-day work.

The templates have been built upon the basic understanding of anti-semitism set out in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) 'working definition' of antisemitism (IHRA 2016). But as even sympathetic critics of IHRA have argued (Pfahl-Traughber 2021), the practical implementation and use of a basic 'core' definition is fraught with difficulties (Jikeli et al. 2019). It is worth noting here that the IHRA definition was from the start intended as general means of recog-nising the broad outlines of antisemitism, rather than a precise scientific tool. Grappling with the variety, complexity and continual development of antisemitism as it appears online has necessitated both extensive and intensive development of the IHRA definition so that the *Decoding Antisemitism* researchers can accurately classify the different types of antisemitic comments encountered in their research. This process of 'operationalisation' of a basic definition allows for the differentiation of antisemitic and non-antisemitic speech to be made with much greater confidence and certainty.

The question of how antisemitism should be defined is one of the most controversial topics within academic and political life today (Waxman et al. 2022). Much of this debate focuses on the issue of where legiti-mate criticism of the State of Israel crosses over into antisemitism (Julius 2010; Klug 2013; Arnold and Taylor 2019; Ullrich 2019; Gould 2020; Penslar 2022). That this is the central point at stake is made clear when one considers the IHRA definition alongside the rival definitions of antisemitism, particularly the more recent Jerusalem Declaration of Anti-semitism (JDA 2021): aside from those categories related to Israel, when it comes to the 'classic' antisemitic stereotypes (such as EVIL, GREED, POWER/INFLUENCE, CONSPIRACY), there is substantial overlap between the two, with the differences being of degree and not kind. Even when it comes to Israel-related antisemitism, the JDA—in much the same way as IHRA—declares that it is, 'on the face of it,' antisemitic to apply 'the symbols, images and negative stereotypes of classical antisemitism to the State of Israel' (JDA, para B6).

Given this broad agreement, the vast majority of concepts classified as antisemitic in this book would not face dispute from the authors

or signatories of definitions aside from the IHRA. That said, some of the Israel-related concepts here clearly would generate opposition—in particular, the classification of the APARTHEID ANALOGY and related references to the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement as antisemitic. Other points of contention include NAZI and FASCISM ANALOGIES—while IHRA directly references Nazi analogies as a potential form of antisemitism, the JDA omits any mention of either Nazism or fascism, and instead asserts that it is not 'on the face of it' antisemitic 'to compare Israel with other historical cases,' including, presumably the case of Nazi Germany. While the *Decoding Antisemitism* project does take a stance on these debates, the inclusion of these concepts is not, in the first instance, meant as a political intervention. The present work aims to supply a comprehensive map of the range of concepts and topoi which have been identified by existing scientific literature and which feature prominently in online debates. Given that substantial numbers of antisemitism scholars, and Jewish people, do argue that to describe Israel in a generalised and totalising fashion as an 'apartheid state' is a form of antisemitism, the omission of this concept from this guidebook would be a glaring absence. We will therefore present arguments, anchored in existing literature, in favour of its classification as an antisemitic statement.

But its inclusion does not mean that the guide as a whole has no utility for those that dispute the most controversial Israel-related concepts. The structure of the book allows for each entry to be treated as an autonomous concept with its own specific trajectory. Someone who is interested in exploring the historical background and contemporary iterations of canonical antisemitic themes such as the Jewish CONSPIRACY, GREED or HOLOCAUST DENIAL, but who takes a very cautious approach to the idea of the APARTHEID ANALOGY or to the BDS movement being antisemitic (Feldman 2018), will still find valuable resources in this book.

Attentive readers may note that not every historical antisemitic stereotype and topos has been included in this guide. For example, there are no entries for ideas of Jews as 'well-poisoners,' 'god killers' or 'intellectuals,' nor notions of 'Judeo-Bolshevism' or associations of Jews with communism more broadly. Likewise, the stereotype of the 'beautiful' or 'seductive Jewess' is not included here. We have made the decision not

to incorporate these concepts and topoi into our taxonomy due to the fact that we have not or very rarely encountered them over the course of several years of research on online communication. This suggests that such concepts have lost some of the traction they once might have had in the antisemitic imagination, and as such readers of this book are unlikely to encounter them either online or offline. While this is by no means a guarantee that they could not make a return, in light of space restraints, the lack of practical utility for entries on these stereotypes meant we felt they were not essential.

How to Use This Book

This book can be used as a reference guide for the breadth and variety of antisemitic concepts, ideas and stereotypes in frequent use today, particularly (although not exclusively) online. But it can also be put to a much more direct practical use: the reader may have encountered a particular post, comment or statement which they believe carries antisemitic meaning, and may already have an initial suspicion of the kind of antisemitic concept or idea contained in that utterance. The book has been structured in a way that makes it as easy as possible to quickly identify the concepts that may be relevant to the utterance under examination.

Throughout the guide, in accordance with the conventions of cognitive linguistics, each concept is presented in SMALL CAPS. This format is used to highlight phenomena that exist on the mental level and can be reproduced through language. For ease of reference, other linguistic phenomena which have their own chapter in the book—such as INSULTS or DEATH WISHES—are also presented in small caps, as are other, less frequent antisemitic concepts which do not have their own chapter. The book is divided into six main parts, where the listed concepts show a proximity to each other in terms of content. In Part 1, we present those classical or 'canonical' stereotypes—ideas of Jewish OTHERNESS, of Jewish GREED or IMMORALITY—that have long been part of antisemitism and consolidated the construction of difference between a non-Jewish in-group and the Jewish out-group. In Part 2, we deal with the constellation of concepts expressing ideas of JEWISH POWER and

INFLUENCE. The following two parts provide insights into developments of antisemitic discourses after 1945. Part 3 examines what can broadly be termed 'secondary antisemitism'—concepts and ideas that arose in the wake of the Holocaust, particularly—although by no means exclusively—in the German context. This includes ideas which, amongst other things, seek to deny, trivialise, reject responsibility for or blame Jews for the Holocaust. Part 4 brings together another set of post-World War II ideas and stereotypes, including explicit support for Hitler and the idea that Jews (or Israel) enjoy the privilege of a 'free pass' from those in power in compensation for the Holocaust. Part 5 is dedicated to the examination of forms of antisemitism which directly target the legitimacy or existence of the State of Israel, or which radically distort the history and present-day circumstances of Israel in order to demonise it. Finally, Part 6 presents forms of relevant linguistic violence against Jews, which the patterns in the previously discussed parts always ultimately also aim at, or are prefaced by. Some concepts and stereotypes may cross over into more than one part—for example, some of the Israel-related concepts could have been included in the secondary antisemitism part. But our priority here was to clarify the various antisemitic attributions that Israel faces in contemporary antisemitic discourse.

Each entry in the book follows a similar structure, with the aim of guiding readers through the individual deductive steps in decoding explicit and implicit expressions of each category. The chapter begins with a historical and conceptual overview, which briefly sets out the historical genesis and meaning of the concept, stereotype or speech act, and highlights the more important and/or frequent forms it takes today. This is followed by a brief list of key identifying characteristics for the concept. Unless otherwise stated, an utterance is considered to reflect the respective category if it has any one of these characteristics. A statement does not have to be explicitly linked to the Jewish or Israeli identity of the individual, group, institution or state mentioned to be classed as antisemitic. This is particularly so for comments which refer to individuals, groups or institutions which are widely recognised as Jewish (George Soros being a key example here). As a rule of thumb, statements which make specific, concrete, time- or spatially limited claims are less likely to be antisemitic than those which make generalised or essentialised claims,

with no temporal or spatial limitation. This is the case even if those specific claims are factually incorrect: being wrong is not the same as being antisemitic.

Next, each chapter includes a series of numbered explicit and implicit textual examples which express the relevant antisemitic category. The majority of the examples included are authentic web comments which have been identified by the *Decoding Antisemitism* team over the course of the research project. They come from each of the language communities studied—namely, English (predominantly the UK), German, and French. These examples have been anonymised; in accordance with the conventions of cognitive and pragmalinguistics, these comments retain their original spelling, punctuation and grammar, including any errors, inconsistencies or offensive terms. Whenever French or German comments are used to illustrate the text, they have been translated into standard British English. On occasion, it was not possible to identify an authentic comment which expressed a particular aspect of the concept or stereotype. In these cases, we have created an artificial comment which expresses that aspect, to assist future researchers who do come across similar comments online. These artificial comments can be identified by being placed in italics.

Each example (or collection of examples, if they express the same or a very similar meaning) is accompanied by an explanation of how the conclusion of antisemitic content has been reached. These illustrations are intended to support readers in analysing texts themselves with regard to possible antisemitic meanings. Based on the textual examples we present, a certain category of antisemitic communication is clearly demonstrable in each case. This does not mean that a corresponding antisemitic motivation or intent can always be directly inferred—what is at issue here is the meaning expressed by the sentence. The fact that readers can be assisted in detecting antisemitic statements with the help of this guide does not mean, however, that the interpretations contained here are exhaustive: antisemitism is often expressed in highly ambiguous or implicit ways that may still escape the criteria set out here. As such, this book represents a work-in-progress, and readers may well find additional meanings or forms of expression that are, as of yet, not included here.

At the end of each chapter, a sample of non-antisemitic examples or examples in which an antisemitic content cannot be firmly proven is provided. These have been included to support efforts to differentiate non-antisemitic meanings from antisemitic ones. In such cases, where more than one coherent and logical interpretation is possible, statements are to be classified as not antisemitic, in order to give the author the benefit of the doubt.

Very often, a statement or comment included here will contain more than one of the antisemitic categories. The connection of these categories either expresses the associations in the antisemitic imagination, or they are deliberately used as pseudo-arguments to support one other, often by activating their inherent emotional potential. In order to help recognise frequent connections between different concepts and stereotypes, each entry ends with a list of closely-related—although not identical—concepts which appear elsewhere in the book.

The chapters in this book are structured in such a way that readers can not only quickly build up a solid understanding of the different varieties of antisemitism, but also be able to follow the individual deductive steps in the identification of antisemitism. Through the dissemination of these materials, honed through years of on-the-ground engagement with antisemitism as it actually exists online today, readers will be able to identify antisemitism—and thus measure its true extent—with far greater precision and nuance. More than this, our intention is for this book to act as a blueprint for other projects, both within and outside academia, dealing with different forms of hate speech, online as well as offline.

References

Afridi, Mehnaz M. 2023. Muslim Antisemitism: Religion, Politics, and Israel. In *The Routledge History of Antisemitism*, ed. Mark Weitzman, Robert J. Williams, and James Wald, 255–261. London: Routledge.

Arnold, Sina. 2022. *From Occupation to Occupy. Antisemitism and the Contemporary American Left*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Arnold, Sina, and Blair Taylor. 2019. Antisemitism and the Left: Confronting an Invisible Racism. *Journal of Social Justice* 9: 1–33.

Baddiel, David. 2021. *Jews Don't Count*. London: TLS.

Barns, Sarah. 2020. *Platform Urbanism: Negotiating Platform Ecosystems in Connected Cities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Becker, Matthias J., Daniel Allington, Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloé Vincent. 2021. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 2*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15310.

Becker, Matthias J., Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Pia Haupeltshofer, Alexa Krugel, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, and Victor Tschiskale. 2023. *Celebrating Terror: Antisemitism online after the Hamas attacks on Israel, Preliminary Results I. Decoding Antisemitism*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-19143.

Becker, Matthias J., Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Veronika Bundzíková, Alexis Chapelan, Pia Haupeltshofer, Alexa Krugel, Iael Kurjan, Helena Mihaljević, Stefan Munnes, Karolina Placzynta, Milena Pustet, Mohamed Salhi, Marcus Scheiber, and Victor Tschiskale. 2024. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 6*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-19748.

Becker, Matthias J., and Hagen Troschke. 2023. Decoding Implicit Hate Speech: The Example of Antisemitism. In *Challenges and Perspectives of Hate Speech Research*, ed. Christian Strippel, Sünje Paasch-Colberg, Martin Emmer, and Joachim Trebbe. Berlin: Digital Communication Research. https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.20.

Bergmann, Werner. 2016. *Geschichte des Antisemitismus*. München: Beck.

Betzler, Lukas, and Manuel Glittenberg. 2015. *Antisemitismus im deutschen Mediendiskurs: Eine Analyse des Falls Jakob Augstein*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Blank, Grant, and Bianca C. Reisdorf. 2012. The participatory Web: A user perspective on Web 2.0. *Information, Communication & Society* 15 (4): 537–554.

Bolton, Matt, and Frederick Harry Pitts. 2018. *Corbynism: A Critical Approach*. Emerald: Bingley.

Brady, William J., Killian McLoughlin, Tuan N. Doan, and Molly J. Crockett. 2020. How Social Learning Amplifies Moral Outrage Expression in Online Social Networks. *Science Advances* 7 (33). https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abe 5641.

Daniels, Jessie. 2018. The Algorithmic Rise of the "Alt-Right." *Contexts* 17 (1): 60–65.

Ehsan, Rabik. 2020. *Muslim Anti-Semitism in Contemporary Great Britain.* London: Henry Jackson Society.

Feldman, David, ed. 2018. *Boycotts Past and Present: From the American Revolution to the Campaign to Boycott Israel*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fine, Robert, and Philip Spencer. 2018. *Antisemitism on the Left*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Gidley, Ben, Brendan McGeever, and David Feldman. 2020. Labour and Antisemitism: A Crisis Misunderstood. *The Political Quarterly* 91 (2): 413–421.

Gould, Rebecca Ruth. 2020. The IHRA Definition of Antisemitism: Defining Antisemitism by Erasing Palestinians. *The Political Quarterly* 91 (4): 825–831.

Hacohen, Eli. 2010. Digital Hate: Terror, Anti-Semitism and Racism on the Internet. In *Terrorism and the Internet: threats, target groups, deradicalisation strategies*, ed. Hans-Liudger Dienel, Christian Rapp, Yair Sharan, and Niv Ahituv, 3–6. Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Hirsh, David. 2017. *Contemporary Left Antisemitism.* London: Routledge.

Hübscher, Monika, and Sabine von Mering, eds. 2022. *Antisemitism on Social Media.* London: Routledge.

IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). 2016. *Working Definition of Antisemitism.* https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/wor king-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

JDA (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism). 2021. *The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.* https://jerusalemdeclaration.org (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Jikeli, Günther. 2015. Antisemitism in Muslim Communities and Muslim Countries: Debates and Studies of a Complex Issue. *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 62–23 (2): 89–114.

Jikeli, Günther, Damir Cavar, and Daniel Miehling. 2019. Annotating Antisemitic Online Content. Towards an Applicable Definition of Antisemitism. arXiv 2019. https://arxiv.org/abs/1910.01214.

Judaken, Jonathan. 2008. So What's New? Rethinking the 'New Antisemitism' in a Global Age. *Patterns of Prejudice* 42 (4–5): 531–560.

Julius, Anthony. 2010. *Trials of the Diaspora. A History of Anti-Semitism in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kloke, Martin W. 1994. *Israel und die deutsche Linke: Zur Geschichte eines schwierigen Verhältnisses*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen.

Klug, Brian. 2013. Interrogating 'New Anti-Semitism.' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36 (3): 468–482.

Kirchick, James. 2023. The Rise of Black Antisemitism: An All Too Familiar Tension Returns. In *Poisoning the Wells: Antisemitism in Contemporary America*, ed. Corinne E. Blackmer, and Andrew Pessin, 89–99. Boston: Academic Studies Press.

Milanović, Aleksa. 2022. Antisemitism Online: History's Oldest Hatred and New Media Challenges. *Filozofija i društvo/Philosophy and Society* 33 (3): 567–582. https://doi.org/10.2298/FID2203567M.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism.* London: Head of Zeus.

O'Reilly, Tim. 2007. What Is Web 2.0: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software. *International Journal of Digital Economics* 65: 17–37.

Penslar, Derek. 2022. Who's Afraid of Defining Antisemitism? *Antisemitism Studies* 6 (1): 133–145.

Pfahl-Traughber, Armin. 2021. Die "Jerusalemer Erklärung zum Antisemitismus." *haGalil*, 4 April 2021. https://www.hagalil.com/2021/04/jerusalemer-erklaerung (last accessed on 12 April 2023).

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika. 2020. "Antisemitism 2.0"—The spreading of Jew-hatred on the World Wide Web. In *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism. A Multi-Faceted Approach*, ed. Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, 311–338. New York, Boston: De Gruyter.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Simes, Jessica T. 2009. Does Anti-Semitism Among African Americans Simply Reflect Anti-White Sentiment? *The Social Science Journal* 46: 384–389.

Stein, Timo. 2011. *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik: Antizionismus in der deutschen Linken?* Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Topor, Lev. 2019. Dark Hatred: Antisemitism on the Dark Web. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 2 (2): 25–42. https://doi.org/10.26613/jca/2.2.31.

Towner, Terri L., and David A. Dulio. 2011. The Web 2.0 Election: Does the Online Medium Matter? *Journal of Political Marketing* 10 (1–2): 165–188.

Ullrich, Peter. 2019. *Expert Opinion on the "Working Definition of Antisemitism" of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance*. Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung Papers and Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

Waxman, Dov, David Schraub, and Adam Hosein. 2022. Arguing About Antisemitism: Why We Disagree About Antisemitism, and What We Can Do About It. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45 (9): 1803–1824.

Weitzman, Mark, Robert J. Williams, and James Williams, eds. 2023. *The Routledge History of Antisemitism*. London: Routledge.

Wistrich, Robert S. 1992. *Antisemitism. The Longest Hatred*. New York: Pantheon.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2010. *A Lethal Obsession. Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*. New York: Random House.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2011. *From Blood Libel to Boycott. Changing Faces of British Antisemitism*. Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Zappavigna, Michele. 2012. *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How We Use Language to Create Affiliation on the Web*, vol. 6. A&C Black.

Part I

Classic Antisemitism

2

The Other/Foreign

Laura Ascone

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The representation of Jews as FOREIGNERS or STRANGERS—or simply *the* OTHER—constitutes the oldest stereotype on which all antisemitic stereotypes and other concepts are built (Wistrich 2010). The notion of 'otherness' is defined by Staszak (2009) as "the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group […] constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them,' the Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of [its own] identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination" (Staszak 2009: 46; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). The in-group becomes then a "cohesive group that […] provides its members with a sense of identity" that is denied to those

L. Ascone (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

outside (Jandt 2007: 440). The construction of Jews as an out-group—as not belonging, in whatever sense, to an in-group—thus constitutes a form of exclusion from the outset.

Discrimination usually occurs (or can be accompanied) by ascribing negative or stereotyped characteristics to *the other* (Van Dijk 2014) and thereby "serves to comfort the Self in its feeling of superiority" (Staszak 2009: 46). For instance, the stereotype of → Jewish power (Chapter 12), according to which Jews have disproportionate control over (a sector of) society or even the world, implicitly conveys the idea that the in-group is morally superior and their fight against the "oppressor" is justified and necessary. This dichotomic interpretation of the world, where one belongs to either the 'superior' in-group or the stigmatised out-group, and where these two groups diverge with no grey area in between, reinforces one's own position through a simplistic vision of reality (Seca 2003).

While many different groups and peoples have been and are conceptualised as 'the other,' Jews and Judaism can be understood as "the paradigmatic other" (Livak 2010). The movement of Jewish groups and the formation of the Jewish diaspora following the fall of the Second Temple created a dynamic where Jews often lived in close proximity to other groups while retaining their own ethnic, cultural and religious identity. This made Jews a common object for practices of in- and out-group identity formation across centuries. Indeed, the twin questions of Jewish 'belonging' and 'otherness' are deeply woven through the political, cultural and philosophical history of Western and/or Christian societies. They lie at the root of what David Nirenberg (2013) describes as long tradition of 'anti-Judaism,' in which different people in different contexts used the image of 'the Jew' to think about and describe the present, to engage and transform their understanding of the past, and to reshape visions of the future.

The idea of 'the Jew' here is used again and again throughout history as a limit point, the line beyond which one community, history, belief system and understanding of the world, reaches its end—and another, one entirely alien and foreign, begins. But given the shared, deeply interwoven and essentially inseparable histories of Jewish and Christian cultures across history, this distinction is one that has to be actively

constructed and reconstructed again and again. For those who seek to do so, drawing a line between the non-Jewish in-group and the Jewish out-group is a task that requires constant vigilance and an ever-shifting conceptual framework.

For centuries, this work of distinction, of creating non-porous boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish communities, histories and beliefs, took place primarily in the sphere of religion. Throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, 'anti-Judaism' sought to clearly demarcate Christian belief from its Jewish roots and a feared 'Judaising' corruption (Nirenberg 2013: Chapter 5–7). Such efforts also found expression in prohibitions against Jewish participation in multiple areas of economic life and physical separation in ghettos and 'Pales of Settlement' (Wirth 1956; Deutsch 2011).

These forms of exclusion and separation were often presented as being justified by reference to the history of the Jewish diaspora, which was interpreted in terms of an inability, if not outright refusal, of Jews to integrate with the rest of society—despite their attempts to integrate often being rejected. The image of the Jew became synonymous with that of the restless wanderer, a figure who "comes today and goes tomorrow" (Simmel 1950: 203), a group "unwilling to make themselves at home, preferring to remain foreign among their hosts" (Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 34). The legend of the Wandering Jew, compiled on the basis of older legends with non-Jewish protagonists, was first published in 1602 and subsequently saw great success in many editions and translations. It was rooted in theological beliefs: Christian authors asserted that eternal exile and the loss of the homeland was a punishment of the alleged role of the Jewish people in the crucifixion of Christ (Anderson 1965).

In the modern era, this traditional religious mode of anti-Judaism transmogrified into new form. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nationalism emerged across Europe as the dominant paradigm of self-understanding. The establishment of liberal and democratic political structures led to Jewish 'emancipation'—the extension of formal political and economic rights to Jewish populations. But formal legal and political equality gave rise to concepts of *Gemeinschaft*—a romantic bond between people founded not in formal rights but in

shared history, culture and, increasingly, blood. This bond was given political expression through the formation of national collectivities with strictly delimited cultural, ethnic and racial boundaries, often articulated through concepts influenced by the scientific and biological language of the time, such as 'organic,' 'race struggle,' 'natural selection' and 'evolution' (Ben-Israel 1992; Hobsbawm 1992). Jews again found themselves pushed out of these 'national communities,' despite being formal political, legal and civil equals, this time on racial, cultural and ethnic grounds. The 'Dreyfus Affair,' in which French-Jewish military captain Alfred Dreyfus was accused of treason against France, was only the most prominent of controversies around Jewish national belonging during this period (Arendt 1973; Bredin 1986; Wilson 1992, → LIE and DECEIT, Chapter 7).

Regardless of their religious or familial status, Jews were increasingly regarded as belonging to a distinct 'Jewish nation,' living within—yet outside of—the true 'national community'. Jews were regarded as being a separate 'nation within the nation,' or a distinct 'state within the state,' and in this way presented as posing a disintegrative threat to the unity of the "true" nation (Katz 1969). The borderless, and thus abstract and intangible, character of the supposed 'Jewish nation' fed into related notions of Jewish 'rootlessness,' 'cosmopolitanism' and 'Jewish loyalty,' where Jews were portrayed as being more loyal to a general, international Jewish 'interest' than to the interests of the nation-states within which they lived (→ DISLOYALTY, JEWISH LOYALTY, Chapter 9). This sense of an international Jewish interest, devoid of territorial existence, in turn was foundational to antisemitic conspiracy theories of secretive Jewish power and control, exemplified by texts such as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" forgery (Cohn 1966; Bronner 2003).

This idea of Jewish citizens as representing a distinct 'nation within a nation,' and as such posing an insidious, internal threat to the state and community, was central to the ideology of Nazi Germany (Herf 2008). The idea that the "true" nation, or community of nations, needed to be defended from the destructive threat of the 'Jewish nation' by any means necessary was one of the Nazis' justifications for the attempted annihilation of Jewish life within Europe, and eventually the world. Indeed, for the Nazis, Jews constituted an 'anti-nation,' an 'anti-people' without

roots or connection to a land, and who thereby could only survive by living parasitically (→ DEHUMANISATION, Chapter 5) off the work and land of others, destroying their 'host' (→ DISINTEGRATION, Chapter 14) in the process (Holz 2001).

In the wake of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, the question of Jewish OTHERNESS expressed through a distinct Jewish nationality was placed on new terrain. The creation of a new Israeli citizenship, open to any Jewish person if they chose to take it up, transformed the terms of the debate, which now centred on the issue of the legitimacy of the State of Israel, rather than the status of Jews in nation-states outside of Israel. However, older ideas of Jewish DISLOYALTY were adapted to the new context, with Jews outside of Israel now facing accusations of seeking to further the interests of Israel over those of their own state. The flipside of this accusation is the idea, articulated by former US President Donald Trump, that Jews outside of Israel should be more loyal to Israel than is supposedly currently the case (Hirschfeld Davis 2019). In both cases, the core concept in play remains the notion of a Jewish OTHERNESS which is applied above and beyond both non-Israeli Jews' official political and legal citizenship and that of Israeli citizenship.

The concept also finds expression in the idea that Israel and Israelis are FOREIGNERS to the Middle East. Often associated with → COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), through which Israel is compared to past colonial states, this representation also implies that Israel's status is illegitimate and that as such Israeli Jews should be → DENIED THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION (Chapter 34).

In recent years, with the rise of autocratic nationalist movements across Europe and the USA, as well as the well-documented revival of → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), notions of Jewish identity as presenting a disintegrative threat to supposedly cohesive, 'organic' and often racially coded national communities have had a resurgence. Claims of a 'great replacement,' in which an international 'elite' dominated, controlled or made up entirely by Jews, are supposedly seeking to destroy (white) national communities through the importation of (non-white) migrants, have found fertile ground in so-called alt-right political movements and online milieus (Rensmann 2020). Such conspiracy theories,

for all their novelty, ultimately rest on long-standing antisemitic ideas of Jewish 'otherness' and non-belonging. More broadly, recent research has shown that anti-Jewish prejudice within right-wing milieus today (both radical and more mainstream) tends to "share more variance with xenophobia than anti-Black prejudice suggesting that people tend to perceive Jews as national outsiders not as racial others" (Levin et al. 2022).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Constructions of difference:
  - Between Jews and a particular (national, ethnic or cultural) or unspecified in-group;
  - Unspecified in-group; between Jews and humanity.
- Jews/Israel/Israelis being foreign—i.e. with no historical connection—to the Middle East.

Antisemitic Examples[1]

Explicit

(1) *You're not French. You're Jewish and even if you converted, this wouldn't change.*

In this example—which formally presents itself as a general and indisputable truth rather than a simple opinion—being Jewish is presented as an innate and indelible feature that makes participation in a national community or in-group impossible. In line with the ideas of racist antisemitism, and based on an essentialised dichotomy between *them* and *us*,

---

[1] Given that the representation of Jews as the OTHER is the oldest antisemitic stereotype, it is the basis upon which all the other antisemitic concepts are built. It is therefore rare to find—at least in our data—web comments referring to this stereotype alone.

being Jewish is considered here as a characteristic which radically distinguishes Jews from any other citizen. The goal here is to highlight an unbridgeable difference and distance between the two groups.

(2) *I would prefer Soros being in Israel rather than here.*

This example is about a well-known Jewish person and Israel. The connection between the two entities leads to the conclusion that Soros is excluded from the respective in-group (marked with the deixis "here") because of his Jewish identity.

(3) "You're not European go back home, that's not your country!!!"

The explicitly verbalised opposition between the (French, non-Jewish) in-group and the (Jewish) out-group is based on the negation of the *other*'s identity ("you're not European," "that's not your country") and consequently the delegitimisation of the presence of Jews. By addressing a general "you" characterised as non-European, the speaker considers Jews as a monolithic group. In this respect, the dividing line between in-group and out-group is made on the geographical level, namely through the terms "European" and "country," as well as the expression "go back home," which suggests that a spatially or geographically anchored construction of difference must be restored.

(4) "Israel is not a country, it's a colony of people mainly coming from Eastern Europe and the USA."

Unlike the previous examples, where a Jewish identity was acknowledged and opposed to the national in-group, Jews in Israel are DENIED THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION. The commenter justifies this by describing the latter as a colony consisting of people coming from all over the world and, as a consequence, of FOREIGNERS (often referred to as "immigrants"). Israeli Jews are portrayed as not belonging to the region despite the Jewish history of the region and the family ties that already exist since several generations after various immigration phases. While some statements of this sort call on Jews to "go back home," others do not accept Israel as a home of Jewish life.

(5) "Colonial people without land."

This example refers to Israel calling Jews a "colonial people." The traditional charge of the rootless WANDERING JEW ("people without land") fuses with the modern accusations that Israelis are colonisers. With both attributions Jews are denied their belonging to the region.

Implicit

(6) "(((They)))"

This comment resorts to semiotic markers to communicate implicitly the difference construction between in-group and out-group. The anti-semitic nature of this example arises as a result of the three parentheses. These, also known as echoes, are typically used in this particular way to implicitly identify, mock and exclude Jews (Fleishman and Smith 2016). The semiotic highlighting includes all Jews indiscriminately and demarcates them from non-Jews as the very Other.

(7) "having lived in this country for a very long time, probably all their lives, [Zionists] don't understand English irony."

This statement was uttered by the former leader of the British Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn at a 2013 meeting of the Palestinian Return Centre in London (Sugarman 2018). By specifying that he was talking about "Zionists" who live or were born in the United Kingdom—and therefore not Jews in or from Israel—the amalgam between Jews and Zionists is here evident. British Jews are equated with Zionists and at the same time made alien, because the attribution implies that their (political, cultural, etc.) focus is on Israel. Furthermore, he implies that British-Jewish citizens do not have the cultural means to understand "English irony," despite being born and raised in the UK. In so doing, Corbyn implies that British Jews do not belong to the British in-group.

(8) "The Central Council of Jews in Germany should rather pay attention to what is happening in their country."

In this example, any (presupposed) engagement of the Central Council of Jews is openly rejected. According to the writer, this engagement should shift to another country, which, given the clear location of the Central Council within Germany and being uttered in a German context, triggers an apparent contradiction. The fact that "their" country is Israel can be deduced by the reader by drawing on their world knowledge (Israel as a Jewish state), thus mitigating the statement's vagueness. Hence, the commenter claims that an institution representing the Jewish community in Germany should not get involved in this very country, which excludes Jews from the national in-group and also transforms Jews and Israel into one bloc.

(9) *It is remarkable that today, Jews participate in exchange programmes with us Germans.*

The comment, brought up in a German context, contains a construction of difference between Jewish and non-Jewish Germans. It continues the anti-Judaic concept, which culminated in Nazism, that Jews were alien to the German people. This construction—here admittedly with a completely different vocabulary and perspective—still exists today.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(10) *Contrary to Germans, Israelis prefer remaining among themselves.*

At first sight, this comment might appear as an opposition excluding the Jewish community from the in-group. Likewise, this might refer to the antisemitic idea that, being loyal to Israel only, Jews do not want to be integrated in the country they live in. However, as the contrast is between two national groups, it cannot be considered as an opposition between an in-group and an out-group, which would have been the case if Jews were explicitly mentioned.

Related Categories

COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

References

Anderson, George K. 1965. *The Legend of the Wandering Jew*. Providence, RI: Brown University Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt.

Ben-Israel, Hedva, 1992. Nationalism in Historical Perspective. *Journal of International Affairs* 45 (2): 367–397.

Bredin, Jean-Denis. 1986. *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*. New York: Braziller.

Bronner, Stephen Eric. 2003. *A Rumor About the Jews: Reflections on Antisemitism and the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohn, Norman. 1966. *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elder of Zion*, 32–36. New York: Harper & Row.

Deutsch, Nathaniel. 2011. *The Jewish dark continent: Life and death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fleishman, Cooper, and Anthony Smith. 2016. (((Echoes))), Exposed: The Secret Symbol Neo-Nazis Use to Target Jews Online [archive]. *Mic*, 1 June 2016.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2008. *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hirschfeld Davis, Julia. 2019. Trump Accuses Jewish Democrats of 'Great Disloyalty'. *New York Times*, August 20. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/20/us/politics/trump-jewish-voters.html (last accessed on 15 June 2023).

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1992. *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holz, Klaus, 2001. Nationaler Antisemitismus. *Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.

Jandt, Fred E. 2007. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*, 5th ed. Thousand Oakes, CA: Sage.

Katz, Jacob. 1969. "A State Within a State." The History of an Anti-Semitic Slogan. *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings* IV (3).

Levin, Ines, Alexandra Filindra and Jeffrey Kopstein. 2022. Validating a Measure of Antisemitism and Testing it Against Support for QAnon and Voting for Trump in 2020. SSRN. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4104143 (last accessed on 15 November 2022).

Livak, Leonid. 2010. *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism.* London: Head of Zeus.

Reisigl, Martin, and Ruth Wodak. 2001. *Discourse and Discrimination.* London: Routledge.

Rensmann, Lars. 2020. The Contemporary Globalization of Political Anti-semitism: Three Political Spaces and the Global Mainstreaming of the "Jewish Question" in the Twenty-First Century. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 3 (1): 83–108.

Seca, Jean-Marie, 2003. Stéréotype. In *Dictionnaire de l'altérité et des relations interculturelles*, ed. Gilles Ferréol and Guy Jucquois, 330–332. Paris: Armand Colin.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press.

Simmel, Georg. 1950. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press.

Staszak, Jean-François. 2009. Other/Otherness. In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, ed. Rob Kitchin and Nigel Thrift, 46–47. Oxford: Elsevier.

Sugarman, Daniel. 2018. Jeremy Corbyn: 'Zionists' Have 'No Sense of English Irony.' *Jewish Chronicle*, August 23. https://www.thejc.com/news/uk/jeremy-corbyn-zionists-have-no-sense-of-english-irony-1.468795 (last accessed on 20 June 2023).

Van Dijk, Teun A. 2014. Discourse, Cognition, Society. In *The Discourse Studies Reader: Main Currents in Theory and Analysis*, ed. Johannes Anger-muller, Dominique Maingueneau and Ruth Wodak, 388–399. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Wilson, Stephen. 1992. *Ideology and Experience: Anti-Semitism in France at the Time of the Dreyfus Affair*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Wirth, Louis. 1956. *The Ghetto*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2010. *A Lethal Obsession: Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*. New York: Random House.

3

Evil/The Devil

Matthew Bolton

3.1 Evil

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The alleged EVIL or malicious nature of Jews, Judaism and/or Jewish institutions is one of the most deeply rooted and enduring antisemitic stereotypes (Smith 1996). Here, Jews are depicted as posing a constant, large-scale, destructive—even cosmic or eschatological—threat posed to a specific society, or all humankind. The historic roots of this stereotype lie in the religious rivalry between Judaism and early Christianity, in which advocates of the latter began to depict Jews as the murderers of Jesus, in league with the Devil, presented Judas as a betrayer/traitor whose actions were linked to an innate Jewish EVIL, and portrayed Jews as seeking to prevent world salvation through Christ (Maccoby 1992;

M. Bolton (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

Nirenberg 2013). In the Middle Ages, these ideas found literary and artistic expression in representations of Jews as monstrous, demonic or Satanic creatures (Wistrich 2013, → THE DEVIL, Chapter 3.2, and → DEHUMANISATION, Chapter 5). Such stereotypes would later emerge—in both verbal and visual forms—as a central aspect of modern anti-Jewish conspiracy theories, including Nazi propaganda (Herf 2008, → POWER, Chapter 12), discernible within depictions of Jews as the wreakers of either capitalist or communist destruction, purveyors of immorality or sexual predators. Portrayals of the existence of Israel (or any Jewish state) as posing a threat to world peace or the community of nation-states as such, or conceptions of the Israel-Palestine conflict as being a cosmological battle between good and evil also fall into this category.

What sets the EVIL stereotype apart from justified accusations of law-breaking or immorality is one or more types of *essentialisation* and *generalisation*. An essentialising attribution is where an individual or group is assigned a set of supposedly "'natural,' observable, physical characteristics, mental capabilities and patterns of behaviour" that "separate[s] and define[s]" that individual or group from other individuals or groups (Dein 2006: 68). The characteristics presented as being innate can be based in reality—i.e. referring to something that actually has happened at some point in time—or be an exaggerated or wholly false depiction. In either case, rather than the action being the result of chance, an individual's decision or personality, related to the particular context in which the action takes place, or a possible mistake or accident, they are instead regarded as representing the timeless, unchanging 'essence' of the person as a member of a group. In essentialising anti-semitic ascriptions of EVIL, a particular action or form of behaviour by a Jewish individual, group or state is immediately and simplisti-cally explained by reference to an innate maliciousness, or the intent to commit EVIL for evil's sake, which is in turn understood as representing the essential core of the individual or group as Jewish. If, for example, a person who happened to be Jewish committed a serious crime, an essen-tialising attribution would be one in which that crime was presented (explicitly or implicitly) as being the inevitable expression of the indi-vidual's innately EVIL 'Jewish' character. Conversely, if a public figure

who is widely known to be Jewish, such as the Hungarian-American investor George Soros, is described as being 'the EVIL of the world,' then that depiction can be interpreted as one in which the individual manifests an underlying, essential Jewish EVIL. Here, Soros' supposed EVIL can be recognised as specifically Jewish due to its globe-spanning extension, and the position he holds in the contemporary antisemitic imaginary.

A *generalising* antisemitic attribution is one in which the particular words or actions of an individual or group—either confected or real—are extended and projected onto the whole Jewish people, nation or state, attributing to them a universal and atemporal character. As with essentialisation, while the target of the attribution, whether an individual, group or institution, should be Jewish, or perceived to be Jewish, for this form of generalisation to be classed as antisemitic, the Jewish nature of the EVIL need not be explicitly specified in the utterance. Non-Jewish targets can be subject to antisemitic claims of EVIL if their actions are explicitly described in terms of a specifically Jewish EVIL. If an utterance lacks sufficient markers of such essentialisation or generalisation or contains details tying it to a more specific context, it should not be categorised as antisemitic, without further infomation or context.

Today, allegations of an EVIL Jewish character are frequently attached onto accusations of Israeli human rights violations, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity and the bombing of hospitals, schools and children, or more generally the charge of threatening world peace (Sharansky 2005; Rosenfeld and Marcus 2015; Fine and Spencer 2018). The extent to which such depictions of Israel can be considered to be applications of the concept of EVIL has sparked some of the fiercest debates within both academic antisemitism studies and broader political spheres and lies at the centre of the definitional dispute between advocates of IHRA (2016) and the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA 2021). There is broad agreement that condemnations of particular Israeli policies or military actions as 'EVIL' should not automatically be classified as antisemitic: what must be considered is the extent to which such condemnations make generalising or essentialising ascriptions, so that those policies or actions are depicted as manifestations of an essential EVIL. A common tendency within Israel-related ascriptions of EVIL (and indeed a range of other Israel-related antisemitic concepts,

such as → NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1, and → DISINTEGRATION, Chapter 14) is to deny outright the existence of a conflict between Israel and Hamas, Fatah, or other Palestinian groups (or formerly the PLO), and the erasure or radical distortion of the historical circumstances of the founding of Israel, the wars of 1967 and 1973, and the right of Israel to defend itself such as any other nation-state (Linfield 2021). Similarly, more recent escalation phases of the conflict (such as those of 2014, May 2021 and the war following the Hamas atrocities of 7 October 2023) are attributed entirely to Israeli aggression. Rather than acknowledging the, at times, aggressive and offensive parts played by Arab states and Palestinian militants in the conflict, both historically and today, all violence and military confrontations between the two parties are attributed to an inherent Israeli or Jewish desire for, or delight in, the infliction of death and destruction.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Arguing that 'EVIL' is a constitutive or innate characteristic of Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism as such;
- Jews/Israelis/Israel/Zionism are depicted as representing EVIL on a large or global scale, or over large/unspecified amounts of time;
- EVIL as a totalising description/attribution tied to Israel/Jewishness as opposed to a description of a particular practice/action, gross exaggeration of specific incidents, imputing an EVIL character in their actions or results (may require background knowledge of the event in question);
- Ascription of EVIL intent to specific incidents:

  – Israel/Jews have deliberately—or for no other reason than EVIL desires—targeted vulnerable groups, including schools, hospitals, children, women, withholding healthcare, etc.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Jews are bad guys."

A generic statement—'bad guys'—routinely used for the expression of prejudice is here presented as a totalising, essentialising and generalised ascription of 'bad'ness—and thus EVIL—to all Jews as such. Jews are innately bad (essentialisation); there is no attempt to differentiate between the actions or words of a particular person and Jews as a whole, nor any other supposed characteristic of Jews offered.

(2) "Evil \$oros hands."

Direct ascription of innate EVIL to a public figure, George Soros, whose Jewish background is well known. The use of a pun—using a dollar sign instead of the 'S'—possibly implies an essentialising association of Soros with → GREED (Chapter 11), and/or financial and economic POWER. On its own, the use of the dollar sign might merely simply refer to Soros's wealth and career as an investor, rather than his Jewishness. But the interpretation can lean towards antisemitism when combined with both 'EVIL' and the metaphoric focus on 'hands,' which again implies a grasping, greedy character and perhaps implicitly references the scheming hands in the antisemitic 'happy merchant' meme (ADL 2022; Andermann and Zizek 2022, → GREED, Chapter 11).

(3) "here's some evidence of Zionist barbarism. Israel is the only country in the world where murdering children and pregnant women is legal and celebrated."

The attribution of "Zionist barbarism" is, while distasteful, a claim that could be made of any state or military force. As such, without further context, it would not be classed as antisemitism. However, the second sentence of the comment asserts that Israel should be distinguished from every other state in the world by the "legality" and "celebration" of the "murder" of classical figures of vulnerability and/or innocence—"children and pregnant women." Here Israel and Israelis are accused of not

only taking joy in death and destruction in general, but joy in the deaths of children and the bearers of children in particular ($\rightarrow$ BLOOD LIBEL, Chapter 4). A further implication is that, given these particular deaths cause such "celebration" in Israel, Israel deliberately targets the most vulnerable in order to ensure opportunities for this "celebration"—a clear ascription of innately EVIL intent and desires.

(4) "I hope more rockets are coming every time you kill a palestinian..you dont have God..no god wants you and your people as slaves..you guys deserve nothing good."

This statement begins by wishing for revenge rocket attacks on Israeli civilians in exchange for the deaths of Palestinians, a statement which in itself should not be categorised as antisemitic, as, while distasteful, it expresses a generic statement of support for one side of the conflict. But the statement goes on to declare that "you"—here Jews as such—are a godless people, forsaken by God to the extent that Jews are not even fit for a role as slaves. As the living embodiment of a God-less, and thus EVIL, state, the Jews "deserve nothing good"—a form of a $\rightarrow$ CURSE (Chapter 40), in that it is an outcome that is desired.

(5) "is that your justification to kill kids? is that how you sleep better at night. the world's suffering started from here since the 40s."

This statement is framed around a rhetorical question, in which the accusation that Israel deliberately "kill[s] kids"—a possible ascription of BLOOD LIBEL—is presupposed, needing no further explication. This presupposition is so strong that the focus of the statement is not on the killing of children at all, but rather the previous commenter's supposed "justification" for the killing which is assumed. The second part of the statement activates the EVIL concept in explicit terms: by claiming that the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948—which from the co-text can be inferred from the spatial deixis "here"—was the starting point for "the world's suffering." By filling this semantic gap, Israel is directly depicted as a threat to world peace, the principal source of EVIL within human existence today.

(6) "The Israelian government are the SCOURGE of the earth."

Despite this statement specifying the "Israelian government" instead of the state of Israel or Jews as such, its depiction of that government as the "SCOURGE of the earth," a conventionalised metaphor, positions it as the primary source of suffering and punishment on the planet, emphasised by the use of capital letters. Presenting the Israeli government in this dramatic fashion calls upon the whole repertoire of historical and religious ascriptions of the eschatological threat supposedly posed to the world, to humanity or to salvation by the EVIL of Jewish existence or behaviour, and as such the statement should be classed as antisemitic.

(7) *Israel kills thousands of children and innocent people every year*.

In this statement, the number of people supposedly killed by Israel across the whole of its existence is grossly exaggerated, again with a focus on the killing of children—such an inflated figure cannot be regarded as mere hyperbole or an error, but is expressed only in order to accuse Israel of a generalised EVIL.

Implicit

(8) "Emperor Palatine lived a long life I'm afraid"

Here the web user responds to a video about George Soros by making an allusion to Emperor Palpatine, a character in the *Star Wars* film series. Palpatine is an all-powerful EVIL force in the films, perpetually seeking to destroy the Jedi Order, the heroic protagonists of the series. By alluding to this fictional character in a discussion about Soros, the user implicitly activates the concept of EVIL by equating Soros's supposed influence and actions with Palpatine's dark power and destructive intentions. The reference to the longevity of Palpatine in this context can be read as an indirect → DEATH WISH (Chapter 41) against Soros, in that the user implies that it would be better for the world if Soros was dead, and sooner rather than later.

(9) "If [Soros] is against it, it is a good thing for the common person."

(10) "the exact opposite of [Soros'] opinion is the best choice for everyone else."

By means of a conditional structure typically reserved for general truths or laws of science, a commenter implies in (9) that the thoughts and actions of George Soros are to be evaluated negatively by every other human being. This means that a dichotomy between Soros and the rest of humanity is set up here in a seemingly harmless form. The grammatical form is a supra-temporal, generalising present tense, whereby a fixed, durative characteristic of Soros is communicated by means of this insinuation. (10) conveys a very similar meaning, suggesting that Soros's position or interests on any topic are diametrically opposed to 'everyone else[s].'

(11) "Soros, Zuckerberg, all good hearted Christian names. They want you to believe that the meek shall inherit the earth."

Since it is common knowledge both Soros and Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg are Jewish, the reader can infer that irony is applied here. But even without this obvious misattribution of Christian identity to Soros and Zuckerberg, the hidden meaning can be accessed by means of knowledge of the central position of Jesus's words from the 'Sermon on the Mount' within Christian theology. By means of this indirect speech act, in which Christians are equated with "goodhearted" and "meek," the user implicitly projects the stereotype of EVIL, but also of → DECEIT (Chapter 7) ("[t]hey want you to believe") and CONSPIRACY THEORIES onto Jews (Chapter 13).[1]

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) "Re Soros: He literally ruined your currency and screwed your country and yet here you are defending him."

---

[1] For the discussion of more examples of the EVIL stereotype applied to Soros see also Becker and Troschke (2022).

Here, an assertion is made about George Soros which, if used in relation to an ordinary Jewish person, can quickly be understood as an attribution of EVIL intent, and thus antisemitic. However, given his actual financial status and career as an investor, when explicitly directed against Soros the case is different. The latter is accused of "ruin[ing]" a currency—in this case the British pound—and "screw[ing]" a country (the UK). If this accusation was generalised, so that Soros was accused of seeking to ruin all currencies and "screw" all countries, this would be an essentialising claim which could constitute a mode of the EVIL stereotype. However, by linking this claim to a specific, time-limited incident—the run on the British pound in the 1992 Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis, in which Soros did indeed 'bet against' the pound—it refers not to an essentialised tendency but a particular, concrete action. Such critiques of specific actions should not be categorised as antisemitic, unless they are elevated into general ascriptions of innate evil.

As noted above, the use of the EVIL stereotype in discussions about the State of Israel, its people or the actions of its government is one of the most controversial issues in current debates about defining antisemitism. These ascriptions thus need to be carefully distinguished from legitimate or even exaggerated criticism of any particular governmental or military policy or action. Statements such as the following, which clearly betrays an anti-Israel impulse but which focuses on particular incidents, should not be categorised as antisemitic (as long as they do not contain the kinds of gross exaggeration discussed above):

(13) "If Israel is seen as a force for peace, I'm a duck. Remember how it attempted to justify dropping a one tonne bomb on a residential block of flats which killed 14 people, including many children, on the grounds that a member of Hamas lived there?"

The commenter cites a specific example of an Israeli attack which allegedly destroyed a "residential block of flats" and "killed 14 people," including "many children." Despite the fact that this supposedly factual statement is preceded by the claim that Israel is not a "force for peace," no aspect makes an essentialising or totalising claim about Israel. The accusation is time-limited and contains specific details and so, even if these details may be contested, it does not contend that this incident

represents an innate characteristic of Israel or Jews as such. Therefore, it is not antisemitic.

Difficult Cases in Relation to Israel

Determining the difference between antisemitic and non-antisemitic statements is a particularly difficult task when certain terms are used which are not specific to Israel or Jews but are rather frequently articulated in—often extremely emotional—denunciations of war, bombing and political conflicts in general. The line between antisemitic and non-antisemitic use of these terms cannot rest solely on the legal accuracy of any particular ascription—describing a single incident as a 'war crime,' for example, even if it does not legally or technically meet the criteria for such usage, cannot be classed as antisemitic without further context. As a rule, however, when these terms are used to denounce or demonise Israel, its people, government or supporters in an essentialising, generalised manner, with no temporal or spatial limit, then it can, taking context into account, be classed as antisemitic.

War Crimes

The accusation that a certain military action by a state constitutes a 'war crime' is one frequently levelled at any number of states, with varying levels of justification. Therefore, to accuse Israel of committing a singular or succession of war crimes does not necessarily fall into the conceptual category of EVIL and is thus not necessarily antisemitic. This is particularly so when the accusation is directly connected to a specific, time-limited incident or escalation phase of the Middle East conflict—even if the description of an incident constituting a war crime is wrong or exaggerated.

> (14) *That attack on Gaza looks like a war crime to me.*

However, if the accusation of Israeli war crimes is generalised, with no time-limit, so that Israel is depicted as being 'forever committing war

crimes' or 'a state that exists to commit war crimes,' this would be anti-semitic. Similarly, if a specific, time-limited event or phase ascribed the status of a 'war crime' is presented as being an example of Israel's innate character, then this is also antisemitic:

(15) "Arab–Israeli conflict? LOLFinancial Times doing propaganda for their masters. Israel has been committing war crimes since 1948 and needed to be brought to justice at The Hague."

Here Israel is accused of perpetually committing war crimes from the moment of its founding, acts which are indirectly equated—by means of reference to the International Criminal Court at "The Hague"—with genocidal violence. This temporally unlimited attribution is intensified by the denial of the term "conflict" to describe the situation in the Middle East through the use of "LOL," with the implication that all violence is the responsibility of Israel. The notion that the Financial Times is "doing propaganda for their masters" activates the POWER stereotype, with Jews depicted as controlling the media.

Massacre

As with 'war crimes,' the description of military actions as a 'massacre' is a frequently used term in highly emotional discourse about conflicts and war in general. Again, in the context of Israel, it is not an immediate flag for antisemitism, even if the claim is empirically wrong. If the use of the term 'massacre' refers to a specific, time-limited historical event, the character of which is genuinely disputed, this should not be classed as antisemitic without further evidence. For example, depictions of the events at Deir Yassin during the 1948 Jewish-Arab war as a 'massacre' may be disputed but are not antisemitic.

(16) *Israel massacred civilians when it was founded, I don't care what you say*.

The word itself carries different resonances in different language communities, and this linguistic context should be taken into account—in an English or UK context, it is a common, if often exaggerated, marker

of generic strong condemnation; in a German context it evokes a more specific history, including potential Nazi references. With regard to Israel, if the accusation of committing 'massacres' is made on a generalised and essentialised basis—so that Israel is defined or constituted by a desire for or innate propensity for massacres—then this does fall into the category of EVIL and is antisemitic. If the accusation of an Israeli massacre, when attached to a specific, time-limited incident, is not just empirically wrong but clearly constitutes a gross exaggeration of the actual event—the judgement of such exaggeration requiring both general contextual 'world knowledge' and specific contextual knowledge of the discussion under examination—then this is antisemitic. The following statement, for example, was posted in response to reports of the May 2021 escalation phase in the conflict, which, even apart from the accusation of → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32), grossly exaggerates the events to such an extent that it moves beyond error to an antisemitic attribution:

(17) "Fcuk the headlines […] This was open genocide - A daylight massacre."

Ethnic Cleansing

Judgement on whether claims that Israel has, is or intends to conduct a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' are antisemitic rests again on whether this campaign is presented as being innate to or constitutive of the state as a whole. Given that a claim of ethnic cleansing presupposes an agreed plan to pursue such a goal, there is less leeway of interpretation than for other claims like 'war crimes' or 'massacre.' If the accusation of 'ethnic cleansing' is attached to a specific, time-limited incident in which the claim may have some historical accuracy—such as elements of the 1948 Jewish-Arab war or certain events around the establishment of Jewish settlements in the West Bank—then, even if the claim is exaggerated or empirically wrong, it should not be classed as antisemitic without further context.

(18) *Like a lot of states, Israel was founded through a programme of ethnic cleansing, what else can you call it?*

If, however, the claim of 'ethnic cleansing' is generalised, and with no time-limit, so that Israel is depicted as being 'forever committing ethnic cleansing' or that the *purpose* of the state is to ethnically cleanse the region, this does fall into the category of EVIL and is antisemitic. Similarly, if a specific, time-limited incident is presented as being part of a longstanding plan to ethnically cleanse the region, or as a manifestation of the essential, generalised nature of the state of Israel, then this is antisemitic:

> (19) "You'll have to excuse the people of that region if (at the latest count 95%) never accept this ethnic cleansing colony made up of people who believe in the fascist ideology of Zionism in their midst."

In this statement, Israel is depicted as an "ethnic cleansing colony," founded on "fascist ideology." Ethnic cleansing here is not an accusation attached to a particular action, time-period or government: nor is it an accusation of a state committing an act of ethnic cleansing (in such a way that the state and the act are held as distinct entities). Rather "ethnic cleansing" is presented as comprising the essential identity of the so-called "colony," thereby denying Israel of its status as a legitimate state as such.

Crimes Against Humanity

Like 'war crimes' and 'massacre,' in English language communities the concept of 'crimes against humanity' is often used loosely, as a means of expressing outrage and condemnation. Even if the accusation of Israel committing a 'crime against humanity,' with a reference to a specific incident, is exaggerated and inaccurate, this does not, in itself, mean that it is antisemitic.

> (20) *They bombed a populated area, that's a crime against humanity.*

If, however, as in the following example, the accusation is generalised, with no time-limit—so that Israel's existence as such, or its actions ever since its founding are depicted as being a permanent 'crime against humanity'—this is included in the EVIL category and is antisemitic:

(21) *Israhell is a crime against humanity!*

'Crimes against humanity' is often used by commenters interchange-ably with 'genocide.' In technical legal terms, the difference between the two is that a 'crime against humanity' is an attack on civilians during an armed conflict, and 'genocide' an act with the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such," and not limited to a time of war (Mettraux 2016: Chapter 26). If the context indicates the commenter means to accuse Israel of committing genocide—such as asserting that Israel is 'wiping out' or seeking the 'total destruction' of Palestinians—this falls into the GENOCIDE category, even if it is explicitly referred to as a 'crime against humanity.' If 'crime against humanity' is used as a means of making an analogy with the Nazis or World War II, this should be categorised as NAZI ANALOGY.

Israeli Bombing of Schools, Hospitals, Children

It is not antisemitic to draw reference to and strongly condemn any specific military attacks by Israel which lead to the deaths of civil-ians, including children, or result in destroyed or damaged civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. This is the case even if the description of a particular incident is, within reason, wrong or exaggerated (a gross exaggeration should be considered as antisemitic).

(22) *They bombed a hospital. I don't care what they were trying to do, that is never acceptable.*

However, if the accusation is generalised, with no time-limit, so that Israel is depicted as deliberating targeting schools and hospitals and so on due to an innate characteristic of the state as such, this does fall into the category of EVIL and is antisemitic:

(23) *Israel has always targeted schools and hospitals.*

If a specific incident is presented as being an example of Israel's innate character, this is also antisemitic. If the killing of children is singled out and presented as deliberate and/or a generalised, innate characteristic of

Israel as a state, this should be categorised as → CHILD MURDER/BLOOD LIBEL (Chapter 4).

Related Categories

THE DEVIL (Chapter 3.2), DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34), BLOOD LIBEL/CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4), DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31).

3.2 The Devil

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Before the rise of Christianity, antipathy towards Jewish communities tended to be just one more expression of a general xenophobia towards outsider groups: "pagans rarely engaged in derisive polemics designed to set the Jews apart as an inherently wicked nation […] pagan hostility to Jews did not derive from a theological worldview" (Perry and Schweitzer 2002: 75). The associations of Jews with the Devil, with demons and with a theological hell that emerged from early Christianity were thus a novel development in the history of anti-Judaism (for a general account of the uses of images of the Devil to 'other' out-groups, including Jews, see Befu 1999). Sources for the demonisation or "diabolisation" of Jews (ibid.: 73) can be found in the scriptures of the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is reported as describing his fellow Jews as "the children of your father the devil, and you love to do the evil things he does" (John 8:44, for discussion of this verse, see Reinhartz 2020). The guilt that the Gospel of Matthew has the Jews take on themselves for the crucifixion of Jesus—"His blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25)—serves of further proof of the Jews "love" for the "evil things" of the Devil and makes a connection between the diabolic nature of the Jews and the idea that Jews committed DEICIDE, the killing of God. Early Christian leaders and theologians picked up this thread. Gregory

of Nyssa contended that Jews are "confederates of the devil, offspring of vipers, […] enemies of all that is good," while for Saint Jerome, Jews came "from the synagogue of Satan," a synagogue which was at once "a brothel, a den of vice, the Devil's refuge, Satan's fortress" (both quoted in Patterson 2015: 69). But the archetypal image of the "demonic Jew" was "born of a combination of cultural and historical factors peculiar to Christian Europe in the later Middle Ages" (Trachtenberg 1983: 6).

What was portrayed as the Jews' stubborn refusal to abandon their faith and accept Jesus as the Messiah continued to motivate Christian anti-Judaism throughout the medieval and early-modern periods. It was argued that the Jews did in fact recognise Jesus as the Messiah, and it was precisely for this reason that they had to kill him—because they were in league with the Devil. The era of the Crusades and the Inquisition, marked by the rise of Islam and the spread of various heresies, threatened the security of the Medieval church. Jews, represented as the "most notoriously 'heretical' and anti-Christian force in Europe," (ibid.: 11) living in the midst of a Christian political system that felt itself to be newly vulnerable, became easy targets for a new form of religious fanaticism. The popular literature of the Middle Ages was dominated by "mystery, miracle, and morality plays, chronicle and legends, poems, folk tales, and folk songs" painting Jews as "the fount of evil," (ibid.: 12) the killers of Christ, and set upon the insidious destruction of the Church and its followers. Images of Jews with horns or a forked tail were commonplace. These ideas and images became entwined with notions of Jewish → GREED (Chapter 11), DECEIT (Chapter 7) and accusations of → BLOOD LIBEL (Chapter 4). They were evoked and extended during the Reformation, with leading figures such as Martin Luther returning to the old image of Jews as the Devil's children and synagogues as "den[s] of devils" (for Luther's anti-Judaism, see Kaufman 2016). They remained a feature of modern antisemitism, despite the ostensible shift from theological anti-Judaism to new racial or biological antisemitism. Depictions of the State of Israel or Israeli politicians and public figures as Satanic or demonic, both linguistic and visual, remain present within elements of anti-Zionist discourse.

Indeed, in recent years, it has been argued that there has been a revival of religious antisemitism, arising from multiple, diverse sources,

united by the idea of Jews as Devils, or in league with the Devil. In 2018, "the perpetrator of the most violent antisemitic act in the history of the United States to date, the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh…that left 11 Jews dead, referr[ed] to them as 'the children of Satan'" in his online forum posts, which combined racial white supremacist antisemitism with religious anti-Judaism (Jikeli 2020). In December 2019, the perpetrators of two violent attacks on Jews in New Jersey and New York professed sympathies with the Black Hebrew Israelites, "a group of antisemitic sects that believe that they are the true descendants of the ancient Israelites and that non-Black Jews are imposters" (ibid.: 3). Some Black Hebrew Israelites groups "believe that Jews deserve only death or slavery," with their anti-Jewish rhetoric couched in apocalyptic religious terms (ibid.: 3). There is some crossover between Black Hebrew Israelite ideology and that of some parts of the Black Muslim movement, for whom Jews are considered 'the agents of Satan', the purveyors of EVIL alongside the 'white devils' (Norwood and Pollack 2020).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Any association or description of Jews, Israel, Israelis or Zionism with the Devil/Antichrist/Satan:
  - Any association or description of Jews, Israel, Israelis or Zionism with hell—understood as a place created by Jews which constitutes a hell for others, the world or humanity as such, from where evil emanates;
- Claims that Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus or God should be categorised as DEICIDE.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Free Palestine from the devil of Zionism"

This statement straightforwardly describes Zionism (and by extension the State of Israel) as a "devil," from which Palestine should be liberated. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is thus elevated from the historical level of competing national and territorial claims to an eschatological level, with Zionism/Israel as the theological force of EVIL and "Palestine" the heroic protagonist embodying universal justice.

(2) "How the abused became the abusers, may Palestine be free from the devils own people of israhell."

Here the population of Israel—redefined and demonised as "Israhell," a play on words frequently found within online comments discussing Israel (discussed further below)—is explicitly described as "the devils own people," a clear reworking (consciously or not) of depictions of Jews as children of the Devil found in the New Testament and early and medieval Christian discourse. This reference to Israelis is preceded by a statement activating a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL, with the once "abused" Jews now becoming "the abusers."

(3) "Unfortunately bbc and other media they don't inform people they hide the reality as they hiding reality of Israel killing peoples of Palestine It's called Sacrificing for devil."

In this statement, the media are conceptualised as subordinates of the devil ($\rightarrow$ POWER, Chapter 12), whereby the latter can be inferred from the direct co-text, which speaks of "Israeli murder of the peoples of Palestine" (EVIL and $\rightarrow$ GENOCIDE, Chapter 32). By putting the text segments together, a diabolical picture is drawn of the allegedly genocidal state of Israel, which benefits from the blind obedience of the media.

(4) "If you support Israel….you enjoy the consequences..may God remainds you taking the side of devil one day."

This statement expresses an indirect → THREAT (Chapter 39) to all those who "support Israel": there will be consequences, presumably divinely ordered, "one day" for "taking the side of devil." Support for Israel is thereby directly conflated with support for the Devil.

   (5) "We are the real Israelites, not those devils."

Here Jews are portrayed as fraudulent imposters, who have illicitly and illegitimately taken the role of God's 'chosen people' from the 'true' Israelites. Drawing on ideologies found within some Black Hebrew Israelite groupuscules, and occasionally extreme Christian sects, the statement then describes the fraudulent Israelites as "devils," explicitly invoking the association of Jews and Satanic power.

   (6) "certainly the devils creature bred from the west"

This example relies on additional context from the thread to fully interpret. From the surrounding discussion, it becomes apparent that the term "devils creature" is directed towards the State of Israel. This identification of Israel with the Devil is accompanied by the claim that it has been "bred"—another animalistic term, along with "creature," evoking religious images of demonic beasts—by "the West." This could either mean that the historical developments that led to Israel's formation are the responsibility of "the West"—presumably Europe—or that Jews have no right to be in the Middle East, as they are "from the West." The former reading would not be antisemitic, but the latter indicates a DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). However, given that it is not possible to unequivocally determine the meaning here, the antisemitic classification of this statement must rest solely on the reference to the Devil.

Implicit

   (7) "You got the wrong spelling Israhell."
   (8) "Israhell is a Criminal State."

Both comments here use a common wordplay to contend that Israel should be spelt "Israhell," implicating depicting Israel as a hell on earth, a place from which EVIL emanates, and that, accordingly, should not exist. The second statement adds to this the accusation that "Israhell" is a "criminal state," and therefore—if its hellish character were not enough—its existence is illegal and illegitimate (DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, Chapter 34).

(9) "Democracy State? Or DEMON CRAZY State!?"

This commenter responds to a previous claim that Israel is a democracy by making a play on the word 'democracy' by altering "Democracy State," to read "DEMON CRAZY State." Capital letters and an exclamation mark emphasise the link between Israel and demonic power. The use of two rhetorical questions serves to give the statement an implicit structure.

(10) "Satanyahu's 'caretaker' government."

This statement falls back on a composed word, a pun, by means of which Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli prime minister on multiple occasions, is portrayed as the devil with little rhetorical effort and to great recipient effect.

Non-antisemitic Examples

Generic references to the Devil or devils, even if they appear in online discussions of Jewish individuals, groups or the State of Israel, should not be treated as antisemitic without further context or information:

(11) Devils exist everywhere.
(12) The world is controlled by devilish people.

In (11), the comment contends that a demonic presence can be perceived everywhere, and there is therefore no specific connection made between Jews or Israel and the Devil. Statement (12) carries echoes of →

CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13) and potentially antisemitic depictions of capitalism (→ ASSOCIATION WITH CAPITALISM, Chapter 11.3), but without further specification of the Jewish identity of such 'devilish people,' the comment cannot be categorised as antisemitic.

Related Categories

BLOOD LIBEL/CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14), TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2022. The Happy Merchant. https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/happy-merchant (last accessed on 03 December 2022).

Andermann, Hendrik-Zoltán and Boris Zizek. 2022. Reconstructing an Antisemitic Meme on Social Media through Objective Hermeneutics. In *Antisemitism on Social Media*, ed. Monika Hübscher and Sabine von Mering, 151–-166. Abingdon: Routledge.

Becker, Matthias J., and Hagen Troschke. 2022. How Users of British Media Websites Make a Bogeyman of George Soros. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 5 (1): 49–68.

Befu, Harumi. 1999. Demonising the "Other." In *Demonising the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert Wistrich, 17–30. London: Routledge.

Dein, Simon. 2006. Race, Culture and Ethnicity in Minority Research: A Critical Discussion. *Journal of Cultural Diversity* 13 (2): 68–75.

Fine, Robert, and Philip Spencer. 2018. *Antisemitism and the Left: The Return of the Jewish Question.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2008. *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda During World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). 2016. Working Definition of Antisemitism. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

JDA (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism). 2021. Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. https://jerusalemdeclaration.org (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Jikeli, Gunther. 2020. Is Religion Coming Back as a Source for Antisemitic Views? In *Religions* 11 (5): 255, 1–8.

Kaufman, Thomas. 2016. *Luther's Jews: A Journey into Anti-Semitism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Linfield, Susie. 2021. Palestine Isn't Ferguson. *The Atlantic*, October 24. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/10/israeli-palestinian-conflict-ferguson/620471 (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Maccoby, Haim. 1992. *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*. New York: The Free Press.

Mettraux, Guénaël. 2016. *International Crimes and the Ad Hoc Tribunals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism*. London: Head of Zeus.

Norwood, Stephen H., and Eunice G. Pollack. 2020. White Devils, Satanic Jews: The Nation of Islam from Fard to Farrakhan. *Modern Judaism—A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience* 40 (2): 137–168.

Patterson, David. 2015. *Anti-Semitism and Its Metaphysical Origins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Perry, Marvin, and Frederick M. Schweitzer. 2002. *Anti-Semitism. Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Reinhartz, Adele. 2020. "Children of the Devil": John 8:44 and Its Early Reception. In *An End to Antisemitism!, Volume 2, Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism*, ed. Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, 43–53. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter.

Rosenfeld, Alvin, and Kenneth Marcus. 2015. *Deciphering the New Anti-semitism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Sharansky, Natan. 2005. Antisemitism in 3-D. *Forward*, January 21. https://forward.com/opinion/4184/antisemitism-in-3-d (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Smith, David N. 1996. The Social Construction of Enemies: Jews and the Representation of Evil. *Sociological Theory* 14 (3): 203–240.

Trachtenberg, Joshua. 1983. *The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism.* Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2013. *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia.* London: Routledge.

4

Blood Libel/Child Murder

Karolina Placzynta

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The classic antisemitic topos of BLOOD LIBEL has a history spanning many centuries and still looms large in the present-day antisemitic discourse. The claim that Jews kidnap non-Jewish children in order to abuse and kill them in the religious rite of human sacrifice (especially around the Jewish holidays of Passover and Purim) paints a grotesque picture of Jews: not only separate and different, i.e. → THE OTHER/ FOREIGN (Chapter 2), but irreconcilably and unacceptably so (Wistrich 2013; ADL 2023). While it could be read as an expression of the more general topoi of inherent → JEWISH EVIL (Chapter 3.1) or → IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), BLOOD LIBEL transmits distinct connotations of monstrousness and bloodthirst, emphasised further by the youth,

K. Placzynta (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

innocence and vulnerability of the alleged victims. It carries considerable emotional intensity, which makes blood libel a powerful tool of antisemitic manipulation and misinformation, and its ability to capture imaginations is perhaps one of the reasons for its longevity.

In one of the earliest existing records of blood libel, the 1144 case of William of Norwich, the discovery of a twelve-year-old boy's body in the woods was subsequently instrumentalised against the local Jewish community, culminating in "the execution by fire of more than thirty Jewish men, women, and children" (Rose 2015). This created a matrix for similar allegations against Jewish neighbours in numerous European towns and villages over the following decades and centuries, resulting in trials, displacements, expulsions and executions (Matteoni 2008; Ifediora 2013). The stereotype put their members under immediate suspicion in any criminal case involving the death or disappearance of a child, and its persistence added to the constant attitude of mistrust towards Jewish neighbours. It was also a convenient justification for individual attacks on Jews and for pogroms. The violent Kielce pogrom of 1946—a mere year after the end of World War II—in which over forty Polish Jews were brutally killed and another forty injured, was sparked by an allegation made by an eight-year-old boy that he had been kidnapped and imprisoned by local Jews (Tokarska-Bakir 2019).

The claims were also reinforced by literature—notably, Chaucer's "The Prioress's Tale," a fourteenth-century story in which a Christian child is murdered by Jews for singing a hymn near to a Jewish ghetto (1987), visual art—typically in the form of church paintings depicting Jews in the act of child murder, and scholarly work—even as the blood libel started to be refuted and ridiculed by some intellectuals (Julius 2012). The accusers offered a variety of explanations for the alleged desire Jews have to murder non-Jewish children: according to one popular claim, human blood was to be used by Jews to bake the traditional matzah bread for the Passover meal (Jacobs 2013).

There is evidence of the blood libel spreading outside of Europe as well. It was at the root of the Damascus affair in 1840, where several prominent Jewish figures were accused of the kidnap and murder of a Christian monk and his Muslim servant, allegedly intending to use their blood for matzah (Frankel 1997). Later on, there are records of blood

LIBEL materials, such as pamphlets and reports, being circulated in 1920s Palestine and BLOOD LIBEL rumours acting as the trigger for anti-Jewish disturbances in several Tunisian towns in 1940 (Julius 2012). Meanwhile, the BLOOD LIBEL appeared also in the 1928 Massena case in New York, where a local Jew was accused of kidnapping and ritual murder of a girl, and, after her reappearance, of plotting to do so (Berenson 2019). It is hardly surprising that similar themes of the supposed bloodthirst and ritual murder emerge in Nazi propaganda of the 1930s and 1940s; in one notorious case, the antisemitic weekly *Der Stürmer* dedicates its entire edition to the topic (Teter 2020).

In Israel-related discourse, the BLOOD LIBEL continues to appear in its classical shape. In 2007, the Palestinian cleric Raed Salah referred to the "blood" of the "children of Europe" being "mixed in the dough of the holy bread" (CST 2011). But it is more frequently utilised in updated form, through the accusation that Israel routinely and deliberately seeks to kill children as a central objective in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This notion of deliberate CHILD MURDER typically rests upon a dichotomy between Israelis as cold-blooded murderers and Palestinians as vulnerable, underage victims of an unequal battle (Israeli 2012; Schapira and Hafner 2013; Hafner and Schapira 2015: 30; Becker et al. 2021). This not only reduces the Palestinian agency in the conflict, but also contributes to obscuring the existence of several terrorist organisations dedicated to attacking Israel.

It is important not to dismiss genuine reports of children's deaths in this or any other setting, and not to become desensitised to such news when consuming media content or analysing its discourse. At the same time, a distinction needs to be made here between the unintentional and the deliberate. The BLOOD LIBEL implies that children or adolescents do not die in the conflict by accident, but rather that their killing is intentional, premeditated, planned and calculated. This is then reflected in the semantic layer of the BLOOD LIBEL discourse, through word choices which either directly convey malicious intentionality and purpose (like verbs "murder" or "slay"), or qualify and intensify what can be more neutral expressions, such as "kill" or "die" (e.g. with adverbs such as "deliberately," or through the use of grossly exaggerated numbers).

The second necessary distinction is that between the factual and specific on the one hand, and the exaggerated and generalised on the other. The BLOOD LIBEL is characterised by disproportionate focus on child targets in the discourse around the conflict in comparison with its other victims, and by suggestions that all Jews, Israelis or all of Israel are guilty of committing CHILD MURDER—or, at the very least, guilty of allowing, supporting or celebrating it. In its most extreme forms, Israeli actors are accused of kidnapping children in order to harvest and either sell or use their organs.

Like other classic antisemitic stereotypes, the BLOOD LIBEL—at its origins an attack on Jews and Judaism—has moulded itself to fit the demonisation of modern-day Israelis and the State of Israel; it has also largely shifted its focus from Christian victims to Muslim ones. What persists is the underlying theme of JEWISH EVIL and cruelty against non-Jews, which allegedly goes beyond mere self-interest and crosses into sadism and monstrosity. While the idea of an adversary echoes through many other antisemitic stereotypes and narratives advancing the allegation that Jews are working against all nations and societies in the political or economic sphere (such as the concepts of → DISLOYALTY/JEWISH LOYALTY, Chapter 9, POWER, Chapter 12, CONSPIRACY THEORIES, Chapter 13, DISINTEGRATION, Chapter 14, and PRIVILEGE, Chapter 26), here the notion of Jews targeting non-Jewish life is expressed in perhaps the most brutal, twisted form: as a desire for the blood of non-Jewish children.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- False claim that Jews/Israelis/Israel/Zionists kill children, which persists in the face of incontrovertible evidence, when no child has been killed, or not by a Jew/Israeli/Zionist or by Israel;
- Claim of intentionality, when the death was unintentional (often conveyed through emotional language: murdered, slaughtered, slayed, massacred, executed, baby killers);
- Exaggeration or generalisation of the events in one or more of the following ways:

- Scale: using general language (countless, innumerable) instead of specifying the time, place or number of victims;
- Frequency: suggesting that the killing is a repeated, routine or habitual activity;
- Target: implying that children are targeted more than adults;
- Responsibility: suggesting all of Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionists are to blame;

● Also possible: false claim that Jews/Israelis/Israel/Zionists kill children to use their body parts for religious or other purposes.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "What you mean is, Israel bomb children. Let's not mince words here."
(2) "There are babies and children being torn into pieces by isre*li terrorists."

The most explicit examples of modern-day antisemitic CHILD MURDER claims focus on the Arab–Israeli conflict and the death of Palestinian children, who become victims of bombing, shooting, air strikes or even, in the particularly brutal portrayal in one of the examples cited here, as "being torn into p[ie]ces." One of the examples specifically says there is no need to "mince words"—in other terms, no need for a more nuanced, balanced or fair representation of the role of Israel, presented here as actively and habitually "bomb[ing] children." The second statement is similarly presented as a fact and calls Israelis "terrorists," suggesting that their actions are deliberate.

(3) "here's some evidence of Zionist barbarism. Israel is the only country in the world where murdering children and pregnant women is legal and celebrated."
(4) "Israelis deliberately kill children while dancing. How can you do that."

(5) "Meet Israel – the country that will cheer when children and hospitals are bombed with white phosphorous, but will be outraged by a comment about Hitler."

The alleged EVIL pleasure derived from CHILD MURDER is conveyed here through the images of Israelis "celebrat[ing]," "dancing" and "cheer[ing]." In the first example, such claims are presented as "evidence of Zionist barbarism" and used to single out Israel as "the only country in the world" where this could be possible, echoing the stereotype of EVIL. Meanwhile, the last example sarcastically juxtaposes the alleged expressions of joy resulting from the suffering of children with oversensitivity at, presumably, any mention of the past suffering of Jews themselves (→ ADMONISHERS, Chapter 22).

(6) "2 days ago Israel massacred Palestinian children. it's been going on for 70 years."
(7) "Israel was founded by terrorists and kiddie killers."
(8) "Israel is an apartheid state led by terrorists and baby killers."

While the first example marks the time of the event it refers to ("2 days ago"), it then immediately adds that it was just one incident in a long series, as the "massacre" of Palestinian children has been "going on for 70 years"—that is since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. This essentialises Israel to a child-murdering state, exemplifying how current events can serve as a basis for the reproduction of classic antisemitic stereotypes. Similarly, the other two examples allege that "terrorists and kiddie killers" either created the Jewish state or are still at its helm, implying that CHILD MURDER is its underlying characteristic. The informal, nonchalant tone of "kiddie killers" and "baby killers" is in stark contrast to the gravity of the accusation, rendering the statement even more impactful.

(9) "small children are targeted whilst they are trying to earn a living by working in a grocery shop."
(10) "Imagine your children playing on a beach and being shot at like a game by the isre*li soldiers."

(11) "How dare your children confront my oppression with stones, don't
     you know my soldiers won't hesitate to blow their heads off?"

Often, the innocence of the Palestinian victims will be emphasised to
make the antisemitic stereotype more persuasive by placing them in
everyday scenarios of work or play ("trying to earn a living," "playing
on a beach"). Also, Palestinian children are often presented as fighters
for the right cause ("confront[ing] the oppression"), to highlight the
inequality between the two sides of the conflict. This is juxtaposed with
the brutality or callousness of the opposing side, who allegedly treat
targeting children "like a game"; in the final example of the set, formu-
lated as a rhetorical mock-question, a personified Israel coldly states that
its army "won't hesitate" to kill children. Regardless of whether this is
supposedly motivated by innate characteristics, routineness or readiness
to kill, it suggests a will to commit CHILD MURDER.

(12) "You can't even use the word here, but they're allowed to kill all
     children and everyone looks the other way."

Generalisation can be applied to victims ("kill[ing] all children") as well
as perpetrators and, as in this case, to the international community,
which allegedly turns a blind eye and allows for the tragedy to happen
through inaction. Apart from the CHILD MURDER topos, this example
invokes the ideas of a → FREE PASS (Chapter 26), supposedly enjoyed by
Jews or the Jewish state, and → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23)—the
idea that Jewish or Israeli actions cannot be freely discussed or criticised.

(13) "blood of Christian children, which all Israeli Jews consume faster
     than Coke."

Although this is rare, the classic, literal understanding of the stereotype
occasionally re-emerges in the modern antisemitic discourse, rehashing
the centuries-old stories of killing "Christian children" with the purpose
of consuming their blood.

(14)

The CHILD MURDER topos proliferates also in visual discourse through antisemitic cartoons, memes and GIFs. This image sees a small child, identified as Palestinian via the black and white keffiyeh and an elongated shadow which forms the name "Gaza," targeted by an Israeli missile while standing alone in an open space; the positioning excludes the possibility of it being collateral damage, which can happen when IDF attacks dense zones of Gaza or when Gaza terror groups fire rockets from civilian areas. The innocence and helplessness of the child is further highlighted by a teddy bear; the might of Israel—by a charging aircraft. The image invites us to sympathise with Palestinians by placing the viewer literally on the child's side. The accompanying text, complementary to the visual dimension and not integral to the visualisation of the BLOOD LIBEL topos, additionally introduces the → APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29).

Implicit

(15) "how many rackets has fired israel at innocent children???"

(16) "please tell me why so many palestinian children have been bombed and shot to death by Israelis."

Unlike the previous textual examples, these two comments about Israeli airstrikes are packaged as questions. However, their nature is most probably rhetorical and not intended to open a conversation. Also, neither of them actually questions whether children are targeted and killed through air strikes by the Israeli side; they both employ presupposition to present this as fact.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(17) "Nine children died in Gaza last month as a result of air strikes."

Specifying the circumstances of the event, that is citing the exact number of victims, the location and especially the timeframe of "last month" not only makes the claim easily verifiable, but also strips it of the ominous, generalised, exaggerated tone that often characterises BLOOD LIBEL claims. Additionally, the statement does not suggest any deliberate action, focusing its attention on the tragic deaths. Choosing the verb "died" instead "were killed/murdered" (although none of these words is in itself a clear indicator of whether a message is antisemitic or not) additionally reduces the level of emotional intensity and helps achieve the comment's overall neutrality.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023. Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era. https://antisemitism.adl.org (last accessed on 20 February 2023).

Becker, Matthias J., Daniel Allington, Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke and Chloé Vincent. 2021. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 2*. Berlin: Technische Universität. Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15310.

Berenson, Edward. 2019. *The Accusation: Blood LIBEL in an American Town*. New York: WW Norton & Company.

Chaucer, Geoffrey. 1987. *The Prioress's Tale*, vol. 20. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

CST (Community Security Trust). 2011. Truth and Lies on Sheikh Raed Salah. https://cst.org.uk/news/blog/2011/11/28/truth-and-lies-on-sheikh-raed-salah (last accessed on 07 June 2023).

Ifediora, John. 2013. The Blood Libel Legend: Its Longevity and Popularity. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2329378 (last accessed on 22 March 2023).

Israeli, Raphael. 2012. *Blood Libel and Its Derivatives: The Scourge of Anti-Semitism*. New Brunswick: Transaction.

Jacobs, Steven Leonard. 2013. The Blood Libel Is Alive and Well—In Fact and Fiction! *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 5 (1): 1.

Julius, Anthony. 2012. *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frankel, Jonathan. 1997. *The Damascus Affair: "Ritual Murder", Politics, and the Jews in 1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hafner, Georg M., and Esther Schapira. 2015. *Israel ist an allem schuld. Warum der Judenstaat so gehasst wird*. Köln: Bastei Lübbe AG.

Matteoni, Francesca. 2008. The Jew, the Blood and the Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe. *Folklore* 119 (2): 2–3.

Rose, Emily M. 2015. *The Murder of William of Norwich: The Origins of the Blood Libel in Medieval Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schapira, Esther, and Georg Hafner. 2013. The Kid, the Death and the Truth [Das Kind, der Tod und die Wahrheit, Orig. from 2002: "Drei Kugeln und ein totes Kind – Wer erschoss Mohammed Al-Durah"], ARD documentary. https://vimeo.com/67054759 (last accessed on 28 May 2023).

Teter, Magda. 2020. *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Tokarska-Bakir, Joanna. 2019. *Pogrom Cries—Essays on Polish-Jewish History 1939–1946*. Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2013. *Demonizing the other: Antisemitism, Racism and Xenophobia*. New York: Routledge.

5

Repulsiveness and Dehumanisation

Alexis Chapelan

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Antisemitism has sometimes been described as an "abstract" and disincarnated hatred, in which Jews simply personify the intangible forces of capitalism and modernity. It is true that various antisemitic conspiracy narratives attribute to the Jews quasi-demiurgic powers, as opposed to the various forms of racism which seem keen to insist on the subpar intellectual or moral capacities of its targets. However, far from being a purely theoretical construct, anti-Jewish prejudice has also been inscribed into the very materiality of Jewish bodies, through a host of tropes and metaphors drawing on representations of physical corruption and repulsiveness.

The pathologisation of the Jewish body predates biological antisemitism and has roots in Medieval antisemitism (Gilman 1991;

A. Chapelan (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.unibuc.ro

Resnik 2012). Appearance, skin colour, hygiene or alimentation are external manifestations which mark the Jew as → THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2). As the demonic Other was the archetype of maleficent alterity in Christian Europe, it was even believed that Jews have devilish horns, which explained the tradition of head-covering (Cohn 1958). Another bizarre medieval folk belief was that Jewish males menstruated; this allegedly "impure" bleeding was thought to be a punishment for Judas' treason of Jesus. This also maps onto blood libel accusations, as the monthly loss of blood had to be compensated by consuming the blood of Christians (Beusterien 1999; Resnik 2000). Such notions later fed into the stereotype of Jewish men being effeminate, weak and anaemic, as opposed to virile and healthy Aryans (Schüler-Springorum 2018).

Cleanliness and disease were other central motives of antisemitic discourses seeking to ascribe "otherness" to Jews. Jews were seen as more prone to certain physical and psychological ailments. Some diseases, such as the *Judenkratze* (*plica neuropathica*) or the *lepra Judaeorum* (Hansen's disease), bore names that illustrated their perceived association with Jews. Such ill-health was attributed to both theological—divine punishment for the DEICIDE or refusing baptism—and lifestyle causes. Jews were frequently accused of living in filth and squalor. In the 1780s, the Bavarian writer Johan Pezzl describes Jews as "covered from foot to head in filth, dirt and rags, […] the colour of a Negro, their faces covered up to the eyes with a beard, the hair turned and knotted" (Pezzl 1923: 107f). In early antisemitic texts, Jewishness not only conveyed uncleanliness and impurity, but also disorderly sexual conduct and vene-real transmission—hence the association of Jews with the most feared disease of the time, syphilis (Friedenwald 1944). It's worth noting that Jews were frequently associated with ailments that had visible and exten-sively mutilating consequences on the body, such as leprosy or syphilis: it was indeed thought that repulsiveness was a pathognomonic sign of the Jews' alleged moral corruption. Modern antisemitism did not fundamentally change such outlook but strived to integrate this diffuse body of folk beliefs into the language of the science of race: the Jew's alleged repulsiveness and their diseased body was no longer attributed to divine punishment but to "inferior blood" or genetic degeneracy.

The Nazi ideologues, which cobbled together a form of catch-all anti-semitism blending complex pseudo-scientific racial theorising with a coarser popular mythology, were keen to revive some of the medieval imagery and lore associated with the "repulsiveness" of Jews. This was particularly notable in materials targeting children, such as the infamous "The Poisonous Mushroom," which provides extensive physical descriptions of the Jewish phenotype (Hiemer 1939). Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer* was also particularly prolific in the genre of "animal cartoons" depicting Jews as animals (snakes, rats, vermin, often with stereotypical facial features). More recently, this type of discourse targets Israel and Israeli, through cartoons that make use of canonical imagery (pigs, snakes or octopuses) or motives (the topos of disease-fighting).

Animal tropes, often associated with a moral characteristic, are not only part of the symbolic construction of repulsiveness; the repulsive Other is also stripped of their humanity, both literally and morally. The bestialisation of Jews draws on the cultural code of purity/impurity, which fuses the external (physical repulsiveness) with the internal (moral dehumanisation) dimension of alterity. Therefore, the inter-twined semantics of repulsiveness and dehumanisation were significantly mobilised and expanded within the new racial biopolitics of inequality, at a time when the increased social and political integration of Jewish minorities exacerbated a sense of urgency about the "Jewish danger" to the body politic (Hortzitz 1988, 2005). The Jewish body was not only conceptualised as inferior, but also as menacing and strange. Since the late nineteenth century, Jews were seen as the protype of the "anti-race" (*Gegenrasse*) whose members lack what it means to be fully human. Jews were sitting not at the bottom, but outside of the racial hierarchy, incarnating "negativity as such" (Adorno and Horkheimer 1972).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Analogies between Jewish/Israel/Israeli individuals or groups and animals which have been canonically associated with Jews in anti-semitic literature and iconography (e.g. pigs, dogs, rats, octopuses,

insects, parasites or other malign pathogens and types of disease). This includes both textual and visual representations;

- Using pest control metaphors to evoke potential courses of actions or "solutions" to problems perceived as being caused by Jewish or Israeli individuals or entities;
- Denying the human status of Jewish or Israeli individuals or groups or affirming they are incapable of human qualities or feelings;
- References to an essentialising Jewish mindset, in particular if it aligns with canonical hostile representations of Jews, such as "clannishness" or arrogance;
- References to a fixed Jewish racial physiognomy, in particular if it is accompanied by expressions of scorn or disgust.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Israel = the country of wild animals."
(2) "Pigs and dogs."

These terse and unequivocal equalisations enact a labelling strategy based on a long tradition of "otherisation" through animalisation. Jews will often be derogatorily compared to "impure" animals, such as dogs and pigs. The *Judensau* ("Jew's sow") was even a widespread folk-art motif in German-speaking territories from around the thirteenth century, depicting intimate relations between Jews and pigs; it not only mocked Judaism's religious interdiction to eat pork but also aimed to blur the frontier between human and animal, suggesting the disturbing possibility of bastardisation (Shachar 1974; Wiedl 2010). The remarkable endurance of this motif is illustrated by the continued association of Judaism and/or Zionism with pigs in contemporary anti-Israeli or anti-capitalist iconography. Of course, this dehumanising metaphor also plays on connotations of greed and materialism, the pig personifying capitalism's voraciousness. Jews have also been assimilated to apes and monkeys: the Bavarian writer Johan Pezzl contends that "there is no

category of supposed human beings which comes closer to the Urang-Utan than does a Polish Jew" (Pezzl 1923). This discourse shifted in contemporary antisemitism to target Zionism and Israel too. Some pro-Palestinian figures, from Hamas-affiliated radical clerics to the former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi, still resort to the trope that Jews are descendants of "apes and pigs." As divine punishment for their actions, Jews can also be reverted to animal form: the London-based Hamas monthly publication *Falastin Al-Muslima* affirms that "Allah did not mete out the punishment of transformation […] from human appearance to the form of genuine apes, pigs, mice, and lizards […] on any nation except the Jews" (Al-'Ali 1996: 54 f.). Here, the aesthetic and the ethical go together: animalisation also functions as a moral condemnation. The epithet "wild" further suggests brutality and viciousness.

(3) "But soon you'll give up when they flush you out of your rat shelters and send you back to where you came from."
(4) "Jewish Nazis strike again. Absolute vermin!"

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, antisemitic animalisation discourses entered a new phase. Traditional pre-modern motives such as the pig, the dog and the ape persisted, but new widespread antisemitic animal analogies began involving rodents, lice or vermin. Barnyard or wild animals often invoke disgust and scorn. The vermin analogy, on the other hand, plays on the dual registers of (aesthetic and moral) disgust and of fear. Vermin are parasitic, invasive species who proliferate uncontrollably and pose an existential threat to humans through the spread of diseases. With the advent of industrial methods of exterminating parasites, the comparison took new genocidal undertones. Nazi propaganda heavily leaned into such hygienist discourses, comparing Jews to typhus-bearing rats, fleas or lice. The Nazi propaganda film *The Eternal Jew*, for example, made explicit a comparison between Jews and plague-carrying rats. In the first comment, the verb "flush out" likewise hints at a common pest control method: flooding rat burrows to force the animals out or drown them. The metaphor suggests that Jews are a parasitic, foreign presence that requires drastic intervention. The phrase is a direct address, thus giving the sense of threat or warning. The second

comment combines the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1) with the animalisation in order to reinforce the moral opprobrium.

(5) "An octopus using grafted tentacles while preserving its own limbs."

This comment appears in the context of a debate on Israel re-establishing some level of cooperation with Arab states (such as Morocco, which normalised in 2021 its relations with the Jewish state). The accusation suggests that it is using them as pawns to advance its agenda on the international stage. Israel is, of course, the "head" or the "brain" of the octopus, while subservient new allies constitute its (expendable) arms. Through the legendary figure of the Kraken, the octopus epitomised in maritime lore an immensely powerful destructive force, capable of swallowing whole ships. Because of their unique body plan, it is a stereo-typically "repulsive" being which evokes a form of radical, monstrous alterity. But on a more abstract level, the analogy with tentacled crea-tures symbolises power and control; its "grabby" tentacles furthermore convey insatiability and greed. The octopus' ability to regrow cut-off limbs makes for the perfect metaphor for the resilience of alleged Jewish conspiratorial networks but also for the selfishness of the "puppet masters": they can afford to coldly sacrifice their subservient pawns and allies. This is what the web user seems to hint at when referencing "graft tentacles."

(6) "Israel, a Virus State in and of itself."

Just as destructive—and more insinuating—is the association of Jews or Israel with the sinister figure of the germ, a microscopic yet equally powerful force. The virus (or bacteria) infests the individual body, but also the entire population and, of course, the body politic itself. Such rhetoric also invites radical—possibly genocidal—action to curb the spread of the disease. Viruses only live through a host body, so applying the metaphor to Israel suggests not only immorality and EVIL, but also the stereotype of THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2). In this light, Israel is presented as a threat to the "healthy" Palestinian community and other states in the Middle East or even on a global scale. Framing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the fight of a healthy organism against a virus

allows for a Manichean geopolitical perspective, while also excluding Israel from the community of respectable, sovereign states. It therefore dovetails efficiently with the topos of the → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

    (7) "A Zionist is not human."
    (8) "To whom you are talking, they are not 'Human'. They don't have heart don't have feelings."

Dehumanisation can take many forms. There is "dehumanisation by association," that takes an *external* point of reference, such as a reviled animal, and identifies the target group with it. Another strategy takes an *internal* point of reference, claiming that the target failed to meet the moral threshold to be qualified as fully human. This threshold is often defined in axiological terms, through the capacity to have uniquely "human" feelings and make ethical decisions. In the two comments, the web users are deliberately vague about the target: the term Zionist is not defined, and it is not known if it functions as a code word for Israeli (or even Jew) or it refers more narrowly to proponents of the Zionist political ideology. In the second, the deixis "they" is an anaphoric reference for which it can be deduced contextually that it applies to Israelis and their supporters. In both cases, the dehumanisation mirrors the stereotype of → IMMORALITY (Chapter 6).

Implicit

    (9) "Well, look at the noses first of all!"
    (10) "He's right, Hitler was Jewish, just look at his face, body and stature."

The myth of the exaggerated Jewish physiognomy, with the protruding hooked nose as its most recognisable feature, dates back to the thirteenth century. Prior to that, it does not appear that Jews were identified in art and iconography by any specific physical traits (Lipton 2014). In its pseudo-scientific enterprise to define negatively the "Semitic" race, modern antisemitism amply circulated such stereotypical representations. The invention of a "Jewish gene" was therefore an attempt to racialise

and biologise Jewish identity. Aesthetics was deeply embedded into the hierarchy drawn up by racial sciences: the supposed Jewish repulsiveness was invariably constructed in antithesis to Aryan beauty. In being denied association with the beautiful and the erotic, the Jewish body is denigrated and dehumanised. This can be conveyed in implicit ways, by drawing on visual representations which are so culturally entrenched they are automatically deciphered by other users. For example, the first comment is a sarcastic quip which does not mention Jews but highlights one body part which functions in popular culture almost as a metonym for Jewishness: the nose. In the context of an appeal to other users, the *unspoken* conclusion of the argument constructed here is that the individuals under consideration have to be Jewish because of their physical appearance. In the second comment, the web user paradoxically resorts to elements of the Nazi racial grammar (the alleged dichotomy between tall blond Aryans and short dark Jews) to uphold the baseless theory that Hitler was secretly Jewish.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(11) "The IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) are responsible for many inhuman actions in occupied territories."

In this comment, the use of the adjective "inhuman" does not amount to dehumanisation because the phrase is a conventionalised harsh language widely used in everyday discourse to condemn state actors and their institutions. Statements like this one should not be equated with antisemitism.

Related Categories

THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2), EVIL (Chapter 3.1), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1).

References

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. 1972. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. New York: Harper and Harper.

Al-'Ali, Ibrahim. 1996, September. *Falastin Al-Muslima*. London.

Beusterien, John L. 1999. Jewish Male Menstruation in Seventeenth Century Spain. *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 73 (3): 447–456.

Cohn, Norman. 1958. The Horns of Moses. *Commentary* 26 (3). https://www.commentary.org/articles/norman-cohn/the-horns-of-mosesold-symbols-and-new-meanings (last accessed on 31 July 2023).

Friedenwald, Harry. 1944. *The Jews and Medicine: Essays*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Gilman, Sander. 1991. *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge.

Hiemer, Ernst. 1939. *Der Giftpilz*. Nürnberg: Sturmer Verlag.

Hortzitz, Nicoline. 1988. *'Früh-Antisemitismus' in Deutschland (1789–1871/72). Strukturelle Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz, Text und Argumentation*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Hortzitz, Nicoline. 2005. *Die Sprache der Judenfeindschaft in der frühen Neuzeit (1450–1700). Untersuchungen zu Wortschatz, Text und Argumentation*. Heidelberg: Winter.

Lipton, Sarah. 2014. The invention of the Jewish Nose. *New York Review*, 14 November.

Pezzl, Johan. 1923. *Skizze von Wien: Ein Kultur- und Sittenbild aus der josephinischen Zeit*. Graz: Leykam-Verlag.

Resnik, Irven M. 2000. Medieval roots of the myth of Jewish Male Menses. *The Harvard Theological Review* 93 (9): 241–263.

Resnik, Irven M. 2012. *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perceptions of Jews in the High Middle Age*. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

Schüler-Springorum, Stefanie. 2018. Gender and the Politics of Anti-Semitism. *The American Historical Review* 123 (4): 1210–1222.

Shachar, Isaiah. 1974. *The Judensau. A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History*. London: Warburg Institute.

Wiedl, Birgit. 2010. Laughing at the Beast: The Judensau. Anti Jewish Propaganda and Humor from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. In *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 325–364. New York: De Gruyter.

6

Immorality

Jan Krasni

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The notion of Jewish IMMORALITY is a stereotype which ascribes to Jews complete alienation from, contempt for and deliberate acting against the common-sense norms of morality. The concept of IMMORALITY is closely connected to the stereotypes of → THE DEVIL (Chapter 3.2) and → EVIL (Chapter 3.1), as it is anchored in the religious and early Christian view on the rival religion (Reinhartz 2020). Portraying Jews as alien to the type of moral constraints which bind other people or religions is a gateway towards their subsequent → DEHUMANISATION (Chapter 5), casting them apart from the ethically "sound" humanity. This stereotype, closely related to notions of Jews as EVIL and aligned with THE DEVIL, harks back to late antiquity and early Medieval conceptions of Jews as "godless" betrayers of Christ, and of Judaism as a religion bereft of the

J. Krasni (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: jan.krasni@tu-berlin.de

higher spirituality attributed to Christianity (Gregg 1997; Poliakov 2003; Nirenberg 2013).[1]

The fringe Christian concept of supersessionism or "replacement theology" in its many forms, anchored in Tertulian's teaching,[2] draws on the re-evaluation of the Old Testament (Vlach 2010). The Old Testament is seen as outdated and therefore *superseded* by the new text, i.e. the New Testament. Paired with the fact that non-acceptance or rejection of Jesus was seen as blasphemy by the Christians, with ascribed guilt for his killing and the subsequent demonisation through the stereotypes of → BLOOD LIBEL/CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4), the idea of the inborn immorality was closely tied to those who held to the teachings present in the Old Testament—the Jews. In other words, the Christian theological argumentation was changing by trying to reject its Jewish roots. In this way, Christianity is defined against the Jewish ethos. The dichotomy between Christianity and Judaism is framed in terms of morality as a struggle between, on the one hand, a lofty spiritual ideal and, on the other, a corrupted materialistic cult. German Nazi-era religious leaders, such as Reinhardt Krause, openly demanded the abandonment of the Old Testament, "with its Jewish morality and its tales of cattle merchants and pimps," in favour of a supposedly more "edifying" version of the Bible (Reese 1974: 229).

The stereotype of IMMORALITY was also used to justify the historical order of Jewish life in the Middle Ages regulated by the Christian rulers. They denied Jews access to most professions and pushed them to pursue the financial activities traditionally seen as religiously immoral and therefore forbidden for the Christians. These are historical reasons for "usury" or moneylending to be symbolically most condemned Jewish occupation.

---

[1] However, it has to be mentioned that one of the central events in Christianity is the Transfiguration of Jesus, an event that is usually depicted with Elias and Moses as prophets standing with Jesus. This event therefore represents the continuity that Christianity wants to achieve with Judaism.

[2] Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus of Carthage was one of the early Church fathers from the third century. His writings are important for Byzantine and Roman church traditions. According to Tertullian, the key point which introduces the supersession is the baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist. Also, Justin the Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, formulates the idea of New Israel, later known as the 'replacement theology,' an idea which contradicts Paul when talking about Israel as the root of the new religion: "the root supports you" (Romans 11:18b).

The interests on the loans are obviously one of the reasons for the stereotype of → GREED (Chapter 11), while the use of Jewish finance for war is tied to their supposed responsibility for conflict, destruction and death of innocent people (an idea which feeds into the → DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14) stereotype). These ideas feed into conspiratorial claims of an overwhelming → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12) over the global financial system. Furthermore, claims that immorality is an inherent Jewish characteristic are also connected with notions that Jews would demoralise the "healthy" members of society (Nirenberg 2013: 269–273). This is the same notion of destructive moral influence that appeared in ideas of "degenerate art" in the Nazi era.

The stereotype of IMMORALITY was crystallised in its explicit ideological form in the work of the National Socialist ideologue and minister in the Nazi German government Alfred Rosenberg, "Immorality in the Talmud" ("Unmoral im Talmud," Bialas 2013: 23; see also Rosenberg 2007). Trying to demonise the core of Jewish religion, Rosenberg starts with the claim: "When two Rabbis contradict each other, the Jew may choose. […] And the Talmud is hence the most immoral work that ever sprang from a human brain, because it seeks to conceal filthy thinking and legally sanctioned swindle under a mask of hypocrisy" (Rosenberg 2007: 8). Rosenberg ascribes immorality both to the Torah, as the instructions of the Jewish conduct, and to the religious institution, i.e. to the rabbinic interpretations within Talmud. Therefore, this is *not an exclusively racist* concept, but one also rooted in the religious hatred. Based on the decontextualised and maliciously interpreted quotes from the relevant sections of Torah, Rosenberg concludes that the Jews and Judaism represent a real danger to all non-Jews because of their way of life and their teachings. As the Jewish system of values is therefore alleged to be incommensurable with that of the non-Jewish in-group, this idea is simultaneously drawing on the common antisemitic stereotype of Jews as → THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2) and invokes the biologising—and racist—metaphor of a dangerous, sick body in a "healthy" society. Some of these ideas reappear today in spurious, distorted claims that Jews are instructed by the Talmud to value Jewish life over non-Jewish life, or to refuse to save non-Jewish lives on the Sabbath.

In the post-Holocaust era, the concept of IMMORALITY often maps onto antisemitic forms of anti-Zionism. The stereotype of IMMORALITY is reiterated through the delegitimisation of the Jewish state on grounds of its supposedly inherently racist, oppressive and unfair (thus incorrigibly immoral) nature (Machover 2018). It also overlaps with ideas that Jews have INSTRUMENTALISED (or exaggerated or even concocted) THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20) in order to justify an illegitimate Jewish state (GREED, → DECEIT, Chapter 7).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Claims that Jews/Israelis/Israel/Zionism do not experience "moral" feelings such as compassion, mercy, kindness or guilt;
- Claims that Jews/Israel/Israelis do not feel themselves beholden to "normal" notions (religious, social, political) of moral behaviour;
- Claims that Jewish religious teachings instruct, or allow Jews to act in immoral ways, particularly towards non-Jewish people.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "They are liars, usurers, cruel, unjust and godless of course they have neither conscience nor morality."

In contemporary discussions among users of online platforms, the notion of Jewish IMMORALITY is often connected to stronger stereotypes such as EVIL. The comment lists a series of alleged moral failings of Jewish people, moving in a crescendo from DECEIT and GREED to EVIL, and eventually to the ontological sin of godlessness (thus denying even Jewish religion itself). The commenter identifies the root cause of this behaviour in the lack of the "normal" human attributes of morality. Deprived of the very capacity to make moral choices, Jews are also indirectly →

DEHUMANISED (Chapter 5), in a way that echoes the way Nazi ideology compared them to "parasites" incapable of human feelings.

> (2) "The zionist state is a vicious immoral entity, founded on violent land expropriation, ethnic cleansing and physical and cultural genocide. A colonial enterprise."

Here, the concept of IMMORALITY is also used in combination with an array of other antisemitic concepts, but this time in order to demonise the State of Israel. The ascribed innate immorality of the "zionist state" is lent an aggressive edge through the additive qualifier of "vicious," which indicates that immorality is a deliberate choice. Within the first clause of the comment, Israel is reduced from a "state" to an "entity," thereby implying the → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). The historical circumstances of the formation of that "entity" become a one-sided morality tale of violence, expropriation, → COLONIALISM (Chapter 30) and → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32). Each of these ascriptions is unfolded from the original, supposedly constitutive, immorality of "the Zionist state" as such.

> (3) "Why would they let a people who are b*mining and killing innocent children and their families into their own land? You people lack morals and empathy. Sick."

The claim that "a people"—which can be read as either Israelis or Jews—are "killing innocent children and their families" at will is explained by the absence of "morals and empathy" amongst "you people." The use of "you people" in an online discussion implies the "people" concerned are Jews as such (or perhaps anyone who refuses to condemn Israelis or Jews as immoral). The central position given to the killing of "innocent children" moves the comment away from the legitimate claim that children do die in Israeli military actions in Palestinian territories and towards BLOOD LIBEL/CHILD MURDER. Underpinning the entire comment is the idea that Israel, Israelis and potentially Jews as such stand opposed to the acceptable, adequate, healthy and social values of other non-Jewish societies.

(4) "He has no mercy, no regrets about his disgusting behaviour."

This comment, posted in response to a news story about the US businessmen George Soros, widely known to be Jewish, describes a man devoid of moral and ethical feelings. Here the actual content of his supposed "disgusting behaviour" is less important than the absence of "regret." The negative tone of the comment indicates that "regret" should be expected after such behaviour; the fact that it is missing in this case implies a concomitant absence of the moral feeling necessary for such "regret." The claim that "[h]e has no mercy" implies IMMORALITY but also clearly maps onto notions of Jewish → VENGEFULNESS (Chapter 8).

(5) "It is ironic to ask Israel to choose between good and evil."
(6) "Soros does not discriminate between good and evil. In his world, those two concepts are indiscriminate."

In both (5) and (6), Israel as a Jewish state and George Soros as a famously Jewish public figure are accused of lacking the capacity to "choose" or to "discriminate" between "good and evil." This ability is constitutive of moral feeling and behaviour, yet here both are said to regard them as identical. As such, the paradigm of "general" or "our" understanding of good and evil is not accessible to "them," i.e. Israel, Israelis or Jews. These comments make clear the distinction between ascriptions of Jewish EVIL and IMMORALITY—in the former, Jews embody one side of the moral divide; in the latter, the moral divide ceases to exist at all.

(7) *They always were and still are the bunch of usurers, no ideals, no solidarity with the victims.*

Even though the idea of a usurer is often connected to GREED, this trope also stands for the general lack of morals. Idealism and solidarity with the downtrodden are seen as inherently moral attributes that Jewish people are incapable of experiencing because of their obsession with material gain. Thus, Jews are essentially "locked out" of humanity, to the point where it is assumed they cannot recognise what constitutes a just cause.

The adverbs "always" and "still" and the use of the past and present tenses highlight the supposedly unchanging nature of Jews.

Implicit

(8) "there will never be peace because Israel values land grabs over basic human compassion."

The idea that Israel as a whole puts its GREED and material interests (obtaining more land and resources) above the suffering of others and the elementary ethical norms of humanity implies that immorality is a collective property of the Jewish state. The adjective "basic" reinforces the sense that, because of its behaviour, Israel fails to meet even the minimum threshold for being part of humanity. This comment also maps onto → ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT (Chapter 36), as the ongoing conflict's causes are reduced to Israel's immoral position. The use of the adverb "never" further solidifies immorality as an ontological, immutable trait of the Jewish state, rather than of its current political leadership.

(9)

In this political cartoon, the concept of IMMORALITY is articulated through the contrast between the material comfort of the Jewish character—drawn with exaggerated and stereotyped physiognomic characteristics—and the suffering of the unseen Palestinians. The idea conveyed is that Israeli (or perhaps Jewish) people enjoy a life of privilege and are callously unsensitive to the misery they cause to others. The remote

control, used to detonate the explosion, evokes the antisemitic concept of POWER, but also highlights the relaxed attitude of the Jewish character, suggesting that the destruction of the lives, homes and livelihoods of others is a form of entertainment. The message of the image is one of Israeli/Jewish callousness and immunity to the norms of moral conduct, which are ascribed not merely to political leaders or military figures but the population at large.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(10) *Netanyahu took over the repertoire of radical right! That is just immoral and dirty politics!*

This comment—independently from being right or wrong—calls only a political leader immoral. Therefore, being personal and relating to one politician and his practices (despite the fact the politician is a prime minister and represents the state of Israel on a symbolic level), this comment is not an antisemitic expression.

(11) "But to the world, their leader is an obviously a corrupt, vile man, the people who follow his ideals, are too."

This comment describes the leader of the state of Israel as a deeply immoral individual. Such qualities are extended also to his supporters. Interpreted broadly, this could mean the entire Israeli body of politics. Following this path of interpretation, the comment could be seen as antisemitic and based on the stereotypes of EVIL and IMMORALITY.
However, the other possible line of interpretation of this comment would be to see it as a radical criticism of the Israeli prime minister, his political party and people supportive of this policy. Understood this way, and outside of an immediate context like the one presented above, the comment would be like any virulent criticism of politicians. The main difference is the lack of clarity as to whether "the people who follow his ideals" are to be understood as all Jews, all Israelis, or as his political followers within Israel.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), THE DEVIL (Chapter 3.2), REPULSIVENESS and DEHUMANISATION (Chapter 5), GREED (Chapter 11), COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30).

References

Bialas, Wolfgang. 2013. Nazi Ethics: Perpetrators with a Clear Conscience. *Dapim: Studies on the Holocaust* 27 (1): 3–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/232 56249.2013.812821.

Gregg, Joan Young. 1997. *Devils, Women, and Jews: Reflections of the Other in Medieval Sermon Stories (SUNY series in Medieval Studies)*, 12 June. SUNY Press.

Machover, Moshé. 2018. An Immoral Dilemma: The Trap of Zionist Propaganda. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47 (4): 69–78. https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.2018.47.4.69.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism. The Western Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Poliakov, Léon. 2003. *The History of Anti-Semitism, Volume 1. From the Time of Christ to the Court Jews.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Reese, Hans-Jorg. 1974. *Bekenntnis und Bekennen: Vom 19. Jahrhundert zum Kirchenkampf der nationalsozialistischen Zeit*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupecht.

Reinhartz, Adele. 2020. "Children of the Devil": John 8:44 and its Early Reception. In *Confronting Antisemitism from the Perspectives of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism* (An End to Antisemitism!, 2), ed. A. Lange, K. Mayerhofer, D. Porat, and L.H. Schiffman. Berlin: De Gruyter. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-70557-3.

Rosenberg, Alfred. 2007. *Immorality in the Talmud*. Brussels: Friends of Europe.

Vlach, Michael J. 2010. *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation*. Nashville: B & H Academic.

7

Lie and Deceit

Matthias J. Becker

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The speech act of lying means "to intentionally mislead others when they expect honest communication," to "form beliefs that are not true" (Harris 2013: 3 ff). It "consists in saying (as opposed to implying) what you believe to be false, with the intention of deceiving your audience into believing what you said" (Marsili 2021: 3246; Wiegmann 2022). The accusation of a Jewish tendency to lie takes two distinct forms: one, in which Jews allegedly assert the untruth with regard to themselves—in which their own traits of character, values, intentions, etc., are distorted (= hypocrisy)—and two, lies that concern the whole external world and non-Jewish groups (= mendacity).

In contrast to the allegation of LYING, which focuses on the production of untruth, the accusation of DECEIT pertains to the underlying

M. J. Becker (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: mjb@decoding-antisemitism.eu

93

purpose of the purported misleading activities. The assumption is that Jews misrepresent the truth in order to gain advantages for themselves or to further a secret agenda, whether for themselves as individuals or in support of wider "Jewish interests" (→ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20).

The concepts of LIE and DECEIT have been an integral part of the antisemitic arsenal of accusations for centuries. A prominent example from the time of the Reformation is Martin Luther's writing "On the Jews and Their Lies" (Luther 2014 [1543]). In this volume, Luther compiles all the calumnies from the previous centuries. According to him, Jews, in league with the → DEVIL (Chapter 3.2), deliberately lie and misinterpret the Bible in order to mislead Christians. Luther's conclusion was to theologically condemn Jews (who against his expectations had failed to take heed of Luther's teachings). In his eyes, they should be excluded, i.e. they should be forbidden to trade and borrow money. Moreover, they had to be fought relentlessly—their writings should be confiscated, and their houses and synagogues burned down. Since they were a danger to the community, they were finally to be driven out of the country. Luther's rhetoric echoed the ideas of the Catholic Church at the time, which went back much further. Such attitudes are reflected in earlier Christian literature, such as Pierre Abelard's "Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian" (Abélard 1993) and Petrus Alfonsi's "Dialogi contra Iudaeos" (Alfonsi 2006) in the twelfth century, or Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Canterbury Tales" (Chaucer 2003) in the fourteenth century. The central position of the church as *the* authoritative institution for all aspects of life in Europe over many centuries explains why the ideas of JEWISH LIE and DECEIT became an integral part of popular belief (Bering 1989).

Closely related to these concepts is the idea of treason. The history of antisemitism shows various examples of betrayal accusations made against Jews, starting with the classic accusation of betrayal of Jesus by his disciple Judas in exchange for thirty pieces of silver (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1, and → GREED, Chapter 11). Much closer historically are the numerous accusations of treason and → DISLOYALTY (Chapter 9) in modern history, most of which build on inherent notions of LYING and DECEIT. The most central symbolic figure for the notion of betrayal in

modern Western European antisemitism is Alfred Dreyfus: this French artillery officer of Jewish descent was accused of high treason and espionage in favour of the German Empire, triggering an acute political crisis in France, which spun between 1894 and 1906 (see DISLOYALTY; Arendt 1973: 89 ff.; Bredin 1986; Stölting 1995: 224 f.). In Britain, too, suspicions arose in the first half of the twentieth century when Jews living in Britain were accused of having a pro-German attitude and even of being agents of the German Reich—a suspicion that became particularly strong at the time of the Second Boer War from 1899 to 1902 (Embacher 2005: 32; Terwey 2006: 28 ff.; Wistrich 2011: 4). Another well-known example is the so-called *Dolchstoßlegende* (stab-in-the-back myth) that circulated in Germany after World War I and blamed the German defeat on Jewish machinations and sabotage (Petzold 1963; Nicosia 2008; Kershaw 2016; Evans 2021: 93 ff.). This, among other aspects, illustrates the interlocking of notions such as deceit, disloyalty and betrayal with the idea of Jews as → THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2). In the case of France and Great Britain, these ideas are linked with Germanophobic patterns of perception, whereas in Germany, they can be understood against the background of geopolitical antagonisms on the European continent at the time. Thus, these patterns are an expression of national antisemitism, in which hostility towards Jews and the need to strengthen national identity come together (Holz 2010).

In the context of secondary antisemitism (→ Sect. III), we can witness a further adaptation of the above-mentioned stereotypes to contemporary conditions: the ideas of Jewish LIE and DECEIT henceforth referred to the Nazi atrocities—one spoke of the so-called *Auschwitz-Lüge* (literally translated as "Auschwitz lie," → HOLOCAUST DENIAL, (Chapter 18); Eitz and Stötzel 2007: 25). The idea of dishonesty was then combined with the topoi of → POWER (Chapter 12) and → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM AND THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), hence, coupled with accusations of a cult of guilt imposed upon the non-Jewish Germans in order to capitalise on it.

In addition to corresponding statements that serve classical or secondary antisemitic stereotypes and strategies, equivalences in discourses focusing on the Arab–Israeli conflict impute an insidiousness on Israel's part, namely, to conceal the situation of the Palestinians

or their own policies from the world. In this context, DECEIT is seen as a means for Israelis to manipulate public opinion (POWER) into granting them a → FREE PASS (Chapter 26) and thus gain total impunity. The concept transferred to the conflict again re-establishes a link to the stereotype of INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST and OF ANTISEMITISM.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Jews, Israel, Israelis, Zionism or Zionists are portrayed (individually or collectively) as essentially lying, deceitful and treacherous (the Jewish identity must be at least implicitly included or targeted in such portrayals).

  Such portrayals should not be confused with statements that problematise:

- An actual untruth brought forth by a Jewish person;
- Any misrepresentations by Israeli institutions about the course of an episode in the conflict with the Palestinians (here it is all the more important to consult background knowledge for accurate assessment).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

Lie

(1) "Anything out of George Soros's mouth is garbage."
(2) "First bit of truth that's came from that man's [Soros's] mouth. And that must have really hurt."
(3) "Coming from Soros, take it with a pinch of salt…"

The examples cited pertain to the Jewish millionaire and philanthropist, George Soros. These instances vividly illustrate the clear and derogatory tone often employed when insinuating falsehoods in online discussions. While these remarks may initially seem directed solely at Soros as an individual, it's essential to recognise that the insinuation of dishonesty is not tied to any specific incident in his life, which would constitute legitimate criticism. Instead, it is framed as an inherent aspect of his character. Even if argued that these statements represent fundamental criticism of an individual, regardless of their Jewish identity, it's crucial to acknowledge that Soros is widely known to be Jewish. Consequently, his name often serves as a metonymy for Jews in general, akin to the Rothschild patronym, and more recently, Zuckerberg (as discussed below).

(4) "Lies upon lies, as the Zionists are known to do."
(5) "Your history consists of nothing but lies."
(6) "Twisting the truth is your speciality."
(7) "The way you Israelis lie shamelessly so openly without any embarrassment is admirable. The world knows what the facts are and who is the oppressor. So hide somewhere with shame, if you have any!"
(8) "@BBCNews Never trust an Israeli… never."

As mentioned earlier, there are numerous examples of this stereotype being directed against Israel. Frequently, based on generic statements, commenters attribute a fundamentally mendacious attitude across time—an allegation directed against both a personified Israel and the Israeli population as a whole. Therefore, corresponding statements do not represent constructive criticism of specific politicians. Sometimes, the concepts of lie and untruth are evoked through the opposite concept of "trust"—or the lack of it—such as in example (8). These examples are still explicit, since distrust (as articulated in structures such as "[n]ever trust") belongs to the semantic field of lying.

Deceit

(9) "George, ever happy to stir it up in the hope of making some speculative cash on the markets."

(10) "Truth does not matter to Soros. It's all about his ploy to make the Republicans look bad while at the same time painting the Democrats as victims."

These examples refer to George Soros, whose repeated mention often serves as a trigger for perpetuating the stereotype of DECEIT. Once again, it becomes clear how directly commenters attribute this characteristic to Soros. The primary (mendacious) act is juxtaposed with the secondary (actually intended) act. Simply by examining the history of antisemitism, it becomes evident that the spheres in which the so-called *Jewish elite* allegedly employ their deceitful tactics range from the economy—where they are accused of artificially creating financial storms to profit—to politics, where they supposedly shape a narrative favourable to their champions.

(11) "I have nothing against Jews. But I am completely against racist hypocrites who claim to be the victim while they steal land and call resistants terrorists. They try to mislead every human being on this planet, thankfully the awareness has been raised nowadays compared to the past."

In this statement, it is characteristic that the commenter first emphasises that their criticism directed at Israel has nothing to do with hostility towards Jews. Hence, this example features a typical "yes, but" construction referring to Jews (with whom some commenters are supposedly good friends) in order to—in the sense of a defence strategy—indirectly give themselves the status of justifying thoughtfulness and liberation from antisemitism. Furthermore, the notion of Israel as a lying entity, as presented in (4)–(8), emerges as the commenter claims that Israel deliberately conveys a distorted image about the conflict and presents itself as a victim. Furthermore, the commenter emphasises that this action would guarantee certain advantages, namely having a pretext for murder and land grabbing.

(12) "Imagine Your lunch was stolen, you throw a pebble at the thief, they throw a breeze block back and call you the bully. Metaphorically what is going on over there. They instigate a problem then play the victim. And again they get a bit further."

(13) "How long will the world allow such oppression by and porcupine who then calls itself the victim. Never in history has an occupier ever occupied oppressed and yet called itself a victim. Israel has manipulated lied and victimised the Palestinians since its existence, just to get a justification for everything."

(14) "your ability to manipulate facts is very great and turn them in your favor. […] all you are doing is killing, settlement, and seizing lands, neighborhoods, and homes !! Keep lying and killing. Nobody believes you."

(15) "They are all unhinged psychopaths with a profuse tendency for deceit lies and distortions, and then they cry louder always louder always the victim.they are Godless."

This set of examples demonstrates how much the stereotypes of LIE and DECEIT, but also the idea of "playing the victim card" (→ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20), occur in conjunction with each other when it comes to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Furthermore, commenters use various forms of comparisons, metaphors and hyperboles to simplify the conflict and/or to demonise Israel. (12) essentialises the trait of EVIL in Israel by conceptualising the country as a "thief" that steals generically and then reacts completely disproportionately to the "pebble" thrown at it. According to the web user, the claimed self-victimisation on the Israeli side is a means to get ahead, leaving unspecified what the hidden goal is: territorial expansion, strengthening reprisals or increasing empathy on the global level. (13) works in a similar way—again the commenter insinuates victim status, manipulation and the existence of hidden goals. Through a rhetorical question at the start of the comment, it is indirectly asserted that this game of obfuscating reality has long been performed by Israel—a state which is devalued by the usage of an animal metaphor. The success of a globally spread Israeli intrigue for its own benefit is questioned in (14) by claiming that "nobody" would believe it. Finally, (15) conceptualises the ideas of EVIL ("psychopaths," "godless") and an alleged staged display of a supposed victim status on the Israeli side as an end in itself.

Implicit

Lie

The implicit forms through which the stereotype of the LIE is perpetuated are repeatedly characterised in the online discourse of the political mainstream by indirect speech acts, such as rhetorical questions or irony, but also the use of emojis and intensifications by means of capitalisation:

(16) "Like, we can believe ANYTHING from George Soros?"
(17) "Lol. And anyone would believe George Soros?"
(18) "Bahaha yes take George Soros word for it."
(19) "'Says George Soros' 😊😊😊😊."

By using generic utterances and mentioning the name George Soros, a contradiction is created between the semantic field activated by words like "believe" or "take […] word for it," all of which refer to issues of truth or credibility respectively, and the person in question. This contradiction is further emphasised by exclamations of laughter and capitalisation. As a result, any individual encountering such statements—regardless of their familiarity with Soros—would infer that he is perceived as habitually dishonest. In example (19), the conventionalised meaning of the combination of the utterance "says X" and laughing emojis clearly indicates that the commenter aims to mock the presupposed notion that Soros can be taken seriously in any regard.

Deceit

(20) "𝔷 oro 𝔷"
(21) "We see you S.oreAss."
(22) "Did he pay for this documentary?"

Just as with the implicit reproduction of the stereotype LIE, also the reference to DECEIT resorts to puns, rhetorical questions and innuendo combined with insulting word choice, ultimately conveying the idea

of cunning and trickery indirectly—in these examples again referring to George Soros. With recourse to icons in the form of snakes, the commenter in (20) uses a play on words—the shape of the letter "s" being replaced by a snake emoji. emoji, evoking the canonical notion of deceitful beings, famously depicted in the Bible with the serpent representing EVIL and DECEIT. While some traditions may consider the snake a symbol of wisdom (New Testament, Mt 10:16), the negative association predominates, neglecting the possibility of a favourable interpretation. This statement thereby dehumanises Soros, transferring the character traits associated with the allegory of the snake to him and essentialising them. (21) enacts a pejorative pun on Soros's name. Through the use of the pronoun "we," the commenter "warns" Soros that the non-Jewish in-group is aware of his deceitful tactics, and even ominously points at a potential retribution in the future. (22)—even though it remains a statement that does not indicate a supra-temporal character trait like the previous statements—is explosive as it references a *BBC* documentary about antisemitic conspiracy theories, which frequently arise whenever George Soros is the topic of interest. By means of a rhetorical question in which the person ("he") as well as the documentary can only be inferred from the thread's context, the idea of a deceitful arrangement is activated.

(23) "Schwindler's List."[1]

This example, extracted from a German-language comment thread, is a combination of pun and allusion, to be interpreted against the backdrop of the notion of the so-called *Auschwitz lie* (→ DISTORTION & DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 18). The writer alludes to Spielberg's renowned film, but simultaneously alters the two supporting terms—hence it cannot be dismissed as a mere typo—by a) transforming the word "Schindler" into "Schwindler" (which means swindler) and b) imbuing "List" with a new connotation by capitalising on the word's meaning in the German language, where "List" denotes trickery or

---

[1] This word play has also been identified in older studies of antisemitic discourse in Germany, see Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz (2017: 11).

cunning. By utilising both terms, and with the aid of world knowledge (namely, that the critically and commercially successful 1993 film "Schindler's List" revolves around the Holocaust), the statement communicates not only the notion of HOLOCAUST DENIAL—the fabrication regarding the genocide of the Jews—but also insinuates a clandestine, deceitful agenda associated with this atrocity.

(24) "Zionist snake."
(25) "playing victims again? Holyy."
(26) "They said, 'Never again' and they lied and are doing it to others."

In Israel-related discourse, equally elaborate patterns are employed to convey the DECEIT stereotype. Similar to (20), (24) also includes a reference to the snake, albeit not in the form of a pun, but as a dehumanising metaphor. Again, the association of deceit with the snake leads to the former being attributed to the target group, which is thereby dehumanised and demonised. An argument against this interpretation could be that the commenter was simply criticising an individual (who happened to be a Zionist), as in the statement: *This Zionist is a snake.* However, the attributive position of "Zionist" in the statement contradicts such an interpretation. Since both words complement each other, supporting one another, the imputed character trait is essentialised within the entire group. In (25), the idea of *playing the victim card*, introduced earlier, is communicated by means of a rhetorical question and conceptualised as a persistent pattern of action. Meanwhile, (26) suggests that "they" (understood here as Israel) not only LIED about the Holocaust—the "never again" slogan being primarily associated with lessons of the Holocaust—but also introduces the possibility of former victims now committing similar atrocities themselves. This is not merely an insinuation of a distorted portrayal of the Palestinian side in the conflict, but an assertion of the INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST in order to obtain a → FREE PASS (Chapter 26) for dealing with the Palestinian side—or worse, to repeat Nazi crimes (→ NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1). This points to the conceptual proximity between different stereotypes such as LIE, DECEIT and INSTRUMENTALISATION, demonstrating once again how the repertoire of contemporary antisemitism is to be understood as

a network capable of adapting to numerous communication contexts and reference points.

Non-antisemitic Examples

The cases in which a Jewish person is accused of lying or fraud, based on actions that actually took place, undoubtedly constitute a significant grey area. There are certainly incidents in the professional career of George Soros that can be identified as dissimulation, as cunning turns of phrase, as is often observed in investment banking. It is important to ascertain whether the accusation pertains solely to a specific incident or if it suggests a fundamental and timeless character trait attributed to the individual based on their identity.

> (27) *At the time, Soros lied and the world believed him.*

In this example, the focus on a specific incident in the past and the lack of any suggestion to portray this act as a Jewish characteristic lead to its classification as non-antisemitic. However, even statements that involve Soros today and align with scenarios typical of antisemitism, such as accusations of exercising control, do not necessarily have to be antisemitic:

> (28) "Is he trying to interfere in the 2020 election?"
> (29) "This guy…well who's he helping?"

It is noticeable that the authors of these web comments begin their discussion by asserting a presumption, namely, that there is fraudulent activity involved. The prevailing reading of Soros's involvement in media discussions about the political future of the USA—which is the context from which these comments originate—is that Soros pursued

a secret agenda. However, the scenarios are tied to specific, identifiable timeframes and do not permit any conclusions to be drawn about Soros' character traits. Furthermore, it may be true that Soros attempted to influence certain election campaigns. Therefore, we cannot clearly discern a distorted portrayal that amounts to antisemitism.

The factual accuracy of an allegation is also crucial in the subsequent topic: the scandal surrounding the antisemitism allegations made against an employee of a Leipzig hotel by the German singer Gil Ofarim in October 2021, which were subsequently refuted following police scrutiny (Ascone et al. 2022):

(30) "If you have no other success and if no one else is interested and you absolutely want to become famous, you just make a big mainstream splash. I'm sure a lot of people will jump on it. Ergo: goal achieved."

The statement is to be classified as non-antisemitic, as there is a factual basis provided (or a potential interpretation of the incident) that can be verified. Despite the initial insinuation of deviousness, which has a supertemporal dimension, there is no distortion of antisemitic proportions. Instead, it represents a critique with insinuations that pertain to Ofarim's individual integrity. Additionally, there are no references or allusions to other individuals with Jewish identity in the sentence.

Related Categories

THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), DISLOYALTY/JEWISH LOYALTY (Chapter 9), GREED (Chapter 11), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20).

References

Abélard, Pierre. 1993. *Conférences: Dialogue d'un philosophe avec un juif et un chrétien – Connais-toi toi-même – Éthique*. Paris: Cerf.

Alfonsi, Petrus. 2006. *Dialogue Against the Jews*. Washington: Catholic University of America Press.

Arendt, Hannah. 1973. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt.

Ascone, Laura, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloé Vincent. 2022. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-Driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 4*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-16292.

Bering, Dietz. 1989. Gibt es bei Luther einen antisemitischen Wortschatz? Zur Widerlegung einer politischen Legende. *Zeitschrift für Germanistische Linguistik* 17: 137–161.

Bredin, Jean-Denis. 1986. *The Affair: The Case of Alfred Dreyfus*. New York: Braziller.

Chaucer, Goeffrey. 2003. *The Canterbury Tales*. London: Penguin.

Eitz, Thorsten, and Georg Stötzel. 2007. *Wörterbuch der Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Die NS-Vergangenheit im öffentlichen Sprachgebrauch*. Hildesheim: Olms.

Embacher, Helga. 2005. Neuer Antisemitismus und Antiamerikanismus in Europa. Historisch vergleichende Überlegungen. *PaRDeS, H.* 10: 28–37.

Evans, Richard J. 2021. *Das Dritte Reich und seine Verschwörungstheorien: Wer sie in die Welt gesetzt hat und wem sie nutzen – Von den »Protokollen der Weisen von Zion« bis zu Hitlers Flucht aus dem Bunker*. München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

Harris, Sam. 2013. *Lying*. Opelousas: Four Elephants Press.

Holz, Klaus. 2010. *Nationaler Antisemitismus. Wissenssoziologie einer Weltanschauung*, 2nd ed. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition.

Kershaw, Ian. 2016. *To Hell and Back: Europe 1914–1949*. New York: Penguin Books.

Luther, Martin. 2014 [1543]. On the Jews and Their Lies [Orig.: *Von den Jüden und iren Lügen*]. Austin: RiverCrest Pub.

Marsili, Neri. 2021. Lying, Speech Acts, and Commitment. *Synthese* 199: 3245–3269. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-020-02933-4.

Nicosia, Francis. 2008. *Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Petzold, Joachim. 1963. *Die Dolchstoßlegende*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika/Reinharz, Jehuda, 2017. *Inside the antisemitic mind: The language of Jew-hatred in contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Stölting, Erhard. 1995. Sechzehntes Bild: "Der Verräter". In *Antisemitismus: Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Julius Schoeps and Joachim Schlör. München: Piper.

Terwey, Susanne. 2006. *Moderner Antisemitismus in Großbritannien 1899–1919. Über die Funktion von Vorurteilen sowie Einwanderung und Nationale Identität*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Wiegmann, Alex. 2022. Lying, Deceptive Implicatures, and Commitment. *Ergo an Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 8. https://doi.org/10.3998/ergo.2251.

Wistrich, Robert S. 2011. *From Blood Libel to Boycott. Changing Faces of British Antisemitism.* Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. https://sicsa.huji.ac.il/sites/default/files/sicsa/files/robert_pp13.pdf (last accessed on 26 October 2022).

8

Vengefulness

Jan Krasni

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The stereotype of Jewish VENGEFULNESS refers to the supposed irrational, misanthropic, egoistic drive to punish those perceived as having wronged them. This drive is allegedly accompanied by bitterness, intolerance and hate against non-Jewish society. The stereotype relies on the idea that there is a fundamental difference between the Old Testament, whose content to a large extent overlaps with the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament around the notion of retribution (Scaer 1997). The idea of the flood and extermination of entire population as God's punishment for the sins described in the Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament (Genesis 7:1–24), is emblematic for the concept of retaliation and is being used as an argument for the stereotype of Judaism as a vengeful religion. In opposition, Christianity and the New Testament are

J. Krasni (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: jan.krasni@tu-berlin.de

constructed as a religion of mercifulness, forgiveness and non-resistance, formulated as: "[b]ut if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:38–42).

However, one should see both approaches as moral and juridical concepts tied to specific historical contexts. While the biblical flood stands for radical retaliation, the "eye for an eye" principle stands for the universal juridical principle of *ius talionis*, a balance between the crime and punishment, according to which the punishment should fit and not exceed the crime. Both approaches are old; the latter has its roots in the Code of Hammurabi, which predates the Hebrew Bible. The reason to emphasise vengefulness as a "Jewish" principle has been the contrast that Christianity sought to introduce with the novel concept of forgiveness and mercifulness. This creates a false dichotomy between a supposedly cruel and vengeful Old (Jewish) Testament and a charitable New (Christian) Testament.

The further history of this antisemitic stereotype develops in literary sources, with Shylock from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" being the most prominent, but also the most ambiguous one. He lends money to his nemesis Antonio and demands a pound of his flesh as collateral if his debt is not paid on time. The insistence on this terrifying debt of human flesh became a metaphor for Jewish VENGEFULNESS and illustrates how Christian authors associated Jewishness with an archaic and brutal morality, which modern civilised society should reject and hold in contempt (cf. Feinberg-Jütte 1999). The merchant, even if his behaviour is motivated by the way society mistreats him, is an example of a literary essentialisation of a Jewish character, reduced to his thirst for retribution (Wojcik 2013). The notion of Jewish vengefulness continues throughout European cultural and intellectual history, and it serves to negatively portray Jewish nature both in the Christian religion (as opposed to the Christian values of selflessness, mercy and forgiveness) and in philosophy (as Nietzsche puts it, as contrary to generosity and nobility) (Golomb 1985).

The historical form of the stereotype of VENGEANCE can usually be identified by its biblical or proverbial references to the Old Testament. However, the stereotype is also applied and adjusted within contemporary discourses. Thus, it can be recognised in various contexts, such as the

Arab–Israeli conflict. Often, it maps onto the idea that there are no real security concerns for Israel and that the only reason for the conflict lies in the Israeli aggression and disproportionate response. This response is driven by the desire to kill as many people as possible or destroy as much property of the Palestinians as possible for any minor attack. The actors performing the vengeance can be Israel or its politicians, institutions, agencies (e.g. prime minister, IDF, Mossad), but also prominent Jewish figures. This stereotype functions as a plastic and eminently adaptable topos, in a wide variety of contexts (cf. Benz 2008).[1]

Key Identifying Characteristics

- The idea that seeking revenge for perceived wrongs is an essential feature of Judaism or of the mentality of Jews, Israelis or of Zionism;
- Alleging aggressive or bloodthirsty behaviour on the part of Jewish or Israeli figures;
- Alleging that Jewish or Israeli response to criticism and/or offences are inherently disproportionate and excessive;
- Alleging Jews or Israeli take a particular sadistic pleasure in taking violent retaliatory action against opponents.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "how about the genocide against innocent Palestinians that your government has been operating for over 70 years? Whilst killing is not going to resolve anything, as I'm sure your country will have its revenge by killing hundreds of Palestinian children within days,

---

[1] It is important to be aware of the difference between the atrocities that take place during the military operations and/or the retaliation on the one side and the stereotype of vengefulness that ascribes manic-like and bloodthirsty, vengeful drive to all Jews.

maybe it's time for Israelis (the people) to start questioning their government and opt for the peaceful and cohabitation option."

The stereotype of Jewish VENGEANCE is here directly brought into connection with the allegation of a → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32) against the Palestinians, introduced at the start of the comment through a rhetorical question. The bloodthirstiness of the vengeful act is even highlighted by mentioning that its victims are children. This comment is related both with the concept of → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) and presupposes the concept of VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL and → CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4).

(2) "their reply is wholly disproportionate though. It's like beating someone to death for spilling your pint."

The topos of VENGEFULNESS is articulated explicitly through a comparison with the absurd behaviour of murdering someone for a minor mistake. This statement maps onto other antisemitic tropes, such as cruelty and bloodlust (EVIL), but also → POWER (Chapter 12) since VENGEFULNESS requires the ability to exert retribution. When applied to the modern-day Arab–Israeli conflict, it fits the traditional antisemitic canon where Jews are presented as full of bitterness and hate, seeking extreme forms of revenge against non-Jews, for even the smallest inconveniences. Furthermore, the comment simplifies the complexity of the political situation by denying that Israel's military or security operations have any other basis than egotistical misanthropic rage (→ ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT, Chapter 36).

(3) "Poor Dieudonné. The most talented comedian of our generation lost everything and is constantly hounded by a certain community in revenge for a few jokes."

The idea of VENGEFULNESS often maps onto the concept of → SELF-VICTIMISATION (Chapter 15). The French comedian Dieudonné is portrayed as an innocent victim of the alleged relentlessness of Jewish REVENGE. Describing his offence as trifling and frivolous in nature further highlights the alleged cruelty and unfairness of the treatment he receives. The comedian's supposed helplessness is contrasted with the idea

of the POWER of Jewish communities, which can act discretionally and ruin his career in retaliation. The Jewish out-group is not named explicitly, but the reference to a "certain community" functions in the French discourse space as a dog whistle that can easily be decoded contextually.

Implicit

(4) "The question can be answered well. Ask the people in Gaza and the West Bank. Read the reports of shooting at unarmed people. In the old law it was an eye for an eye, and now it is 8 against 192."

The biblical reference to *ius talionis* ("an eye for an eye") often essentialises Judaism—and its proponents—to its supposed archaic and brutal nature, which puts retaliation before the "Christian" values of mercifulness and forgiveness. However, the commenter alleges that Israelis themselves are going well beyond the principle of exact retribution and engage in a wholly disproportionate spree of violence. While it is not antisemitic to point out the deadliness of the conflict or atrocities against civilians, this comment builds on a principle stereotypically associated with Jewishness, implicitly suggesting that current violence is fuelled by a supposed eternal Jewish tropism towards VENGEFULNESS.

(5) *Starmer is doing his Zionist backers' work and destroying the left #itwasascam.*

This comment rests on two implicitly reproduced stereotypes—Jewish POWER and VENGEFULNESS. The meaning of the first needs to be drawn out through the context of → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13) which see Keir Starmer's leadership of the British Labour Party in the wake of Jeremy Corbyn's 2019 electoral defeat as being driven by funding from certain "Zionist[s]." Starmer's attempts to remedy the antisemitism crisis that engulfed the party during Corbyn's leadership by expelling members found guilty of antisemitic comments is here portrayed as an unjust act of vengeance, made at the behest of his "Zionist backers." The hashtag "#itwasascam" is used to indicate to the in-group that the entire Labour crisis was a fiction deliberately created to undermine

the left-wing faction of the party. It thus represents a mode of →
INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20).

Non-antisemitic Examples

In order to differentiate between antisemitic and non-antisemitic
comments, it is important to determine if the respective comment relates
to a specific event or if it is generalising the property of VENGEFULNESS
to all Jews. A non-antisemitic comment may include a strong, harsh
critique of Israeli retaliatory actions. The key element is whether they
refer to a real, documented occurrence, in which one should verify the
facts before classifying the comment as antisemitic.

(6) A: "Classic Israeli response."
    B: "Exactly. Freak out at even the slightest hint of blame."

This interchange responded to the boycott of Jewish settlements by the
ice cream manufacturer Ben & Jerry's. This boycott should not be seen as
antisemitic, as it targets only Jewish settlements rather than Israel itself.
The response of the Israeli government did not recognise this distinc-
tion and instead treated the boycott as if it were a boycott of the entire
state. The depiction of this response as being "classic Israeli" and repre-
sentative of the state's "freak[ing] out at even the slightest hint of blame"
does, via generalisation, echo claims of Jewish VENGEFULNESS. However,
the accusation is fairly mild and could conceivably be made against any
leadership of any other state who acted in an overly defensive manner
to certain forms of political opposition. As such, the interchange in (7)
should not be classed as antisemitic.

(7) "I understand that Israel wants to avenge its citizens, but in the
    process other innocent civilians are killed in the IDF's reckless strikes.
    The cycle of violence needs to stop now."

This kind of comments cannot be seen as antisemitic, as they state a basic
rule for all the militaries in the world, inscribed in international law—the
killing of unarmed combatants in military operations is not acceptable,

and even accidental casualties should be avoided. The commenter appeals to both sides of the conflict to stop the escalation, thus sharing the blame of these violence between the belligerents.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29).

References

Benz, Wolfgang. 2008. Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Volume 1. München: K.G. Saur.

Bible. n.d. Common English Bible Online. Biblestudytools.com. https://www.biblestudytools.com/ceb (last accessed on 11 December 2022).

Feinberg-Jütte, Anat. 1999. Siebtes Bild: Shylock. In *Bilder der Judenfeindschaft. Antisemitismus – Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps and Joachim Schlör, 119–126. Augsburg: Bechtermünz.

Golomb, Jacob. 1985. Nietzsche on Jews and Judaism. *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 67 (2): 139–161. https://doi.org/10.1515/agph.1985.67.2.139.

Scaer, David P. 1997. Vengeance Definition and Meaning. Bible Dictionary. Biblestudytools.com. https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/vengeance (last accessed on 11 December 2022).

Wojcik, Paula. 2013. *Das Stereotyp als Metapher: Zur Demontage des Antisemitismus in der Gegenwartsliteratur*. Bielefeld: Transcript. https://doi.org/10.1515/transcript.9783839422465.

9

Disloyalty/Jewish Loyalty

Hagen Troschke

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The stereotype that questions or denies the loyalty of Jews consists of a cluster of several allegations. These include accusations of DISLOYALTY to the home country or to non-Jews, insinuations of divided loyalty between the home country and Israel, of being more loyal to Israel or of being loyal exclusively to Israel, and finally accusations of being loyal first and foremost or only to Jews. Other variants of the DISLOYALTY stereotype are highlighting connections and solidarity networks among Jews as something negative, or as something that would either bring disadvantages to non-Jews or be the main driver of success for Jewish individuals in society.

Doubts about the loyalty of Jews and the claim that they show a lack of loyalty to the society they live in or to their home country

H. Troschke (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

have a long history and are closely linked to other antisemitic ideas. First, the stereotype builds on the notion of Jews as → THE OTHER/ FOREIGN (Chapter 2) or a distinct, self-contained community of outsiders perceived as categorically separate from the non-Jewish in-group and serves to exacerbate this separation and sow mistrust. As alleged non-members, they are assumed to pursue their own interests that do not correspond to or even work against the interests of the society around them or their home country. In this way, the concept calls into question the trustworthiness of Jews and their commitment to their home countries. The spectrum of attributions ranges from unreliability and selfishness to treason.

The link between allegedly divergent interests and a lack of trustworthiness is the starting point for further accusations that Jews are excessively striving for → POWER (Chapter 12), damaging society, its values and traditions through → DISINTEGRATING acts (Chapter 14), or advancing a supposedly global Jewish agenda through → CONSPIRACIES (Chapter 13). All these accusations essentially presuppose DISLOYALTY and portray Jews as potential threats or hostile elements.

Claims that Jews are more loyal to Israel than to their home country, or solely to Israel, emerged with the establishment of the State of Israel and serve to portray Jews as unreliable citizens.[1] It is true that there are many personal or idealistic connections between Jews and Israel (which other groups also have with certain countries), and that Israel has the character of a (potential) refuge from antisemitism for Jews. This has been used as a pretext to construct a conflict of loyalties: a reference to a true premise is instrumentalised to obscure the falsity of the accusation built on it and to give the claim credibility. With this variant, the DISLOYALTY accusation has been given a new form that is intended to appear less offensive—the assumed loyalty towards Israel is sometimes almost described as understandable against this background. Such loyalty to Israel also certainly exists (as in other minority contexts). What makes it problematic is the assumption that dual loyalties cannot coexist, but

---

[1] In a global survey conducted in 2014, 41% of respondents said they thought Jews were more loyal to Israel than to their home country (ADL 2014). This was thus the most prominent of the antisemitic attributions queried—and one that has remained prevalent in subsequent surveys (ADL 2019, 2023).

that they are in conflict and that loyalty to Israel comes at the expense of loyalty to the home country. This attribution is just as inflammatory as when Jews are directly accused of DISLOYALTY to their society, which is also the core of the attribution in this variant. Based on this accusation, Jews are sometimes asked to deny any real or assumed connection to Israel in order to prove their loyalty, in a way that is rarely required of other minorities.

Historical examples illustrate how the stereotype manifested itself in different geographical and political contexts. In medieval Europe, Jews were considered OTHERS because they practised a religion other than the hegemonic one. In Christianity, which was constantly struggling with its Jewish heritage, this was not accepted and Jews were pressured to convert, threatened with further social exclusion or death. Near the end of the Middle Ages, Spain forced its Jewish inhabitants to either convert to Christianity or emigrate. However, there was a widespread suspicion there that all converts secretly remained loyal to their old faith (indeed, some did) and thus had divided loyalties to both religions, or even assumed no true loyalty to Christianity (Nirenberg 2002). This suspicion was met with ever new regulations for the converts on the part of the authorities and with torture and murder on the part of the Inquisition to enforce the converts' loyalty or to punish them.

When the legal equality of Jews as citizens was first debated or implemented in European states, doubts were raised as to whether they would fulfil their civic duties and whether they could be relied upon. In the late eighteenth century, the view emerged that Jews would form their own "state within a state" to which they would be loyal, a view which persisted throughout the nineteenth century (Katz 1969/1970). It was modified by assigning Jews to a parallel Jewish "state" that would extend across the borders of the nation states (Erb and Bergmann 1989: 162–163), an idea which provides a basis for CONSPIRACY THEORIES.

During the Dreyfus Affair at the end of the nineteenth century in France, the Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus was wrongly accused of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment (cf. → LIE AND DECEIT, Chapter 7). The accusation presupposed that as a Jew he felt no patriotic duty and loyalty towards France and therefore had to be the suspected traitor (Lindemann 1991). During World War I, Jews in the German Empire

were similarly accused of lacking patriotism. However, the attempt to prove that they were shirking military service with a "Jewish census" (*Judenzählung*) in the army confirmed the opposite (Ullrich 1999). At the end of World War I, the army leadership and the political right in Germany finally tried to attribute the defeat to the fact that left-wing parties and Jews had deliberately undermined morale—thus acting against German interests—by means of the "stab-in-the-back myth" (*Dolchstoßlegende*) (cf. Chapter 7; Barth 2003; Evans 2021: 47–84). When, soon afterwards, Nazi propaganda incessantly presented the image of Jews as enemies and conspirators, the accusation of DISLOYALTY paled in comparison because, paradoxically, it presupposes a form of belonging to the (national) community.

At the same time, the topos of alleged DISLOYALTY of Jews was spread for years among US isolationists: according to this idea, they had worked to lead the USA into World War II for their own interests (Shapiro 2021: 169–190). In the Soviet Union, in turn, in 1948 Stalin unleashed a campaign against Jews, whom he regarded as "rootless cosmopolitans" and accused of spying as "Zionist agents," especially for the USA. The persecution was accompanied by prison sentences and murders, culminated in allegations of a doctors' plot against the lives of the political elite and was extended to Eastern Europe in show trials (Luks 1998). It only stopped with Stalin's death in 1953.

In private statements, US President Nixon repeatedly reiterated the view that he generally considered Jews to be less patriotic, assuming they would be more loyal to Israel or sympathetic to the Soviet Union, and suspected individuals of DISLOYALTY because of their (assumed) Jewishness—especially in relation to their support for his policies (Whitfield 2010).

The reverse of the DISLOYALTY trope supposes that the only effective loyalty Jews feel is towards their own; as a result, they are often accused of tribalism and favouritism towards other Jews, often at the expense of meritocracy. Because Jews had often been pioneers in the press or entertainment industries and were well represented in cultural hubs such as Hollywood (Lappin 2004), they were and still are often accused of clannishness and of positive bias towards other Jews. This way, the merits of

successful Jewish individuals (in areas as diverse as entertainment, journalism, finance or politics) are downplayed through the assumption that such ethnic solidarity was the main driver behind Jewish professional achievements.

Key Identifying Characteristics

Expressions that claim that Jews show:

- Disloyalty to their home country;
- Loyalty first and foremost to Israel and limited loyalty to the home country;
- Exclusive loyalty to Israel (while not being Israelis themselves);
- Disloyalty to non-Jews/non-Jewish society;
- Loyalty first and foremost to Jews (worldwide) and limited loyalty to the home country;
- Exclusive loyalty to Jews.

Expressions regarding bonds and solidarity between Jews that:

- Portray these negatively;
- Imply these would be used to the disadvantage of others;
- Imply Jews would be successful just because of them.

Statements about Jews supporting each other or Israel that do not create the impression that this is at the expense of loyalty to the home country or to non-Jews are not antisemitic, as neither are statements about proven conflicts of loyalty.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

   (1) "Why don't these Jewish Ukrainian citizens stay and defend their country?"

   (2) "I wonder why Ukrainian Jews have fled the country instead of standing by their fellow Ukrainians in these difficult times."

   (3) "Zelenskyy will eventually tire of videoconferences with no outcomes in sight, and in the second act he will hand in his bulletproof vest and his Ukrainian badge and go into hiding for good with his co-religionists."

Against the background that many people and groups have fled the war in Ukraine, (1) is singling out Jews—even if they were the subject of the conversation before. It implies that the question of whether refugees should stay and fight instead is posed about Jews in particular, and not about all refugees. Jews are thus marked as (particularly) DISLOYAL to their country. Apart from that, the insinuation undercuts the fact that Ukrainian men fit for military service were not allowed to leave the country at that time, and that Jews also participate accordingly in the defence of Ukraine. The same applies to (2). Here, however, the contrast between Jewish and non-Jewish Ukrainians is additionally reinforced by highlighting the non-Jewish Ukrainians as persevering defenders. In (3), on the other hand, the loyal commitment of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy to Ukraine is first conceded, only to be followed by doubts about its continuation and the insinuation that he would eventually abandon Ukraine, as his "co-religionists"—i.e. Jews—had allegedly already done.

   (4) "She should be awarded the Legion of Honour for denouncing France's internal enemies."

The statement refers to a demonstrator in France in 2021 who carried a placard bearing the names of several well-known French Jews and the inscription "traitors." Here, approval is expressed for this attribution, the accusation of DISLOYALTY is heightened to the maximum through the label of "enemies" (which articulates a form of aggressive othering) and,

in line with an antisemitic perspective, the incitement is reinterpreted as merit.

(5) "It is only a matter of time that Jews will act as a fifth column."

The attribution of forming a "fifth column"—a group that, in the interest of another state or power, uses its embeddedness in society to harm it unexpectedly and effectively—declares Jews to be traitors and even enemies. It must be concluded that the actor in whose favour they would act and who would have their shared or exclusive loyalty is the Jewish state.

(6) "Trump is right – Jews can't value what the American people do for them, and they can't be counted on!"

This comment refers to a social media post by former US President Trump in which he accuses "Jewish leaders" of a "lack of loyalty" (O'Connell 2022). He did so in response to the criticism he had faced—coming from Jews, among others—for meeting with rapper Kanye West, who has repeatedly spread antisemitic views, as well as with the Holocaust denier and white supremacist Nicholas Fuentes. The attributions following the affirmation of Trump's statements claim that Jews are DISLOYAL to society per se, and exclude American Jews from society by contrasting "them" with the "people."

(7) "Jews stick together worldwide, national affiliations are secondary."

This comment asserts both that Jews would be loyal primarily to each other and that they would be more loyal to each other than to their home countries.

Implicit

(8) "That's your French side I guess. I'm waiting for the knife in the back to feel the Israeli side."

This response to a commenter, who the writer assumes to be Jewish, insinuates that the commenter has a French and an Israeli "side." While the "French side" is perceived as unproblematic, the comment uses a metaphor to express the expectation that the commenter will soon make DISLOYAL or treasonous statements in favour of Israel. The possible qualities this "Israeli side" could be endowed with are thereby drastically reduced to insidious action. Simply being marked as a Jew leads to the accusation of divided loyalty—even while admitting that there was no evidence for this.

(9) "If we were talking about Chinese influence and pointing out that Chinese students on campus were part of China's great plan, would you be saying the same thing?"

This question is part of an exchange between commenters in which the first insinuates that Jews, by and large, represent Israel's interests. Another commenter contradicts this notion and points out its absurdity. With the question in (9), a third person then uses an analogy to create a fictitious scenario to contradict the counter-speech and support the stereotype expressed at the beginning of the exchange. The assumption of a CONSPIRACY in which all Chinese students are led by China is transferred on the one hand to Israelis abroad, who supposedly act in the service of certain goals of Israel, and also to all Jews, on the basis of the initial assertion about them. It thus equates Jews and Israelis, assigns Jews to Israel regardless of their actual country of origin and consequently declares them FOREIGNERS everywhere outside Israel. Jews are interpreted as Israel's stooges or agents and thus classified as loyal to Israel. The rhetorical question framing is meant to reinforce this analogy by suggesting that agreement with it is inevitable.

(10) "It's all about their Zionist interests."

Referring to Jews outside Israel, this remark contains the accusation that for Jews, Zionism and thus the support of Israel and its well-being is the top priority, and that they would work for this goal above all else. Their loyalty would thus be first and foremost to Israel.

(11) "With a name like yours I am not surprised with your comment."

According to this post, the content of a comment can already be expected based on the name of its author: the commenter had rejected the coverage of an episode of the Gaza conflict in which possible misconduct by the Israeli army was discussed and thus indirectly defended the army or the Israeli side. From this positioning and the name of the commenter, which can be interpreted as Jewish, the implicit claim is derived that a person with a Jewish name—i.e. a Jew—can only be expected to hold a loyal position towards Israel. Apart from the question of the appropriateness or correctness of the objection, (11) generalises the position and actions of an individual to an attitude or action of the group: since the name perceived as Jewish was the criterion for the loyalty to Israel attribution, this would apply equally to every person with a Jewish-sounding name.

(12) "Your downplaying gives me the impression that you are both part of the clan."

In the course of a discussion about an episode of the Arab–Israeli conflict and Israel's role in it, (12) identifies two commenters as Jewish because of the positions they hold. To understand this, it has to be inferred that "part of the clan" means belonging to the Jewish/Israeli group. The accusation is accordingly that they would disseminate positions or an agenda on the basis of their (ascribed) group affiliation or in the interest of, or even on behalf of Israel, aiming to support Israel or its actions through propaganda. Assumed connections between Jews are thus viewed negatively here as clannish loyalty.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(13) "It is obvious that Jews draw cohesion from their communities."

This statement may well be considered true for many Jews who are members of a Jewish community. The focus here is on the social impact of congregational activities. It does not claim that orientation to the

group in this area of life affects other relationships or strains any other loyalties.

(14) "Zelenskyy says, I'm Jewish and I must be supported by Israel!"

The underlying assumption for this view attributed to Zelenskyy is that Israel would stand up for Jews. Examples of such support exist, and it is natural because of the links between Israel and the diaspora, as well as Israel's self-image as a protector of Jews. However, it does not follow from this statement that Israel would exclusively stand up for Jews.

Related Categories

THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 1), POWER (Chapter 12), DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14), CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2014. The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism. https://global100.adl.org/map/ (last accessed on 17 July 2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2019. The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism. https://global100.adl.org/about/2019 (last accessed on 17 July 2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023. The ADL Global 100: An Index of Antisemitism. https://global100.adl.org/about/2023 (last accessed on 17 July 2023).

Barth, Boris. 2003. *Dolchstoßlegenden und politische Desintegration. Das Trauma der deutschen Niederlage im Ersten Weltkrieg 1914–1933*. Düsseldorf: Droste.

Erb, Rainer, and Werner Bergmann. 1989. *Die Nachtseite der Judenemanzipation. Der Widerstand gegen die Integration der Juden in Deutschland 1780–1860*. Berlin: Metropol.

Evans, Richard J. 2021. *The Hitler Conspiracies. The Third Reich and the Paranoid Imagination*. London: Penguin Books.

Katz, Jacob. 1969/1970. *A State within a State: The History of an Anti-Semitic Slogan* (The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings IV), 29–58. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Lappin, Eleanore. 2004. *Juden und Film*. Wien: Mandelbaum Verlag.

Lindemann, Albert. 1991. *The Jew Accused: Three Anti-Semitic Affairs: Dreyfus, Beilis, Frank 1894–1915*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luks, Leonid, ed. 1998. *Der Spätstalinismus und die "jüdische Frage." Zur antisemitischen Wendung des Kommunismus*. Köln: Böhlau.

Nirenberg, David. 2002. Mass Conversion and Genealogical Mentalities: Jews and Christians in Fifteenth-Century Spain. *Past & Present* 174: 3–41. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3600715.

O'Connell, Oliver. 2022. Trump Lashes Out at 'Jewish Leaders' for 'Lack of Loyalty' to Him. *The Independent*, 10 December 2022. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-jewish-leaders-israel-loyalty-b2242525.html (last accessed on 23 July 2023).

Shapiro, Edward. 2021. *A Unique People in a Unique Land: Essays on American Jewish History*. Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781644697405.

Ullrich, Volker. 1999. Fünfzehntes Bild: "Drückeberger." In *Antisemitismus. Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Julius H. Schoeps, and Joachim Schlör, 201–217. Augsburg: Weltbild.

Whitfield, Stephen J. 2010. Nixon and the Jews. In *Patterns of Prejudice* 44 (5): 432–453. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2010.527442.

10

Blame for Antisemitism

Marcus Scheiber

Conceptual and Historical Overview

While antisemitic stereotypes ascribe generalised negative characteristics to Jews, BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM goes further by holding Jews responsible for the hatred expressed towards them. It is claimed that Jews trigger antisemitism through their behaviour and actions or, in particular, through actions of Israel and/or those associated with Zionism (Topor and Fox 2021: 186).

On the one hand, the attribution of blame is a strategy to redirect responsibility from those who engage in hate speech and hate crime onto those who are affected by it. It is a strategy to deflect responsibility and conceal one's own aggression or that of those who spread antisemitic ideas or act accordingly. On the other, through the frequency with which this strategy has been used, the attribution that Jews are to

_____

M. Scheiber (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

© The Author(s) 2024
M. J. Becker et al. (eds.), _Decoding Antisemitism_, Postdisciplinary Studies in Discourse, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-49238-9_10

127

BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM has now become a standalone stereotype. As a result, discrimination and violence against Jews appear to be legitimised, as it is now regarded as a reaction to their alleged misconduct (Adorno 1973: 124; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 115; Harrison 2020: 9).

BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM was a core component of Nazi ideology. The crimes of the Nazis were frequently presented, both at the time and in later justifications, as a reaction to alleged actions of Jews (which amounts to → HOLOCAUST DISTORTION, Chapter 18.1), such that antisemitism is interpreted as self-inflicted and in this way a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL is carried out.

One common means by which BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM is expressed is through the separation of a small group of "good" Jews from the majority of "bad" Jews. The supposed "good" Jews act in a way that does not instigate antisemitism—whether through assimilation, conversion or denunciation of Israel and of Zionism—and thereby highlight the deplorable activity or beliefs of the remainder, which are thus presented as being responsible for the antisemitism Jews as a totality face (Kahn-Harris 2019). This idea rests on the claim that if only all Jews would act in the manner of the "good" Jews, then antisemitism would disappear—a claim which thereby implicitly holds the negatively-depicted Jews responsible for the prejudice suffered by the group as a whole.

In an updated form, BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM is frequently found in relation to Israel, when antisemitism is attributed to Israel's policies and/or existence, or when it is portrayed as a legitimate reaction to Israel's military actions (Stein 2011: 11; Small 2013: 9). Jewish solidarity with Israel is in this way condemned as complicity with Israeli actions, which are rejected, and Jews are thus → HELD COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS (Chapter 25) (Topor and Fox 2021: 15).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Establishes a causality between behaviour or actions of Jewish entities and antisemitism;
- Characterises antisemitism as a self-inflicted phenomenon legitimised by Jewish behaviour or actions;
- Blames Israel, its existence and/or actions, for incidents of antisemitism.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "With their behaviour, Jews need not be surprised that they are met with hatred."

In (1), the stereotype of BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM prototypically opens up a generalising causal chain between the alleged actions of Jews and the (implicitly necessary) ensuing reaction in the form of antisemitism ("met with hatred"). In the process, Jews are both collectivised through the use of the plural ("their," "Jews") and the claim is furthermore generalised through the openness of the attributed action (no reference is made to a concrete event). The resulting causality, however, is realised through an ironic moment in the form of a litotes, i.e. an understatement in which an affirmation is expressed by a negation ("need not to be surprised"), which passes off knowledge of this connection (that antisemitism is self-inflicted) as obvious and legitimises it in this way.

(2) "Israel, more than any other country on earth today, is the number one perpetrator and supporter of antisemitism."

(2) also realises the stereotype via a causal chain within which Israel is made solely responsible for antisemitism. Thus, Israel is identified as the reason for prevailing antisemitism within the framework of a hierarchical relation ("more than any other country on earth"). By failing to provide a specific reason, the comment essentialises the accusation against Israel.

However, the comment ignores the fact that no action on Israel's part can justify antisemitism, since this is based on a collective attribution of blame and an immanently negative essentialisation. Moreover, the comment suggests that Israel not only causes but supports and deliberately engenders antisemitism for its own purposes, thereby aggravating the charge.

(3) "No wonder antisemitism is growing when Jews in this country do not oppose Israel's inhuman actions."

While (2) realises the stereotype by referring to Israel, (3) appears as an amplification of the accusation, in that antisemitism is justified and legitimised both because of Israel's actions and, in a second step, through a lack of distancing of Jews living outside Israel. Once again, the BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM is apportioned by presenting Israel's actions, which trigger antisemitism, as involving the collective participation of all Jews.

Implicit

(4) "I wonder why, time to look into the mirror."

Through the use of the mirror metaphor, the remark suggests to Jews that through self-examination they would come to the conclusion that they were (partly) to BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM. In the reflection of the mirror, the question of responsibility for antisemitism is thrown back on the hypothetically questioning Jews, who must recognise themselves as the very persons responsible. It is thereby expected that the predicted insight of those who experience this reproach is in agreement with the reproach itself. The person commenting wants to partially confirm his or her own view with this kind of utterance. At the same time, the ironic phrase "I wonder why" amplifies this attribution by implicitly referring to a supposedly accepted, public knowledge.

(5) "Could it be that their constantly wielded moral club first generates antisemitic feelings among Germans?"

While the previous examples have mostly articulated a non-specific accusation to BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM, (5) concretises this in the accusation of an excessively and consequently unjustified moralising demand to come to terms with or raise awareness of antisemitism (which at the same time refers to the stereotypes of → INSTRUMENTALISATION, Chapter 20, and → ADMONISHERS, Chapter 22). For in the form of a rhetorical question, via the metaphor of the "moral club," which expresses a disproportionality and inappropriateness of the demand, antisemitic actions are justified solely and exclusively in those imputed demands, the legitimacy of which is negated at all times. The example represents a typical expression of secondary antisemitism, frequently mostly used in German (and Austrian) discourse. It sketches the image of persons who unjustifiably try to enforce or impose their moral ideas on others.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(6) "If a radical right-wing government comes to power in Israel, a new wave of antisemitism threatens—against Jews in Europe and Germany."[1]

As mentioned in the footnote, this is not a contribution from an anonymous commenter, but a post from a newspaper. Interestingly, this post was used by readers as a basis for sharing antisemitic ideas, namely that Israel's existence and actions are responsible for antisemitism in other contexts. Although this was a dominant reading in the ensuing *Twitter* thread, this example does not contain sufficient evidence that this idea was actually communicated. Rather, the editors emphasise that these are correlations that need to be kept in mind. Especially in relation to (2) above, where Israel is conceptualised as "the number one perpetrator and supporter of antisemitism," the differences are striking. Nevertheless, it must be taken into account that—whenever phenomena in the Middle East and antisemitic incidents, for example in Europe, are mentioned

---

[1] This is a post from the German news outlet *Der Spiegel*, published on *Twitter* on 17 November 2022. The example was used in our fifth Discourse Report, in which we examined the response on German websites with regard to the Israeli elections in November 2022 (Chapelan et al. 2023: 20).

in the same sentence—the reading not only of a correlation but of culpability is very close.

Related Categories

HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS (Chapter 25), EVIL (Chapter 3.1).

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1973. *Studien Zum Autoritären Charakter*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Chapelan, Alexis, Laura Ascone, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Pia Haupeltshofer, Jan Krasni, Alexa Krugel, Helena Mihaljević, Karolina Placzynta, Milena Pustet, Marcus Scheiber, Elisabeth Steffen, Hagen Troschke, Victor Tschiskale, and Chloé Vincent. 2023. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 5*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-17105.

Harrison, Bernard. 2020. *Blaming the Jews: Politics and Delusion*. Indiana: University Press.

Kahn-Harris, Keith. 2019. *Strange Hate: Antisemitism, Racism and the Limits of Diversity*. London: Repeater.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the antisemitic mind. The language of Jew-Hatred in contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Small, Charles Asher. 2013. *Global Antisemitism. A Crisis of Modernity. An Introduction*. New York: ISGAP.

Stein, Timo. 2011. *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik. Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken*. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Topor, Lev, and Jonathan Fox. 2021. *Why do people discriminate against Jews?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Part II

Concepts of Power

11

Greed, Exploitation and Identification with Capitalism

Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, and Chloé Vincent

11.1 Greed

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The association of Jews with money, and the depiction of Jews as a uniquely greedy and rapacious people, is one of the oldest and most persistent of antisemitic myths (Foxman 2010). Writings, speeches and imagery portraying Jews as grasping, avaricious and miserly, ever ready to lie and trick their way to a profit, and willing to sacrifice all morality in pursuit of riches, can be traced back to the origins of Western-Christian

M. Bolton · A. Chapelan (✉) · C. Vincent
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

A. Chapelan
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.uni

C. Vincent
e-mail: chloe.vincent@ugent.be

culture. Early Christianity was in great part founded on the contrast between the supposed materialism of Jews and the spiritualism of Christians (Nirenberg 2013). The New Testament story where "Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons" (Matthew 21:12) became a cornerstone of early Christian depictions of Jews as corrupting the holy, while the reviled figure of Judas, betraying Jesus in exchange for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15), enabled the association of Jews with money to be fused with the concept of DEICIDE, the idea that Jews were responsible for the death of the son of God (Munson 2020). Throughout the early Christian era and into the Middle Ages, this belief was strengthened through the popular association between Jews and the practice of moneylending (usury), with Jews depicted as demanding extortionate rates of interest (a notion closely connected to the stereotype of → EXPLOITATION, Chapter 11.2).

The connection between Jews and money was the result of three main factors (Roth 2003):

1. distorted references to passages in the Talmud which permitted Jews to lend money at interest to non-Jews (although not to fellow Jews) (Freeman and Shurpin 2018),
2. the legal exclusion of Jews from the majority of non-monetary forms of labour and land-holding, the official—though widely ignored—bans on Christian moneylending by Canon law, and
3. the subsequent role of some wealthier Jews in lending money to (often deeply unpopular) monarchs, rulers and the wider aristocracy.

As commodity exchange and commerce grew in dominance throughout the early modern era, Jews became associated with the development and use of paper money, credit and bills of exchange. This new mode of exchange was widely regarded as inherently untrustworthy, a means of using mathematical trickery to bamboozle honest labourers and trap rulers in debt, and a cause of economic crises and poverty. The myth of Jews as pioneers and profiteers of the new 'funny money,' which took particular hold in France, has been disproved by recent research showing categorically that Jews and Jewish-run banks made up a small portion of

the medieval proto-financial sector, which was dominated by Christian bankers closely entwined with the Vatican (Trivellato 2019). Nevertheless, the associations between Jews, financial trickery and greed became cemented in the popular imagination across early modern Europe. Images of Jews hoarding, counting or 'holding their hand out' for money were a common motif for paintings, sculptures and figurines throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while cultural productions—such as Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" or Charles Dickens's "Oliver Twist"—gave new creative life to the old tale (Meyer 2005; Adelman 2008).

This medieval idea has found expression on the internet particularly with the emergence of the 'Happy Merchant' meme: a cartoon image of a man with a crooked back and caricatured 'Jewish' nose, wearing a kippah and rubbing his hands in glee. The image was originally part of a larger racist cartoon, both anti-Jewish and anti-Black, created by a white supremacist cartoonist. The image of the Jew was then cropped and became the theme of the antisemitic image gallery on Tom Metzger's White Aryan Resistance website in 2004 (Oboler 2014). The image spread through the internet forum 4chan—favoured by the alt-right—and across the web, undergoing many modifications and re-workings to put the GREED stereotype to work in a huge and ever-changing range of online discourse settings (Andermann and Zizek 2022; ADL 2022).

This conflation of Jews, money and finance underpinned later—ASSOCIATIONS OF JEWS WITH CAPITALISM—to be discussed separately below—and was (and remains) a core tenet of modern antisemitic conspiracy theories. "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," the Russian forgery which remains the template for many antisemitic → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13) today, fantasised that the Jewish cabal sought to fulfil its goals by "working on the most impressionable side of human intelligence: with consideration to money, greed and the insatiable desire for gain" (quoted in Segel 1996: 137). Antisemitic CONSPIRACY THEORIES today continue to posit Jewish dominance of the international finance and banking sectors, which is supposedly used to 'pull the strings' of global political events in order to further Jewish financial interests. The contemporary demonisation of figures such as George Soros, routinely accused of seeking to control or distort global politics for

personal gain through shadowy financial → POWER (Chapter 12), draws directly on this lineage. The GREED stereotype can also be expressed in philosemitic form, when speakers make positive reference to the supposed innate 'business' or financial acumen of Jewish communities.

The emergence of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel quickly became a new terrain upon which the ancient stereotype of Jewish GREED took on new form. The desire for a Jewish state was itself depicted in terms of greed—an attribution that continues to be articulated in accusations of Israel as an insatiable 'land grabber' seeking a 'Greater Israel' across swathes of the Middle East (Pipes 1994). According to the antisemitic imagination, the state was founded as a launchpad for an international Jewish plot to take over the entire world, the ultimate end goal of the innate GREED of the Jewish people (Segel 1996: 58). Closely related to this idea is the notion that Jewish people and the Israeli state seek to profit from the memory of the Holocaust (→ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20). Ideas of a cynical 'Holocaust industry' enabling Jews to profit from a Western sense of shame or responsibility over Nazi crimes can bleed into more extreme theories which suggest that the events of the Shoah were a fiction cooked up by Jewish elites in order to expand their wealth, a form of → HOLOCAUST DENIAL (Chapter 18).

The concept of GREED is closely related to notions of EXPLOITATION but can be distinguished through its focus on the ascribed Jewish propensity for the accumulation of wealth, rather than the experience of being on the receiving end of such propensity. Comments which express a sense of being 'ripped off' or treated unfairly by Jews should be classed as EXPLOITATION.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Any generalised or essentialising accusation that Jews/Israel/Israelis/ Zionism are driven in their actions primarily by an 'unnatural' or 'immoral' level of greed, love for money or the desire for wealth, resources or land;

- In the case of figures who are well known as Jewish—such as George Soros—there does not need to be a direct reference to their Jewish identity.

Accusations of GREED against lesser-known Jewish individuals/entities should be treated with caution and a decision on the antisemitic nature of the accusation depends on the context and/or the use of other antisemitic tropes in the statement.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "It is disgusting to see how greedy these Jews are!"

This comment expresses the stereotype of Jewish GREED through an assertive, and thus direct, speech act. The use of the descriptor "disgusting" clearly expresses a sense of → REPULSIVENESS (Chapter 5), and the GREED stereotype is reproduced explicitly, with a direct reference to Jews making it obvious who is the target of the negative ascription.

(2) "their Zionist religion does not exist they just believe in dollars."

Here the attribution of GREED is produced through a contrast between the 'false religion' of Zionism—a formulation which already shifts Zionism from the level of national ideology to the religious sphere, in a way that seeks to single out Jewish nationalism from that of every other group—and the supposedly 'true' Jewish belief in "dollars"—that is, making money and chasing wealth. Zionism (and by extension the State of Israel) is portrayed here as a fraudulent political idea used cynically to cover up the underlying essence of Jewish existence, money-making. In so doing, the user makes GREED an innate characteristic of Jews as a whole.

Implicit

(3) "Business, always business !!!"

This comment was posted in response to reports of mediation efforts by the then Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The underlying motives for Bennett's actions are presented as being "business," i.e. money-making. The context of the comment—responding to a news story which contained no suggestion of any economic deals involving Israel—indicates that the web user's immediate reaching for the concept of "business" to interpret the actions of a prominent Jewish-Israeli is a means of articulating the GREED stereotype. The repetition of "business" with the addition "always" affirms the connection between Bennett's actions and the supposed innate Jewish tendency to pursue financial and monetary gain in any situation, and at the cost of any moral scruples.

(4) "They eat from every trough, money has no smell."

Both clauses of this comment are in their original fairly commonplace French sayings to describe any form of behaviour which prioritises money-making, profit or self-enrichment over moral concerns. In general use neither are antisemitic. They become so here due, first, to the context—posted in response to Israeli state diplomacy with no connection to economic or financial interests—and second, by the use of the plural third person pronoun "[t]hey," which moves the ascription of GREED from the level of particularity to one of generality, incorporating all Jews in an essentialising manner. In addition, the reference to animals feeding carries a further antisemitic subtext, by activating the imagery of animalistic gluttony and of REPULSIVENESS AND DEHUMANISATION.

(5) "who is holding his hand out once again?"

This comment is taken from a German news site, and its articulation of the GREED stereotype incorporates both a general and German-specific mode of the concept. The comment is structured as an indirect speech act, through the form of a rhetorical question and a metaphor ("holding his hand out"), both of which need interpretation to grasp their meaning.

The message being communicated is that Jews as a collective are seeking (more) money without being prepared to earn it, thus acting in a REPULSIVE (begging, cowardly) and GREEDY manner. The use of the phrase "once again" forms a presupposition, indicating that this is a repetitive, if not endemic, action of Jews across history, and thus ascribes an innate character to Jews. In a German post-World War II context, the idea of Jews demanding money from Germans is linked to ideas of an → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20) and concepts deriving from secondary antisemitism, such as → CLEAN BREAK (Chapter 17) and → REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16). When posted below the line of news articles dealing with current antisemitic incidents in Germany, such statements can be easily decoded as described above.

Non-antisemitic Examples

> (6) "The bridge between Judaism and banks/money changers is as old as the OT [Old Testament] and Christianity. Jews and money are symbiotic according to popular opinion. Even still in 19th and 20th century Germany. This is simply because of the tradition imposed on them by Christian society."

While this comment focuses on the popularly perceived relation or association between Jews, money and finance, it does so in order to problematise it and provide some historical context for the traditional association between Jews and money.

> (7) *When Soros was working full-time as an investment banker, he wanted more and more. No business was too unprofitable for him.*

The statement focuses on George Soros and the accusation of insatiable greed levelled at him. It could be read in an antisemitic way; however, as it provides a specific and delimited temporal context—while "working full-time as an investment banker"—it can also be understood as attaching the concept of GREED to the role of investment banker, without any additional Jewish element.

Related Categories

POWER (Chapter 12), REPULSIVENESS (Chapter 5), LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7).

11.2 Exploitation

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The idea that Jews are uniquely and inherently exploitative people is closely associated with the notion of an inherent Jewish GREED and is effectively its flip side. But rather than the focus of the concept being on the accumulation of wealth, here EXPLOITATION seeks to encapsulate and express the experience of being on the 'receiving end' of the supposed Jewish propensity for self-enrichment at the expense of both morality and other people. At the core of the concept is the notion that Jews take any and every opportunity to gain materially, regardless of the moral, ethical or physical consequences or harm inflicted on others. Jews are thus presented as inherently untrustworthy, people who will routinely → LIE and DECEIVE (Chapter 7) for material gain. This idea of untrustworthiness is connected to the broader concept of → FOREIGN-NESS/ALIENNESS (Chapter 2), according to which Jews do not belong to any nation or people, and so cannot be regarded as "wholly reliable" (Wodak 2018: 65) interlocutors or political and economic partners. It is given additional force by the long anti-Jewish association of Jews with → IMMORAL (Chapter 6) money-making and GREED. The result is an antisemitic concept in which Jews are always suspected of seeking to cut an unfair deal, to 'rip off' those who trade with them and to charge extortionate interest or rent.

The idea of endemic Jewish monetary or financial 'shady dealing' sits within a broader framework in which Jews are accused of failing to properly contribute to a national economy through productive labour, but rather exploit the labour of others for their own gain (Stoetzler 2008). Accusations that Jews had wilfully forsaken productive labour, particularly cultivating the land through agriculture, in favour of using financial

trickery to seep off the profits of honest, productive workers gained particular political potency in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Such claims were in part an offshoot of early bourgeois critiques of the 'unproductive' feudal aristocracy, to whom Jews (and moneylending Jews in particular) were closely associated (Penslar 2001). In the nineteenth century, the idea of a Jewish rejection of manual or 'productive' labour took on a new 'scientific' form. Jews, both rich and poor, were frequently characterised as 'parasitical' outsiders, feeding off the labour or largesse of the 'organic' community, and failing to make any contribution to the 'common wealth' (Stoetzler 2008). The end result of such parasitical exploitation was seen as the → DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14) of the 'true' and 'organic' national communities.

This → DEHUMANISING (Chapter 5) depiction of Jewish communities was not limited to the nationalist and fascist right but was found across the political spectrum, from the National Liberals in Germany—for whom "the Jews [were] our misfortune"—and the New Liberals in the UK (Bolton 2023), through to the socialist and anarchist left. Antisemitic accusations of Jewish parasitism can be found in the work of nineteenth-century anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and most explicitly in the writings of Russian revolutionary anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Bakunin claimed that "in all countries the people detest the Jews" because the "whole Jewish world […] constitutes a single exploitative sect, a sort of bloodsucker people, a collective parasite, voracious, organised in itself, not only across the frontiers of states but even across all the differences of political opinion" (quoted in Fine and Spencer 2017: 4–5). Over the past decades, the notion of EXPLOITATION has been again evoked in speculative claims that Jews were primarily responsible for the transatlantic slave trade, an idea that originates in Black radical circles such as the Nation of Islam (Faber 1998).

As with the concept of Jewish GREED, the idea of an inherent Jewish exploitativeness re-emerged in new form in the wake of the establishment of Israel, invariably tied to an alleged illegitimacy and fraudulent character of Jewish statehood. At the more benign end, Jews in Israel are accused of 'cultural and culinary appropriation,' due to a supposed absence of Israeli culture and connection with the Middle East. Ignoring the large Mizrahi Jewish presence in Israel, common Israeli foods (such

as hummus, shawarma and falafel) are being presented as Palestinian or Arab 'property' which Israel has stolen and falsely represented as their own (Mazzig 2020). At the more extreme end, the idea of 'parasitism' is applied to Israel, such that the state is an exploitative 'scam,' a means by which Jews can extract wealth and power from the USA, Germany or the world in general. Like GREED, there is a close relation between this idea and accusations of → INSTRUMENTALISING THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), tipping over at times into outright → HOLOCAUST DISTORTION and DENIAL (Chapter 18).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Generalised and/or essentialised allegation that Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism make use of somebody or something meanly, unfairly or fraudulently for their own advantage;
- Accusations that Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism are fundamentally unproductive, parasitic and do not contribute to economic development;
- Stating that Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism are or have been involved historically in exploitative processes such as transatlantic slave trade, child labour, workers' pauperisation, North–South inequalities, etc.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) *Another Jewish rip-off.*

The association with Jews and exploitative practices is made directly and unambiguously through the conjoining of "Jewish" and "rip-off," such that the "rip off" is presented as being innately Jewish (and vice versa).

The use of "[a]nother" acts as a presupposition, indicating the typicality and historical frequency of the alleged behaviour.

(2) "Israel is an artificial parasitic state."
(3) "Israel is not a state, it is a criminal parasite perpetrated by the US and UK. #history."

Both of these comments use the label of "parasite" to condemn Israel as an inherently exploitative entity, producing nothing of value but living off the labour and wealth of others. The first intensifies this claim with a description of Israel as "an artificial […] state," i.e. a state without historical legitimacy. The second comment refuses to even grant the title of 'state' to Israel at all, however qualified. Instead, Israel is called a "criminal parasite," a legal and ethical wrong in its entirety. Given a parasitical nature, Israel has no real agency of its own, but rather lives off the support given by "the US and UK"—the commenter thus suggests that Israel constitutes a crime "perpetrated" by those countries. The hashtag "#history" lends the comment a veneer of authority, presenting the commenter as well acquainted with the supposed historical facts which back up the allegations of Israel's parasitical, criminal existence.

(4) "The truth will not be silenced! These names are only the corrupt ones that suck the planet dry!"

This comment was posted in response to reports about antisemitic signs that appeared in French protests against the Covid-19 vaccination 'passport'; the signs contained the names of well-known Jewish figures, who were accused of being behind the pandemic and the vaccine. The commenter fights back against a presumed "silenc[ing]" of "[t]he truth"—namely that the people listed both created the Covid-19 crisis and are personally benefitting from it. This idea carries certain resonances of a → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23). According to the commenter, the (Jewish) names listed on the signs are "corrupt," and intent on "suck[ing] the planet dry," evoking imagery of Jews as blood-sucking parasites. Despite the comment not including a reference to the specific names, this information can be gleaned from the context of the

news report and the comment thread itself. As such it remains an explicit expression of the concept.

Implicit

(5) "normal, since it works as a leech, Europe had America giving the best of themselves for the leech."

Here, the attribution of Jewish parasitism is made through the metaphoric description of Israel as "a leech"—an animal stereotypically living through the EXPLOITATION of another animal, or human, body and sucking their blood. This image is strengthened through expression of the idea that Israel was created through a form of moral blackmail, in which European crimes and subsequent guilt for the Holocaust led "Europe" to force the USA into "giving the best of themselves"—presumably a reference to US funding and military support provided to Israel.

(6) "Knowing them they have watered it down a little."

In a comment posted in response to reports of the early success of the Covid-19 vaccination programme in Israel, the commenter suggests that "they"—a generalising reference to Israelis—have "watered down" the vaccine. Based on historical world knowledge, i.e. in the context of older and broader concepts of Jewish EXPLOITATIVENESS, it can be inferred here that Israelis are supposedly duplicitously seeking to make the most profit out of their resources, even if it entails dishonesty and fraud—regardless of the consequences. This fraudulent, potentially destructive behaviour is presented as being typical of Jewish practices as such.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(7) *Palestinians are often used as a cheap labour force in Israel. They should get more rights and protection.*

This comment addresses the issue of the human rights of Palestinians working in Israel, in a way that is matter-of-fact and not hyperbolic. The alleged economic hardships of these workers are not tied to an ontological Jewish nature, as such an accusation can be levelled against many other states using immigrant workers. The call for a change in policy seems oriented towards the political class and does not amount to a demonisation or a → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

Related Categories

LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7), DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14), THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTI-SEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), DEHUMANISATION (Chapter 5).

11.3 Identification with Capitalism

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Modern antisemitism was often twinned with a dogged hostility to modernity and its economic expression: capitalism, free trade and the world of finance. Often overshadowed by the scholarly emphasis on biological racism, antisemitic anti-capitalist discourse is nevertheless a powerful mechanism of *othering* and a key element in the metamorphosis of traditional anti-Judaism into modern antisemitism.

In medieval societies, Jewish minorities—prohibited from owning land and therefore excluded from the core economy of feudal society—engaged primarily in urban, skilled occupations such as trade, finance or the medical profession (Botticini and Eckstein 2007). These sectors of activity played a significant role in future capitalistic developments, thus creating the distorted picture of capitalism itself being an offshoot of a specific Jewish mindset and worldview—the core thesis of early sociologists of capitalism such as Werner Sombart (Bodemann 2014). Of course, in-depth analysis of the cultural dynamics of early capitalism

paints a much more nuanced picture: some authors, such as Max Weber, even situate the moral impetus of capitalism in the Protestant faith, rather than Judaism (Weber 2001 [1904]). Nonetheless, the association of Jewishness and capitalism mapped onto stereotypes and tropes which already enjoyed widespread currency in pre-modern European societies, such as the dichotomy between the 'pure,' 'spiritual' Christians and the 'materialistic,' 'cynical' and 'profit-driven' Jews (Battini 2016).

In this context, it is unsurprising that visual representations of the archetypal bourgeois (a corpulent, porcine and → REPULSIVE (Chapter 5) top-hatted figure) merged with the visual canon of anti-semitism. The figure of the Jew became the embodiment not only of the abstract forces of capitalism, but also of the social class which bene-fited from it, attracting mockery and hostility. Neither aristocratic nor plebeian, the Jew symbolised a form of social ambiguity and upward mobility typical of modernity: they were often castigated as greedy social climbers and as factors of social dissolution (Kaplan 2015). The intellec-tual genealogy of the anti-Jewish anti-capitalism paradigm can be traced back to the French Revolution. In 1806, the Catholic essayist Louis de Bonald penned an article titled suggestively "Sur les Juifs," in which he claimed that the emancipation of Jews had unleashed their economic → POWER (Chapter 12); therefore, he contends, Jews were positioned to become "the only social group that seemed to have benefited from the market society" (de Bonald 1806).

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, this worldview was spread mainly by intransigent Catholic writers who supported the Church's antiliberal social doctrine. By the middle of the century, the idea that capitalism was in some way entwined with Judaism began to take root within the burgeoning left-wing socialist milieus. Karl Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question," while taking aim at the overt political antisemitism of other leftist figures such as Bruno Bauer, nevertheless posited a connection between "the *empirical* essence of Judaism, i.e. haggling" and the rise of capitalism, such that through capitalism the world was becoming *Jewish* (Marx 1975: 56). Works by two French socialist thinkers—Alphonse Toussenel and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon— further contributed to the spread of antisemitic anti-capitalism, in which Jews were not merely characterised as being beneficiaries of capitalism,

but rather as the secretive force behind it, controlling its institutions and forcing its economic model upon the world (Kaplan 2015). These ideas gained such traction that by the turn of the century leading German socialist August Bebel famously decried antisemitism as "the socialism of fools" (Randall 2021).

The topos of Jewish economic domination and of their stranglehold on workers was also echoed in various anti-Jewish conspiracy narratives such as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (where they were paradoxically also accused of orchestrating the opposition to capitalism in the form of communism). In contemporary discourse, the figure of the banker still sometimes functions as a dog whistle for the Jewish elite: for example, a 2012 London mural by American artist Mear One depicted a "bankers' conspiracy" in ways strikingly reminiscent of antisemitic iconography (Bolton and Pitts 2018: 220–221). Populist critiques that pit a small, secretive, international elite of financiers against a 'hardworking,' 'productive' majority are not automatically antisemitic, but contain what Adorno and Horkheimer (2002 [1944]) described as the "elements of antisemitism," needing only political articulation to be brought to the surface. References to the supposed → POWER (Chapter 12) and control of the Rothschild banking family, or anti-capitalist critiques which focus on the Jewish background of particular figures within the financial and banking worlds, are commonplace in contemporary internet discourse on both the political right and left (Gidley 2021).

Therefore, contrary to a popular misconception, conservatism and nationalism did not have a monopoly on antisemitic sentiment (Crapez 1998). In industrialised nations, socio-economic antisemitism was a durable, potent ideological configuration which drove the rearticulation of religious anti-Judaism into a new framework, linking Jews to the wide-ranging dislocation generated by economic modernity. Socio-economic antisemitism is a two-pronged operation of ideological simplification: on the one hand, Jews are identified with money; on the other, capitalism is reduced to a supreme reign of the non-productive financial sector—that is, of money—over all social life (Postone 2003). This worldview can often take the form of a 'personalised' critique of capitalism (Bonefeld 2014), in which capitalism is not grasped as a social system but

rather attributed to the nefarious activities of identifiable individuals. Antisemitic versions of this critique naturally assume a static, quasi-ontological connection between Jews and capitalism. While less frequent than attributions of capitalism to Jews as such, or well-known Jewish figures such as George Soros, claims that the State of Israel functions as a base for capitalist or financial expansion and exploitation enable associations of Jews and capitalism to enter anti-Zionist discourse.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Associations of Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism as a group with capitalism, or capitalism as being innately Jewish;
- Moving beyond simple attributions of Jews or well-known Jewish figures being profiteers 'within the system,' to suggestions that Jews are 'behind the system' itself—that is determining the function or structure of capitalism. They may be depicted as being protagonists of capitalism or even the only true capitalists.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) *Jewish capitalism is the enemy.*

Here the identification of capitalism with Judaism is direct and undisguised. The idea of a "Jewish capitalism" which is "the enemy" suggests the possibility of a capitalism that is not Jewish and which would be beneficent. Thus, what is wrong with capitalism is not capitalism as such, but only its Jewish manifestation.

(2) *Modern capitalism is essentially the collusion of Wall Street and Jerusalem. This is the alliance that drives today's economic system, and only when it will be broken can we find an alternative to it.*

In European antisemitic thought, particularly in France and Germany, Jews were associated strongly with Anglo-Saxon mercantilism. The idea of a Jewish-American alliance was prominent in Nazi propaganda, and it bled into anti-American sentiment during the Cold War period, when it was rehashed by Soviet discourse. Therefore, the idea that capitalism is the fusion of the cynical desire for profit of financial elites (referred to metonymically as Wall Street) and of an ancient, deep-rooted Jewish impetus maps onto both religious antisemitism (which sees Judaism as such as being materialistic and profit-driven) and modern economic antisemitism (which blames rootless cosmopolitans for the ills of modernity). The comment is based on a presupposition, which is affirmed as a universal, undisputable fact. In the second part, the commenter states that opposing Jews and their allies is a necessary step to find an alternative to the capitalist model, thus explicitly linking anti-capitalism and antisemitism as one common cause.

Implicit

(3) *Those (((capitalists))) running the world.*

The use of triple brackets around a word as a semiotic marker originates in far-right online forums (Tuters and Hagen 2020), where it was used to indicate the Jewish background of a particular person without stating it outright (and thus without risking moderation or social sanction). By placing "capitalists" within the three brackets, this comment indicates that the capitalists in question are Jewish, and that their Jewish identity is central both to their position as capitalists and the POWER demonstrated by their supposed "running the world."

(4) *Capitalism is a plot by you know who #Rothschilds*

This comment expresses the association of Jews and capitalism by means of focusing on well-known figures within the banking or financial worlds who are of Jewish background. The first expresses a conspiratorial critique of capitalism as a consciously constructed "plot" which, while not itself directly antisemitic, does open a pathway to antisemitic modes of anti-capitalism. The reference to "you know who" suggests

an inability to speak directly of those who are behind this plot, for fear of sanction, an idea closely related to the → TABOO OF CRITI-CISM (Chapter 23). That "you know who" refers to Jews is confirmed by the hashtag "#Rothschilds," in which the historic banking family is used to allude to the concept of a general Jewish POWER/INFLUENCE over political and economic conditions.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(5) *This international cabal are forcing capitalism on the rest of us to impoverish the people and enrich themselves. They are monsters.*

There is no reference to Jews in general or Jewish individuals in the comment, and as such it can be taken for a crude form of populist critique of the "international elite" in the name of "the people." However, the use of the term "cabal"—a word whose etymological roots lie in the Hebrew 'kabala,' meaning a form of received mystical knowledge—indicates a potential antisemitic meaning, where the "international cabal" are coded as Jewish. But given the widespread use of 'cabal' to mean 'small group of powerful figures,' a label which does not necessarily have to be directed at Jews, to code such a comment as antisemitic would require further contextual information than is carried in the comment alone.

(6) *We need a revolution to get rid of Soros, Rothschild, Gates, Yellen, Rockefeller and all the rest of them.*

Here, the leftist idea of an anti-capitalist revolution is reduced to the eradication of certain well-known individuals, three of whom are of Jewish background. This betrays a highly conspiratorial and potentially antisemitic understanding of capitalism. However, given that the three Jewish names singled out are, or have been, the holders of significant financial, banking or governmental power, and the other two figures mentioned are not Jewish, it is not clear—without further context—whether the antisemitic reading of the comment is the main or most coherent interpretation.

Related Categories

CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), POWER (Chapter 12).

References

Adelman, Janet. 2008. *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in "The Merchant of Venice."* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2022. The Happy Merchant. https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/happy-merchant (last accessed on 03 December 2022).

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. 2002 [1944]. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Andermann, Hendrik-Zoltán, and Boris Zizek. 2022. Reconstructing an Antisemitic Meme on Social Media Through Objective Hermeneutics. In *Antisemitism on Social Media*, ed. Monika Hübscher and Sabine von Mering, 151–166. Abingdon: Routledge.

Battini, Michele. 2016. *Socialism of Fools*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bodemann, Y. Michal. 2014. Coldly Admiring the Jews: Werner Sombart and Classical German Sociology on Nationalism and Race. In *Antisemitism and the Constitution of Sociology*, ed. Marcel Stoetzler, 110–134. Lincoln and London: Nebraska University Press.

Bolton, Matt, and Frederick Harry Pitts. 2018. *Corbynism: A Critical Approach*. Emerald: Bingley.

Bolton, Matthew. 2023. Antisemitism in the British 'New Liberalism' movement. In *Critical Theory and the Critique of Antisemitism*, ed. Marcel Stoetzler. London: Bloomsbury.

Bonefeld, Werner. 2014. *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Bloomsbury.

Botticini, Maristella, and Zvi Eckstein. 2007. From Farmers to Merchants, Conversions and Diaspora: Human Capital and Jewish History. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 5 (5): 885–926.

Crapez, Marc. 1998. *La gauche réactionnaire*. Oxford: Berg International.

De Bonald, Louis. 1806. Sur les Juifs. *Mercure de France*, 1 February. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k3817054h/f9.item.r=Bonald (last accessed on 16 December 2022).

Faber, Eli. 1998. *Jews, Slaves, and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight*. New York: NYU Press.

Fine, Robert, and Philip Spencer. 2017. *Antisemitism and the Left*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Foxman, Abraham H. 2010. *Jews and Money: The Story of a Stereotype*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freeman, Tzvi, and Shurpin Yehuda. 2018. Moneylending and Jewish Law. Chabad.org. https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4108763/jewish/Moneylending-and-Jewish-Law.htm (last accessed on 19 February 2024).

Gidley, Ben. 2021. Understanding and Resisting Left-Right Convergence in the Internet Age. In *Exposing the Right and Fighting for Democracy*, ed. Pam Chamberlain, Matthew N. Lyons, Abby Scher, and Spencer Sunshine, 80–87. London: Routledge.

Kaplan, Zvi Jonathon. 2015. A Socialist Drumont? Alphonse Toussenel and the Jews. *Jewish History* 29 (1): 39–55.

Marx, Karl. 1975 [1843]. On The Jewish Question. In *Early Political Writings*, 211–242. London: Penguin.

Mazzig, Hen, 2020. Attacking Israeli Food? Your Racism Is Showing. *Jewish Journal*, 12 February. https://jewishjournal.com/commentary/columnist/310647/attacking-israeli-food-your-racism-is-showing/ (last accessed on 16 December 2022).

Meyer, Susan. 2005. Antisemitism and Social Critique in Dickens's Oliver Twist. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 (1): 239–252.

Munson, Henry. 2020. The Permeable Boundary Between Christian Anti-Judaism and Secular Antisemitism. In *Explaining, Interpreting, and Theorizing Religion and Myth*, ed. Nickolas P. Roubekas and Thomas Ryba, 174–195. Leiden: Brill.

Nirenberg, David. 2013. *Anti-Judaism*. London: Head of Zeus.

Oboler, Andre. 2014. *The Antisemitic Meme of the Jew*. Caulfield South, VIC: Online Hate Prevention Institute.

Penslar, Derek J. 2001. *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pipes, Daniel. 1994. Imperial Israel: The Nile-to-Euphrates Calumny. *Middle East Quarterly* 1 (1). https://www.meforum.org/215/imperial-israel-the-nile-to-euphrates-calumny (last accessed on 14 December 2022).

Postone, Moishe. 2003. The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century. In *Catastrophe and Meaning*, ed. Moishe Postone and Eric Santner, 81–114. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Randall, Daniel. 2021. *Confronting Antisemitism on the Left: Arguments for Socialists*. London: No Pasaran Media.

Roth, Norman. 2003. Moneylending. In *Medieval Jewish Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Norman Roth, 453–462. London: Routledge.

Segel, Binjamin W. 1996. *A Lie and a Libel: The History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.

Stoetzler, Marcel. 2008. *The State, the Nation and the Jews*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Trivellato, Francesca. 2019. *The Promise and Peril of Credit: What a Forgotten Legend about Jews and Finance Tells Us about the Making of European Commercial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tuters, Marc, and Sal Hagen. 2020. (((They))) Rule: Memetic Antagonism and Nebulous Othering on 4chan. *New Media & Society* 22 (12): 2218–2237.

Weber, Max. 2001 [1904]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Routledge.

Wodak, Ruth. 2018. The Radical Right and Antisemitism. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren, 61–85. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

12

Power

Matthias J. Becker

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The notion that "Jews have too much power" has been a recurring theme in the history of antisemitism. This belief persists today, as evidenced by a 2023 survey conducted by the ADL, which revealed that over 20% of Americans subscribe to the idea that "Jews have too much power in the United States." Additionally, nearly a quarter of all respondents expressed the belief that "Jews have too much power on Wall Street or in the business world" (ADL 2023). This underscores a significant aspect of antisemitism: unlike racism, which seeks to portray certain groups as inferior, antisemitism also aims to propagate the image of Jewish omnipotence and depict Jews as a shadowy and oppressive elite (Wistrich 2010).

M. J. Becker (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: mjb@decoding-antisemitism.eu

It is worth noting that the topos of JEWISH POWER was a rather marginal stereotype in Christian antisemitism. It was not until the nineteenth century that it became a central element of the symbolic grammar of antisemitism, intimately linked to the emergence of political and cultural modernity. Augustin Barruel popularised the motif in the aftermath of the French Revolution, alleging that Jews control liberal and anti-monarchist political factions. Left-wing antisemites—such as Alphonse Toussenel, author of a book transparently titled "The Jews, Kings of Our Time"—then latched onto the idea, albeit in a less conspiratorial tone: here, Jews are presented as ruthless capitalists and captains of industry, controlling the flow of money and yielding this power to dominate politics (Kaplan 2015). As Jewish influence is often allegedly exercised through money, it maps perfectly onto earlier anti-Jewish representations (→ GREED and EXPLOITATION, Chapters 11.1 and 11.2). This showcases the ability of antisemitism to adapt and evolve: it capitalises on the increased defiance against authority that comes with political modernity, using the framework of a legitimate revolt against the elites to justify anti-Jewish prejudice.

It is the construct of POWER that makes antisemitism as a hate ideology so attractive in contemporary anti-hegemonic discourses, such as within some modes of anti-globalisation, anti-imperialist and anti-racist activism (Postone 2006; Julius 2010; Kressel 2017; Kahn-Harris 2019; Baddiel 2021). Such ideas appear in more explicit form within the imaginary of supremacist movements of all stripes—the concept communicates that Jews seek to subjugate the respective in-group and represent a danger (Langer 2022). This specificity (as well as subsequent concepts and conspiracy narratives) ultimately means the topos of JEWISH POWER functions as a "symbolic glue" that links movements and ideologies which are at the opposite end of the political spectrum—from white supremacism (which alleges Jews direct their power against the nation-state and white majorities), to simplistic modes of radical anti-capitalism (which can implicitly present a supposed "Jewish elite" in the financial sector as the driver of neoliberal policy and economic exploitation, → IDENTIFICATION WITH CAPITALISM, Chapter 11.3), and to some forms of anti-imperialism (which focuses on Israel's alleged influence on Western governments and mainstream media).

In line with the observation that the notion of JEWISH POWER can extend to all sorts of spheres—while in the Middle Ages it was primarily money trade, since modern times corresponding insinuations against Jews have expanded to encompass all possible spheres of life—there is a diversity of manifestations that is mirrored in the empirical material presented below. Besides the political arena, Jewish influence is imagined above all in the spheres of business or in the media and entertainment industries. The topos of POWER is, of course, closely intertwined with antisemitic → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13). However, the latter goes beyond simply ascribing exaggerated power to Jews. A conspiracy narrative in such a context alleges that JEWISH POWER affects all domains of social life, instead of being circumscribed to one (such as media, the financial markets, politics, etc.). In addition, conspiracy narratives insist less on overt or publicly identifiable networks of influence, but rather on a hidden, secretive cabal. Therefore, CONSPIRACY THEORIES are much more of a holistic category, because they seek to explain the workings of society as a whole, whereas the notion of POWER has a narrower scope and lower public visibility.

The mention of *a* Jewish or Israeli lobby, for example, carries less conspiratorial undertones, because lobbying is a lawful—albeit informal—political process in modern democracies. Also, the work of Israeli lobby organisations is a matter of fact and does not in itself constitute antisemitism (neither CONSPIRACY THEORIES nor the stereotype of POWER). The depiction of *the* Jewish or Israeli lobby, however, carries the connotation that it operates globally, involves Jews all over the world and ascribes disproportionate power and influence. Thus references to "the Jewish lobby" or "the lobby" are a central manifestation of the POWER stereotype, which—often simply because of the excessive reference to these and no lobby organisations of other interest groups—deviates from an ordinary description of or criticism of power constellations.

Alongside the idea of a Jewish *agens* influencing the political, financial/economic and public/media spheres, ideas of a subjugated *patiens* also lurk in antisemitic discourse. Examples include the fantasy that German politics does not dare to present itself confidently towards Jewish

communities or Israel,[1] or the belief that the media only expresses pro-Israeli tones out of fear of retribution. The passive side, which can also be translated as submissiveness and SERVILITY, presupposes a POWERFUL Jewish side. It is essential to distinguish this from notions of goodwill on the part of the media or political actors, which imply the existence of a certain pro-Jewish/Israeli bias or benevolence without claiming it is enforced directly but suggesting internal (ideological or material) considerations.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- The insinuation that Jews, Israelis, or Zionists, whether as individuals or a group, or Israel itself possess an overwhelming amount of power or even omnipotence;
- The attribute of power can also manifest as submissiveness or even fear, assumed on the part of politics, society or the media when dealing with Jews/Israel.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

The following comments present examples where attributions of POWER are projected directly onto a Jewish identity, which despite its explicit form, is becoming increasingly common as a form of antisemitic hate speech, even in online comment sections of the political mainstream:

(1) "it's not just Britain, it's worldwide… Jewish lobby organisations have a huge influence over the world media, politics and economy. It's neither new nor unknown fact."

---

[1] In 2012, it was the journalist Jakob Augstein, son of Rudolf Augstein (the founder of *Der Spiegel*) that coined the metaphorical phrase: "When Jerusalem calls, Berlin bows to its will" (Augstein 2012; Betzler and Glittenberg 2015).

(2) "The CRIF is very strong, when I think that we spit on Islam with impunity and for one or two normal signs we cry antisemitism, bravo Jews 😏 you are very strong"

(3) "As ADENAUER[2] already said: 'The power of the Jews should not be underestimated EVEN TODAY'…!"

(4) "Not surprised with these fabricated stories. The media is owned by the Jews."

In these comments, related notions are linked to FINANCIAL and ECONOMIC, but also POLITICAL POWER, as well as to the idea of INFLUENCE ON PUBLIC OPINION through control of media and discourse. In line with the aforementioned distinction between POWER and CONSPIRACY THEORIES, (1) and (2) represent examples of the POWER stereotype since, firstly, the commenter refers to "lobby organisations," and secondly, the mentioned CRIF (*Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France*) is a public association in France which operates openly, mainly through media campaigns. Thus, in these two statements, there is no allegation that a secret lobby directs all the domains of one or various countries (which would correspond to a conspiracy narrative). The quote highlighted in (3) directly references the stereotype that is articulated once more in the final sentence of (4).

In debates within politically moderate online spheres, the concept of POWER is most frequently applied in the context of Israel and Zionism. Here, commenters tend to use terms such as "lobby" or "master(s)." This observation shows how the explicit rendering of this concept is to be located in post-war detour communication, which tends to revolve around the Arab–Israeli conflict:

(5) "Israel owns all major parties in Britain. they all do it's bidding."

(6) "'I am Israel. I have the power to control American policy. My American Israel Public Affairs Committee can make or break any politician of its choosing, and as you see, they all compete to please me.'"

(7) "And all European Union countries and UN are busy silent. These organisations seems to be fearing Israel."

---

[2] Konrad Adenauer was the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1949 to 1963. The original quote is "The power of the Jews even today, especially in America, should not be underestimated," cf. Marwecki (2020).

(8) "It is not allowed in our governments to mess with the toughest best funded lobby Group in the world; The Israeli Lobby."

Besides the typical construction "Israel owns/controls X" that appears in (5) and (6), (7) and (8) demonstrate how the flip side of the alleged power structure can be articulated in online communication: web users ominously convey a general sense of danger and threat. By highlighting the coercive power and resources of the "toughest best funded lobby Group in the world," (8) is activating a SELF-VICTIMISATION (Chapter 15) scenario. The supposedly servile and timid behaviour of the world's governments and multinational bodies is meant to reveal that their authority is only a façade, and that the real power belongs to Jewish or Israeli interests. The imputation of POWER and SERVILITY is not limited to the political sphere. Commenters emphasise that the effect of an alleged—Jewish as well as Israeli—POWER is also, and especially reflected in the media landscape as soon as the Arab–Israeli conflict stands in the foreground:

(9) "They [the media] are run by Zionists! They are not telling the truth; they are trying to manipulate their audience."

(10) "Israeli's protecting themselves… Double standards of western puppet media of Yahood…."

(11) "How are they supposed to report neutrally when they are led and fed like puppets by the same hand? They can only serve up pro-Zion news, woe betide the politician, actor, celebrity who raises the injustice in Palestine, in the same week that person's life is made more difficult in every way, if he/she goes too far one might even have a car accident on the street…"

These and the following examples show how the stereotype of (Jewish/Israeli/Zionist) POWER over the media is repeatedly expressed in connection with the stereotype of DECEIT (supposedly covering up crimes in the Middle East conflict), but also with the → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23) and CONSPIRACY THEORIES. (11) even reflects the idea that contrary opinions will be punished with loss of livelihood, or even death. In addition to a general rejection of the legitimacy of the media, individual media are directly addressed and accused, with users repeatedly resorting to the same conventionalised metaphors to imply SERVILITY:

(12) "Shame on you [*The Independent*] and your biased journalism. Please change your name to Zionist news."

(13) "Why don't you [*The Guardian*] show how it started and who always starts it. Seems that you're scared of the Zionists that pay you rather than report on the truth."

(14) "Screw your [*Daily Mail*] propaganda and your masters the Zionists."

(15) "Where is that news FT….. you also have become a pet of the Terrorist state of Israel."

(16) "Well, it just shows the telegraph also sits in Israel's pocket."

Implicit

The patterns through which the concept of political POWER is implicitly communicated range from omissions (17) to deliberate errors (18), with which users presumably try to avoid the automatic recognition of the name "Rothschild" in the comments section:

(17) [As confirmation of S. Lavrov's conspiracy myth][3] "Yes, because [Hitler's] paternal grandmother has worked for a well-known and powerful family in Vienna. Rot … ☺"

(18) User 1: "Nat Roth schild has been lobbying UK MPs to obliterate Russia."
User 2: "Therein lies a lot of the world problems with that family. They finance all wars, shame on them."

Furthermore, users resort to metaphors—in (19)–(21)—and allusions—in (22)–(24)—to imply the presence of Jewish POWER:

(19) "the world is silent because of the puppet masters who pull the strings."

(20) "Follow the money."

(21) "And Israel has got its dogs barking in the USA ☺ ☺."

(22) "No suprise, the country that secretly controls the world is getting the quickest vaccines."

---

[3] For more information on Lavrov's statement and reactions online, cf. Ascone et al. (2022).

(23) "these boomer cuckservatives won't take kindly to your criticism of their masters ethnostate."

(24) "Not just the UN, but we Brits share part of the blame … although I strongly suspect our hand was tilted in the wrong direction by the usual suspects. But even so, this was certainly not our best effort in disassembling empire."

If the metaphors are still relatively conventionalised in online discourse, readers need sufficient world and contextual knowledge in order to deconstruct the allusions correctly. In (22), the allusion is virtually standard in the context of demonising an allegedly omnipotent Israel; in (23), the commenter alleges a relationship or dependency and zealous obedience between conservative politicians and Israel; the Jewish state is not mentioned explicitly, but the reference to an "ethnostate," an accusation routinely levelled against Israel (→ RACIST STATE, Chapter 29.2), narrows the meaning of the phrase in an antisemitic sense. The term "cuckservative" is also interesting, as it is routinely used by the radical right to castigate mainstream conservatives as weak and servile. And in (24), the world knowledge about Israel's origins and about the involvement of the UK and the UN in that process leads readers to conclude that the commenter alludes to Jewish communities as well as, through a metaphor ("our hand was tilted"), to Jewish control.

As with other stereotypes, rhetorical questions are popular patterns to communicate the respective concept:

(25) "Guess who has major influence over that world?"
(26) "How long before MP Julie Elliott is 'purged'?"

Whether it is a matter of general assertions about the fate of the world or speculation about the reasons for concrete political scandals, the supposed enquiry in this way has the status of sharing a secret knowledge in a particularly effective way (see also rhetorical questions in Chapter 13).

In contrast to the allusions in the examples above, the following examples of paralogisms activate chains of inferences that are supposed to lead to the idea of Jewish POWER:

(27) "Now answer why 30 states force contractors to sign contracts stating that they can't boycott or promote the boycott of Israel."

(28) "Criticism of the Israeli regime is not antisemitism. The conservative government have been more recently making changes to what is allowed to be taught to fit their narrative. It's worth looking into those who financially back our politicians!!!"

(29) "I find it somewhat alarming that my original post was deleted, there was nothing in the post that was either factually incorrect or offensive is any questioning of the power and influence of this community and individuals therein, no matter how oblique, to be completely off limits?"

The emphatic appeal in (27) shows how a commenter can indirectly refer to an Israeli POWER. Directly engaging other users, the comment functions similarly to a rhetorical question, as the answer is strongly implied in the interrogation. This "detective" approach and the focus on *cui bono* ("who benefits") is heavily employed in conspiracist discourse, which tries to create the illusion of a rigorous logic. The obvious beneficiary of measures taken to combat antisemitism or anti-Zionism being Jews and Israel, it is deduced that they are necessarily the forces behind such measures. This simplistic representation denies any agency to sovereign nation-states or organisations which might have other ideological, cultural or political reasons for taking such steps. The same concatenation occurs in (28), where an investigation is suggestively demanded to identify those behind the attitude of conservative politicians in the UK. Who these backers are is again made clear by the initial assertion of who these policies ultimately serve. In (29), the deletion by content moderation of a previous comment that was suspected to contain hate speech is interpreted as a sign of the influence of the reference group. The → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23) is taken as the ultimate proof of the omnipotence of Jewish and Israeli groups. In all these examples, therefore, the same principle is present: the real force behind the bans is their beneficiaries.

In relation to the notion of POWER in the media context, puns and allusions again determine the way commentators indirectly reproduce the discussed stereotype:

(30) "I know that western media is pathetically zionized."
(31) "Guardian of Zion!!!"

Allusions also play an important role in the implicit reproduction of this stereotype. In the following comment, the commenter claims via a reference to biblical sources that media outlets are spreading falsehoods about George Soros:

(32) "This is nothing to do with anti-Semitism. I suggest you (The BBC film makers) look into this more carefully; those who still know what the truth is and haven't taken your 30 pieces of silver."

By contrasting "those who still know what the truth is and haven't taken [money]" with those who have allegedly been bribed, in the context of a BBC report on conspiracy theories that are regularly activated when the name George Soros is mentioned, the commenter accuses the outlet of this very bribery. This is not done directly, however, but by means of an allusion to the New Testament story of Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus (Becker and Troschke 2023). This allusion activates a core element of anti-Judaism, according to which the Son of God was betrayed (and consequently killed) by a Jew—an accusation that has since been transferred by the Christian church onto the entire Jewish community. In contrast to the historical scenario, however, it is not a Jewish person who benefits from the alleged act (as in the case of Judas, an example of GREED). Rather, this relationship is reversed: according to the comment, the role of the Romans is now played by an influential Jew, Soros; and the role of Judas by the BBC. Hence, the two stereotypes come to the fore: primarily it is said that a bribed BBC delivers biased reporting (POWER) and by allusion, the comment articulates the stereotype of GREED in an indirect manner—it effectively accuses the film makers of "acting like Jews," or acting in a way that furthers Jewish interests, sacrificing their morals and commitment to the truth in exchange for financial reward. As before, conventional and creative metaphors become apparent in online discourse:

(33) "Utterly Disgraceful reporting at best. A dog doesn't bite his Master I guess."

(34) "They [the media] are biased and they can't go against their masters can they 😒"

Moreover, rhetorical questions in particular serve as an indirect way to foster the image of Jewish or Israeli POWER on the media landscape:

(35) "Who controls the media? 😊"
(36) "Is the spectator owned by an Israeli or something?"
(37) "Did Netanyahu write that headline?"
(38) "'The Independent' hmm wondering just how independent this paper really is now?"
(39) "How much did you [*The Guardian*] get for to publish this shameful article?"

And here, too, the aforementioned paralogisms occur – this time with regard to the media. Once again, by criticising a state or development, commenters indirectly allude to a Jewish or Israeli beneficiary:

(40) "Great performance Bild!!! 'Rocket terror' as a headline, so you clearly show where you stand and who is directing you."
(41) "Report comes out yesterday concluding that Israel is an apartheid state and, predictably, today the news is about 'ANTI-SEMITISM!!!' It's all so obvious and, frankly, BORING."
(42) "Search and easily list the owners of the French media, TV, press, etc. Then shut up."

Non-antisemitic Examples

Like conspiracy theories in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the notion of POWER is to be evaluated in terms of whether the subjects of power or the characteristics of the exercise of power can be understood as an expression of antisemitic thinking.

For example, when commenters present a certain media narrative in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic as being determined by the interests of the elite, the clues are often insufficient to identify (structural) anti-semitism behind it, since the respective statement can also simply be an expression of anti-elitist thinking. Examples of this include coded terms

like "globalists," "cosmopolitan elite" or "New World Order" (NWO) that—if the context is too ambivalent—cannot be reduced to antisemitic meaning (even though they are frequently used accordingly).[4]

In the context of a problematisation of media's focus on antisemitic violence emanating from minorities (such as Black of Muslim), rhetorical questions that seek to address the motivation of such focus should not necessarily be understood as an indirect reference to a Jewish or Israeli influence. Instead, they might just underline the racism of certain actors and milieus the outlets and/or their journalists feel affiliated with. In this respect, a comment like (43) can criticise anti-Muslim narratives the part of the media (or the political orientation of the sponsor of a tendentious study) without crossing the line into antisemitic thinking:

(43) *Who benefits from inciting hatred against Muslims? Who paid for this study?*

The same applies to a basically positive attitude on the part of politics and the media that is self-motivated. In contrast to SERVILITY, where influence and POWER are indirectly communicated, goodwill is interpreted as being based on its own principles. If, for example, a certain media outlet adopts an editorial stance favourable to Israel or immediately rejects relativising statements about Nazi crimes, this is not to be interpreted as a consequence of the assumed actions of an alleged lobby. The conclusion, according to the commenter, could be that the position of the media outlet under discussion is freely chosen, and possibly motivated by the aim to present itself as history-sensitive and anti-antisemitic. Admittedly, these two assertions—*goodwill* of the outlet and *control* coming from a Jewish/Israeli out-group—can go together, directly or indirectly. However, there must be clear indicators in the respective comment that represent explicit or implicit patterns to reproduce the latter stereotype. In post-war Germany, a statement such as "from that lobby that has always been breathing down our necks" can be described as antisemitic. By contrast, the insinuation of an "opinion

---

[4] However, see ADL "Quantifying Hate: A Year of Anti-Semitism on Twitter," https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/quantifying-hate-a-year-of-anti-semitism-on-twitter, or Sales (2019).

lobby" in post-war Germany can also be understood in terms of the so-called German *raison d'état* when it comes to Israel's security, which is a reality of German symbolic politics and not an imagined power apparatus.

Another non-antisemitic example is the criticism of a Jewish individual who is undeniably in a position of economic wealth and/or political power (like the billionaire George Soros or high-ranking Jewish politicians) which refers specifically to that person's status and connections (and therefore represents a truth value) without extending that characteristic to all participants of that group or implying that their Jewishness is a factor in their accumulation of influence.

Related Categories

CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), GREED (Chapter 11), DECEIT (Chapter 7), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023. Antisemitic Attitudes in America: Topline Findings, 12 January. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/antisemitic-attitudes-america-topline-findings (last accessed on 24 August 2023).

Ascone, Laura, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloé Vincent. 2022. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 4*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-16292.

Augstein, Jakob. 2012. Die deutsche Atomlüge. In *Der Spiegel Online*, 4 June.

Baddiel, David. 2021. *Jews Don't Count*. London: TLS.

Becker, Matthias J., and Hagen Troschke. 2023. Decoding Implicit Hate Speech—Using the Example of Antisemitism. In *Challenges and Perspectives of Hate Speech Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, ed. Christian Strippel, Sünje Paasch-Colberg, Martin Emmer, and Joachim Trebbe. Berlin:

Digital Communication Research. https://www.digitalcommunicationrese arch.de/v12.

Betzler, Lukas, and Manuel Glittenberg. 2015. *Antisemitismus im deutschen Mediendiskurs. Eine Analyse des Falls Jakob Augstein*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Julius, Anthony. 2010. *Trials of the Diaspora. A History of Anti-semitism in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kahn-Harris, Keith. 2019. *Strange Hate: Antisemitism, Racism and the Limits of Diversity*. London: Repeater.

Kaplan, Zvi Jonathan. 2015. A Socialist Drumont? Alphonse Toussenel and the Jews. *Jewish History* 29 (1): 39–55.

Kressel, Neil J. 2017. The Great Failure of the Anti-Racist Community: The Neglect of Muslim Antisemitism in English-Language Courses, Textbooks, and Research. In *From Antisemitism to Anti-Zionism: The Past & Present of a Lethal Ideology*, ed. Eunice G. Pollack. Boston: Academic Studies Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781618115669-003.

Langer, Armin. 2022. Deep State, Child Sacrifices, and the "Plandemic:" The Historical Background of Antisemitic Tropes within the QAnon Movement. In *Antisemitism on Social Media*, ed. Monika Hübscher and Sabine von Mering. London: Routledge.

Marwecki, Daniel. 2020. Reparation Was National Rehabilitation: Germany and Israel's Long, Strange Relationship. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May. https://mondediplo.com/2020/05germany-israel (last accessed on 02 December 2022).

Postone, Moishe. 2006. History and Helplessness: Mass Mobilization and Contemporary Forms of Anticapitalism. *Public Culture* 18 (1): 93–110.

Sales, Ben. 2019. Senator's Speech on "Cosmopolitan Elites": Anti-Semitic Dog Whistle or Poli-Sci Speak?" Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 19 July. https://www.jta.org/2019/07/19/united-states/a-missouri-senator-gave-a-speech-opposing-a-powerful-upper-class-and-their-cosmopolitan-priorities-um (last accessed on 02 December 2022).

Wistrich, Robert S. 2010. *A Lethal Obsession. Anti-Semitism from Antiquity to the Global Jihad*. New York: Random House.

13

Conspiracy Theories

Alexis Chapelan

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Historically, one fundamental aspect of antisemitism was how it was organised as a mass ideology with the aim to mobilise the population against a common enemy. In this respect, it was always directed towards the broadest possible public consumption. Antisemitic pamphlets became—alongside the Bible—one of the first mass-produced printed works in early Modernity (Baron 1967; Teter 2020; Scribner 1994). Conspiracy theories—particularly antisemitic ones—are amongst the first cultural products of mass consumption in history.

A history of antisemitism is a history of the virality of fear and prejudice; and the main driver of that virality was the narrative of a nefarious conspiracy led by Jews to destroy society. Going beyond a purely descriptive definition—an assertion of the existence of a covertly operating

A. Chapelan (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.uni

group of people who seek to manipulate the course of events (Butter 2020)—conspiracy narratives can be mapped onto a specific perspective on power. They are fundamentally oversimplified ways, in which people attempt to make sense of power and how it is (unevenly) distributed in society. Antisemitism, on the other hand, constructs Jews as an abstract, intangible form of global power that dominates the world. This distinguishes antisemitism from most other forms of racism (Postone 1980). Antisemitism tends to ascribe to the "Jew" an unlimited, albeit secretive, agency which justifies discrimination or even extermination. When looking at both antisemitism and conspiracy theories through the lens of power, their structural proximity becomes evident.

There is still debate amongst scholars whether medieval anti-Judaism constituted a "mature" conspiracist worldview or merely contained proto-conspiracist elements (Heil 2006; Butter 2020). Nevertheless, the medieval language of Jew-hatred already exhibited features common to later conspiracy accusations: secrecy, plotting, the sense of Jewish unity and their alleged international connections, their use of foreign languages, etc. The Great Plague, in particular, represented a crucial juncture as it shifted anti-Jewish accusations from a local plane (→ BLOOD LIBEL, Chapter 4, host desecration, etc.) to an international one (Heil 2006). As the printing press homogenised and centralised these fragmentary horror folk tales, the idea of a single extended Jewish conspiracy to destroy Christianity took even sturdier roots. During the nineteenth century, new narratives emerged on both sides of the political spectrum: on the conservative right, Jews were seen as plotting against the old Christian monarchist order, whilst on the socialist left, they were perceived as organising a takeover of the economy and the exploitation of the toiling masses (→ GREED, Chapter 11). The political grammar of modern antisemitic conspiracy theories was laid out in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," a fraudulent late nineteenth-century document which purports that Jews are organising clandestinely to use their international influence to take over the world and encourage the downfall of societal norms (Webman 2011).

With explicit demonstrations of anti-Jewish prejudice largely tabooed in post-Holocaust Western societies, a process of "detour communication" has taken shape, in which latently antisemitic conspiracy theories

are articulated by means of codes and ciphers (Bergmann and Erb 1986). Whilst not all contemporary conspiracy theories can be deemed antisemitic, it is possible to identify a few clusters of conspiracy beliefs grounded, explicitly or implicitly, in an antisemitic worldview, and aggregated around a core dogmatic premise or script.

1. **The Global Domination Conspiracy Theory**. A direct offshoot of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," this narrative has never really ceased to exist, but its language evolved sensibly after the Holocaust. This category of conspiracy theories postulates that Jews are, in some manner, pulling the strings behind global events with the goal of advancing Jewish interests at the expense of others (Fox and Topor 2021). Playing on the ambiguity of the concept of Zionism, which represents Israeli nationalism but for some also hints at the dark imagery of the Protocols, the proponents of the theory prefer to evoke the fight against Zionists than against Jews. The archetypal example is the ZOG (Zionist Occupied Government) conspiracy theory (Daniels 1997; AJC 2021b). The ZOG narrative, which presents Jews as secretly control Western politics and organising mock elections, was constructed in the late 1970s in the US white nationalist milieus; like the Protocols, it quickly spread globally and is now popular amongst antisemites in Europe and the Middle East. At the top of the ladder sits a select Jewish aristocracy (such as the Rothschild family), powerful individuals (like George Soros) or Israel and its state agencies, often a combination of the three. Less explicit versions of the ZOG conspiracy, such as the New World Order or the Great Reset (AJC 2023) narratives, are not necessarily antisemitic, unless they are invoked in relation to Israel and/or another Jewish figure or group.

2. **Holocaust-Related Conspiracy Theories**. Far from ringing the death knell of antisemitic conspiracy theories, the post-Holocaust era spawned new narratives. They allege a manipulation of historical narratives surrounding World War II and the Holocaust in order to create a sympathetic public opinion, legitimise the creation of Israel and extract resources from Western nations ($\rightarrow$ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20). It presents Holocaust denial legislation or awareness campaigns as further proof Jews control mainstream media and politics ($\rightarrow$ POWER, Chapter 12). It goes beyond simple denial of the Holocaust ($\rightarrow$ HOLOCAUST DENIAL, Chapter 18)

or accusations of INSTRUMENTALISATION, because it entails a premeditated plan to dupe the public and suppress dissent. A sub-genre of Holocaust-related conspiracy theories does not deny the extermination outright, but accuses Jews of plotting the war, bankrolling Nazism or asserts Hitler's supposed Jewish origins. These theories can be heuristically separated, but in practice, they usually work in synergy: each one constitutes an additional layer to the alleged plot of Jewish world domination.

3. **"White Genocide"/Disintegration Conspiracy Theories** (→ DISINTEGRATION, Chapter 14). Whilst closely linked to the world domination narrative, this cluster is distinguished by the attention paid to the means by which Jewish groups supposedly undermine the "foundational values" of the nation-state or civilisation as such. From accusations in the late nineteenth century that Jews sell toxic alcohol to the peasants to ruin their health (Oisteanu 2016) to the Jewish "porn conspiracy" myth in the 1970s and 1980s (Kristoff 2020), such narratives have continuously morphed and evolved to attach themselves to each era's moral panics. Today, two such narratives have gained major traction online. The Great Replacement theory claims that there is an intentional effort led by Jews to promote mass immigration, intermarriage and acculturation to destroy Western civilisation, often accompanied by the slogan "Jews will not replace us." However, when presented in a more generic form—such as the modified version "You will not replace us" (YWNRU)—the Great Replacement theory nests itself into mainstream discourse. Its overt target then is pro-globalisation elites and non-white immigration and, therefore, it is not automatically antisemitic. Antisemitic meaning has to be deduced contextually; the common trigger is the reference to prominent Jewish politicians or pro-democracy activists (such as the philanthropist George Soros) accused of championing "open borders." Another potentially antisemitic conspiracy theory is the anti-vax narrative, particularly dynamic in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Anti-vax or Big Pharma conspiracy beliefs are not necessarily antisemitic, but the convergence between anti-vaccine advocacy and antisemitic views has deepened significantly recently (Karakoulaki et al. 2021). This represents another complex nexus between antisemitism and anti-elitism, where contextual information needs to be retrieved in order to extract the antisemitic meaning.

4. **Warmongering Conspiracy Theories**. The idea of Jews seeking to convince, coerce or bribe rulers of states into declarations of war—whether for direct financial gain, political benefit or to disintegrate national communities and intra-state relations of non-Jewish states—can be traced back to the French Revolution (see the Simonini letter) and was particularly prominent amongst anti-imperialist opposition to the British Empire during the period of the Anglo-Boer War (Hirshfield 1980). In the late 1930s, the Nazi propaganda machine, too, portrayed Jews as warmongers, pushing the unwilling European people into fratricidal armed conflict, whilst in the US, opponents of American intervention also depicted those urging for war against the Nazis as being in hock to "international Jewry" (Laqueur 1998). This narrative has since expanded to other scenarios: Israel is accused of manufacturing and bankrolling terrorist attacks (such as 9/11) or groups (ISIS, Hamas, etc.) in order to antagonise the West and the Muslim world. These allegations are not limited to the Middle Eastern context: the Russian aggression of Ukraine has been described as a "brothers' war" fomented by Zionists (or the Zionist-American axis) for profit or for weakening orthodox, traditionalist Russia (Anti-Defamation League 2022). This discourse connects back to the trope of Jewish appetite for world domination (through a *divide et impera* strategy) but also of Jewish lust for blood and murder (→ EVIL, Chapter 3). Such accusations are distinct from legitimate and measured criticism of Israel's foreign policy in the Middle East.

5. **Q-Anon Conspiracy Theories**. Q-Anon functions as an interconnected galaxy of conspiracy theories rather than a unified narrative. Whilst many of its supporters vehemently deny any anti-Jewish prejudice, most of Q-Anon's archetypal elements—such as notions of secret elites, kidnapping and murder of children and the rejuvenating power of their blood—are ripped from antisemitism's historical plotlines. Furthermore, studies showcased that antisemitism is one of the strongest positive predictors of support for Q-Anon (Levin et al. 2022).

Such a taxonomy cannot render the plethora of combinations and cross-pollination of conspiracy narratives that emerge when people try to make sense of the world or embed their attacks against particular groups or

individuals in a narrative for legitimation. But by highlighting conceptual nodes, their crosslinks and overlaps, such a mapping can be a useful tool for deconstructing complex conspiracy narratives into a series of distinct, immediately recognisable topoi.

Key Identifying Characteristics

An antisemitic conspiracy theory can be defined as:

- A narrative that Jews/Israel/Israeli/Zionism exercise (a secret) control over certain institutions, corporations/interest groups, countries or the whole world;
- An explanation of historic or current events that purport a hidden nefarious role of Jewish individuals/groups.

An antisemitic conspiracy theory can be identified through:

- Contextual relevance: whether the narrative appears in the context of an antisemitic trigger debate/discussion;
- Direct or implicit reference to a personality or group identified or widely regarded as Jewish. The statement does not need to make explicit their Jewish/Israeli identity. Names such as Soros or Rothschild are embedded into a larger cultural code, in which they act as symbolic shortcuts for Jewish elites or Jews as a whole;
- Presence of common antisemitic topoi (explicit or coded form, see list below);
- No connection to demonstrable reality or gross exaggeration of real events/actions.

A few common conspiracy narratives and their relation to antisemitism are:

ZOG (Zionist occupied government)	Antisemitic
Mossad bankrolling Islamic terrorism	Antisemitic
American-Zionist/Israeli complex	Antisemitic
Jewish origins of Hitler	Antisemitic
Q-Anon	Antisemitic

(continued)

Great Reset (no Jewish referent)	Not antisemitic per se
Great Replacement (no Jewish referent)	Not antisemitic per se
5G/chemtrail/anti-vaxx/Covid-19 hoax (no Jewish referent)	Not antisemitic per se
9/11 hoax (no Jewish referent)	Not antisemitic per se
Cultural Marxism (no Jewish referent)	Not antisemitic per se

Common Antisemitic Topoi in Conspiracy Theories:

- World domination (ZOG)—coded form: New World Order (NOW), (Global) Deep State, globalist elites;
- The Jewish lobby—coded form: The financial lobby;
- The Jewish Council of Elders—coded form: Councils of powerful families (Council of the 13, Committee of the 300, etc.) or secret societies (Council for Foreign Relations, Bilderberg Group, Club of Rome);
- Allegation of promotion of communism/socialism/capitalism/multiculturalism;
- Ritualistic murder/human flesh or blood consumption—coded form: paedophilia, abuse of children, organ harvesting;
- Disintegration;
- "White genocide"—the ethnocide of Christian, white people through elite-organised mass immigration or destruction of traditional family (in the context of an antisemitism trigger or mention of Jewish individuals/objects);
- Poisoning (in the context of antisemitism trigger or mention of Jewish individual/object; ex: Soros, Israel, Mossad);
- False flag operations.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Jews rule the WORLD!"

(2) "Now u can see who rules the world!! Jews"

The emphatic structure of the claim of Jewish global domination, further reinforced by the use of capitalisation or multiple exclamation points, manufactures a contrived sense of evidence and of moral urgency. Jewishness is constructed as a monolith, in a totalising and essentialising manner.

(3) "Zionism strikes again…Really, I have to say they are everywhere…-Palestine is not enough anymore…They want to colonize the world. #BDS#FreePalestine."

In the context of Israel-related detour communication, also used in many other categories of antisemitism, "Zionism" (interchanged with Israel) here functions as a code word allowing plausible deniability of racial or religious prejudice when articulating antisemitic conspiracy theories. By using language, slogans and symbols associated with the Arab–Israeli conflict, the commenter attempts to situate himself in the sphere of the critique of Israel, but topoi such as world colonisation or Jewish omnipresence ("they are everywhere") are deeply rooted into antisemitic mythology. The third person plural pronoun "they" creates a conspiratorial, threatening effect. Strategic, deliberate avoidance to name the alleged conspirators actually enhances the potency of the narrative. In addition to feelings of intangible threat, it invites other users to engage in the conspiracy by filling in the missing dots.

(4) "That's why I always say WWII was a planned war. The Jewish elite with their allies stage the war…"
(5) "Well seeing as the Jewish bankers funded both sides of WW2, he has a point"
(6) "If one looks at the facts, for example the Straussians in the American administration, the financing of Hitler by the Rothchilds and so on, you will realize that Lavrov is absolutely correct! These people have only one religion and that is money!"

In a rehashing of Nazi-era propaganda, in (5), the Jewish financial elite is accused of having pushed a bellicose agenda in 1939 or even having "staged" the conflict. The accusation of playing both sides

(6), the supreme form of amorality in any war, is levelled against Jewish financiers. The stereotypes of → GREED (Chapter 11) and → IMMORALITY (Chapter 6) are collectively ascribed to Jews without explicitly naming them; however, the reference in (6) to two leading Jewish figures of the time (the philosopher Leo Strauss and the wealthy Rothschild family) brings into focus the meaning of the semantically undefined syntagm "these people." What is also characteristic of conspiracy theories is the presentation of undocumented speculations (the Rothschilds bankrolling Hitler) as undisputed historical facts, without citing any (reliable) source to substantiate such claims.

(7) "This gay guy a Zionist puppet willing to destroy 48 million people lives to make few millions or send 200,000 Jews to the Zionist Israeli kingdom at the holy land as a gift to occupation forces and settlers!!! MAD MAN"

In the context of the 2022 war in Ukraine, the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy (who is also Jewish) is accused of deliberately provoking Russia to advance the Zionist agenda. Drawing on the long-standing conspiracy theory of Jewish war-mongering, Israel's alleged responsibility for wars all across the globe is a recurrent theme.

(8) "Stalin Hitler Churchill all had Jewish blood running through the veins..... FACT!!!"
(9) "Hitler and Paul Joseph Goebbels, both had Jewish heritage, you don't always like what you are born..."

Hitler's alleged Jewish origins also fit into the broader idea that Jews are omnipresent and all-powerful: Not only Hitler but also other high-ranking Nazis are suspected of harbouring secret Jewish origins. The topos of stigmatised knowledge and secrecy is mobilised again when users allege that Hitler's origins have been obfuscated by Israel.

(10) "HA! ISIS = Israeli Secret Intelligence Service, which is why Israel was SO keen to insist the organisation be called DAESH, or even ISIL. […] What's that motto of ISIS? 'By Deception We Shall Do War.'"

Here, Israel is accused of being behind the terrorist group ISIS. In a febrility to find cues about a conspiracy, especially if they are "hiding in plain sight," ISIS's acronym is re-interpreted to mean "Israeli Secret Intelligence Service". The Mossad, steeped as it is in pop culture mythology, is a key element of the antisemitic conspiracy imaginary. The tactics of Israel's intelligence services are mapped onto the trope of JEWISH DECEIT and MENDACITY.

Implicit

(11) "(((The lobby that does not exist))) strikes again"
(12) "Above there's only the Sun"

Grasping the antisemitic meaning of this comment depends on context and shared cultural references. Sarcasm and irony can also be used: evoking the influence of the "lobby that does not exist" or the "community I cannot name" is a knowing wink to other like-minded Internet users. Sometimes, more elaborate dog whistles, rooted in web counterculture, are entering Internet vernacular: the expression "Above there's only the Sun" (often visually represented through a string of emojis: 👤👤👤👤👤☀️), coined by controversial French comedian Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, alludes to Jews being the absolute pinnacle of the global chain of command (Info Libertaire 2020). As for the (((echoes))),[1] such ciphers are now part of the coded antisemitism that occurs online. These mock-taboo theatrics play into the script of danger and secrecy, so characteristic of conspiracy narratives.

(13) "the world is silent because of the puppet masters who pull the strings"
(14) "Antisemitism is a word created to prevent people from naming the culprits and to criminalisze those speaking out against evil everywhere."
(15) "To learn who rules over you, tell me who you are not allowed to criticize"

---

[1] See "Echo," Anti-Defamation League, https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/echo (last accessed on 26 July 2023).

The theme of silencing and taboo → TABOO OF CRITICISM
(Chapter 23), closely linked to the common trope of JEWISH POWER,
is a prominent feature of comments asserting Jewish global dominance.
Some, as in this case, imply the acceptance of → SERVILITY on behalf
of non-Jewish actors. Others emphasise coercion by asserting that the
concept of antisemitism is a tool of oppression and social control →
INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20). These leitmo-
tivs are conveyed in (11) through a quote falsely attributed to Voltaire,
which is actually penned by the ZOG conspiracy proponent Kevin Strom
(Reuters 2022).

(16) "THE GOYIM KNOW – SHUT IT DOWN"
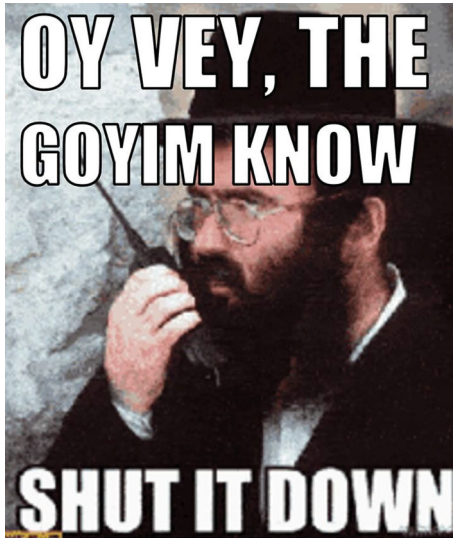
Visually, the idea of Jewish manipulation and DECEIT is conveyed
through this popular meme, which spread on message boards like 4chan
and 8kun. The phrase "The Goyim know" appeared at several extremist
rallies and events, including the August 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in
Charlottesville, Virginia. The meme portrays a stereotypical Orthodox
Jew giving orders to an unseen accomplice. Whilst it does not explicitly

formulate a specific conspiracy theory, the commenter uses the semantically vague wording at the top of the meme to allude to a scenario involving multiple conspiracy topoi such as cover-ups, secrecy and → DECEIT (Chapter 7). It also implies with the prompt above that Jewish impunity is coming to an end and public opinion is becoming aware of the alleged conspiracy.

(17) "Google 'Dancing Israelis' - you'll LOVE what you find!"
(18) "HENRY-LÉVY, BUZYN, ATTALI, ATTAL, DRAHI, SALOMON!!! PUT ON YOUR GLASSES, FOLKS"

More complex utterances are also used to convey the idea of a global conspiracy, with users often urging others to "do their own research" and discover the truth. Here, the "dancing Israelis" is a cryptic allusion to the idea that Israeli secret services are behind the 9/11 attacks, the "proof" being five "dancing Israelis" arrested as they were allegedly celebrating the carnage (Anti-Defamation League 2011). In a similar comment (18), readers are exhorted to make the connection between the (Jewish-sounding) list of names, through the metaphor of glasses which, in this case, symbolise the supposed inability to see the truth. It maps onto the symbolism of the "red pill", where the aforementioned pill enables a person to overcome illusion and perceive what the alleged conspirators are trying to conceal (Chapelan 2021; Curtis 2022). What stands in the foreground is the sense that through individual investigation, one can discover and expose the truth. Early antisemitic conspiracy pamphlets resorted to a strikingly similar audience-engagement technique: in Johann Eisenmanger's "Entdecktes Judenthum" ("Judaism Unmasked") or in August Rohlin's "Der Talmudjude" ("The Jew of the Talmud"), the authors urge the readers to get familiar with the Talmud or even learn Hebrew, so that they can better understand the Jews' malevolent plans (Taguieff 2020). Such language is at the core of the twisted epistemology and long-lasting appeal of conspiracy theories: they seem to give intellectual agency back to the "little man," who otherwise may be overwhelmed by the complexity of the world.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(19) "BBC, CNN, ALJAZIRA all are controlled by US the owner of israel people, b/c israel is USA province outside US territory"

(20) "Israel guarded by US since they can't life without independent and all these media controlled by US and its aliens"

In these examples, it is alleged that Israel is being secretly controlled by the US. Such a position literally reverses the relationship of POWER and servility of traditional antisemitic narratives such as the ZOG conspiracy: it demotes Israel from the rank of string-puller to that of a mere local subservient actor. By actively de-emphasising Israel, this statement—however geopolitically erroneous it may be—does not fit the canon of antisemitic conspiracy beliefs.

(21) "Where did you see he got jabbed? All politicians who did it on camera, they did it with the lid on the syringe, on purpose"

Here, the authenticity of Benjamin Netanyahu's public Covid-19 vaccination is questioned: in this case, the former Israeli prime minister is not singled out for his Jewishness, and the accusation of deception and mendacity is clearly levelled at the entire global political class. Covid-19 conspiracy theories can attach themselves to antisemitic narratives, but most do not specifically target Jewish groups or individuals. Therefore, they are not antisemitic per se.

Related Categories

POWER (Chapter 12), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23), LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7), DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2011. Decade After 9/11. Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories Alive and Well. https://www.adl.org/resources/news/decade-after-911-antisemitic-conspiracy-theories-alive-and-well (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2022. Antisemitic Conspiracy Theories Abound Around Russian Assault on Ukraine. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/antisemitic-conspiracy-theories-abound-around-russian-assault-ukraine (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

AJC (American Jewish Committee). 2021a. New World Order #TranslateHate. https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/New-World-Order (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

AJC (American Jewish Committee). 2021b. Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) | #TranslateHate. https://www.ajc.org/translatehate/Zionist-Occupied-Government (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

Baron, Salo. 1967. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bergmann, Werner, and Erb Rainer. 1986. Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung: Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 38 (2): 209–222.

Butter, Michael. 2020. *The Nature of Conspiracy Theories*. Cambridge: Polity.

Butter, Michael, and Peter Knight, eds. 2020. *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. New York: Routledge.

Chapelan, Alexis. 2021. 'Swallowing the Red Pill': The Coronavirus Pandemic and the Political Imaginary of Stigmatized Knowledge in the Discourse of the Far-Right. *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 19 (3): 282–312.

Curtis, Neal. 2022. Red Pill: The Structure of Contemporary Apocalypse. *Apocaplityca* 1: 96–115.

Daniels, Jessie. 1997. *White Lies: Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality in White Supremacist Discourse*. London: Routledge.

Fox, Jonathan, and Lev Topor. 2021. *Why Do People Discriminate Against Jews?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gerteis, Joseph, and Nir Rotem. 2023. Connecting the 'Others:' White Anti-Semitic and Anti-Muslim Views in America. *The Sociological Quarterly* 64 (1): 144–164.

Heil, Johannes. 2006. *"Gottesfeinde" – "Menschenfeinde." Die Vorstellung von jüdischer Weltverschwörung*. Essen: Klartext.

Hirshfield, Claire. 1980. The Anglo-Boer War and the Issue of Jewish Culpability. *Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (4): 619–631.

Info Libertaire. 2020. Shoahnanas et "au dessus c'est le soleil," signes de reconnaissance entre dieudonnistes, 10 September. https://www.infolibertaire.net/shoahnanas-et-au-dessus-cest-le-soleil-signes-de-reconnaissance-entre-dieudonnistes (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

Karakoulaki, Marianna, and Giulia Dessi, eds. 2021. *Antisemitism and Anti-Vax Discourse in Europe*. London: Media Diversity Institute.

Kristoff, Kerl. 2020. 'Oppression by Orgasm:' Pornography and Antisemitism in Far-Right Discourses in the United States Since the 1970s. *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 39 (1): 117–138.

Laqueur, Walter. 1998. *The Changing Face of Anti-Semitism: From Ancient Times to the Present Day*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Levin, Ines, Alexandra Filindra, and Jeffrey Kopstein. 2022. Validating and Testing a Measure of Anti-semitism in Support for QAnon and Vote Intention for Trump in 2020. *Social Science Quarterly* 103 (4): 794–809.

Oisteanu, Andrei. 2016. *Imaginea evreului in cultura romana*. Bucuresti: Polirom.

Postone, Moshe. 1980. Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to "Holocaust." *New German Critique* 1 (9): 97–115.

Reuters. 2022. Fact Check: 'To Learn Who Rules Over You' Quote Wrongly Attributed to Voltaire, 3 February. https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-voltaire-quote-idUSL1N2UE2LM (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

Scribner, Robert. 1994. *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Taguieff, Pierre. 2020. *Criminaliser les Juifs: le mythe du meurtre rituel et de ses avatars (antijudaïsme, antisémitisme, antisionisme)*. Paris: Hermann.

Teter, Magda. 2020. *Blood Libel: On the Trail of an Antisemitic Myth*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Uscinski, Joseph. 2018. The Study of Conspiracy Theories. *Argumenta* 3 (2): 233–245.

Webman, Esther. 2011. *The Global Impact of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. London: Routledge.

14

Disintegration

Marcus Scheiber

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The stereotype of DISINTEGRATION is conceived as the Jewish tendency for "activity directed towards separation or destruction" of a community or state (Böschenstein-Schäfer 1962: 40). Originally used to designate chemical or biological processes that oppose the process of "composition," the expression underwent a change of meaning when linguistic images of such processes were projected onto developments in social and political spheres (ibid. 48). The idea of a DISINTEGRATING quality is attributed to Jews in an essentialising way as a habitual, formative behaviour that aims at the dissolution of state, social and spiritual order (ibid. 60).

The central moment of the stereotype of DISINTEGRATION manifests itself in the idea of a people as a single organism that can only carry

M. Scheiber (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

out its activities if all its parts or members are intact and work together. Jews are excluded from this organism as foreign bodies (→ FOREIGN/ OTHER, Chapter 2), frequently portrayed in biological terms as "viruses" or "parasites" (→ DEHUMANISATION, Chapter 5, and → EXPLOITATION, Chapter 11.2). As such, Jewish participation in that organism supposedly poses a threat of "infection," "decay" and finally "dissolution." It is, therefore, not surprising that the term or its adaptation flourished in Nazi Germany, which attempted to legitimise antisemitic ideas through, amongst other things, pseudo-scientific analogies to chemical or biological processes.

Discourses of DISINTEGRATION are founded upon a romanticised portrayal of the "organic community" as unified and morally pure. To the extent that this self-image is accepted, corresponding ideas of potential threats of disintegration emanating from such diverse sources as liberalism, eroticism and socialism are all the more attractive. In the antisemitic mind, all of these threats are united by their being ultimately controlled by Jews (Faber 2000: 260). Reference is made above all to the figure of the "all-powerful Jew," who would either secretly → INFLUENCE (Chapter 12) global processes in the form of the "Jewish financier," seeking to bring about financial crises and profits from the resulting social destabilisation, or the "Jewish Bolshevik," striving to lead societies from their traditional lines into what was perceived as a communist dystopia (Faber 2000: 262). Such → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13) ultimately serve as simplistic explanatory models for a world that is growing in complexity and at the same time, refer to a long tradition of blaming Jews for a wide variety of events.

The attribution that Jews have an inherent disintegrative quality is not, however, limited to the Nazi state, which links the stereotype to racial theory, but already presents itself in the political landscape of the nineteenth century as an established topos, when Düring (1881) refers to moral decay in the empire and Chamberlain (1912) to social decay through Jewish activity in general (the latter at the same time disseminating and popularising antisemitic race theory). Amid the general lamentation of decay after Germany's defeat in World War I, the metaphor of disintegration found resonance when old values and ways of thinking in German society were questioned (Böschenstein-Schäfer

1962: 68). The practice of critiquing existing social conditions was portrayed as an attack on social security and cohesion, with "intellectualism" increasingly condemned as a consciously destructive activity. This distrust of the intellect, which ultimately feeds anti-modernism, is then turned against Jews by identifying them as the origin and motor of intellectualism, which is then interpreted as a striving for individualism and thus as a disintegration of tradition (Rosenberg 1930; Hofstadter 1991).

In the present day, the stereotype of DISINTEGRATION manifests in Israel-related antisemitic discourse through the idea that the existence of Israel or of a Jewish presence in the Middle East threatens, or is intended to destroy the cultures and societies of the surrounding Arab states, or the international community of nations as such. This notion is not tied to specific Israeli actions (unless those actions are presented as examples of this general accusation), but rather conceptualises Israel and Zionism as an inherently destructive, insidious and poisonous force that, overtly or surreptitiously, seeps into non-Jewish societies in order to bring about their downfall. Similar patterns can be recognised in contemporary CONSPIRACY THEORIES about a "Great Replacement," in which Jews are accused of using their global power to import huge numbers of migrants into societies to undermine and ultimately destroy the "indigenous" (usually understood as "white") culture (Winston 2021; Veracini 2022).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Characterises Jewish individuals/groups as destructive to a community, society, democracy, economy and/or (inter)national order. This may include:

  – Accusations against prominent Jewish figures (such as George Soros or the Rothschild family) of provoking divisions, endangering social cohesion or wanting to abolish the imagined traditional or desirable structures or life models and beliefs;

 – Portrayal of Israel or Jewish presence in the Middle East as a threat
   to the cultures and societies of the surrounding Arab states, or the
   international community.

● Depicts Jews as antagonistic and threatening to an entire nation,
  religion or to certain desirable social units (such as the traditional
  family).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Jews are troublemakers."
(2) "Liars, agitators, splitters?!"

In (1) and (2), despite their brevity, the stereotype of DISINTEGRATION is
realised in different ways: in (1), the commenter uses the pejorative attri-
bution "troublemakers," which is meant to suggest a negative but not
overly drastic assessment, and which is then generalised and projected
onto all Jews. In (2), the stereotype is explicated through the use of
the concrete designations "liars, agitators, splitters?!," to refer to Jews
(a meaning made clear by the statement's context). Although (1) seems
to be more harmless, both are based on the same pattern of thought:
because of their deeds, Jews are to be characterised collectively and abso-
lutely, so by their very nature, as entities that bring about destabilisation
(in the regional and social sense) or actively aim at it.

(3) "Because the Israelis behave like murdering Nazi butchers, Zionism is
    cancer spreading across the world, infiltrating foreign governments."

Whilst the first examples were still characterised by their generalising
brevity, (3) adds further explanations to its attribution of the stereotype,
which are intended to legitimise such an attribution. The commenter
invokes, one, the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1) with regard to
"*the* Israelis," and two, adds a disease metaphor to describe Zionism.

Zionism is portrayed as a "cancer" that—if it proliferates unhindered—will ultimately destroy the afflicted body ("foreign governments"). In doing so, the comment uses an image that was already widespread within nineteenth-century antisemitic discourse.

(4) "Yes funnily enough all these places were full of all kind of people until Western colonialists arrived in the early twentieth century of which Zionists were the plantation, working tirelessly to destabilise and destroy what they have not already stolen."

(5) "It was Zionist that pushed the whole criticism of Islam thing in recent years and other Jewish people that started critical theory, aimed at criticizing, slandering and lying about other countries in or to try and weaken them."

A similar picture is painted in (5), which again accuses Zionists and Jews—in the classic charge of intellectualism—of promoting criticism of religion or of putting forward social theories ("critical theory") in order to destabilise other states or social structures. The reference to critical theory points to a conspiracy theory of disintegrating quality that, at its core, claims that the Frankfurt School—whose best-known representatives were of Jewish origin—was pushing a leftist intellectual Marxism to undermine conservative values ($\rightarrow$ CONSPIRACY, Chapter 13) (Mirrlees 2018: 53). Via the reference to Zionism, the example shows that the stereotype of disintegration is attributed to Jews in order to present them in an essentialising way as entities that endanger societies.

The attributions of a disintegrative quality of Zionist activities are tainted with the motif of their alleged colonialist aspirations: according to the comment, Zionists have destabilised the region around present-day Israel by colonising it and, as a result, illegally displacing the people living there. They are not only conceived as part of Western colonialism, but are indicated as its central outpost, used as a base for a programme of wider destruction across the region ($\rightarrow$ COLONIALISM ANALOGIES, Chapter 30). The comment thus suggests the disintegrative aims of the State of Israel, and in doing so indirectly legitimises action against it, since the concept of disintegration is supposedly inherent to Zionism and would necessarily result in the destruction of others.

(6) "Jewish people imported black and brown auxiliaries to fight us. As
soon as their golem says a word against Jews all hell breaks loose. See
where the power lies"

(7) "Jews will not replace us"

These two comments are embedded into a broader conspiracy narrative,
often known as the "Great Replacement" theory (also sometimes as the
"white genocide" theory), which postulates that mass non-white migra-
tion is being orchestrated by the elites (→ CONSPIRACY, Chapter 13) in
order to destroy the Christian, white nation-states. In examples (6) and
(7), these elites are explicitly identified as Jewish. Comment (6) refers to
the British politician Diane Abbott, a woman of colour, as a "golem:"
according to Jewish folklore, a golem is an animated creature created
through black magic to serve a master. Therefore, the implication is that
non-white members of the society are nothing more than pawns used
by Jews for their anti-white agenda. Comment (7) functions as a direct
speech act and a rallying cry for the white in-group. It is a call to resist the
allegedly corrosive influence of the Jewish element, with the verb hinting
at its supposed totalising "Great Replacement" agenda that amounts to a
dissolution of the in-group's very existence.

(8) "Country people usually have big and strong family bonds that can
pull resources together. Jews don't want that and make all of them
seem like inbred retarded hicks."

This assertion paints an image of rural life that suggests that people in the
countryside are deeply rooted, resourceful and strong. This strength and
security is supposedly looked upon with disdain or mistrust by Jews, who
therefore disrupt, attack or seek to prevent it—amongst other things, by
agitating against people in the countryside and their way of life.

Implicit

(9) "If the body is sick, then you have to fight the disease."

The stereotype of DISINTEGRATION does not have to be explicitly
communicated. The comment appears in the context of a debate over

the financier George Soros and uses dehumanising metaphors. The argumentation is based on the idea of a healthy organism attacked by an illness; a metaphorical interpretation only arises from the co-text and context of such a commentary, since no explicit reference is made in the comment to specific actions or persons. Instead, it makes a generalising statement that most would agree with in a medical context. However, the reference is not a medical but a social framework, which needs to be implied. Within this, Jews are conceptualised as a "disease" that would threaten the "body" and would therefore have to be urgently combated (→ DEATH WISHES, Chapter 41).

Non-antisemitic Examples

(10) "Netanyahu is a political troublemaker."

Whilst the comment attributes a disintegrative quality to the Israeli political leader Benjamin Netanyahu, a well-known Jewish person, this attribution does not turn out to be antisemitic, since it is neither generalising nor aimed at his Jewish identity. The quality is ascribed to him, in particular, in the context of his political actions, regardless of his Jewish identity, and is therefore to be understood as a political critique.

Related Categories

FOREIGN/THE OTHER (Chapter 2), DEHUMANISATION (Chapter 5), INFLUENCE (Chapter 12), CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13).

References

Böschenstein-Schäfer, Renate. 1962. Zur Geschichte des Wortes "Zersetzen." In *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Wortschöpfung (3)*, ed. Werner Betz, 40–80. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Chamberlain, Houston Stewart. 1912. *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts (10)*. München: Verlagsanstalt F. Bruckmann A.-G.

Dühring, Eugen. 1881. *Die Judenfrage. Frage des Racencharakters und seiner Schädlichkeiten für Völkerexistenz, Sitte und Cultur*. Berlin: Personalist-Verlag von Ulrich Dühring.

Faber, Richard. 2000. Zwanzigstes Bild: "Der Zersetzer." In *Antisemitismus. Vorurteile und Mythen*, ed. Schoeps Julius H., Schlör Joachim, 260–264. München: Piper.

Ford, Henry. 1920. *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*. Dearborn: Dearborn Publishing Company.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1991. *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. New York: Vintage Books.

Mirrlees, Tanner. 2018. The Alt-right's Discourse on "Cultural Marxism": A Political Instrument of Intersectional Hate. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice*, 39, 49–69.

Rosenberg, Alfred. 1930. *Der Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit*. München: Hoheneichen.

Veracini, Lorenzo. 2022. Islamophobia, Antisemitism, Zionism, Settler Colonialism. *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 7 (1): 65–75.

Winston, Andrew S. 2021. 'Jews Will Not Replace Us!': Antisemitism, Interbreeding and Immigration in Historical Context." *American Jewish History* 105 (1–2), 1–24.

15

Self-victimisation

Alexis Chapelan

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Victimhood is a complex notion, embedded into a variety of cultural norms and practices. It can be argued that the victim has become a central identity position in modern politics, which cuts across all ideologies. It constitutes a major gateway to social engagement, a pivotal means by which groups and individuals perceive themselves and constitute themselves as political actors (Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Jacoby 2015; Horwitz 2018). Antisemitism produces real-life victims, through demonisation and exclusion, oppression, violence and eventually large-scale extermination during the Holocaust. But, the memory of Jewish suffering has had to contend with virulent counter-victimisation narratives which have sought to justify continuing discrimination and marginalisation against Jews. Self-victimisation constitutes one of the

A. Chapelan (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.unibuc.ro

core mechanisms of "moral disengagement:" by viewing themselves as faultless victims which merely acted in response to provocation, people evade moral responsibility; thus, not only are one's own injurious actions justified, but one even can feel self-righteous in the process (Bandura 1999). Nazi propaganda abundantly used this rhetoric, portraying Jews as aggressors and the German nation as a victim (Herf 2006).

Victimhood identity exists in a nexus with another fundamental political concept: → POWER (Chapter 12). Victimisation thus entails a hierarchical duality and occurs in a context of power imbalance. Correspondingly, modern antisemitism is fuelled by a paranoid and conspiratorial vision of the distribution of power in society. As highlighted by Postone (2010), in antisemitism, the "Jew" is seen as the personification of an intangible, global and quasi-unstoppable power, which effortlessly churns up civilisations, nations and peoples. The alleged power of Jews lies at the core of all antisemitic victimisation narratives. On the right, those narratives aggregate around such conspiracy myths, culminating into the threat of the "white genocide" of native Christian populations (Perry 2003; Winston 2021). On the left and in some Arab countries, victimisation narratives embrace the language and the martyrologies of anti-imperialism and focus on portraying Israel as a continuator of the European colonial enterprise and its white supremacist dogma (Becker 2021). Self-victimisation frames can also map onto anti-capitalist sentiment, with globalised Jewish finance depicted as exploiters of "the people." Last but not least, victim identity can be activated and made salient in post-Nazi historical settings (for secondary antisemitism → Part III). For example, in post-war Germany, mechanisms of "defense against guilt and unwanted memory" ("Schuld-und-Erinnerungsabwehr," see Adorno 1975) led to a discourse of self-victimisation, which focused both on presenting Germans as victims of World War II on an equal footing with Jewish populations, and on accusing Jews of further oppressing German society through material and symbolic reparations (Salzborn 2011).

The topos of self-victimisation harks back to the roots of antisemitism. The DEICIDE myth firmly established Jews as ontological oppressors, guilty of the foundational act of victimising Christianity—the martyrdom of Jesus. Thus, Jews were held accountable for the

victimisation of Christianity as a whole. Therefore, central scripts of medieval anti-Judaism portrayed Jews over and over as ritualistically murdering and torturing defenceless Christian children (→ BLOOD LIBEL, Chapter 4) but most of all alleged that Christians would suffer from usury on the part of Jews (→ GREED, Chapter 11). Starting with the nineteenth century, the topos of self-victimisation dovetails with the topos of Jewish POWER. Anti-liberal authors such as the socialist Alphonse Toussenel associated Jews with the social ills of the nascent capitalism, linking the pauperisation and victimisation of workers to the action of the "financial masters." The concept of the DEICIDE continues to frame his antisemitism: "If the Jewish people were truly the people of God, they would not have killed the son of God; they would not continue to oppress […] all the workers that Christ wanted to redeem" (Toussenel 1886: XVIII). Antisemitism functioned fully as a catch-all populist worldview and practice aggregated around a core dichotomy between the downtrodden, victimised in-group—defined in religious, socio-economical or ethnical terms—and the alleged existence of a global Jewish overclass.

However, the motif of discrimination truly gained salience after the Holocaust. In clinical psychology, DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender) is documented as a common strategy used by perpetrators in response to being held accountable. This model also functions on a collective level, within the new configuration of secondary antisemitism mentioned above (Rensmann 2017). For example, the suffering of the European peoples during the war is blamed wholly on the interests of Jews, who are accused of having lured Nazi Germany into the armed conflict. Often relegated to the fringe of the political scene, antisemites constructed their anti-establishment identity by portraying Europe's people and culture as doubly victimised by Jewish-American imperialism and by Judeo-bolshevism. Maurice Bardèche, a prominent French fascist intellectual, penned in his periodical "Défense de l'Occident" ("Defence of the West") long articles on Allied war crimes, drawing heavily on the newly-minted lexicon—crimes against humanity, genocide, concentration and extermination camps—of the Nuremberg trials (Preda 2021). The topos of → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23) also enacted a form of self-victimisation discourse:

it proposes that anyone who speaks out against Jewish interest will be silenced, persecuted and ostracised. The political correctness and the mass migration allegedly promoted by Jewish liberal elites amounted for some to a "white genocide." Neo-Nazi blogger Andrew Anglin laments that "we are a generation of throwaways, which (((those who write history before it happens))) have slated to be the last generation of Heterosexual White Men" (Southern Poverty Law Center 2022). The triple parentheses (echoes) are used here to highlight Jewish identity.

But, post-Auschwitz symbolic grievances are not limited to the radical right. Other "competitive martyrologies" have emerged. Fringe Black Power movements, such as Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, have blamed Jews for the slave trade or black oppression (Salzman and West 1997; Pollack 2021). In the Arabic world, the Israeli—Palestinian conflict was also perceived through the prism of a hyperbolic Arab victimhood identity, particularly after the 1967 Six-Day War which resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and other Arab territories.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Presenting Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism as "ontological oppressors" throughout history;
- Drawing analogies between victims of terrorism/slavery/genocide (whether the Holocaust or other mass crimes in history) and the situation of individuals/groups allegedly persecuted by Jews/Israelis or in the name of the fight against antisemitism;
- Alleging victimisation of a public figure or group as a result of their stance on Jews/Israel/Zionism;
- Alleging a slide towards authoritarianism/dictatorship as a result of actions by Jewish/Israeli individuals or groups, or in the name of the fight against antisemitism;
- Portraying a broad range of persecution (understood in the entirety of its semantic field, from disadvantaging to silencing and killing) exerted by Jewish/Israeli individuals or groups, or in the name of the fight against antisemitism.

However, it is not self-victimisation, and therefore not antisemitic, to point to victimhood as a result of real, documented incidents.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Unless we act quickly, everyone that goes against Soros will be locked up, mark my word!"

The topos of victimisation dovetails once more with the pervading theme of the → TABOO OF CRITICISM and of "cancel culture." It is the figure of Hungarian-born Jewish billionaire George Soros, which crystallises the conspiratorial paranoia of a global crackdown. It allows to mobilise around a shared sense of danger and urgency, expressed by the commenter through the plea to "act quickly" and the final warning; the plural first person pronoun "we" creates a sense of emotional proximity between the members of the in-group.

(2) "Others have media at their feet, and Dieudonné is barred from working and feeding his family."

Self-victimisation narratives are often activated by a perceived inequality of treatment. This comment needs to be situated in the context of the social media ban of the controversial French comedian Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala (Becker et al. 2021). Dieudonné, once a mainstream left-leaning entertainer, had built over the years a robust anti-establishment following by weaving antisemitic conspiratorial motives into his shows. Since social media was a large source of income for Dieudonné, the commenter condemns the alleged economic blackmail exerted through "cancel culture." Whilst Dieudonné—who is a millionaire—is far from being in a dire situation, painting him as a struggling working-class man creates, again, a sense of emotional proximity which feeds back into a collective victimhood identity. There is also a subtle sexual undertone to the narrative: by preventing Dieudonné to fulfil his traditional role as a

breadwinner and protector to his family, he is being symbolically emasculated. The emasculation of virile, traditional males by a Jewish elite is a recurrent topos in far-right discourses.

Implicit

(3) "So you occupy another's homeland, oppress them, throw them out of their homes, kill them, lock up their children and then want to play the innocent victim?"

Antisemitic victimisation narratives are difficult to pin down in the context of the Israeli—Palestinian conflict, where both sides are responsible for documented violent actions against civilian population. This comment, however, seems to meet Natan Sharansky's (2004) "3D" criteria (delegitimisation, i.e. → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, Chapter 34, demonisation, and double standards) that distinguish legitimate criticism of Israel from antisemitic prejudice. The accusations are totalising and essentialising, ascribing fixed roles to Israelis and Palestinians as ontological oppressors and oppressed. The vilification of Israel also implies its illegitimacy as a state. The victimisation of Palestinians unfolds as a crescendo of violence and abuse, from imperialism ("occupy another's homeland") to physical elimination ("kill them") and destroying any prospects for future generations ("lock up their children"). The comment is formulated as a direct, accusatory address to the Israeli out-group. The comment is a rhetorical question, which presupposes not only immoral acts on the part of Israel (occupation, theft and murder) but also a hypocritical, dishonest and unjustified victimhood claim (→ DECEIT, Chapter 7.2). A central strategy at the heart of victimisation discourses is denying the other's side claim to victim identity, thus solidifying one's own claim.

(4) "I AM DIEUDONNÉ […] BLACK LIVES MATTER!!!"

This comment sheds light on the rhetoric mechanisms of victimisation. As indicated above, just as in the late 1940s, former Nazi collaborators hijacked the lexicon of human rights created to condemn Nazi

crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes), present-day discourses of victimisation draw from a wide range of political repertoires, such as freedom of expression or racial justice. The slogan "I am Dieudonné," which alludes to "I am Charlie," draws a parallel between Dieudonné and the *Charlie Hebdo* journalists brutally murdered in a terrorist attack in Paris in 2015. The analogy suggests that the struggle against antisemitism amounts to a form of moral and intellectual terrorism. The reference to the Black Lives Matter movement reinforces this analogy between actual physical violence and the alleged "moral violence" exerted by the establishment against dissidents. This time, the slogan has an anti-imperialist dimension in addition to the anti-racist one. The Cameroon-born Dieudonné has had a long history of leaning heavily into the anti-imperialist mythology, explicitly linking Jewish bankers to slavers (Stille 2014). Stylistically, the use of capital letters conveys negative and paroxysmic emotions, such as anger and indignation.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(5) *Hamas and Israel need to come up with a durable peace plan to end the suffering of the Palestinians. These people deserve a place to feel safe from oppression and discrimination.*

This comment does not meet the criteria for being classified as antisemitic. The focus is firmly on the humanitarian drama of the Palestinians, rather than on a vilification of Israel. It does not imply Israel's illegitimacy as a sovereign political entity, but only calls for a shift in its policy towards non-Jewish residents of the area. The responsibility for the conflict—and for its solution—is shared between the main warring factions (the Israeli authorities and the Islamic militias), who are presented as having a moral obligation towards stopping civilian suffering.

(6) Since the end of the war, Germany have been constantly belittled and humiliated. The higher-ups want to see us continue in this position.

This comment reflects a sense of resentment towards the post-war political and social status quo. Nonetheless, it is not clear who the out-group of the "higher-ups" refers to. It might be the post-war political and economic elites, Western countries or supranational institutions such as the EU, NATO or the UN. Germany's alleged victimisation is situated in the context of a more diffuse anti-elitist and anti-establishment resentment, which cannot be firmly linked to a Jewish object.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), BLOOD LIBEL (Chapter 4), POWER (Chapter 12).

References

Adorno, Theodore. 1975. Schuld und Abwehr: Eine qualitative Analyse zum Gruppenexperiment. In *Sozologische Schriften II: Gesammelte Schriften 9/2*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Bandura, Albert. 1999. Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (3): 193–209.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave.

Becker, Matthias J., Daniel Allington, Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloé Vincent. 2021. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 2*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15310.

Fassin, Didier, and Richard Rechtman. 2009. *The empire of trauma: An inquiry into the condition of victimhood*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2006. *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press.

Hofstadter, Richard. 1964. The Paranoid Style in American Politics. In *Harper's Magazine,* 1 November 1964.

Horwitz, Robert. 2018. Politics as Victimhood, Victimhood as Politics. *Journal of Policy History* 30 (3): 552–574.

Jacoby, Tami. 2015. A Theory of Victimhood: Politics, Conflict and the Construction of Victim-based Identity. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 43 (2): 511–530.

Perry, Barbara. 2003. "*White Genocide:" White Supremacists and the Politics of Reproduction.* In *Home-Grown Hate*, ed Abby Ferber. New York: Routledge.

Pollack, Eunice. 2021. Robbing the Jews: The Antisemitic Roots of the Nation of Islam's Belief System. *Journal of National Resilience, Politics and Society* 3 (1): 11–29.

Postone, Moishe. 2010. Zionism, anti-semitism and the left. *Solidarity* 166 (3). February 5. https://www.workersliberty.org/index.php/story/2010-02-05/zionism-anti-semitism-and-left (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

Preda, Johnathan. 2021. Le discours victimaire de l'extrême-droite en France depuis 1945: entre minimisation et trivialisation des crimes du nazisme. In *Revue Alarmer,* 20 September 2021, https://revue.alarmer.org/le-discours-victimaire-de-lextreme-droite-en-france-depuis-1945/ (last accessed on 06 March 2023).

Rensmann, Lars. 2017. Guilt, Resentment, and Post-Holocaust Democracy: The Frankfurt School's Analysis of "Secondary Antisemitism" in the Group Experiment and Beyond. *Antisemitism Studies* 1 (1): 4–37.

Salzborn, Samuel. 2011. Anti-Jewish Guilt Deflection and National Self-Victimization: Antisemitism in Germany. In *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, ed. Lars Rensmann, Julius H. Schoeps, Ireneusz Krzemiński, Jeffrey Luppes, and Halrun Luppes. Leiden: Brill.

Salzman, Jack, and Cornel West, eds. 1997. *Struggles in the Promised Land: Towards a History of Black-Jewish Relations in The United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sharansky, Natan. 2004. 3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16: 3–4.

Southern Poverty Law Center. 2022. *Extremist Files: Andrew Anglin.* https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/andrew-anglin (last accessed on 06 March 2023).

Stille, Alexander. 2014. The Case of Dieudonné: A French Comedian's Hate. *The New Yorker*. January10. https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-case-of-dieudonn-a-french-comedians-hate (last accessed on 06 March 2023).

Toussenel, Alphonse. 1886. *Les Juifs, rois de l'époque: Histoire de la féodalité financière*. Paris: C. Marpon et E. Flammarion Editeurs.

Winston, Andrew. 2021. "Jews will not replace us!": Antisemitism, Interbreeding and Immigration in Historical Context. *American Jewish History* 105 (1/2): 1–24.

Part III

Secondary Antisemitism

16

Rejection of Guilt

Hagen Troschke

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Holocaust-related REJECTION OF GUILT (*Schuldabwehr*) is an argumentative strategy that aims to absolve three groups of people from guilt: 1) perpetrators, 2) people who benefited from the Holocaust, 3) those who did not oppose the Holocaust. The rejection of one's own guilt or that of others serves as a moral and legal exoneration. It seeks to make it possible to leave the past, bad conscience, shame or horror behind, and to live in an undisturbed social normality. It serves to enable continued identification with a group that supposedly behaved with integrity during the Nazi era, facilitates perpetrators' escape from criminal prosecution and looks to resurrect pride in a nation untainted by its historical crimes.

REJECTION OF GUILT is a form of antisemitism because it trivialises or denies responsibility for the biggest antisemitic crime in history and

H. Troschke (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

thereby attempts to absolve those involved in the Holocaust in one way or the other or to minimise the extent of their participation. Moreover, it is a mockery of the victims of a crime in which no one wants to have been involved.

The REJECTION OF GUILT was and is particularly widespread in Germany and Austria, since in the German Reich, these societies were the "originators" of the Holocaust and bore the main guilt for it. The Holocaust was not merely the work of a few political leaders and die-hard Nazis, but was only possible through the direct contribution of hundreds of thousands (Hilberg 1992; Friedländer 1997: 4, 322–323), the acceptance or approval of millions and the silence of the rest of society (Dörner 2007; Fulbrook 2023). With the German defeat in World War II and the end of National Socialist rule, the previous legitimation of the crimes committed provided by both state and society was lost. Guilt became a relevant category again and both those involved and those who behaved passively were forced to position themselves in this changed situation, in which criminal prosecution was possible and officially different moral standards applied again.

The strategies of rejecting guilt were used by perpetrators, profiteers and those who became guilty by failing to assist the victims, they were applied to themselves and to others, and were also used by subsequent generations. The perpetrators denied their perpetration or claimed that they were personally not guilty or hardly guilty despite their involvement in the crimes. The externalisation of guilt draws attention to other actors to whom guilt is delegated. It was common, for example, to claim that those involved bore no responsibility because they had acted under duress (Padover 1946). In relativising guilt, culpable behaviour is acknowledged in principle, but an attempt is made to minimise one's own share of guilt or to limit culpability.

Support for this effort to acquit perpetrators has come and continues to come from family members and from society at large. For several decades, a main impulse was to suppress the potential—and, at various levels of culpability, probable—involvement of one's own family members with whom one continued to live alongside. Attempts were also made to absolve entire groups (e.g. civil servants or people who did not belong to any Nazi organisation) or society as a whole of guilt and

to narrow the circle of perpetrators to senior Nazis or particularly brutal individuals (Bergmann 2007).

Large parts of the population denied having known about the crimes (Postone 1980: 99), whereas knowledge about them was widespread in the German Reich (Gellately 2001) and, moreover, the mass murder of the Jews was at least vaguely known throughout Europe (Hilberg 1992: 195). The denial of awareness serves to conceal one's own perpetration or one's own failure to help. In addition, it was and is often counterfactually claimed that resistance was carried out inconspicuously or that conformity and the implementation of all expectations of Nazi society were unavoidable, for fear of drastic punishment (Welzer et al. 2002).

In two of the successor states to the Nazis, East Germany and Austria, there was also a very specific form of REJECTION OF GUILT. East Germany invoked communist resistance and anti-fascism in its identity and located the Nazis in West Germany (Herf 1997). In Austria, the dominant narrative was that it had been the first victim of Nazism (Uhl 2006), and with the return to its own nation state, responsibility for the common Nazi past was left to Germany. These official narratives also made it easier for individuals not to have to face this past on a personal level.

The impulses of this (direct) REJECTION OF GUILT may be gradually diminishing, since the generation growing up today was not only not involved in the crimes, but has had limited contact with those involved personally. Some right-wing extremists aside, the younger generation no longer identifies with the lifeworld of Nazism and thus no longer believes it has to defend itself or others in this respect.

The forms of REJECTION OF GUILT presented here position themselves on *individual and collective participation* in the Holocaust. In doing so, they do not question its essential characteristics. In contrast, → DISTORTION OR DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 18 with their claims relating to the extent and character of the atrocities or the participation of the relevant actors, touch on a broader historical dimension and *attempt to change the entire interpretive framework* in order to achieve a REJECTION OF GUILT in this way. A refusal to *deal* with this guilt does not constitute a REJECTION OF GUILT, but falls under the category → demands for a clean break, Chapter 17. A REJECTION OF GUILT that

refers to Nazi crimes other than the Holocaust still follows comparable motivations and goals, but in that case is not a category of antisemitism.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Denial of having known about the Nazi crimes;
- Denial of involvement in the guilt context (if this refers to groups of people or organisations that were central to the implementation of the Holocaust, it falls under → HOLOCAUST DISTORTION, Chapter 18.1);
- Externalisation of guilt whereby the involvement in the guilt context is accepted while responsibility and blame are placed on others (e.g. superiors, duty to obey orders, comrades/colleagues, personal risk in case of non-participation);
- Relativisation of guilt (e.g. by diminishing the extent of the participation or importance of the individual role in a certain crime, allegations that the perpetrators were too young to be held accountable, or that they would have tried to ease the situation for the victims or to support them).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Ordinary people didn't know anything about these things back then."

For large but indeterminate parts of the population who are given the attribute "ordinary," it is negated that they would have known anything about the Holocaust. This exempts them from being complicit as bystanders or confidants. The statement also manufactures a rigid dichotomy between, on the one hand, the "innocent" German population and, on the other, the Nazi elite. This simplistic statement obfuscates historical reality—the NSDAP was a mass party, and large numbers of people, apart from the political elite, were involved in the functioning of

the Nazi economic, military and administrative machine. Nazi ideology was also widespread and permeated deep into all social strata.

(2) "Maybe she didn't even know what exactly was going on when she applied at the time."

This statement and several of the following examples come from social media debates responding to two 2021 trials in Germany against former concentration camp personnel. In (2), the guilt of a concentration camp secretary is discussed. In the form of a speculation, the focus is directed to the time before she entered the service, which ignores the knowledge of the atrocities she acquired with the first day of her service. The statement draws attention to the implicit assumption that a person who unwittingly entered a criminal context could not be responsible for the acts committed therein or even as an accomplice.

(3) "She was a secretary. She was not a guard, warden, Kapo [inmate who oversaw other inmates, H.T.] or doctor who selected the incoming prisoners. Nor one who made decisions or decided who had to die. If all employees and subordinates were charged with aiding and abetting just because they did not actively fight against what superiors or bosses did, then some would have to go to court."

The emphasis on her role as a "secretary" and the contrasting comparison to staff who dealt directly with the inmates are used to highlight an apparent harmlessness of her field of work. Complicity is not ruled out, but the actual blame is delegated to decision-makers and senior staff alone. In the process, complicity is played down by passing it off as non-resistance. Under the condition that functionaries like her could be charged with complicity, proceedings would also have to take place in a large number of other cases. Conversely, prosecution in this case would not be justified, because in many other cases, prosecution does not take place or has not taken place, and thus there would be unequal treatment.

(4) "What a stupid thing to say, she didn't have the power to say NO to Hitler… Now she should pay for Hitler's MISDEEDS."

The premise of the secretary's guilt is rejected as "stupid" and thus false. For the justification, the context is shifted: instead of formulating the (moral) claim of not voluntarily applying for service in a concentration camp or asking for being transferred to another place, a straw man argument is used here to claim that she would have had to rebel against Hitler in order not to have to become guilty in her personal context of action. By denying the possibility of standing up to Hitler on her own (and successfully), she is passed off as helpless and her actions as having no alternative. Since the "misdeeds" were only Hitler's responsibility and thus perpetration is narrowed down to a single person, not only would the concentration camp secretary be a perpetrator and unjustly accused, but all perpetrators would be absolved of guilt. Placing all the blame on Hitler, for either having seduced or excessively oppressed the German people, or personifying the entire era of Nazism and its policies with Hitler is or was a widespread form of perspectivisation through which the participation of all others is made invisible.

(5) "You had no choice. You were drafted. Whether you wanted to or not."

In the discussion about the trial of a former SS guard in a concentration camp, it is claimed that service in the concentration camp was a duty that one could not escape and that there was no room for manoeuvre. The guard is absolved of his individual guilt by referring to orders. This sweeping generalisation of coercion is contradicted by historical facts. For the longest time of its existence, one had to apply for admission to the SS. Exceptions were made for non-German SS members (Zaugg 2021) and when Wehrmacht camp guards were incorporated into the SS (Hördler 2020). Membership was thus voluntary in most cases. Likewise, one could avoid guard duty in the concentration camps, amongst other things, by applying for a transfer to the front.

(6) "What would have happened if the guard had refused the orders? He would have been executed."

The rhetorical question reduces the guard's options for action to refusal of orders. This is then presented as unreasonable by referring to a consequence he would face for doing so. Due to the assumed highest personal risk, the blame would lie with those who have the power to punish. As in (5), the possibility of transfer remains unmentioned.

> (7) "The woman did her duty… Nothing more, nothing less."

With reference to the concentration camp secretary, her participation in the crimes is portrayed as the execution of the tasks that she had to fulfil. This externalisation of guilt simply ignores the purpose of a concentration camp and her function in it. Her contribution is given the appearance of an everyday and unproblematic activity.

> (8) "Now one begins a thorough legal reappraisal and finds only the small cogs of old age. A young woman who worked as a secretary, an assistant cook etc. certainly all made a contribution to the crime, but it is negligible compared to that of the lawyers, concentration camp doctors etc."

The Nazi crimes are acknowledged and the prosecution of these acts is agreed to in principle. On this basis, however, a relativisation takes place. By emphasising the guilt of perpetrators in more prominent positions, perpetrators who were not in command are largely absolved of responsibility for their part in the crimes. In this way, a large mass of perpetrators who were indispensable for the implementation of persecution and extermination have been exonerated retrospectively.

> (9) "She may have been working there voluntarily, but I don't think she was thinking: 'Cool, here I can kill people, here I feel comfortable.'"

The assumption about her motivation and inner attitude denies any personal intention to commit a crime. With their absence—so the conclusion to be drawn—she could also not have been substantially guilty.

Implicit

> (10) "What is just about being punished as a bystander for what others
>   have done?"

The ascribed role as a "bystander" (a term that makes an explicit attribu-
tion but is part of a presupposition and therefore used with implicitness)
and the rhetorical question aim at a single meaning: the concentration
camp secretary would not have been involved in the crimes, although
she did work in the concentration camp. The unspoken premise here is
that those who themselves did not murder anyone are not guilty. This
approach would absolve all the hundreds of thousands of accomplices of
any guilt who, as civilian employees, public officials, railway workers,
etc., all made a contribution to the Holocaust with their individual
actions.

> (11) "Her crime was mainly writing letters, making coffee and possibly
>   making appointments for the bosses."

In this statement, the part played by concentration camp administrative
stuff in the atrocities is downplayed: the juxtaposition of "crime" and
the listed tasks is meant to ridicule the accusation against them. These
supposedly innocent tasks are detached from their context and aim—
and as a result, made to appear ordinary and harmless. The importance
of administrative activities to the functioning of concentration camps is
thus relativised and negated.

> (12) "His victims? What was he guilty of as a security guard?"

These rhetorical questions deny that an SS guard was part of the atroc-
ities at all and thus could be involved in the context of guilt in a
concentration camp.

> (13) "Let him who is without sin among us cast the first stone."

As a reaction to the reporting of the above-mentioned trial against former
concentration camp personnel, this bible quote is used to relativise guilt
comprehensively, which places the extent of the atrocities committed in

the concentration camps on a level with all kinds of crimes, but also other offences, misdemeanours and misconduct, under the term "sin." Everything that a person can be guilty of is passed off as equivalent guilt through the use of this metaphor.

> (14) "The guy was a simple employee in a camp. As so many Germans, he wore a black uniform and belonged to an elite military unit. Was he responsible for the crimes of his peers?"

The guilt of the concentration camp guard is relativised three times. The emphasis on his low status as a "simple employee" is used to conclude that he had no influence on the events in the concentration camp. At the same time, his membership in the SS ("black uniform") is played down and his personal share of guilt is presented as small, since he was only one of "so many Germans." With the rhetorical question, perpetration and responsibility are shifted to other SS members and limited to them. However, the same argumentation could be applied to them—with the result that no one was guilty.

> (15) "Did a guard stand watch at the gate or herd the poor prisoners into the gas chamber?"

The rhetorical question implies that only direct contact with the victims is to be counted as participation in the atrocities. It undercuts the fact that the operation of a concentration camp was only possible through the division of labour and that the guard in his function ensured that the inmates could not escape and be killed. The camp guards also accompanied the selection of the arriving prisoners and also killed inmates themselves.

> (16) "Today, soldiers detached to guard, some who were there for only a few months, administrative staff and secretaries are convicted of mass murder."

This restrictive emphasis on an assumed time period ("some who were there for only a few months") implies that participation in mass murder

is less serious if the perpetrator was not present for the entire period of the crime. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of the functional units are exempted from guilt.

(17) "Next, the offspring of Adi's shepherd bitch will be sued."

By means of a sarcastic reference to Hitler's ("Adi's") dog and guilt by association as justification for the expected next stage of prosecution, the trials are ridiculed. In this way, the REJECTION OF GUILT and prosecution of participants whose function is assessed as insignificant is expressed.

(18) "The world was a different place 80 years ago, this is just another woke agenda."
(19) "That was simply a different time."

In these comments, a vague specificity of the time of the crime is claimed with reference to the two trials. The informational blanks cannot be filled other than by the assumptions that, due to unnamed circumstances, the possibilities for action were severely limited (the decision against being complicit) or even that certain behaviours were favoured (it seemed the right thing to be part of the SS or to work in the concentration camp). This suggests that responsibility must be assessed according to the maxims and ideas of the time and not according to today's moral and legal standards, which are discredited in (18) as "another woke agenda." The assumptions undercut the fact that participation in (mass) murder was also wrongful action at that time, even if it was carried out by state power.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(20) "It's not true that all Germans bear guilt for the Holocaust."

This statement may be motivated by the desire to avert the accusation of guilt not only from all those actually uninvolved, but also from those (indirectly) involved. The background to this statement is the idea, which first emerged in the 1940s, that there was an accusation of collective guilt against every German—which was not the case (except for some

individual opinions). The claim that there had been such an accusation was only a straw man argument, the denial of which was used to ward off guilt in general. However, since the statement is true in itself, its manifest informational content must first be considered in the interpretation. For this reason, it is not in itself to be classified as an expression of REJECTION OF GUILT.

Related Categories

DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK WITH THE NAZI PAST (Chapter 17), HOLOCAUST DISTORTION AND DENIAL (Chapter 18).

References

Bergmann, Werner. 2007. 'Störenfriede der Erinnerung'. Zum Schuldabwehr-Antisemitismus in Deutschland. In *Literarischer Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz*, ed. Klaus-Michael Bogdal, Klaus Holz, and Matthias N. Lorenz, 13–35. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.

Dörner, Bernward. 2007. *Die Deutschen und der Holocaust. Was niemand wissen wollte, aber jeder wissen konnte*. Berlin: Propyläen.

Friedländer, Saul. 1997. *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, Volume I. The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939. New York: HarperCollins.

Fulbrook, Mary. 2023. *Bystander Society. Conformity and Complicity in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Gellately, Robert. 2001. *Backing Hitler. Consent and coercion in Nazi Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Herf, Jeffrey. 1997. *Divided memory. The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hilberg, Raul. 1992. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945*. New York: Aaron Asher Books.

Hördler, Stefan. 2020. *Ordnung und Inferno. Das KZ-System im letzten Kriegsjahr*, 2nd ed. Göttingen: Wallstein.

Padover, Saul Kussiel. 1946. *Experiment in Germany. The Story of an American Intelligence Officer*. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce.

Postone, Moishe. 1980. Anti-Semitism and National Socialism: Notes on the German Reaction to "Holocaust." *New German Critique* 19: 97–116.

Uhl, Heidemarie. 2006. From Victim Myth to Co-Responsibility Thesis. Nazi Rule, World War II, and the Holocaust in Austrian Memory. In *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu, 40–72. New York: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822388333.

Welzer, Harald, Sabine Moller, and Karoline Tschuggnall. 2002. *"Opa war kein Nazi." Nationalsozialismus und Holocaust im Familiengedächtnis*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Zaugg, Franziska Anna. 2021. *Rekrutierungen für die Waffen-SS in Südosteuropa. Ideen, Ideale und Realitäten einer Vielvölkerarmee*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110730777.

17

Demands for a Clean Break with the Nazi Past

Hagen Troschke

Conceptual and Historical Overview

"Demands for closure," "drawing a line under" or a "clean break" (*Schlussstrich*) from the Nazi past are a constitutive mode of post-Holocaust antisemitism (Rensmann 2004). They were and are used to express the wish that the remembrance of the Holocaust should be ended, the confrontation with (Nazi) antisemitism discontinued, and payments to the victims stopped.

Demands related to the Holocaust are a phenomenon that is particularly widespread in Germany and Austria, the countries from which the Holocaust originated and where the main responsibility lies. Furthermore, such demands are found primarily in discourses of societies in which co-responsibility was accepted in the first place and where a corresponding sense of complicity is felt. In a German context, they first

H. Troschke (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

aimed at a legal and moral exoneration of the perpetrators and of Nazi society in general. After the phase of repressing Nazi crimes was gradually followed by confronting them, the advocates of a clean break have been making further demands. They claim that remembering historical crimes or taking responsibility for them imposes a significant and unjustified restriction upon the development of national identity, as well as potentially the personal development of individuals within that society.

According to this argument, addressing guilt leads to the situation in which one can neither concentrate on shaping the future nor live and act politically in normality, liberated from responsibility. Therefore, it is insisted that a new chapter be opened, in which guilt is no longer an issue. This would inevitably contribute to the history of the Holocaust being forgotten. Appeals for a clean break are directed at the cultural and political establishment and all those involved in the discourse—with the aim of winning support for these demands.

In contrast to the → REJECTION OF GUILT, Chapter 16, DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK reject the *confrontation* with guilt and *not the guilt itself*. They are expressions of an indirect rejection of guilt and do not involve an obvious denial or distortion of demonstrable facts. This seems to be the preferred strategy when calling for collective exoneration, as this is expected to be less controversial than direct rejections of guilt. As a means of exoneration from the past, DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK allow one to display that one acknowledges guilt and, as such, can now put the past behind because it has been dealt with sufficiently. The wish for not addressing the issue can also extend to antisemitism in general, which is presented as a phenomenon of the past.

Closely related to DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK are demands for an end to an alleged → FREE PASS, Chapter 26, which is said to have been granted to Jews or Israel because of a sense of guilt over the Holocaust. This demand has become a constant refrain in the repertoire of worldwide antisemitism. With its help, the possibilities of spreading antisemitic slander and passing it off as criticism expand considerably. In the process, argumentative reference is also made to a supposed → TABOO OF CRITICISM, Chapter 23 resulting from a guilt complex, by which one should no longer be restricted.

Demands for closure also reveal indifference towards the suffering of the victims and a lack of empathy. The history of the victims would deliberately no longer be passed on if these demands were met. In part, demands for closure are also directed against Jews. They are reproached for remembering the Holocaust, which is linked to the accusation that they practice such remembrance excessively ($\rightarrow$ ADMONISHERS, Chapter 22), thereby obstructing the "carefree" society that would follow from bringing questions of historical remembrance and responsibility to an end. In this way, Jews stand in the way of a positive self-image or even national pride. Moreover, in connection with demands for an end to compensation payments, Jews are accused of $\rightarrow$ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20 or $\rightarrow$ GREED, Chapter 11.

DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK are an established discourse position that persisted through the decades in a variety of ways. In the following, they are illustrated on the basis of prominent debates in Germany. After the end of Nazism, there was widespread rejection of prosecuting the perpetrators. Due to the extensive societal participation in Nazi crimes and the widespread approval of Nazism, there was a great collective interest in seeking to leave the past behind, not excluding the perpetrators from society and leaving them unpunished. The first legal *Schlussstrich* was reached shortly after the founding of West Germany through an amnesty law (Frei 2012). This decision was, at the same time, an expression of a rejection of guilt: the guilt was not considered relevant enough to justify (further) criminal prosecution.

The historical review of Nazism has always been contested: the reference ranged from the conclusion that it was a monstrous chapter, to the assumption that it was overemphasised at the expense of other periods of German history. The debate about the conditions, nature and goals of Nazism and the memory of its crimes—especially the Holocaust—also took place in the academic milieu and was openly fought out in West Germany in 1986 in the so-called historians' debate (*Historikerstreit*). The subject of criticism was, in addition to revisionist theses, the point of view advocated by Ernst Nolte and Michael Stürmer, amongst others, that a clean break with the Holocaust-focused preoccupation with the past was necessary in order to achieve a normalisation of the German present and identity (Evans 1989).

In right-wing extremism, the absolute denial of any critical examination of Nazi crimes is openly propagated, e.g. by means of terms such as "cult of guilt" (*Schuldkult,* Suermann 2019). In doing so, it is claimed that this examination is inappropriate in its extent and in the matter at hand and must therefore be stopped. The actual reason for this claim is that coming to terms with the past is perceived as interfering with the far-right's own political activities and ambitions: it impedes efforts to win supporters for the far-right ideology burdened by Nazi crimes and to popularise nationalism (Bott 1969: 106–107; Pfahl-Traughber 2019: 302).

In 1998, in an acceptance speech that was much discussed and received much approval, the writer Martin Walser presented reflections that ultimately amounted to a demand for an end to remembering and confronting the Nazi past (Walser 1998; Lorenz 2007). He also demonstrated his rejection with regard to the then planned Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, which he shared with many others.

Attacks on the culture of remembrance also come from the (left-wing) academic and cultural milieu. They have gained momentum with a debate in recent years (including an exemplary text by Dirk Moses) (Friedländer et al. 2022), which is also permeated by antisemitic attributions (Spencer 2022). On the one hand, the debate correctly emphasises that the remembrance of different historical crimes is not mutually exclusive, since the space for remembrance is unlimited. On the other hand, however, it is demanded that the remembrance of the Holocaust should be limited in order to give more space to the remembrance of other crimes. In other words, the demand to limit Holocaust remembrance does not stem from any external necessity, but solely from the wishes of those who believe it to be too pronounced within the German discourse. Although this approach does not yet have the absoluteness of a DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK, it certainly comes close. The claim that the remembrance of the Holocaust is maintained in order to conceal other crimes is unfounded, as such a strategy would cover up crimes with crimes – with no discernible benefit to the descendants of the perpetrators. As a crime of superlatives in many respects and with special characteristics, the Holocaust inevitably receives a lot of attention. Restricting remembrance therefore also effectively amounts to relativising the Holocaust.

Moreover, Holocaust remembrance is not controlled by elites in order to whitewash the state, as has been claimed, but has been painstakingly developed over decades in a bottom up process by many small actors for the purpose of education. There is no organised or top-down campaign to hinder the efforts that are also necessary to establish the remembrance of other crimes. The motive behind the accusation of a forcibly imposed and disproportionate remembrance of the Holocaust is to delegitimise this remembrance. It is an attempt to push the central Jewish trauma into the background, to ignore their history of persecution (and the circumstances surrounding the founding of Israel), as well as contemporary antisemitism, and to no longer have to regard Jews as a marginalised group.

The slogan "Free Palestine from German guilt," which rose to prominence in the wake of the 7 October attacks and subsequent war, implicitly claims that Germany's position towards Israel in relation to the Palestinians is uncritical because it is shaped by guilt and therefore comes at the expense of the Palestinians (Gutmair 2023). In fact, however, Germany takes a heterogeneous stance towards Israel, which includes both support for the existence of the Jewish community in Israel and regular criticism, particularly in international forums, and the Palestinians are continually supported financially in various forms and also with regard to a state of their own. This slogan aims to influence the German discourse in such a way that Germany abandons its differentiated stance and positions itself one-sidedly in favour of the Palestinian side. An attack on the culture of remembrance, which is identified as the cause of the alleged German stance that is rejected, is intended to pave the way for this: Germany should no longer be restricted by remembrance and its consequences. On the one hand, Germany is being approached with this DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK. On the other hand, however, this is also a position that is developing in Germany and is being cultivated in certain milieus as a variant of a genuinely German strategy of exoneration from responsibility for the past.

When demands are made by today's generations urging an end to the remembrance of the Holocaust, they may refer to the fact that they have not incurred any personal guilt and feel they have sufficiently dealt with this history. However, since everyone is free to deal with this issue

(besides the basic information provided by school education) or to ignore it, such demands for closure show that people are already bothered by the fact that the issue is being raised. But failing to address the topic would lead to the Holocaust being made invisible and forgotten, and no more insights and lessons could be drawn from it. In addition, a lack of Holocaust education risks fuelling further conspiracy theories and historical revisionism.

Key Identifying Characteristics

DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK comprise demands to end:

- Dealing with the Holocaust;
- Dealing with (Nazi) antisemitism;
- Payments to victims of the Holocaust.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "And eternal remains the eternal guilt that must never go away. Honestly, as long as France, England, Holland and especially the USA don't crawl on their knees to their victims and ask for forgiveness, I'm not going to fucking feel guilty for something that happened before I was born. At some point, there will be an end to this imposed eternal guilt!"

The emphasis on an imposed "eternal guilt" that will never be allowed to "go away," along with the vulgar rejection of feelings of guilt, indicates a clear aversion on the part of the user to deal with the Holocaust. The claim that it is about guilt conceals the fact that it is historical knowledge and responsibility that are rejected, and that contact with the subject itself is shied away from. While on the one hand, an end to any confrontation with the past is explicitly demanded, on the other, such confrontation is presented as being dependent on the positioning of

other societies vis-à-vis their history. However, this is ultimately contradicted by the commenter's own emotional rejection. This condition is merely put forward in order to shift the topic by referring to crimes in the history of other countries, to offset guilt and to distract from the guilt in one's own society and the necessity of dealing with it.

DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK with regard to the prosecution of Nazi perpetrators can still be found in the present. On the occasion of two trials held in Germany in 2021 against former concentration camp personnel, there were many reactions in social media, some of which serve as examples here.

(2) "There has to be an end sometime."

(3) "Let history be history now. That's enough. God knows we have other problems."

(4) "You should be ashamed of yourselves. A 96-year-old woman. Maybe someone else can be dug up and judged."

(5) "Yes, it was bad what happened in the 3rd Reich, but the man is 100 years old. Let it go!"

While in (2), the comprehensive rejection of criminal prosecution is expressed without justification, in (3), it is legitimised by referring to current problems. This implicitly makes the false claim that a choice must be made between prosecuting historic crimes and dealing with present challenges. This bogus argument is meant to generate consent for giving preference to addressing present-day problems. In (4), in addition to moral condemnation, prosecution is sarcastically certified as excessive by means of an exaggerated scenario. The acknowledgement of Nazi crimes in (5) has the character of a concession. This serves to demonstrate insight into the problem, in order to then be able to put forward the demand for closure with apparent legitimacy. It is probable that arguments such as those in (4) and (5), which refer to the retrospective date of the crimes and to the old age of the accused, would also have been used if the accused had been 60 years old. It is (intentionally) misjudged that the punishability of these crimes has not decreased or been abolished with the passing of time and does not depend on age.

(6) "But the current generation is so fed up with having those times forced down their throats. They want to live normally."

From the metaphor of physical glutting and coercion that refers to "those times" (a reference to National Socialism and the Holocaust respectively), it can be deduced that the user feels a strong aversion towards any addressing of the topic—which is why the conclusion is a desire for normality.

(7) "We, who were born after 1945, have nothing to do with this. We bear neither responsibility nor any guilt! I can neither understand nor accept this cult of guilt!!! No more payments of any kind."

In this statement, two DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK are strikingly present. The rejection of remembrance, which is devalued here as a "cult of guilt," and of "payments" that remain undefined is justified argumentatively with reference to the innocence of the post-war generations.

Implicit

(8) "It's good that Germany has no other problems."

This ironic reaction to a trial of concentration camp personnel suggests that Germany has other, more pressing, problems and that the user consequently disapproves of the trial. The statement is an implicit call to solve these problems instead—with the prosecution of Nazi-era crimes being by extension presented as a waste of time and resources.

(9) "In the Nuremberg trials, everything was dealt with, and these "small cogs" were acquitted."

What ensues implicitly from this claim is that justice was done with the trials of leading Nazis and war criminals (1946–1949) and that today's trials are therefore superfluous and should be omitted. It is wrong that the so-called "'small cogs' were acquitted." Only a fraction of the perpetrators was brought to trial at that time. Through the metaphor, a REJECTION OF GUILT also becomes effective, which limits guilt to decision-makers.

(10) "As long as we don't finally leave the past behind, we will never again have the chance to develop love for our country, and that's a damn shame."

The rejection of the moral responsibility for a certain "past" is made a condition for "love for our country," thus implicitly setting up a demand to put an end to the national debate around the Holocaust if this "love" is to be achieved. The open allusion to the past hints at the Nazi era, but without ever mentioning it; the reader has to decode it based on their knowledge of its prominence in German consciousness. Here, it becomes apparent that a positive relationship is not thought of as an embracing of certain desirable aspects, but as a total claim that seeks unrestricted and undisturbed identification. However, it is possible to refer to merits of one's own country while at the same time addressing its dark sides.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(11) "Age is no protection from punishment, I know… Nevertheless. How do you want to punish her? Life imprisonment at 96??? Or community service??? Irony off…. It comes years too late."

This comment doubts the point of a trial because of its timing. However, it differs from (4), for example, as it does not reject such a trial in principle. The only objection is that in the case of a conviction, punishment can no longer be meaningfully applied in view of the age of the accused.

(12) "Moving on does not mean forgetting."

Depending on the context, such a statement can legitimise an attitude that, in addition to "moving on," does nothing to prevent "forgetting," thus allowing it to happen and effectively drawing a line under the Nazi past. In another context, however, it can also mean that orientation towards the future and remembering are possible in parallel. If the context is unknown, the latter reading would be chosen in favour of the author and the comment would be classified as not antisemitic.

Related Categories

REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16), FREE PASS (Chapter 26), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23), ADMONISHERS (Chapter 22), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), GREED (Chapter 11).

References

Bott, Hermann. 1969. *Die Volksfeind-Ideologie. Zur Kritik rechtsradikaler Propaganda*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

Evans, Richard J. 1989. *In Hitler's shadow. West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the Nazi Past*. London: Tauris.

Frei, Norbert. 2012. *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*. München: C.H.Beck.

Friedländer, Saul, Norbert Frei, Sybille Steinbacher, and Dan Diner, eds. 2022. *Ein Verbrechen ohne Namen. Anmerkungen zum Neuen Streit über den Holocaust*. München: C.H.Beck.

Gutmair, Ulrich. 2023, 5 November. "Free Palestine from German Guilt." Der Antisemitismus der Progressiven. *taz*. https://taz.de/Free-Palestine-from-German-Guilt/!5967918/ (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

Lorenz, Matthias N. 2007. Walser-Bubis-Debatte. In *Lexikon der "Vergangenheitsbewältigung" in Deutschland. Debatten- und Diskursgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus nach 1945*, ed. Torben Fischer, and Matthias N. Lorenz, 3rd ed., 320–322. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Pfahl-Traughber, Armin. 2019. *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland. Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Rensmann, Lars. 2004. *Demokratie und Judenbild. Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Spencer, Philip. 2022. Thinking about the Holocaust, Genocide and Antisemitism Today: On the Limitations of a New, Anti-Imperialist Revisionism. *Society* 59: 12–15. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-022-00668-1.

Suermann, Lenard. 2019. Schuld-Kult. In *Handwörterbuch rechtsextremer Kampfbegriffe*, ed. Bente Gießelmann, Benjamin Kerst, Robin Richterich, Lenard Suermann, and Fabian Virchow, 2nd ed., 326–339. Frankfurt am Main: Wochenschau Verlag.

Walser, Martin. 1998. Dank. In *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels 1998. Martin Walser. Ansprachen aus Anlaß der Verleihung*, ed. Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, 37–52. Frankfurt am Main: MVB.

18

Holocaust Distortion and Denial

Hagen Troschke

18.1 Holocaust Distortion

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The Holocaust was the mass murder, planned and systematically carried out by the National Socialists and their collaborators, of approximately six million European Jews, who were considered an enemy race according to the antisemitic Nazi ideology (Hilberg 2003; Longerich 2010; Bundesarchiv et al. 2022). The goal was the extermination of all Jews: through mass shootings, gassings, forced labour and many other methods (Benz 1991, 2011). They were either killed where they fell into the hands of their persecutors or deported to a widely ramified system of concentration camps for this purpose.

H. Troschke (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

Shortly after the end of World War II—after the world gradually learned about the extent of the extermination of European Jews—the first efforts began to distort or even completely deny the events of this crime and, thus, falsify the historical facts (Lipstadt 1993: 49–64). These activities quickly spread around the world. DENIAL and DISTORTION OF THE HOLOCAUST are usually discussed together under the term DENIAL. However, this chapter will make a distinction: HOLOCAUST DISTORTION differs from → DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 18.2, in that it recognises the Holocaust's genocidal character in principle (or at least seeks to give that impression). However, it relativises the historical facts, which is tantamount to a partial denial. The forms of relativisation can be assigned to two basic fields according to their strategies and purposes. The strategies of the first field pursue the purposes of rejecting the guilt and whitewashing antisemitism or National Socialism and serve as a basis for antisemitic attacks on Jews. In the strategies of the second field, the Holocaust is not the focus, but is only used to strengthen the effect of another message with its symbolic power. This second aspect of relativisation is an essential reason for presenting DISTORTION separately from DENIAL.

The first field of DISTORTIONS includes strategies that relate directly to the Holocaust. They attempt to *exempt perpetrator groups or to play down this crime*. Through such statements, aspects of the Holocaust are erased and its scope is reduced. The first strategy attempts to play down or deny the complicity of certain perpetrator groups or organisations in the Holocaust, as well as contributions made by the population in Nazi Germany and other countries—amongst other things by attributing responsibility to others. Complementary to this is the second strategy of reducing responsibility for the Holocaust to a small selection of perpetrators. There are various historical constellations for both strategies, of which only basic patterns will be mentioned: in Germany, these strategies seek to excuse the Wehrmacht, the police and the population in general, while blaming the SS, the Nazi leadership or Hitler alone (Greven and von Wrochem 2000; Bitunjac and Schoeps 2021; Litvak and Webman 2009; Heer et al. 2003). In states where there was collaboration in the implementation of the Holocaust (Bitunjac et al. 2021), the role of the collaborators is relativised or denied and responsibility is attributed

solely to German perpetrators or other groups abroad, or it is reduced to certain collaborating groups in order to exonerate the involved parts of the population from responsibility (Shafir 2002; Hausleitner 2010). The third strategy is the attempt to reduce the scientifically proven number of deaths to a fraction by means of falsification, embezzlement and decontextualisation, for which extensive efforts have been made (Lipstadt 1993). However, if the figure given is so low that it completely alters the character of the event itself and, thus, seeks to conceal it, this downplaying is tantamount to DENIAL. This strategy could, therefore, be listed for both DISTORTION and DENIAL, if it were not almost impossible to determine exactly when one turns into the other. Finally, the fourth strategy blames Jews for the Holocaust or presents the Holocaust or individual crimes thereof as an act of self-defence (Shafir 2002: 38–47; Bergmann 2007: 20; Hausleitner 2010). Thus, Jews are said to have initiated the Holocaust in order to push for the founding of Israel. On the other hand, Nazi propaganda declared Jews from the outset to be, amongst many other things, the personification of the "Bolshevik threat," which is why they had to be fought. This attribution became part of the standard repertoire of Holocaust falsification and also appeared in Eastern European countries, where Jews were also passed off as key decision-makers in Soviet policy and the Red Army—amongst other things, to justify crimes committed against Jews by actors in those countries in response to conflicts with the Soviet Union. According to other justifications, they had robbed their countries economically (→ GREED, Chapter 11) or had behaved disloyally (→ DISLOYALTY, Chapter 9) and were punished for it.

Like HOLOCAUST DENIAL, these DISTORTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST falsify historical facts in order to deprive this event of significance and make its remembrance no longer necessary. In contrast—or in addition—to the methods of DENIAL, these strategies are intended to create the impression of a legitimate discussion about historical facts. The allegations are spread under the pretext of wanting to correct supposed untruths in historiography. By ostensibly accepting the historical event in general, those who spread such DISTORTIONS claim to be in consensus about history. They speculate that this increases their credibility. The

strategies of this first field of Holocaust relativisation differ from HOLO-CAUST DENIAL only in the discursive means and are no less dramatic in their effects: the claim of a lower number of victims, for example (categorised here as DISTORTION), is comparable in its effect to a claim denying the number of victims by passing off those killed as refugees who can no longer be found administratively (cf. "reinterpreting those killed as missing persons" in DENIAL).

The immediate function of HOLOCAUST DISTORTION is the rejection of guilt: it seeks to avoid questions about the history of one's society and family and to protect and rehabilitate one's group (nation, cultural group, religious community, organisation, company, etc.)—and thus also to protect and enhance the part of one's self-image that is based on iden-tification with one's own group. In contrast to → REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16), which essentially positions itself on *individual participa-tion* in the Holocaust and does not question its essential characteristics, Holocaust relativisation, with its assertions that downplay the extent and character of the atrocities or the participation of the relevant actors, refers to a broader historical dimension and *attempts to change the entire inter-pretative framework* in order to achieve, amongst other things, a rejection of guilt. Another form of rejecting guilt is its inversion with the claim that Jews were to blame for the Holocaust. This is also an extreme variant of the attribution of → BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10) to Jews. The purpose of this inversion of guilt is to deny Jews victim status, since an attack on victims would be perceived as an obvious transgression, and to discursively clear the way for antisemitic attacks.

Downplaying the number of victims is also a basis for the accusa-tion of → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20). It is claimed, for instance, that the number of those killed was delib-erately exaggerated by Jews or Israel in order to increase the amount of reparation claims against Germany. However, this is inaccurate: the repa-rations were based not on the number of victims, but on the number of survivors, who came to Israel and were resettled there, and the costs incurred by Israel (Lipstadt 1993: 56–57).

The most widespread motivation for DISTORTION and DENIAL—and one that is built on rejection of guilt—is the extreme right's aim to restore and secure the prestige of its ideologies (Lipstadt 1993; Wistrich 2012).

It strives to render the political tenets of e.g. nationalism, hate ideologies, fascism, National Socialism and authoritarian forms of society in general irrelevant, and thereby expand its scope for political action. To this end, the worst consequences of antisemitism and, in particular, of National Socialist ideology are to be erased. However, the project of rehabilitating antisemitism is supported by actors from a broad political and ideological spectrum.

There is a strategy used in both fields of DISTORTION—both to exonerate and to use the symbolic power of the Holocaust: the equation of the Holocaust with other crimes against humanity. Such an equation can be voiced in order to place other drastic crimes against humanity from the past and present next to the Holocaust, and, thus, make it appear as one mass atrocity amongst many. The function of this is to offset the respective crimes and—as in the strategies already described— to deny the dimension and specificity of the Holocaust in order to relativise the guilt of those involved. Such equations, however, must be distinguished from comparisons that weigh certain aspects of different genocides against each other in the search for knowledge gain and take differences into account. Comparisons can turn into equations when, for example, the Holocaust is reinterpreted as a colonial crime (with the desire to gain land and labour passed off as the motivation, thereby erasing its exterminatory antisemitic aims).

While the strategies mentioned so far start from the Holocaust and primarily want to make a statement about it, a second variant of equating the Holocaust with other mass atrocity crimes belongs to the field of strategies, in which the Holocaust is used merely as a point of reference and another fact is in focus. In this context, the symbolic power of the Holocaust as the epitome of genocide (due to its dimension but also its perfidious and systematic execution) is instrumentalised in order to emphasise the gravity of another mass atrocity crime. As a logical consequence, this indirectly relativises the Holocaust.

Finally, there is a strategy that leads to DISTORTION simply by *instrumentalising the symbolic power of the Holocaust.* The Holocaust is taken as an extended symbol of evil, mass atrocities or horrific acts in general and equated with scenarios of violence or conflict in order to underline their

seriousness, to draw attention to them and to mobilise political commit-ment. Examples of this include the denunciation of factory farming or compulsory vaccination as being akin to the Holocaust. Discourse around the Arab–Israeli conflict frequently features comparisons to the Holocaust; an antisemitic form of the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1) is also created through an equation, as this attributes Nazi practices to Jews. At the same time, Israel is accused of → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32). This case is also special in that Jews, as the victims at the time, are—in an inversion of the Holocaust—declared to be today's perpetrators (Wistrich 2017). These equations may not be intended to reinterpret or down-play facts of the Holocaust, but indirect trivialisation inevitably results from such equations. Of all the DISTORTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST, the forms that instrumentalise its symbolic power are the most common in mainstream contexts.

Such relativisations of the Holocaust lead to the character of the Holo-caust being diluted and, through their widespread use, the facts being suppressed, forgotten or overlooked. This also paves the way for the spread of deliberate forms of DISTORTION or DENIAL. The DISTOR-TION OF THE HOLOCAUST can be the result of ignorance, as just mentioned. However, this does not diminish its communicative effect and the perpetuation and support of the corresponding discourse, which leads to questioning the historical events, their impact and the necessity of remembering the Holocaust.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Trivialising or denying the complicity of perpetrator groups or organ-isations in the Holocaust (e.g. the Wehrmacht, collaborators outside Germany), as well as the contributions made by local populations;
- Reducing the blame for the Holocaust to a small selection of those involved;
- Minimising the number of victims;

- Holding Jews responsible for the genocide perpetrated against them, or presenting the Holocaust as an act of self-defence (for example, by suggesting that Jewish responses to Nazism or Jewish participation in communist movements justified their persecution by the Nazis);
- Equating the Holocaust with other crimes against humanity;
- Equating the Holocaust with scenarios of violence or conflict (for raising awareness for political aims, e.g. the Arab–Israeli conflict, intensive livestock farming, the imposition of vaccine certificates).[1]

Comparisons of the Holocaust with other genocides, which are not relativising, include the respective contexts and address not only similarities but also differences. They, thus, take a differentiated and qualified view and are accordingly not antisemitic.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "German soldiers did not participate in atrocities."

In the context of World War II, this claim attempts to absolve German soldiers of war crimes and participation in the Holocaust, contrary to historical facts. In this way, an essential part of the Holocaust is declared non-existent. In fact, the German military (Wehrmacht) was systematically involved in carrying out the Holocaust through various logistical measures and especially through mass shootings (Heer 1999). On the linguistic level, the façade of fact is reinforced by neutral, matter of fact tone and lack of hedging.

---

[1] All these key characteristics have been compiled taking into account the elaborations of the IHRA (2021: 7–10). However, the following points have not been included here, as we believe they belong to other categories: "statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event" and "honoring the historical legacies of persons or organizations that were complicit in the crimes of the Holocaust" (→ AFFIRMATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 27); "accusing Jews of 'using' the Holocaust for some manner of gain" (→ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20).

(2) "The Germans had no choice: the Holocaust was decided by the Nazi clique that ruled the country with terror."

The German population is contrasted with a "Nazi clique" and the horror is generalised, thus obscuring who was affected by the terror: namely persecuted groups, but not the majority of the population. Although only a small circle of people made the essential decisions, the execution relied on the participation of hundreds of thousands who, with their individual contributions, made the Holocaust possible in the first place (Friedländer 1997: 4, 322–323; Hilberg 1992). The comment makes this systematic contribution invisible and limits the responsibility for the Holocaust to a few leading Nazis.

(3) "There have never been 6 million killed."

It is not clear here on what scale the number of victims is placed instead. The emphatic "never" suggests that a significantly lower number is assumed. The statement could have been made with the intention of strategic ambiguity, in order to sow doubt about the historical facts by denying them in general, without committing to a number.

(4) "The hugely disproportionate participation of Jews in the Communist parties was the reason for Hitler to round them up to prevent a Communist overthrow."

The reasoning of the comment is inconsistent on several levels. Firstly, at that time, no communist takeover was imminent anywhere. Soviet Jews, on the other hand, were already citizens of a communist-ruled state. Moreover, the proportion of Jews in communist movements is exaggerated in this account. Finally, the supposed political activity of some Jews (who did not act as Jews and often have not identified as Jewish) is taken as a starting point to justify measures against all Jews. Jews are, therefore, blamed for the Holocaust (as an extreme form of BLAME FOR ANTI-SEMITISM), presented here under a euphemism ("to round them up"). As a result, the responsibility for the Holocaust is reduced to Hitler with another strategy of DISTORTION.

(5) "The Jews – especially the Zionists – made themselves an incalculable threat against Hitler."

This claim reflects the → CONSPIRACY THEORY (Chapter 13) already circulating in Nazi propaganda, according to which Jews had planned a war against Nazi Germany. It was and is used to justify that with the Holocaust, the Nazis were merely defending themselves against Jews, who appear to be the ones responsible for it (Bytwerk 2005).

(6) "Well, Stalin and Mao Zedong, the Spanish and the Arabs have committed no less terrible crimes."
(7) "Terrible crimes have been committed at all times in human history – why is it always the Holocaust that is held up?"
(8) "Why not prosecute the Americans who guarded and controlled the Rhine meadow camps, or the Allies who carried out the carpet bombing of Germany!"

In all three comments, the topic is changed away from the Holocaust in order to divert attention and relativise it. In (6) and (7), the Holocaust is generalised into one chapter in a series of crimes. Differences between historical events are thereby levelled, just as in (8), where the Holocaust is openly trivialised by the objects of comparison used. The internment of German prisoners of war (*Rheinwiesenlager*) and the carpet bombings carried out by the Allies in Germany in response to German carpet bombings in other states are in no way comparable to the Holocaust. These comparisons are widespread topoi of directly offsetting Nazi crimes with actions of the Allies.

(9) "What our politicians are doing is far worse than what the lady did at her typewriter."

This comment, posted in reaction to a news report of a trial against a former concentration camp secretary in 2021 in Germany, makes a comparison between complicity in the Holocaust and unspecified misconduct by German politicians. In doing so, the alleged political misconduct is attributed the greater gravity and the Holocaust is trivialised. The latter is compounded by representing the former concentration camp staff member as just a "lady […] at her typewriter."

(10) "Gaza is a true concentration camp, unlike the exaggerated story of
        the 6 trillions."

This comment contains two relativisations of the Holocaust. In a
contrastive comparison, the Gaza Strip is portrayed by means of a NAZI
ANALOGY as a "true" place of mass extermination, while at the same time
denying this characteristic to the Holocaust. The claim of an exaggera-
tion is, in turn, reinforced by means of an exaggerated number of victims.
The latter serves to ironically emphasise that—on the contrary—the
number of Jews killed in the Holocaust was supposedly much lower than
scientific research has established. The conflict between the Palestinians
and Israel is reinterpreted as a scenario, in which the roles of perpetrator
and victim are each attributed to one side. Israel is accused of genocidal
acts, although it merely maintains a blockade of an enemy territory, from
which it is repeatedly attacked, to stop the influx of weapons.

(11) "Abortion is an ongoing mass murder that far exceeds the scale of
        the Holocaust."

Anti-abortionists who see abortion as murder may also resort to DISTOR-
TIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST to lend additional moral weight to their
cause in the political debate over the legality or performance of abor-
tions. In the present statement, the Holocaust is even presented as less
serious.

(12) "Blacks are hit hardest by the abortion holocaust."

The topos *abortion holocaust* originates from the US context and is used
by some abortion opponents to ascribe characteristics of the Holocaust
to the practice of abortion. The two concepts are fused into a single
concept, in which the Holocaust is reinterpreted from a concrete histor-
ical event to the descriptive core of abortion. The reference to Black
people results from the fact that the abortion rate amongst Black people
in the USA is disproportionately high, which has led to extensive political
debates.

(13) "Twitter lay-offs are a Holocaust for overpaid code monkeys."

A wave of redundancies amongst the employees of the networking platform Twitter is taken as an opportunity to compare the loss of jobs of software programmers (referred to here with a pejorative term) to the Holocaust, thus making fun of or disparaging their situation.

(14) "The mass slaughter of non-human animals is simply nothing short of a holocaust."

Factory farming and extensive consumption of animal products are debatable from a moral perspective, but condemning the killing of animals for food does not justify a comparison to the systematic extermination of Jews motivated by hatred.

Implicit

(15) "Our soldiers have remained decent."

The comment refers to German soldiers, similar to (1), stating that they have acted decently in general; in this way, it falsely claims that they were not guilty of participating in war crimes and the Holocaust. This implicitly absolves an essential group of perpetrators and obscures a significant aspect of the Holocaust. Moreover, the commenter considers the soldiers part of their own in-group ("[o]ur soldiers"), potentially absolving themself from any blame by proxy.

(16) "Of course, it was the evil Germans … I've rarely read such rubbish."

In response to a social media comment that mentioned German complicity in the Holocaust in many ways, this statement takes the

position that the population involved was essentially innocent. This is evident by the irony in the first part of the comment, which results from the contrast of seemingly absolute approval and negative evaluation of the Germans, with the second part, which by itself once again excludes a corresponding complicity through the explicit and sharp rejection, colloquially referring to it as "rubbish."

> (17) "Come on, what do you guess? How many were there? Dare, it doesn't make any difference anyway…"

In a discussion about the number of those killed in the Holocaust, one web user asks another in a flippant tone to state what they think is the correct number of victims. However, the number is explicitly said to be irrelevant. From the scepticism about the historical evidence that this user had previously expressed and their last statement, it can be concluded that first, there is no good justification for any number, except, perhaps, lower figures than the official ones and, second, that they consider it futile to challenge the official estimates. Both possibilities amount to an implicit downplaying of the number of victims.

> (18) "It is true that many Jews were killed in Romania, but we should not forget that the vast majority of the Soviet leadership were Jews."

This sentence begins by acknowledging the fact of the Holocaust and ends with a false claim about the share of Jews in the Soviet leadership. At first glance, the two pieces of information appear unrelated, as there is no connection between them in terms of content. On an implicit level, however, the juxtaposition suggests a connection: linking the two with "but" aims to present the character of the crime in a changed way by presenting the false claim as a justification for it. This alludes to an interpretation of the Holocaust in Romania, according to which, Jews in Romania were killed because they, as Soviets or members of the Red Army, allegedly committed crimes against Romanians (Hausleitner 2010). The introduction, thus, proves to be a concession in order to subsequently (partially) legitimise this aspect of the Holocaust and declare Jews to be guilty of their fate.

(19) "It's always like that, see East Germany…. The average border guard who shot at fugitives was then punished afterwards."

This response to a media article about a trial of former concentration camp personnel in Germany in 2021 is ostensibly concerned with → DEMANDING A CLEAN BREAK (Chapter 17), i.e. ending criminal prosecution now that the decision-makers will not be affected anymore. To this end, an analogy is drawn, in which the prosecution of concentration camp personnel is compared to that of the border guards of East Germany; amongst other things, the latter had the task of preventing refugees from East Germany from crossing the border to West Germany, if necessary, by shooting them. Indirectly, the systematic violation of human rights by the state at the inner-German border and the Holocaust are equated through the analogous relationship of criminal prosecution and criminal offence in the two scenarios.

(20) "We should also not forget what the Spanish and Portuguese did in South America…. Whole cultures were wiped out there just like that."

In reference to the Holocaust, the commenter highlights crimes committed during the period of colonialism, without clarifying the differences between the historical events. Instead, the hint at the eradication of entire cultures implies that the crimes are not only comparable, but that this era of colonialism was worse. In this sense, the call not to forget serves on the one hand to distract from the Holocaust and on the other hand to place it in a series of crimes and thus to relativise it.

(21) "Israel's policy has been a crime against humanity since the founding of Israel, although they should know what the Germans did to them, that is exactly what they are enacting. The Palestinians are forcibly deported into ghettos with no way out."

This comment activates the NAZI ANALOGY in the form of a DISTORTION OF THE HOLOCAUST via a comparison as well as allusions. The

reference to the criminal offence of "crime[s] against humanity," a category of international law created in response to the Nazi atrocities, is an allusion to Nazism, which brings Israel into conceptual proximity with it. The allusion serves as an opening for a comparison on the level of action, according to which, Israel is repeating the Holocaust against the Palestinians. The allusions to deportations and ghettos reinforce the analogy.

(22) "It is like at that time, no one saw it…. no one has seen the crimes against the people and the country…. except, right-wingers, lateral thinkers, opponents, etc.—all bad people. Just like at that time."

(23) "Vaccination makes you free."

These two comments refer to the vaccination campaign and hygiene measures against Covid-19 during the recent pandemic, and the debate about compulsory vaccination. In (22), an allusion to National Socialism is made through the phrase "at that time." An analogy is made between Nazi crimes and alleged present-day "crimes against the people and the country" (which is the commenter's assessment of the Covid-19 measures). It suggests that "right-wingers, lateral thinkers" (*Querdenker*; a German movement that has opposed Covid-19 measures—reaching from the far-right to anti-vaxxers) and "opponents" do not participate in this and have kept a critical eye on political developments. The second part of the NAZI ANALOGY relates this group to those devalued and persecuted under National Socialism via the ironic attribution "all bad people." The Covid-19 measures are consequently compared to, amongst other things, the Holocaust. The same applies to (23), where the relativisation of the Holocaust comes about through the allusion to "Arbeit macht frei" (German for "work makes you free")—a mocking sign that was displayed at the entrances of several concentration camps.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(24) "The 'constitutional' council has shown us its submission to the injunction of the paSS and therefore to dictatorship."

The accusation directed at the French Constitutional Council of having paved the way to dictatorship by approving a law on a Covid-19 vaccination certificate (the so-called health pass) is accomplished by means of a NAZI ANALOGY through the wordplay "paSS." Even if, based on such strategies, the association with Nazi Germany and its worst crimes is triggered, in this context (and according to conservative interpretation), the SS might be considered as an organisation responsible for numerous other crimes in addition to the Holocaust, and the reference to it cannot, in this respect, be interpreted solely as an equation of the vaccination certificate with measures of the Holocaust, although this is a possible interpretation.

(25)   "In the Second World War, Jews were only one of many groups who had to mourn the loss of life."

Even if this statement was made with the intention of an implicit relativisation—according to which all groups have mourned because they had all experienced comparable or the same traumas, or have had to mourn a similar number of victims—the explicit statement is still true. An interpretation that assumes a relativising statement about the extent of the loss is, therefore, not necessarily the only possible one.

Related Categories

HOLOCAUST DENIAL (Chapter 18.2), REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16), BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20).

18.2 Holocaust Denial

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST goes beyond DISTORTIONS: it rejects the fact that the Holocaust took place. In doing so, the Holocaust is completely negated as an event through the denial of its very occurrence or of its crucial characteristics. The latter can be achieved either by denying essential aspects, such as mass shootings and the existence of extermination camps or gas chambers, or by reinterpreting the victims of the genocide as war victims or by claiming that they were missing survivors whose whereabouts were merely untraceable due to the turmoil of war.[2] Deniers rely on untenable interest-driven "investigations" that violate scientific standards and try to support their agenda with alleged contradictions in witness testimonies, falsified evidence, decontextualisation of facts or—most often—simply free inventions (Lipstadt 1993; Vidal-Naquet 1993; Wistrich 2012).

DENIAL is not about exonerating individual groups of perpetrators. The function of rejection of guilt plays a subordinate role here, as it is more general in nature. Rather, the main concern is the rehabilitation of National Socialism, antisemitism and right-wing extremist ideologies, in general, by attempting to declare the monstrous crimes that grew out of Nazi ideology non-existent. By decoupling it from the Holocaust, Nazi ideology is supposed to gain in innocence and attractiveness. Accordingly, DENIALS are used primarily in the far-right spectrum. However, DENYING THE HOLOCAUST is not a consistently pursued strategy there: besides that, preference for a higher number of victims or wishes for a continuation of the Holocaust are also expressed in this spectrum ($\rightarrow$ AFFIRMATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 27). Just like forms of relativisation, DENIAL can also be used for the purpose of antisemitic attacks. Jews are then accused, for example, of having invented the Holocaust or of promoting an allegedly false historiography ($\rightarrow$ LIE and DECEIT, Chapter 7) in order to derive financial or political benefit from feelings

---

[2] For more detail on purposes and motivations, see the above sub-chapter on $\rightarrow$ DISTORTIONS (Chapter 18.1).

of guilt and condemnation by means of → INSTRUMENTALISING THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20).

While some deniers have used their academic platforms and a veneer of professional respectability to promote this alternative version of history, more recent examples include public figures active in the social media. Nicholas Fuentes—a US political commentator and proponent of far-right, white supremacy and antisemitic views—has denied the validity of the Holocaust by mockingly comparing concentration camp crematoria to ovens, and Holocaust victims' bodies to "six million batches of cookies" (Hull 2019). The statement was emblematic of the rhetorical strategies present in the HOLOCAUST DENIAL discourse, but also of the dehumanising attitudes in antisemitism in general.

In the Arab world (Nordbruch 2001; Litvak et al. 2009) and in Iran (Küntzel 2012), Holocaust denial is systematically used as a tool (in Iran as part of an antisemitic state ideology) to wage attacks on Israel's existence. These stem from the premise that the founding of Israel was only possible because of the experience of the Holocaust and the sense of guilt felt by European or Western states, resulting in the creation of a place of refuge for the survivors. Attempts are made to rewrite the historical event or to erase it from memory in order to negate the assumed reason for Israel's existence and its legitimacy, and to declare support for it as inappropriate and superfluous.

For a DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST, history must be falsified even more comprehensively than for a relativisation. DENIAL is, thus, a qualitative leap in the positioning towards the Holocaust, in which the speaker accepts to completely lose credibility and to face exclusion from large parts of the discourse or to be received only in discursive niches.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Asserting that the Holocaust never happened;
- Rejecting central aspects of the Nazi extermination project (e.g. the planned and systematic nature of the genocide, the existence of death camps or gas chambers).
- Denying the intentionality of the genocide against the Jews:

- Reinterpreting the genocide as a sum of acts of war;
- Reinterpreting those killed as war casualties, victims of war-related deprivations or as missing persons whose whereabouts could not be determined due to their flight and the turmoil of war.[3]

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Unlike the Holocaust the Armenian genocide is actually confirmed."
(2) "They are contemporary witnesses. They could thus confirm that the history we have been taught for the last 70 years is a lie."

In (1), the Holocaust is compared to another genocide, in order to resolutely deny the former via the claim of missing evidence. Meanwhile, (2)—a comment posted in response to trials of former concentration camp personnel in Germany—claims that the Holocaust is "a lie," and suggests that the defendants in the trial should be heard as eyewitnesses as they would supposedly be able to refute it.

(3) "So you admit that the gas chambers are just a fantasy scenario?"

The comment describes gas chambers, the apparatuses of mass extermination central to the Holocaust, as fiction and seeks the consent of the interlocutor. While this is formulated as a question rather than a statement, the commenter does not seem to expect an open answer. Instead, the question is already biased: it presupposes that they are "just a fantasy scenario" and strongly suggests that the reply should be affirmative.

Implicit

(4) "Auschwitz was just a labour camp."

---

[3] Again, these key characteristics have been compiled taking into account the elaborations of the IHRA (2021).

The reinterpretation of Auschwitz—a veritable symbol of the Holocaust and extermination camps in the collective consciousness—into a (pure) labour camp first of all plays down the share of the labour camps in the "extermination by labour" via the limiting qualifier "just." Moreover, the comment not only implicitly denies essential characteristics of mass extermination in relation to Auschwitz, but it also indirectly negates these characteristics for the entire system, in which Auschwitz was embedded.

(5) "The concentration camps were set up primarily to lock up (war) prisoners, some of whom also had to perform forced labour."

In (5), concentration camps largely denied their purpose of extermination, with the claim that their aim was to "lock up (war) prisoners." Consequently, the comment also negates the measures serving this purpose; Jews are not even mentioned as the main objects of extermination in concentration camps. It remains open whether at least some of them are meant as "prisoners," or whether this term is meant to conceal the fact that they were affected—and to what extent.

(6) "When 6 million bodies are burnt, you should see a white mountain of lime next to the camps, at the very least. I'm willing to believe that it's dispersed in the atmosphere, but if that's the case, then prove it instead of imposing dogma."

The comment relies on false premises, as a significant part of the Holocaust took place through mass shootings outside the concentration camps, and fails to realise that the ashes were disposed of or utilised. The commenter asks another user to provide evidence to this effect and strategically self-positions as open-minded. However, calling the state of research on the Holocaust "dogma" shows a general rejection of these findings. The expected proof of the practice of burning victims' bodies, which cannot be provided due to the inaccurate presupposition, is only a pretext for then taking the lack of such proof as an admission that the Holocaust did not take place in the known form.

(7) "Crematoria had to be set up wherever there were a lot of dead people, so that diseases and epidemics could not spread any further."

The "dead" are brought into a causal connection with "diseases and epidemics" via the alleged aim for them "not [to] spread any further," suggesting that the victims in the concentration camps (essentially) died of diseases. The killed are, thus, reinterpreted as deceased. The disposal of those killed is presented as a hygiene measure that was intended to protect the inmates. This implicitly denies that the Holocaust was a mass murder and that the crematoria were a means to dispose of the bodies of its victims as efficiently as possible.

(8) "Whether there was murder in every concentration camp, I cannot say for sure…"

This comment, taken from a comment thread related to the topic of Auschwitz, does more than simply question the core function of concentration camps by trying to give the impression that it cannot be determined with certainty. The commenter had already relativised the Holocaust before, and here wants to keep open the possibility that, perhaps, no one was murdered in Auschwitz. This declares one of the main sites of the Holocaust a possibly harmless place.

(9) "The Nazis were fighting a rearguard defence against bolshevism and everything they did falls under what mass mobilization modern warfare entailed in the twentieth century."

Regardless of whether the roles of the attacker and attacked are reversed here between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, or whether the statement refers only to the war years in which Germany was in military retreat, "everything they did"—and this then includes the Holocaust—is passed off as part of a "rearguard defence" in which they would have been forced to commit these crimes under extreme pressure, or would have committed them only incidentally. This statement keeps the crimes general by paraphrasing them, in order not to commit to a DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST on the semantic level.

(10) "Isn't it the case that those who were believed dead reappeared years later in other countries?"

This rhetorical question suggests that the Jews murdered in the Holo-

caust did not suffer this fate, but rather—probably after a successful escape, and when an overview of their whereabouts became possible after the turmoil of World War II—were essentially alive in exile.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(11) "I've never seen a six-digit tattoo before."

This statement refers to a series of prisoner serial numbers that were tattooed on prisoners at Auschwitz (Langbein 1989: 288) in order to help identify the unclothed dead or possible escapees. This practice was also applied to Jews. These prisoners were not murdered immediately (such victims were not given a number) but intended for "extermination by labour." The comment can be interpreted literally as the speaker having no experience of seeing such a number. However, since the probability of meeting an Auschwitz survivor with such a number is extremely low these days, this statement can superficially be seen as unnecessary. Its communicative function, in this case, could then be to question the existence of the numbers and, thus, the arrival of prisoners at Auschwitz as a *pars pro toto* for the fundamental function of this concentration camp per se in the Holocaust. Due to the two possible readings, this statement cannot be clearly determined as antisemitic.

Related Categories

HOLOCAUST DISTORTION (Chapter 18.1), REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20).

References

Benz, Wolfgang, ed. 1991. *Dimension des Völkermords. Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus*. München: Oldenbourg.

Benz, Wolfgang. 2011. The dimensions of the Holocaust. In *Denial of the Denial, or the Battle of Auschwitz. Debates about the Demography and Geopolitics of the Holocaust*, ed. Alfred Kokh, and Pavel Polian, 102–128. Boston, USA: Academic Studies Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781618111197.

Bergmann, Werner. 2007. 'Störenfriede der Erinnerung'. Zum Schuldabwehr-Antisemitismus in Deutschland. In *Literarischer Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz*, ed. Klaus-Michael Bogdal, Klaus Holz, and Matthias N. Lorenz, 13–35. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.

Bitunjac, Martina, and Julius H. Schoeps, eds. 2021. *Complicated Complicity. European Collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II. Berlin*, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Bundesarchiv, Institut für Zeitgeschichte, and Lehrstuhl für Neuere und Neueste Geschichte der Universität Freiburg, eds. 2022. *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung der europäischen Juden durch das nationalsozialistische Deutschland 1933–1945*. Vol. 1–16. De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Bytwerk, Randall L. 2005. The Argument for Genocide in Nazi Propaganda. *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* 91 (1): 37–62.

Friedländer, Saul. 1997. *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume I. The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939*. New York: HarperCollins.

Greven, Michael Th., and Oliver von Wrochem, eds. 2000. *Der Krieg in der Nachkriegszeit. Der Zweite Weltkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft der Bundesrepublik*. Wiesbaden: Leske u. Budrich.

Hausleitner, Mariana. 2010. Die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Holocaust in Rumänien. In *Umdeuten, verschweigen, erinnern. Die späte Aufarbeitung des Holocaust in Osteuropa*, ed. Micha Brumlik, and Karol Sauerland, 71–89. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus-Verlag.

Heer, Hannes. 1999. *Tote Zonen. Die deutsche Wehrmacht an der Ostfront*. Hamburg: Hamburger Ed.

Heer, Hannes, Walter Manoschek, Alexander Pollak, and Ruth Wodak, eds. 2003. *Wie Geschichte gemacht wird. Zur Konstruktion von Erinnerungen an Wehrmacht und Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Wien: Czernin.

Hilberg, Raul. 1992. *Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders. The Jewish Catastrophe 1933–1945*. New York: Aaron Asher Books.

Hilberg, Raul. 2003. *The Destruction of the European Jews*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Hull, Caleb. 2019. Here's Nick Fuentes denying that the Holocaust happened [...]. https://twitter.com/CalebJHull/status/1189594371030695937 (last accessed on 31 August 2023).

IHRA. 2021. Understanding Holocaust Distortion. Contexts, Influences and Examples. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Understanding%20Holocaust%20Distortion%20-%20Contexts%2C%20Influences%20and%20Examples%20-%20IHRA.pdf (last accessed on 11 June 2023).

Küntzel, Matthias. 2012. Judeophobia and the Denial of the Holocaust in Iran. In *Holocaust Denial. The Politics of Perfidy*, ed. Robert Solomon Wistrich, 235–255. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Langbein, Hermann. 1989. Auschwitz: The History and Characteristics of the Concentration and Extermination Camp. In *The Nazi Holocaust. Part 6: The Victims of the Holocaust, Vol. 2*, ed. Michael Robert Marrus, 1115–1132. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Saur. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110968729.1115.

Lipstadt, Deborah E. 1993. *Denying the Holocaust. The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*. New York: Free Press.

Litvak, Meir, and Esther Webman. 2009. *From Empathy to Denial. Arab Responses to the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Longerich, Peter. 2010. *Holocaust. The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Nordbruch, Götz. 2001. *The Socio-Historical Background of Holocaust Denial in Arab Countries. Reactions to Roger Garaudy's The Founding Myths of Israeli Politics*. ACTA 17. Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

Shafir, Michael. 2002. *Between Denial and "Comparative Trivialization." Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe*. ACTA 19. Jerusalem: Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism.

Vidal-Naquet, Pierre. 1993. *Assassins of Memory. Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wistrich, Robert Solomon. 2012. Introduction: Lying about the Holocaust. In *Holocaust Denial. The Politics of Perfidy*, ed. Robert Solomon Wistrich, 1–25. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110288216.1.

Wistrich, Robert Solomon. 2017. Antisemitism and Holocaust Inversion. In *Antisemitism Before and Since the Holocaust. Altered Contexts and Recent Perspectives*, ed. Anthony McElligott, and Jeffrey Herf, 37–49. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-48866-0_3.

19

Relativisation and Denial of Antisemitism

Marcus Scheiber

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Whilst antisemitic stereotypes and analogies aim at a generalising and essentialising attribution of negative characteristics to Jewish entities (thus, from the non-Jewish in-group to the Jewish out-group), the communicative strategies of RELATIVISATION and DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM only indirectly refer to Jewish entities by denying or reinterpreting antisemitism when it occurs in specific instances or in general. Moreover, these strategies focus on the speaker or commenter (and not on a character trait imputed to Jews); it is thus a matter of self-reference: in this particular case, they deal with the phenomenon of antisemitism in a certain discursive way. Thereby, antisemitism is deprived of its Judeophobic quality in the most diverse contexts, in order not to have to deal with it (be it due to a lack of empathy, injured national pride or a desire

M. Scheiber (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

for exoneration) (Schwarz-Friesel 2015: 293) (see also → REJECTION OF GUILT, Chapter 16).

RELATIVISATION OF ANTISEMITISM aims to play down antisemitic acts—both in the past and the present—by imposing additional conditions on them for being deemed antisemitic, for example, when antisemitism is located solely in a certain era, or when Israelis are excluded from it, or when antisemitism is only considered within a religious dimension. These conditions can, on the one hand, consist in an inappropriate contextualisation, i.e. locating antisemitic acts in other contexts which, due to their structural and/or content-related qualities, do not allow for an antisemitic interpretation. For example, when anti-vaxxers (individuals opposing the use of vaccines) present themselves as being subject to the same injustices that Jews have suffered throughout their history, the particular antisemitic quality of those injustices is erased. Similarly, whilst there are many overlaps between antisemitism and forms of racism targeting other groups, if antisemitism is simplistically conflated or equated with racism or other forms of discrimination, the specific distinguishing features of antisemitism may be lost (Cousin and Fine 2012). On the other hand, broadening or narrowing the scope of antisemitism is used to deprive the term of its meaning or to prevent a meaningful application of the term (Becker 2021: 462).

Communicative strategies of RELATIVISATION can seek to shift antisemitism "into the marginal area of social problems" (Schwarz-Friesel 2015: 302)—if, for example, it is claimed that antisemitism only affects a small group that is supposedly not worth mentioning—with antisemitism thus being presented as a minor problem, needing no great attention in contrast to other phenomena that are attributed greater urgency.

Such a goal is also pursued by the strategy of DENYING ANTISEMITISM—albeit more directly—by attempting to negate the existence of antisemitism in its entirety. The DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM aims at its negation in a certain past or present scenario, milieu, statement or a certain work by a person or institution. It is expressed particularly starkly in circumstances where there is a broad social consensus that antisemitism exists within given contexts, such as the display of antisemitic images at the 2022 art exhibition *documenta 15* in Germany

(Deitelhoff et al. 2023) or antisemitic incidents within the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership. A negation can be based on the need to delegitimise all evidence that runs counter to the antisemitic worldview (Schwarz-Friesel 2015) by presenting such positions either as fundamentally justified criticism or by reinterpreting the articulated antisemitism (Rensmann 2016).

Such RELATIVISATION and DENIAL is often motivated by the identity of the speaker or institution accused, particularly if they themselves come from a minority group or present themselves as committed anti-racists. As a result, both strategies occur in exemplary fashion as a concealment tactic within which actions are no longer interpreted as antisemitic. Instead, they are construed as harmless descriptions or critique, or as anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-racist—especially in an updated form in relation to Israel, meaning that efforts to confront or clamp down on those statements are presented as an illegitimate restriction of free speech and political debate (Stein 2011) (→ TABOO OF CRITICISM, Chapter 23). This feeds into the idea of an allegedly virulent → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20). Both strategies protect antisemitic attitudes and actions and its persistence in present and past discourses: what revisionist efforts and the *documenta 15* case have in common is that consensually attributed antisemitism is absolutely negated or denied, or—as in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic— the term is trivialised when anti-vaxxers or other groups instrumentalise it for their own purposes.

Key Identifying Characteristics

Relativisation

- Seeks to trivialise or minimise antisemitism by making inappropriate or irrelevant comparisons to other unrelated incidents or scenarios;
- Trivialises antisemitism as a problem of the past;
- Trivialises antisemitism as a problem of political or social minorities or individuals;
- Expands or limits the scope of the term antisemitism.

Denial

- Negates antisemitism altogether;
- Negates antisemitism in certain scenarios, statements, actions, works, milieus or institutions, in circumstances where there is a broad consensus that antisemitism can be ascribed to these contexts;
- Reinterprets or reclassifies antisemitism as criticism (of Jews/Israel/a specific member of that out-group).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

Relativisation

(1) "There is no longer any serious antisemitism in Germany today."

In (1), antisemitism is relativised through its trivialisation in terms of a historically past dimension. The claim here is that contemporary antisemitism can be ignored because it is not as severe as in the past. Argumentatively, this is implied by a reference to the historical knowledge of the addressees, which points to past forms of antisemitism (be it the antisemitism of the Nazi era, that of the nineteenth century, etc.). Although the implied premise that antisemitism was different at different times can be agreed with in principle, this does not affect the Judeophobic quality of contemporary antisemitism. As such, the comment acts as an attempt to relativise antisemitism.

(2) "Other forms of racism are much worse."

Trivialisation in (2) places antisemitism in a hierarchical relation to *other* "forms of racism," within which antisemitism plays only a subordinate

role since those other forms are regarded as "much worse."[1] The statement thus relativises antisemitism by characterising it as less significant. Moreover, it ignores the fact that a hierarchical relationship between different hate ideologies—despite existing points of overlap—cannot be meaningfully drawn due to their qualitative differences.

(3) "The main problem today is the aggressive antisemitism of many Muslims."

This example presents antisemitism as a relevant problem of society and does not question it in principle, but it limits its extension, makes it exclusively the problem of a certain group and, thus, tries to hide the fact that antisemitism demonstrably occurs in all (religious) groups and milieus by limiting it to a specific group. This enables antisemitism in other groups, and above all the group that the speaker themselves identifies with, to be ignored. For if antisemitism mainly occurs only amongst the group of "Muslims" and is characterised by a particular aggressiveness, antisemitism is in effect declared to be a marginal phenomenon within the rest of society and the solely responsible group is clearly and exhaustively identified.

(4) "Israelis are the true antisemites of today."

As in the previous example, (4) performs a restriction of antisemitism when Israelis—via the hyperbolic attribution "true"—are singularly identified as antisemitic actors. This means that accusations of antisemitism aimed at any non-Israeli actor must, by extension, be either false or minor compared to the alleged antisemitism of the Israelis. This limitation is amplified again in the historical reference "of today" (although the time period also remains indeterminate) by placing Israelis in a series of antisemitic actors: in the present, Israelis embody essential and absolute qualities that belong to antisemites. Although it is not made explicit what such an interpretation results from, nor which aspects of antisemites are attributed to Israelis, the attribution represents a negatively essentialising

---

[1] The commenter conceptualises antisemitism as a sub-form of racism, which the *Decoding Antisemitism* project disagrees with due to the particular status and characteristics of antisemitism.

projection. In this way, such a reference prototypically realises a frequent strategy of demonisation (Becker 2021) whilst turning the victims of antisemitism into today's perpetrators.

Denial

> (5) "It's a meaningless term as you well know."

By asserting that antisemitism is a "meaningless term," this web user does not merely downgrade the importance of antisemitism in relation to racism or other modes of prejudice, or suggests that antisemitism today is inconsequential compared to the past. Rather, the statement represents an open rejection of the concept of antisemitism in its entirety. This carries two potential meanings—one, the denial of the existence of antisemitism as such, or, perhaps more likely, an implicit claim that the term "antisemitism" has been so debased and diluted by overuse (possibly through its supposed INSTRUMENTALISATION) that it no longer carries significant meaning and has been reduced to the status of an empty signifier.

> (6) "Antisemitism ended with National Socialism."

In (6), a historical relation is used to present antisemitism as a part of the past that does not, however, have any effect on this day and age. By presenting antisemitism as ending with the National Socialism regime losing power in Germany in 1945, all antisemitic statements and actions after that date, whether against Jews or Israel, are absolved of their antisemitic content. The comment thus gives legitimisation to any form of present-day antisemitic hatred.

> (7) "Why is naming people antisemitic? In fact all these people are Jews, right? I didn't know that! But what I realise is that all these people named have either blood or wars on their hands, or they are lying, or they are, like Soros, monsters of the capitalist system working for the impoverishment of the people and the enrichment of the elites themselves! So in fact I simply deduce that today a handful of people of Jewish origins, since that's the problem because by naming them

we become antisemites, are at the origin of ALL THE WORST in the world, right?"

By questioning the antisemitic quality of the statement as such, (7) reveals itself as the prototypical form of antisemitism denial. The comment arose in the context of the so-called health pass discussions in France in 2021, within which Jews were staged as responsible for, or secretly masterminding the pandemic (→ CONSPIRACY THEORIES, Chapter 13). To communicate this, the names of (well-known) Jewish people were written on placards used during health pass street protests. The comment refers to this by declaring the act of naming them as not antisemitic, arguing that everyone (should) know about the wickedness of these people in particular, and of Jews in general, and that the statements therefore have a truth value. The comment, thus, aims to refute the accusations of antisemitic attitudes attributed to people who see a connection between the Covid-19 pandemic and Jewish people. By attempting to establish a causality between Jews and all of the world's problems ("impoverishment of the people and the enrichment of the elites") (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1), by identifying those responsible by name ("Soros"), by creating the appearance of logical argumentation through expressions such as "deduce" or "in fact" and by seeking to uncover connections through questions, i.e. by asking for facts that everyone can confirm ("all these people are Jews"), the comment aims to establish the factuality of an antisemitic reality. Within such a reality, naming Jewish people or attributing absolute evil to them does not constitute an antisemitic act. The comment thus negates the antisemitic quality through an argumentation that presupposes the acceptance of the antisemitic notion that all Jews are bad (and is thus ultimately circular).

Implicit

Relativisation

(8) "To make a thunderclap out of a fart once again."

Denial

> (9) "Stories from the Paulaner Garden."

RELATIVISATION and DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM do not necessarily have to be explicitly communicated. The implicit examples above show that although antisemitism is relativised, as in (8), or denied, as in (9), these interpretations only arise from the context of the comments, since neither specific actions nor persons are referred to, so that the comments can only be interpreted as antisemitic against the background of their contextual embedding and with the addition of world knowledge. The comment in (8) relativises antisemitism by trivialising the attribution itself: it states that a context to which antisemitism is ascribed—the Gil Ofarim case, within which the singer makes accusations of anti-semitism against a hotel employee (cf. Ascone et al. 2022)—should not be granted the importance it is given because it is (one can imply from the derogatory language use) only a marginal phenomenon (a "fart" is not a "thunderclap" and should never be treated as such). Thus, by describing a (supposedly) antisemitic incident as a "fart," it is both ridiculed and marginalised.

In contrast, (9) negates antisemitism through the use of an idiomatic phrase, which originates from the German language and goes back to a formula from television advertisements for the Paulaner brewery. Here, far-fetched stories were repeatedly told in a beer garden, always opening with the phrase "stories from the Paulaner garden." The phrase has since passed into everyday language within digital communication spaces and expresses the idea that a preceding story is considered untrue and ficti-tious. Therefore, by uttering this phrase in relation to an antisemitic incident or accusation of antisemitism—such as in the *documenta 15* case—the comment denies the antisemitic quality of the same.

Non-antisemitic Examples

The criterion to determine both RELATIVISATION and DENIAL is whether there is a consensus (in the scientific community or in the discourse on the topic) that a certain scenario is antisemitic. This fact leads to problems of interpretation if such a consensus does not exist or proves to be false. This is what happened in the Gil Ofarim case, in which the Jewish-German singer was criticised for → INSTRUMENTALISING (Chapter 20) the accusation of antisemitism he made, as the antisemitism he allegedly experienced was not found in the course of subsequent investigation (Ascone et al. 2022). Consequently, statements that challenged the accusation could not be considered DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM, as long as they did not generalise regarding other Jews' experiences of antisemitism.

Moreover, it cannot always be clearly decided, without further context, whether a question is to be interpreted as rhetorical or legitimate.

(10) "Where is antisemitism hidden in my post?"
(11) "Isn't racism worse than antisemitism because it affects more people?"

Therefore, (10) cannot be understood as DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM, nor can (11) be exclusively read as RELATIVISATION OF ANTISEMITISM, since there is a possibility (and the context does not provide any further clues) that the questioner is looking for information, as a result of which they cannot be attributed as antisemitic. In (10), if the original comment was indeed not antisemitic, the user can legitimately reject the accusation through a rhetorical question.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), HOLOCAUST DISTORTION AND DENIAL (Chapter 18), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23), INSTRUMENTAL-ISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20).

References

Ascone, Laura, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloé Vincent. 2022. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 4*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-16292.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments. Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cousin, Glynis, and Fine Robert. 2012. A Common Cause. Reconnecting the Study of Racism and Antisemitism. *European Societies* 14(2): 166–185.

Deitelhoff, Nicole, Marion Ackermann, Julia Berstein, Marina Chernivsky, Peter Jelavich, Christoph Möllers, and Cord Schmelzle. 2023. Abschlussbericht. Gremium zur fachwissenschaftlichen Begleitung der documenta fifteen. https://www.documenta.de/files/230202_Abschlussbericht.pdf (last accessed on 11 May 2023).

Rensmann, Lars. 2016. Antisemitismus und Israelfeindschaft. In *Deutschland, die Juden und der Staat Israel. Eine politische Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Olaf Glöckner, and Julius H. Schoeps, 265–284. Zürich: Georg Olms.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika. 2015. Antisemitismus-Leugnung: diskursive Strategien der Abwehr und die emotionale Dimension von aktueller Judenfeindschaft. In *Gebildeter Antisemitismus. Eine Herausforderung für Politik und Zivilgesellschaft*, ed. Schwarz-Friesel and Monika, 293–312. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Stein, Timo. 2011. *Zwischen Antisemitismus und Israelkritik. Antisemitismus in der deutschen Linken*. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

20

Instrumentalisation of Antisemitism and the Holocaust

Matthias J. Becker

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The accusation that Jews INSTRUMENTALISE ANTISEMITISM contends that Jews seek to deliberately exploit concern about antisemitism in order to benefit, either financially or politically. Accusations that Jews seek to INSTRUMENTALISE THE HOLOCAUST suggest that they attempt to use the memory of the Holocaust as a tool to obtain power, wealth or to further the interests of Jews or of Israel. In extreme cases, such ideas can lead to claims that Jews have exaggerated the scale or even manufactured the entire event of the Holocaust ($\rightarrow$ HOLOCAUST DISTORTION and DENIAL, Chapter 18) in order to impose feelings of guilt on the non-Jewish world, which can then be exploited for Jewish gain.

Historically, the origins of the topoi presented in this chapter are quite recent. Before the Nazi crimes, the widespread social acceptability of

M. J. Becker (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: mjb@decoding-antisemitism.eu

antisemitism meant that the allegation of INSTRUMENTALISING it was hardly an accusation that could be used to discredit opponents. However, the notion that Jews (and/or Israel) are exploiting the hatred directed against themselves or the memory of the Holocaust against unwanted criticism and to advance their own agenda became prevailing concepts in post-1945 discourses.

Claims of INSTRUMENTALISATION can take different forms in different contexts. In Germany (and Austria), they represent central elements of *secondary antisemitism* (Schönbach 1961; → Sect. III). Under this term falls the desire for a → CLEAN BREAK (Chapter 16) and for a → REJECTION OF GUILT (Chapter 16). Its presence in these societies can, therefore, be understood as a collective reflex in the context of the symbolic reckoning with antisemitism and the Nazi crimes (Salzborn 2010)—precisely the reflex that is often interlocked with the accusation of INSTRUMENTALISING ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST due to a specific, sometimes hidden agenda (Hirsh 2010; Sicher 2016).

The mention of other concepts in the context of post-1945 antisemitism demonstrates how multivalent these two concepts actually are: when someone brings forth the accusation of INSTRUMENTALISATION, depending on the context, the motifs of → DENIAL (or RELATIVISATION) OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 19) and the REJECTION OF GUILT can also follow, being part of the repertoire of *secondary antisemitism.* However, the accusation of INSTRUMENTALISATION is also related to classical stereotypes such as → POWER (Chapter 12), → LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7) and particularly → GREED (Chapter 11). Moreover, such accusations often represent a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL, as the non-Jewish in-group presents itself as being attacked by the Jewish out-group and the victims of antisemitism are ultimately portrayed as its beneficiaries. The alleged manipulative strategy of EXPLOITATION (Chapter 11) would in turn be the source of hostility against Jews by possibly claiming that the latter are themselves the originators of antisemitism (→ BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM, Chapter 10).

These observations shed light on how the canonical categories of the antisemitic discourse can be adapted and re-contextualised within a climate of widespread public awareness of antisemitism in the aftermath of the Nazi mass murder of European Jewry. It is another testimony

to the continuity and adaptability of the traditional concepts—their conceptual roots remain present, but the concrete verbal reproduction differs and can present new content-related aspects stemming from recent or current events. Indeed, it may be precisely because the close proximity of claims of INSTRUMENTALISATION to classical tropes is rarely explicitly articulated, or widely understood, that the accusation is so frequently made—as common within the higher echelons of politics, media, art and culture as it is in online spaces.

The topos of INSTRUMENTALISATION is present both in radicalised milieus and in mainstream discourse. In the former, it is often accompanied, as noted above, by an outright → DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST or the reality of ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 19) in society. Thus, American Holocaust denier Austin J. App affirms in his pamphlet "The Six Million Swindle" that Jews are using "fake corpses" to financially blackmail society (App 1976). However, this motif also made inroads into mainstream discourse: Norman Finkelstein's book "The Holocaust Industry" does not deny or trivialise Nazi crimes but argues that the post-war American-Jewish establishment exploits the memory of the Holocaust for political and financial gain to further Israel's agenda (Finkelstein 2000). He "accuses US Jewish survivor organisations, among other things, of deliberately working with false survivor figures in order to obtain higher compensation payments from Germany than was justified" (Schwietring 2014). In countries which were not directly involved into the Holocaust, such as the US and the UK, allegations related to Israel tend to take precedence over those related to (financial and moral) reparations.

Another example of the phenomenon in mainstream discourse, occurred in relation to German remembrance culture, particularly in a speech by the best-selling German author Martin Walser at the Paulskirche in 1998. According to Walser, the "permanent representation of our [German] shame" serves the "instrumentalisation of our shame for present purposes" and the media use "Auschwitz" as a "moral cudgel" (in German: *Moralkeule*) (Rensmann 2004: 356).

Recent discussions of left-wing antisemitism in the UK have revealed a tendency to interpret accusations of antisemitism as a cynical means of defending Israel from legitimate criticism. This phenomenon, often referred to as the "Livingstone formulation" (Hirsh 2016), suggests that

the accusation of antisemitism itself is considered more egregious than the possibility of being antisemitic, leading to the dismissal of legitimate concerns about antisemitic attitudes (see also online discussions on the David Miller case in Becker et al. 2021).

In various languages, this concept is translated with diverging emotional impact, by using references such as "Holocaust exploiters" (Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 58) or the "Holocaust Industry."[1] Metaphorical phrases like "playing the antisemitism/Holocaust card" or the German equivalent, "wielding the antisemitism or Auschwitz club" (in German: *die Antisemitismus- oder Auschwitz-Keule schwingen*) suggest that attempts to address the historical legacy of genocidal antisemitism serve as (a) a strategic manoeuvre and (b) a malicious act of harming the other party. The strong emphasis on the Holocaust does not come as a surprise as it represents historically the most extreme manifestation and culmination of institutionalised antisemitism. Hence, references to this constitutive, central crime stand at the forefront of such accusations.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- The accusation that Jews, Israel and/or another (possibly non-Jewish) party are exploiting the Holocaust or antisemitism for various reasons, including financial or political terms, especially in relation to the idea of a reflexive defence of Israel;
- The suggestion that antisemitism prevention laws, education initiatives, or commemoration policies are illegitimate because they are perceived to serve a hidden agenda, such as protecting Israel or influential Jewish elites;
- The reduction of the Holocaust or antisemitism to mere rhetorical tools, devoid of their historical significance, and used solely for argumentative purposes.

---

[1] The complete title of Finkelstein book is "The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering."

It is important to differentiate these accusations from legitimate criticism aimed at individuals who make unfounded antisemitism accusations lacking objective basis or truth value, or those made for personal benefit, as exemplified by Gil Ofarim's accusations of antisemitism below.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

Even though classic accusations of INSTRUMENTALISING THE HOLO-CAUST may be made openly with direct reference to the Jewish out-group as instigators and beneficiaries of such manoeuvres, they do not depend on such a direct reference. They can be voiced in an open manner, i.e. without even naming a responsible person or group:

(1) "The Holocaust—the best recipe for political oppression"
(2) "The Shoah cannot be bought, it makes money like oil."
(3) "Jews are always talking about the Holocaust ignoring other victims of WW2. Shame how they did this holocaust industry business. This is like a spit to victims faces"
(4) "'The holocaust instils a guilt complex in those said to be guilty and spreads the demoralization, degeneration, and eventually the destruction of the natural racial elite among a people. This transfers effective political control to the lowest elements who will kowtow to the Jews'" [quoted by a commenter]

The first two claims do not name the beneficiaries of the alleged INSTRU-MENTALISATION. However, the latter are easy to identify, since the main group of victims of Nazi mass murder was known to be Jews; in the perspective of the commenters in (1) and (2), a reference to this, therefore, primarily benefits this group. In contrast, (3) and (4) clearly indicate Jews as beneficiaries. Moreover, according to (4), the → ADMONISHING reference (Chapter 22) to the Holocaust would also come from a third (non-Jewish) party seeking to draw political capital from a supposed INSTRUMENTALISATION. However, this party's agency is presented as limited, as it is allegedly ultimately subservient to the "Jews," implying

that they also benefit indirectly from the "guilt complex" generated by the memory of the Holocaust.

The allegation of INSTRUMENTALISING THE HOLOCAUST becomes even clearer when commenters accuse Israel of such actions:

(5) "Israel also massacres the Palestinians, but they have the right because 'the schoa' bla bla bla'…"

(6) "Israel is an apartheid colony made up of people who had nationalities, citizenship and ethnicities of other countries (mostly Europe and North Africa) who use the cover of the Holocaust to steal Palestine from its indigenous people."

(7) "The Zionist propaganda after WW2 concentrated basically on the western feeling of guilt towards the jews in Europe and their Holocaust and creating a homeland for them on their claiming holy land is a must."

(8) "the current resistance (not conflict) by the Palestinians against this criminal Israeli entity which stole their houses and then kicked them out is NOT 1000 years, it's only 73 years old.. started in 1948, by the help of most western governments, using the Holocaust guilt.. a guilt they still carry and use to justify their blind support to this criminal mafia"

These comments link the memory of the Holocaust to their individual views on the existence and actions of Israel and imply an exploitation of the former by the latter. The exploitation of the Shoah would serve as justification for massacres in (5), the establishment of apartheid in (6), the carrying out of land theft in (6) and (7) and organised crime in (8). In (5), inverted commas and a phrase expressing boredom are used to present the reference to the mass murder of the Jews as exaggerated and subject to ridicule; in (6), the metaphor of a "cover" suggests that such references are merely a front for political ends. In (8), it is noteworthy that, as above, the accusation is levelled against third parties, i.e. Western states, with the argument that the INSTRUMENTALISATION of the past would serve them to justify the oppression imputed to Israel.

When it comes to the accusation of INSTRUMENTALISING ANTI-SEMITISM, in general, this is expressed even more directly in the web

discourses studied. Commenters conceptualise the alleged EXPLOITA-
TION as a universal template for rejecting criticism directed against Jews
(→ TABOO OF CRITICISM, Chapter 23):

> (9) "I find anti-Semitism overused. Every time anyone disagrees with a
> Jew it is antisemitism."
>
> (10) "The only shouting is in mimicry of those like yourself who screech
> 'ANTI-SEMITISM!!!' at the mere thought someone somewhere
> doesn't like the latest Woody Allen movie."
>
> (11) "Frankly, those claiming people are 'anti-semitic' in a situation such
> as we are seeing is a shameful abuse of the history."
>
> (12) "We understand antisemitism better when we look at 'how much' it
> brings in each year. It is a very juicy business that requires no effort,
> very pleasant for lazy people who do not want to work!"
>
> (13) "With them, you have to have one eye in front and one eye behind
> at all times. They are involved in all the dirty tricks. They will then
> come and complain about antisemitism."

Apart from trivialising and ridiculing the accusation of antisemitism,
words like "shameful" and "lazy" in (11) and (12) imply moral turpi-
tude on the part of the accuser (→ IMMORALITY, Chapter 6, GREED,
Chapter 11). Other stereotypes such as LIE and DECEIT ("dirty tricks")
also appear in connection with such accusations. It is noteworthy,
however, that Jews are not always mentioned—but since they become
the beneficiaries through the accusation itself, readers can infer them as
direct or indirect initiators. In addition, there are numerous allegations in
German-language online comment threads about the insidious oppres-
sion of Germans through supposed INSTRUMENTALISATION, with Jews
being referred to either in the comment or in its direct context:

> (14) "The Jews stage a lot to make themselves important and also
> to demand money from us Germans as so-called compensation
> payments. Unfortunately, every German falls for it."
>
> (15) "Here we go, again, everything has to revolve around these people,
> if anyone steals their limelight, out come alleged anti-semitic slurs,
> yawn, oh vey!"
>
> (16) "To spend your life trying to stifle debate by playing the 'anti-semite'
> every time someone tries to explain an opinion to you that you don't

> like will eventually destroy your soul. I feel genuine pity for you. I hope one day you can let openness and non-judgementalism into your heart, and that happiness will follow."

The portrayal of Jews as morally dubious, which we also find above, goes so far here that some commenters—as in (16)—end up expressing moral superiority in the form of pity towards the Jews' alleged need to stifle any critical debate about them by acting out their victimhood.

When it comes to Israel, commenters also tend to pronounce the accusation of INSTRUMENTALISING ANTISEMITISM with an alleged TABOO OF CRITICISM or the stereotype of DECEIT, presupposing numerous scenarios of injustice in the Middle East being covered up with the alleged INSTRUMENTALISATION:

(17) "Clearly you learnt nothing from your history and worse than that are repeating it on others…Of course, anyone who dares to criticise Israel gets accused of being an antisemite. Pitiful. In any case, the phrase has been rendered meaningless"

(18) "Accusations of antisemitism are the fig leaves for oppression and the genocide of Palestinians."

(19) "Funny how standing up for genocide gets branded as anti-semitic these days. It's like me calling you homophobic for telling me I've put on weight."

(20) "This Anti-Semitic thing has gone too far. It's being used and abused to protect people from punishment for atrocities and stop real conversation and analysis, it's akin to someone who doesn't wear glasses starting a fight and then putting a pair on whenever things get real and crying about getting hit."

(21) "I wonder what version of antisemitism you are discussing? The official dictionary version or the one used by Zionists to whitewash Israel's history of crime and terrorism"

In addition to alleged Nazi crimes (→ NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1) and the accusation of the → INABILITY TO LEARN FROM THEM (Chapter 24) in (17), conveyed alongside the insinuations of "oppression" in (18), "genocide" in (18) and (19) (→ GENOCIDE, Chapter 32) and "crime and terrorism" in (21) (→ TERRORIST STATE, Chapter 31), it is striking that the commenters in (19) and (20) draw on everyday

comparisons to persuasively communicate what they see as the disproportionality of the antisemitism accusation and an inappropriate victim status on the Israeli side ("crying about getting hit"). The reference to a "dictionary" in (21) indicates that Israeli perceptions of states and processes have, in the commenter's view, become completely disconnected from usual standards of description and evaluation. This disconnection is not the result of an unintentional negligence, but the consequence of a deliberate whitewashing.

Commenters convinced of INSTRUMENTALISATION by Israel repeatedly raise the accusation of → DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33)—namely that critical views of other countries and religions are globally tolerated and sometimes even praised, but in their eyes, this would not apply to Israel (again, TABOO OF CRITICISM):

(22) "It is not about Judaism it is about Zionism. Who are hiding their crimes and mix it with the Jewish heritage to prevent people from criticising them. If you want to boycott Saudia Arabia and prevent Arabic translation no one will say that you are Islamophobic. Although, you are preventing another 26 countries from it. But no fuss will be made. And that exactly why Israel needs to start pay for its actions."

(23) "Oh my god, we're talking about an invasion slaughtering thousands of innocent Ukrainians and you're trying to make the narrative all about you and Hamas? Wow, really playing that victim card. Have you no shame?"

In its original context, (23) was preceded by the statement that Israel and Russia are rogue states—whereas one is allowed to name the victim side in the Ukraine war, this is allegedly not possible for the Palestinian side because Israel would immediately emphasise its victim status as a Jewish state.

Due to its sensitive and reflective tone, the following appears to be a moderate statement portraying Israel's handling of criticism as the cause of disadvantage to Jewish communities worldwide, but it ultimately reproduces the concept of BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM:

(24) "I worry for the Jewish people that any disagreement with Israel's policy on anything gets labelled anti-semitic. With less than 20 million people worldwide, ensuring that their voice is not lost or diminished is very important to the World given their disproportionate contribution to its culture, scientific endeavour, finances and politics. Yet as we see from the creditable woke campaign, the generalised use of anti-semitic will become tiresome and work against the importance in not forgetting anti-semitism as a blight in World history."

Although the concept presented in this chapter is unambiguously referred to at the comment's beginning, it is the commenter's underlining of concern that frames a concatenation of the alleged INSTRUMENTALISATION with an observation of a creeping exclusion of Jewish communities. It is precisely this framing that makes the commentary far more dangerous in terms of normalisation of antisemitic tropes in contemporary, politically moderate discourse than terse, verbally aggressive statements that reveal little empathy on the part of the writer.

Implicit

In the majority of web commentaries that implicitly assume an INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST, overt allusions are discernible (Lennon 2004; Becker 2021: 285 ff):

(25) "The Jews need to stop living in the past."

This comment expresses the call for Jews to behave differently than before. It is not clear what specifically the Jewish memory refers to. As is typical for allusions, the implied scenario is not directly derivable, e.g. by mentioning characteristic vocabulary associated with the latter. However, even if the commenter does not refer directly to the Nazi era (whereby the comment may well refer to manifestations of antisemitism in other phases of history), the Nazi crimes are nevertheless so present in the public consciousness when it comes to antisemitism and Jewish experiences of suffering that this scenario can be activated immediately.

In the next comment, the focus on the Holocaust is not attributed to Jews, but again to Israel. The ambiguity based on an open allusion, which could also be found in (25) with regard to the implied historical scenario, occurs again, but is given more concrete form by the word "millions," which instantly activates the association with the Nazi genocide:

> (26) "I'm fully aware of the treatment of Jewish people throughout our times, EVERYBODY is, it's everywhere, you can't get away from it and it was evil, terrible what happened to millions of Jewish people. THIS DOES NOT GIVE MODERN ISRAELIS THE RIGHT TO DO SIMILIAR TO OTHER PEOPLE"

Even though the commenter seems to bring forth empathy for the collective trauma of the Jews, one, they reproduce the INSTRUMENTALISATION stereotype and two, they claim (in capital letters reflecting urgency) that the NAZI ANALOGY is justified in relation to Israel; a reference to the Holocaust would not lead to a justification of the crimes alleged by the writer.

The following is an unambiguous quotation of the phrase *Never Again*, which primarily alludes to the crimes of Nazi Germany, but also other crimes against humanity. The user claims that Israel—due to its implied frequent reference to Nazi crimes—mocks the latter and their commemoration:

> (27) "Israel makes a mockery of NEVER AGAIN. Bennett is a War Criminal just like Putin. During the May Assault Israel BOMBED 6 hospitals and 54 schools."
>
> Exactly the same idea is conveyed by the following rhetorical question, in which the reference to the Holocaust is evaluated as a fallacious argument for alleged injustice against Palestinians:
>
> (28) "Does the horrors that the Jewish people suffered during the holocaust justify the present-day humiliation of the Palestinian people?"

A much wider range of implicit patterns is found in the insinuation that ANTISEMITISM in general IS INSTRUMENTALISED. Here, commenters use puns, as in (29), allusions in (30) and metaphors in (31)–(34):

(29) "Opfarim" [combining the German-Jewish singer's name *Ofarim* with the German word *Opfer*, in English: *victim*][2]

(30) "The whole thing is staged and there are people sitting somewhere rubbing their hands together."

(31) "it's not about religion bro, they are just using this card to terrorise anyone who dares to reveal their truth"

(32) "Straight away yet again the Israelis pull the 'anti-semitic' race card when it has absolutely no relevance"

(33) "Zelensky plays the Jew card all the time"

(34) "Now the machine will swing into action."

The metaphorical formulation *playing the antisemitism/Jew/hate/race card* is, as mentioned at the chapter's beginning, the most popular implicit pattern to present the idea of INSTRUMENTALISATION. As with references to the Holocaust, overt allusions play a major role here, often linked to the stereotypes DECEIT, → PRIVILEGE (Chapter 26) and POWER:

(35) "The only people that got a bad deal in history for a time.........give it a break....no reason to do as you like."

(36) "it is pointless to rewrite history for political purposes.... Israel wants at all costs to retain the title of the people who have suffered the most in the world."

Another, more implicit and necessarily context-depending pattern of bringing forth this stereotype is idioms and made-up slogans in which the accusation of antisemitism is conceptualised as a recurring litany, as in (35), or the initiators are understood as those who focus solely on negative cases, in (36):

(37) "Change the record."

(38) "Very very short memories when it comes to any kindness done, very very long ones when it comes to any harm."

Jokes, irony, sarcasm and cynicism are further forms, in which the intended communicative meaning is brought out indirectly, partly with

---

[2] This comment was posted before the results of the police report on the Gil Ofarim case were published (see also "Non-antisemitic Examples" below and Ascone et al. 2022).

quotation marks and omissions, partly with emojis as well as hyperbolic formulations:

(39) "And Q the anti-semitic card in…3,2,1……YAWN 😴 🙂"
(40) "Accusations of antisemitism in 10…9…8…"
(41) "Apartheid apologists crying anti-Semitism in 9……8……7…….."
(42) "How easy it is to shut down comment or debate… call everyone an antisemvb ite… How much I owe you here take a little penny 🪙🪙🪙🪙"
(43) "Once again, a 'yet so much discriminated Semite' in Germany"

Finally, the rhetorical question, another indirect speech act which—despite the clarity of the content referenced in it—is nevertheless a popular figure of the implicit production of antisemitic stereotypes in politically moderate discourse. In the following example, it again demonstrates the clear proximity between the stereotypes of INSTRUMENTALISATION and TABOO OF CRITICISM and PRIVILEGE:

(44) "We cannot support the people of Palestine.. their suffering because that would be anti-semitism? We cannot criticise Israeli politics because that would be anti-semitism? So Israeli government get a free ticket? The only government in the world that cannot ever be criticised?"

Non-antisemitic Examples

Criticism of an accusation of antisemitism is not inherently antisemitic if the incident lacks any antisemitic basis. For example, if criticism of a Jewish politician is based on their sexist or homophobic attitudes, and this criticism is understood as antisemitic by some, it remains valid as long as it is rooted in truth. It is important to observe whether similar criticisms are also applied to others with similar attitudes or if double standards are being employed.

The same principle applies to cases like the Gil Ofarim incident, where the Jewish-German singer was criticised for allegedly instrumentalising accusations of antisemitism (Ascone et al. 2022). If such criticism is indiscriminately directed towards all Jews,it becomes an

example of how incidents can trigger the reproduction of antisemitic stereotypes. However, if criticism is directed at a specific individual and is based on valid concerns, it must be considered within the wider context. In Ofarim's case, subsequent police investigations revealed the falsity of his accusations, justifying criticism of his instrumentalisation. However, any automatic dismissal of his claims and insinuations of ulterior motives before the investigation's conclusion could indeed be viewed as antisemitic.

Related Categories

LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7), HOLOCAUST DISTORTION and DENIAL (Chapter 18), DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 19), ADMONISHERS (Chapter 22), GREED (Chapter 11), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23), JEWS HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST (Chapter 24).

References

App, Austin J. 1976. *The Six Million Swindle: Blackmailing the German People for Hard Marks with Fabricated Corpses*. Takoma Park, MD: Boniface Press.

Ascone, Laura, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke and Chloé Vincent. 2022. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 4*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-16292.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Becker, Matthias J., Daniel Allington, Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke and Chloé Vincent. 2021. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 2*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15310.

Finkelstein, Norman. 2000. *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*. New York: Verso Books.

Hirsh, David. 2010. Accusations of Malicious Intent in Debates About the Palestine-Israel Conflict and About Antisemitism The Livingstone Formulation, "Playing the Antisemitism Card" and Contesting the Boundaries of Antiracist Discourse. *Transversal*, 1.

Hirsh, David. 2016, April. How Raising the Issue of Antisemitism Puts You Outside the Community of the Progressive. The Livingstone Formulation. *Engage*.

Lennon, Paul. 2004. *Allusions in the Press: An Applied Linguistic Study*. Berlin and New York: De Gruyter.

Rensmann, Lars. 2004. *Demokratie und Judenbild. Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Salzborn, Samuel. 2010. Anti-Jewish Guilt Deflection and National Self-Victimization: Antisemitism in Germany. In *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Julius H. Schoeps. Leiden: Brill.

Schönbach, Peter. 1961. *Reaktionen auf die antisemitische Welle im Winter 1959/60*. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Schwietring, Marc. 2014. *Holocaust-Industrie und Vergangenheitspolitik. Norman G. Finkelstein und die Normalisierung des sekundären Antisemitismus in Deutschland*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Sicher, Efraim. 2016. The Postcolonial Jew: Racialization, Delegitimization, Ambiguity. In *Anti-Judaism, Antisemitism, and Delegitimizing Israel*, ed. Wistrich, Robert S. Lincoln. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press.

21

Nazi-Jewish Collaboration

Jan Krasni

Conceptual and Historical Overview

This concept is rooted in the antisemitic imaginary of a—at least partial—Jewish guilt in the preparation and execution of the Holocaust. This stereotype, like many others, decontextualises and distorts historical facts in order to either exonerate the real perpetrators of the Holocaust—the German Nazi state and its actual collaborators—and ascribe it to the victims of this regime, or to relativise German guilt by insisting on the complicity of the victims and the perpetrators. Closely related to concepts of Jewish → IMMORALITY (Chapter 6) and → EVIL (Chapter 3.1), it reappears in associations of Zionism and the State of Israel with Nazism.

The fact that there was an element of cooperation between some Jewish groups in Germany and the Nazi regime in certain periods has

J. Krasni (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: jan.krasni@tu-berlin.de

been noted and critically discussed by figures such as Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem (Schoeps 2021). Later, in the inter-war and the first period of Nazi rule in Germany, smaller associations of secular and liberal Jews were in support of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). For those Jews most committed to assimilation, a rejection of their Jewish ethnic and religious identity and embracing of liberalism and laicity were often combined with participation in the various nationalist movements of Central and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Vogt 2016)—from which they were often expelled. Movements such as the League of National German Jews (*Verband Nationaldeutscher Juden*) called for the dissolution of a distinct Jewish identity and the complete assimilation of the Jews in the German majority.[1] However, these associations were never representative of most of the Jewish population in Europe or Germany.

Another root of this stereotype emerged during the second phase of the Nazi rule, which started with the deportation of Jews and organisation of ghettos after 1939. The Jewish councils (*Judenräte*) established by the Nazis were organisations forced to communicate with the German authorities both in the Reich and later in the territories occupied by the German forces. The councils were first obliged to inform the occupational authorities about the number of Jews and their whereabouts—information which was later used for their deportation and extermination. Later, the councils were given the assignment to administer the ghettos and ordered to organise the Jewish Ghetto Police forces (*Jüdische Ghetto Polizei,* JGP). The JGP was ordered to deliver their ghetto cohabitants, who would be either used for forced labour or transported to the concentration and extermination camps. As noncompliance was punished by death, it is obvious that this kind of cooperation was enforced by the Nazi regime as a way of structuring the process of extermination of Jews in Europe, and that the people involved were not in a position to change anything. The final Jewish group employed by the Nazi regime for fulfilling certain roles in the extermination process are the prisoner task forces (*Sonderkommando*) responsible for various

---

[1] This association existed from 1921 until 1935 and was shut down by the Nazis. Despite the loyalty to the German state, their members were persecuted and killed.

tasks within concentration and extermination camps. Tasks like bringing other prisoners into the gas chambers or taking care of the crematoria did belong to their work but, as in previous cases, it would be wrong to claim that they were collaborators as also they were used as slave labour and were destined for extermination themselves (Marc 2012; Aderet 2019; Dinkelaker 2019).

The third mode of the stereotype of Nazi-Jewish collaboration is rooted in the imaginary that the Zionist movement did not care about the suffering of the Jews or were willing to leverage the Jewish position in Europe for concessions in Mandate Palestine. By associating Zionism and thus Israel with Nazism, the intention is to retrospectively discredit and delegitimise Israel as a state. In short, the critique can be formulated as follows: "(1) ideological identification with Nazism; (2) active contact with the Nazis; (3) the avoidance of a militant stance against Nazism until the late stages of World War II; (4) the abandonment of German Jewry due to a narrow Zionist perspective with its […] emphasis on the 'state-in-the-making.'" (Eschkoli-Wagman 1999: 21–22). This claim is often used, as historical records show that while some of the representatives of Zionist movements showed a lack of compassion for those trapped in the concentration camps, others did try to have contact with Nazi authorities and negotiate the extraction of Jews and Jewish property to Palestine in the scope of the Haavara agreement (Eschkoli-Wagman 1999; Nicosia 2012; Segev 2018). However, it is important to understand that all these discussions and actions took place during the increasing Nazi persecution of Jews. It was a unique situation in which the Zionist side did not have any real leverage in negotiations. Thus, hardly any of the decisions had an impact on the situation on the ground and could not change the German plan to annihilate European Jewry.

Such arguments also featured in the accusations by the Soviet Union which held Zionists responsible—in addition to colonial and capitalist oppression of the Global South[2]—for the collaboration with the Nazis and the death of millions of Jews (IJA 1978; 69). This line of argumentation was further developed by the current president of

---

[2] It is important to mention that an opposite accusation came from the British imperial antisemitic sentiment, which saw Zionists as controlled by communists and collaborating with the Soviets against British interests in the Middle East.

Palestine Mahmoud Abbas in his doctoral dissertation—written while studying in the Soviet Union and therefore from its ideological perspective—and later book on connections between Zionism and National Socialism. His book has gained wide acceptance in Arab-speaking countries (Bergman 2014). Finally, this strand of argumentation was reused and spread further by the activists of the liberal or socialist left in the West (Bogdanor 2017). The main proponent of such a view is Lenni Brenner, whose books "51 Documents: Zionist Collaboration with the Nazis" and "Zionism in the Age of Dictators" are regarded as the main "evidence" of Zionist collaboration with Nazi Germany. While he does draw on historical documents, he decontextualises and interprets historical facts in a biased fashion (cf. Bogdanor 2016). Brenner's reputation as an anti-Vietnam war activist and as a Jew from an Orthodox family is often mentioned in this context, disregarding his communist convictions which define his radical critique of capitalism and of Zionism.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Claiming that the Holocaust was co-organised, supported or instigated by Jews and/or Zionists;
- Alleging that the Jewish councils, Jewish Ghetto Police and prisoner task forces were Nazi collaborators;
- Claiming that prominent Jewish figures (whether historical or contemporary) were Nazi collaborators;
- Claiming that perpetrators of Nazi crimes (in the Wehrmacht, SS, administration or other units) were themselves Jewish, or that large numbers of Jews served in Nazi structures;
- Claiming that the Haavara agreement was a Nazi-Jewish or Zionist plan for the extermination of Arab Palestinians;
- Claiming that the Holocaust was a trade-off for the establishment of Israel;
- The idea that Zionists/Jewish elites did not care about European Jews exterminated by the Nazis or traded them in exchange for the support of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

Direct claims of Nazi-Jewish collaboration are often made dispassionately, with the commenter presenting themselves as merely the bearer of an unfortunate historical truth. Distorted and decontextualised events are reworked to present an image of willing Jewish collaboration with their Nazi persecutors. In (1), the focus is on the supposedly critical role of Jews in the functioning of the extermination camps:

(1) "Only with the help of Jewish collaborators could the killing machinery in the concentration camps be operated. Only a few rebelled as in the uprising in Auschwitz in 1944 or in Sobibor in 1943."

The reference to the "few" who rebelled in Auschwitz and Sobibor camps carries with it a note of disapproval for the (Jewish) prisoners who did not. This expectation of mass resistance not only radically underplays the reality of life in a concentration camp and the vast differences in power and autonomy between prisoner and captor, but also effectively blames Jews—not Nazi Germany—for their own destruction. The comment suggests that it was the choice of certain Jews not to rebel but rather assist in the exterminations that were the ultimate driving force behind Auschwitz, shifting responsibility from the Nazis and putting it onto supposedly willing Jewish collaborators. There is therefore an overlap here with → HOLOCAUST DISTORTION (Chapter 18), → BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10) and → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20)—if Jews were actually to blame for the Shoah, then any reference to Nazi or European responsibility for the Holocaust today by Jewish or Israeli individuals or groups can only amount to a cynical attempt to benefit from the falsely ascribed guilt.

(2) "It is perhaps true that the first collaborators in their own extermination were the Jews themselves via the Judenrat. In France via the UGIF cf Maurice Rajsfus the Jewish collaboration in the UGIF"

(3) "They got victimized during ww2, true, but they also victimized themselves…The elite Jews in Germany at the time, helped the NAZIs exterminate Jews"

In (2), the blame for the Nazi extermination is again pinned on those Jews who, in hugely straitened circumstances, were forced into ersatz "leadership" positions of Jewish populations within radically antisemitic states. While the reference to the French historian Maurice Rajsfus—who did claim that some members of the General Union of French Israelites (*Union générale des israélites de France*, UGIF) had helped with Vichy round ups of French Jews—could, in another context, be a legitimate comment, here it is presented not as one argumentative position against others, but rather as undisputed fact. That such a one-sided presentation that is intended to act as incontrovertible evidence for a much more generalised claim is shown by the previous sentence, in which "the Jews themselves"—i.e. not a particular Jewish individual or group in particular circumstances, but Jews as an essentialised whole—are labelled "the first collaborators in their own extermination." This again shifts responsibility away from Nazi Germany and their French collaborators in the Vichy regime and onto Jews as a group, acting as a generalised accusation of Jewish collaboration and blame for the Holocaust. The same mechanism can be seen in (3). The supposed role of "elite Jews" in "help[ing]" the Nazi extermination—already a spurious claim—is generalised through the use of "they," so that Jews as a group are accused of "victimiz[ing] themselves" through collaboration. The illusion of factual content is also constructed here on a linguistic level: through the matter of fact, impersonal and almost academic tone, appeals to authority (Rajsfus), specific historical references (Judenrat, UGIF), academic jargon ("cf") and even distancing strategies ("It is perhaps true that").

(4) "The head of the Luftwaffe who bombed Britain was Jewish and there many others who fought for Hitler."
(5) "It was a Jewish general that bombed Britain in WW2."

Some debates broaden the idea about the Jewish-Nazi collaboration and project the guilt for the atrocities of the Nazi forces on the real or

imaginary Jewish individuals in various roles. Both (3) and (4) refer indirectly to Erhard Milch, a high-ranking Nazi with a Jewish father. Milch's disputed heritage has long been of interest to negationist historians such as David Irving. As with (2) and (3), the aim of such comments is to extrapolate generalised claims about Jews as such from isolated incidents: to present the actions of an individual such that they become representative of Jews as a group, and shift the burden of responsibility from Nazi Germany and onto their victims.

Other comments seek the same goal but in reverse—rather than looking for individuals with Jewish heritage within the Nazis, they start with an already prominent Jewish person and try to find evidence with which they can be branded as a Nazi collaborator. The prominence of the individual as Jewish then enables the generalisation of the claim to all Jews. The example of George Soros is emblematic here (5), but similar claims of collaboration are often ascribed to Israeli leaders, well-known Zionists or significant people from other Jewish movements.

(6) "Soros wasn't a "Holocaust survivor" he was a Nazi collaborator who stole from his Jewish countrymen as they were being loaded into cattle trucks."

Claims that the Zionist leadership or the Zionist movement as a whole collaborated with the Nazis can be split into those which suggest they did so cynically to hasten the establishment of the Jewish state, and those for whom Zionism and Nazism are two modes of the same political ideology ($\rightarrow$ NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1). The Haavara agreement is a frequent reference point, deprived of any historical context and instead presented as authoritative proof of eager Zionist collaboration.

(7) "and the Zionist leaders who collaborated with the Nazis?"
(8) "ah the Zionist propaganda videos to try and deflect from their crimes against humanity and Gaza gee where did the zionists learn their propaganda technique's to hide their crimes oh that's right when they signed on with the Nazis the Haavara Agreement"

Implicit

> (9) "History is repeating, you just need to learn from it, there are Jews in the AZOV regiment in Ukraine"

The implicit articulation of the topos of Nazi-Jewish collaboration can make use of presuppositions and refer to them as common knowledge. These comments can also connect the past with various contemporary events and create a clear connection between Jewish people and both historical national-socialism and neo-Nazi or right-wing movements, such as the Azov regiment in Ukraine. The antisemitic meaning is constructed through implicature: the commentator indirectly insinuates a historical closeness between Jews and Nazis via the topos of a repetition of history and the claimed presence of Jews in the Azov regiment. While the exact extent of the cooperation between Jews and Nazis is not mentioned, the comment aims to blur the line between perpetrators and victims by claiming that the lesson to be learned from the Nazi regime is that Jews themselves took part in the Holocaust.

> (10) "When you're ready to sacrifice half of your own people just to create a state, you have a real Jewish determination."

The following comment draws on the anti-Zionist conspiracy theory that Jewish elites sacrificed ordinary Jews to get land in the Middle East to create the State of Israel. The Nazi era is not explicitly referenced, however, the extermination of half of the Jewish population clearly activates historical knowledge of the Holocaust. By claiming that Israel was founded on the sacrifice of the European Jews, and that it was fatally associated with the Nazi regime, the commenter clearly attempts to delegitimise the Jewish state and paint it as a moral aberration. It also portrays Jewish elites as deeply IMMORAL (Chapter 6), → GREEDY (Chapter 11) and opportunistic, therefore, reproducing canonical antisemitic stereotypes. The comment also relies on sarcasm, by displaying mock admiration for the supposed determination and ruthlessness of the founders of Israel. The epithet "Jewish" placed before determination implies that such callousness and cruelty is a typical feature of the Jewish mindset.

(11) *Let's be honest, Hitler could not have ruled Germany and Europe without some form of help from (((them)))*

The idea of the complicity of the Jews in the Nazi regime maps onto a wide range of conspiracy theories pertaining to → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12), as it is assumed the Nazis would not have been able to achieve their political hegemony without tacit acceptance or support from the omnipotent Jewish elites. Some of the more extreme versions of this narrative postulate that Hitler was a Jewish agent (and possibly himself a Jew) working in agreement with the wealthy and influential Rothschild family, which financially and politically supported his rise. The idea that Jewish elites had significant advantage to gain from the Nazi regime is often the focus of the concept of Jewish-Nazi collaboration, as seen in (11). The echoes are a dog whistle commonly used in antisemitic discourse to refer to Jewish people.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) *What are you talking about! Do you know that those Zionists had an agreement with the Nazis! The Haavara Agreement was an agreement between Nazi Germany and Zionist German Jews signed on 25 August 1933. The agreement was finalized after three months of talks by the Zionist Federation of Germany, the Anglo-Palestine Bank and the economic authorities of Nazi Germany.*

The comment is emphasising proven historical facts that cannot be questioned. Even though its elements may sound politically motivated in the context of a heated discussion (e.g. a thread about the Middle East conflict), the comment keeps to specifics and does not make the claim that Jewish people or the Zionist movement were helping the Nazis.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10), HOLO-CAUST DENIAL and DISTORTION (Chapter 18), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1).

References

Aderet, Ofer. 2019. The Crime: Collaborating With the Nazis. The Punishment: Excommunication From Judaism. *Haaretz*, 2019. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2019-08-24/ty-article-magazine/.premium/the-crime-collaborating-with-nazis-the-punishment-excommunication-from-judaism/0000017f-e3b7-d7b2-a77f-e3b78f310000 (last accessed on 13 August 2023).

Bergman, Ronen. 2014. Abbas Book Reveals: The "Nazi-Zionist Plot" of the Holocaust. *Ynetnews*. https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4596121,00.html (last accessed on 13 August 2023).

Bogdanor, Paul. 2016. An Antisemitic Hoax: Lenni Brenner on Zionist "Collaboration" With the Nazis. *Fathom*. https://fathomjournal.org/an-antisemitic-hoax-lenni-brenner-on-zionist-collaboration-with-the-nazis (last accessed on 13 August 2023).

Bogdanor, Paul. 2017. Ken Livingstone and the Myth of Zionist "Collaboration" with the Nazis. *Fathom*. 2017. https://fathomjournal.org/ken-livingstone-and-the-myth-of-zionist-collaboration-with-the-nazis (last accessed on 13 August 2023).

Dinkelaker, Philipp. 2019. Jewish Collaboration? Honor Court Cases Against Survivors of the Shoah in Postwar Germany. *The Journal of Holocaust Research* 33 (4): 254–276.

Eschkoli-Wagman, Hava. 1999. Yishuv Zionism: Its Attitude to Nazism and the Third Reich Reconsidered. *Modern Judaism* 19: 21–40.

IJA, Institute of Jewish Affairs. 1978. *Soviet Antisemitic Propaganda: Evidence from Books, Press, Radio*. London: Jacob Well.

Marc, Buggeln. 2012. Das System Der KZ-Außenlager: Krieg, Sklavenarbeit und Massengewalt. Gesprächskreis Geschichte. Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Schoeps, Julius H. 2021. Complicated Complicity. In *European Collaboration with Nazi Germany During World War II*, ed. Martina Bitunjac and Julius H. Schoeps, 263–278. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter.

Vogt, Stefan. 2016. *Subalterne Positionierungen. Der deutsche Zionismus im Feld des Nationalismus in Deutschland 1890–1933*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag.

22

Admonishers

Marcus Scheiber

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The stereotype of ADMONISHERS accuses Jews or Israelis of (1) practising Holocaust remembrance excessively and making exaggerated claims in this regard against the German or Austrian society (or other societies which collaborated in the Holocaust), and (2) raising inflationary accusations of antisemitism ($\rightarrow$ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST and OF ANTISEMITISM, Chapter 20). Both insinuations are linked to the claim that these are attempts to criticise, accuse or target non-Jews unjustifiably or unfairly. Further, this activity is said to be largely responsible for perpetuating a culture of commemoration in relation to the Holocaust which stifles the development of a positive national identity. Similar to the rejection of remembrance in the demands for a $\rightarrow$ CLEAN BREAK with the Nazi past (Chapter 17), the ADMONISHER concept suggests that

M. Scheiber (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

Holocaust remembrance stands in the way of a positive national and familial self-image (Rensmann 2004: 91; Salzborn 2011).

Moreover, the ADMONISHER attribution paints Jews as trouble-makers who, through their behaviour, produce or provoke antisemitism (Bergmann 2007: 25; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 96). References to the significance of Holocaust remembrance or the history of persecution of Jews and its continuing effects as well as to current antisemitism are turned into signals of such troublemaking or of socially disruptive behaviour, which in turn become the cause of accusations made against Jews (either specific individuals/groups or generalised). Since, according to this construct, Jews refuse to give up or "get over" remembrance and thus do not absolve the perpetrators but keep the memory alive—for what is often portrayed as monetary reasons (→ GREED, Chapter 11.1, INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLO-CAUST AND OF ANTISEMITISM), revenge (→ VENGEFULNESS, Chapter 8) or a stubborn irreconcilability—"admonishing" Jews are accused of shaping themselves into a group that the majority of the society rejects (Bergmann 2010). Hence, the stereotype of ADMONISHERS seeks to pin the →BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10) on Jews themselves, since negative attitudes towards Jews would be overcome if they would only reconcile with the Germans (ibid.).

In this way, the ADMONISHERS stereotype defines Jews as a group of people who refuse to come to terms with today's changed conditions, continually remind the perpetrators and their descendants of the Nazi crimes, depriving them of the possibility of developing a national "normality."

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Characterises Jews, Israelis as "troublemakers of remembrance" for (excessively) keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and/or permanently bringing up antisemitism;
- Characterises Jews, Israelis as irreconcilable.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "I'm tired of being reminded of the Holocaust every time I express patriotism as a German."

The stereotype of ADMONISHERS typically manifests itself in the form of an accusation. Here, the commenter makes the claim that Germans are unfairly prevented from feeling patriotic due to being continually "reminded" of the atrocities of the Holocaust. The frequency with which this historical guilt is allegedly mentioned is formulated in the form of a hyperbole (being "tired" and "every time"). The act of Holocaust remembrance itself is therefore deprived of its legitimacy by the pretence that it is expressed in all possible—and hence not always appropriate—contexts. This emphasises the commenter's exasperation with the continued confrontation with the past and implies the demand that it stops. The comment does not address the question of whether such remembrance is justified in certain contexts, but rather it is rejected in its entirety by being ridiculed via hyperbole, and accused of preventing the expression of patriotism in any situation.

(2) "Jews will never stop reminding us of the past."

In (2), a generalising attribution is expressed both through a hyperbole ("never stop") and through the use of the plural ("Jews"), which at the same time opens up a dichotomy between Jews and the in-group ("us"). The statement does not only impute such permanent action to Jews, but also articulates an accusatory tone in the hyperbole, in that the alleged constant remembering is perceived as disturbing and negative.

(3) "Meet Israel – the country that will cheer when children and hospitals are bombed with white phosphorous, but is constantly talking about the Holocaust."

This statement combines the accusation against Israel that it celebrates bomb attacks on children and hospitals, and at the same time continuously talks about the crimes of the Holocaust. Here, the first accusation is used to morally devalue Israel and put it in the wrong by attributing to it actions that correspond to the stereotype of → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) (since such behaviour is deemed reprehensible) and → LIE (Chapter 7). Contrasting the first with the second accusation serves to discredit Holocaust remembrance via the negative qualities attributed to Israel, since it would be as immoral as it is inappropriate to remember the experience of the Holocaust—hyperbolically presented as "constantly"—but at the same time not to acknowledge the suffering of others, or to cause it in the first place. The comment thus characterises Israel as an—illegitimate—ADMONISHER.

(4) "The moralising is counterproductive in the long run."

The comment uses a judgemental accusation to dismiss remembrance and ultimately represents an inversion of the moral accusation of guilt. It points out that the practice of remembrance would be excessively moralising and carry potentially negative consequences—whether for the politics of remembrance or for Jews themselves remains open—in that it is perceived as "counterproductive" to the actual endeavour. The comment thus alludes to remembrance being meaningful, only to reject it in its entirety because the supposedly "moralising" way in which it is implemented by the group referred to in the context of the thread (Jews) would not coincide with the objective. As a consequence, (4) implies they should refrain from these demands (which can also be understood as an implicit appeal for a CLEAN BREAK).

Implicit

(5) "Will Jews ever stop cornering us with tales from our past?"

The statement presupposes the idea of continuous admonition, described as a restriction to a free development ("cornering"), through a rhetorical question. Furthermore, it expresses an implicit demand that the Holocaust no longer be addressed and therefore strives for a CLEAN BREAK.

The use of the word "tales"—evoking everyday stories or even fiction—which here refers to the deeds of the Nazi era, seeks to characterise those deeds as insignificant in the present context. Demands for a CLEAN BREAK often occur together with the stereotype of ADMONISHERS, as the accusation of an excessive politics of remembrance on the part of Jews is based on the wish that the Holocaust—and thus the confrontation with guilt—should no longer be addressed. As a result, the "admonishing authority" is constituted as negative.

(6) "This is exactly what the victims, or the third generation of their relatives, expect from us! And woe betide us if we don't play along!"

In the context of this thread, the commenter refers to the endless self-flagellation that is allegedly required from the (non-Jewish) in-group. While the previous examples either discredited the perpetuation of remembrance by making it ridiculous or called for an end to it altogether, (6) outlines a scenario in which a failure to remember would have negative consequences, indicated in the phrase "if we don't play along." This as well as the interjection "woe" suggests a looming disaster, should the required act of remembrance not be performed, which is given urgency by the exclamation mark. The utterance thus refers to an external compulsion to remember—additionally manifested through the use of "expect"—allegedly enforced by Jews. The comment also employs sarcasm to convey the alleged absurdity of the victims' demands; the reference to the "third generation" also implies that, because of the passing of time, those who now evoke their deceased relatives have no more real legitimacy to do so. Once again, the question of the need to remember is ignored and its inappropriateness postulated instead, insofar as it amounts to a compulsion that one naturally (and rightly) wishes to resist.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(7) "Remembering history—that always comes from those who see themselves as the forever superior."

The accusation that remembrance is enforced implies a defensiveness against it, aiming at an end to the politics of memory in order to leave one's own guilty past behind. Each of these accusations thus realises the stereotype of ADMONISHERS, identifying the admonishing entity as Jewish and/or Israeli, although context is needed to deduce that "remembering history" refers to the Holocaust and not another historical event. While the same argumentative strategy is applied—demands for remembrance arise group-specifically and unilaterally ("always") from a feeling of (moral) superiority that is (implicitly) not conceded to the demanders—the defensiveness against remembrance and the accusation of memory politics cannot be interpreted as antisemitic.

Related Categories

VENGEFULNESS (Chapter 8), BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10), DEMANDS FOR A CLEAN BREAK WITH THE NAZI PAST (Chapter 17), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST and OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20).

References

Bergmann, Werner. 2007. Störenfriede der Erinnerung. Zum Schuldabwehr-Antisemitismus in Deutschland. In *Literarischer Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz*, ed. Klaus-Michael Bogdal, Klaus Holz and Matthias N. Lorenz, 13–35. Stuttgart: Metzler.

Bergmann, Werner. 2010. Sekundärer Antisemitismus. In *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Benz, Wolfgang, 300–302. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Rensmann, Lars. 2004. *Demokratie und Judenbild. Antisemitismus in der politischen Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Salzborn, Samuel. 2011. Anti-Jewish Guilt Deflection and National Self-Victimization: Antisemitism in Germany. In *Politics and Resentment. Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Julius H. Schoeps, 397–423. Leiden and Boston: Brill.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind. The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

23

Taboo of Criticism

Alexis Chapelan

Conceptual and Historical Overview

In 1892, one of France's leading antisemitic agitators, Édouard Drumont, launched a new political newspaper which swiftly became the principal organ for disseminating conspiracy narratives and Jew-hatred. Its name was significant: *La Libre Parole* ("Free Speech"). The choice of such a title sheds light on a crucial dimension of the antisemitic imaginary, one that is still very prevalent and active in today's climate. It claims to always be threatened with silencing, since their views are actively being suppressed and tabooed as a consequence of an alleged hegemony of Jewish interests in the public sphere and in particular in media and politics → POWER (Chapter 12).

A. Chapelan (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.unibuc.ro

Within the broader context of the anti-political correctness thrust of contemporary right-wing discourses, the revitalisation of such a legitimation device is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, while it is still a new legitimation tool in other forms of exclusionary ideologies (racist, anti-LGBTQ, anti-feminist), the topos of the TABOO OF CRITICISM play a key structural role in the ideological architecture of antisemitism. As Moishe Postone (2010) highlights, modern antisemitism has taken on a pseudo-emancipatory promise. Feeding on stereotypes of Jewish wealth, power and insularity, it purports to fight an omnipotent elite in the name of the oppressed masses. Of course, the antisemitic *praxis* has always been anti-democratic and authoritarian; however, its *language* is engaged in a constant, uneasy and perverse negotiation with the languages of "anti-hegemonic" ideologies like socialism, anti-imperialism or libertarianism. The insistence on freedom of expression is therefore not only a rhetorical strategy to gain a capital of sympathy through → SELF-VICTIMISATION (Chapter 15). It functions on a deeper level as part of the core conspiracy narrative of antisemitism, which frames itself as a resistance movement against global Jewish POWER.

The topos of the TABOO OF CRITICISM gained salience with the appearance of the first legal instruments to limit the proliferation of antisemitic hate speech in the late nineteenth century, at which time France was a major ideological laboratory for antisemitic populism. Firebrands such as Drumont and his collaborators at the *Libre Parole* fully exploited the rhetoric of "freedom of the press" and "freedom of expression" which, in the context of the nascent liberal republican regime, enjoyed widespread intellectual currency. When one of the first explicit anti-hate speech laws—the Marchandeau Decree—was passed by the French government in 1939 the far-right reacted virulently. The *Action Française* castigated a "vile amendment to the 1881 press laws;" in an article titled "Freedom of the Press and the Jewish Question" it stated that under the new law the "wretched Rothschild and Lazare are now taboo," while re-affirming its "ABSOLUTE [sic] freedom" (Daudet 1939). In a similar vein, *Je Suis Partout* ("I Am Everywhere") proclaims: "We'd like to remind our reader the press is no longer free" (Gaxotte 1939).

After 1945, this motif will noticeably increase in salience, proving particularly popular with Holocaust deniers. Since the 1980s, negationist authors such as David Irving, Robert Faurisson or Willis Carto have faced a robust backlash to their theses, therefore, often backpedalling and taking the debate on the more favourable terrain of freedom of expression rather than Holocaust history. Such strategy echoes what Ruth Wodak calls a rhetorical *perpetuum mobile*: when challenged, antisemites immediately shift the frame and trigger another debate unrelated to the original utterance, on the topic of freedom of expression or political correctness (Wodak 2015). The "Holocaust taboo" becomes a focal point of the ideological grammar of secondary antisemitism. Another prominent denier, Mark Weber alleges:

> In some countries special 'Holocaust denial' laws stifle free and objective discussion of the Holocaust issue. In Israel, Germany, France, Austria and a few other nations, it is a crime publicly to 'play down,' 'dispute,' 'whitewash' or 'deny' the Holocaust. No other chapter of history is protected by law in this way. Even factually accurate statements that violate 'Holocaust denial' laws are punished. Over the years, many individuals in those countries have been fined, imprisoned or forced into exile for disputing Holocaust claims. (Weber 2013)

Irving also laments that "it is no longer possible to write pure history […] once one ventures into this unpleasant field." He goes on to list the ways he has been punished for breaking the "taboo:" "[…] it was not just one single action that has destroyed my career but a cumulative, self-perpetuating, rolling onslaught, from every side" (Irving 1999). *The Daily Stormer*, an openly neo-Nazi and denialist online publication and one of the most influential blogs in the alt-right ecosystem, similarly claims to be "the most censured publication in history" (Anglin 2021).

In the American context, this rhetoric also embeds itself into the myth of the Founding Fathers' Constitution: when Jews are allegedly attacking the sanctity of the First Amendment, they are attacking the very core of Americanism. Thus, the defence of America's core values is used to legitimise anti-Jewish prejudice (Finn 2019).

In Germany and other post-Nazi societies, the concept of the TABOO OF CRITICISM maps onto secondary antisemitism, with expression such as "wielding the antisemitism or Auschwitz club" (in German: *die Antisemitismus- oder Auschwitz-Keule schwingen*) highlighting an element of coercion and violence in the way Jews allegedly weaponise their past to suppress criticism → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20).

Key Identifying Characteristics

Identifying the topos of TABOO OF CRITICISM relies heavily on the context. However, it also appears in more explicit forms than other antisemitic concepts because this argument, through its co-optation of the language of liberalism and freedom of expression, seeks social and political respectability. The stereotype claims that:

- Issues related to Jews/Israel/Israelis/Zionism cannot be freely discussed in society due to physical, economic or moral/symbolic coercion in the suppression of free debate on these topics;
- Critics are being repressed through anti-democratic censorship, economic pressure (such as loss of livelihood) or symbolic means (smear campaigns, character assassination, etc.);
- Silencing dissent is a global, systematic strategy of Israel/Jewish individuals and communities or their allies (media, big business actors, political establishment);
- Political, social or economic actors (governments, companies) are participating in the enforcement of the taboo because of fear or servility towards Jews/Jewish elites and/or Israel;
- The fight against antisemitic hate speech is of a totalitarian/tyrannical nature, with analogies between it and real-life authoritarian regimes (past or present) or fictional political dystopias.
- It frequently overlaps with other concepts, such as:

– POWER (Chapter 12), as the capacity to impose and enforce the taboo is often linked to alleged Jewish or Israeli networks of influence;
– INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20).

Direct Jewish pressure does not need to be directly conveyed. Criticising specific laws, measures or initiatives or contesting the utility, necessity or morality of certain efforts to combat antisemitism does not automatically constitute antisemitic speech.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "When you say negative things on social media about Israel or Jews especially on FB you get blocked that is fact. HOWEVER saying negative things about Irish, Blacks, Hispanics, and others are inappropriately ok."

In (1), the concept of taboo of criticism is activated to allege that other minority social groups are denied the type of protection Jews allegedly benefit from (→ PRIVILEGE/'FREE PASS,' Chapter 26). This accusation of privileged treatment is mapped on a long-standing tradition of thought that emerged in the post-Holocaust era in certain left-leaning, anti-colonial and anti-racist milieus. Such rhetoric constructs "competitive martyrologies" (Saphir 2007) by stacking up against each other accounts of past and present victimhood, and accusing Jews of unduly monopolising it. Furthermore, by denouncing the so-called hypocrisy of Western standards of freedom of expression, the users also activate the notion of JEWISH POWER: it is only through their illegitimate networks of influence that they can enforce the alleged TABOO OF CRITICISM. This taboo extends to private companies, such as *Facebook*—often singled out because its owner Mark Zuckerberg has Jewish origins. This narrative also posits that minorities who do not possess such economic, social and political capital are left out unprotected.

(2) "Don't even think about looking at a Jewish person, or you'll soon be accused of antisemitism."

Humour and sarcasm can make antisemitic utterances appear more palatable. This quip, referring to an alleged ban on looking, brings forth a hyperbole: it implies that not even making visual contact with a Jewish person is allowed, let alone making critical remarks. It also hints, albeit discretely, at the age-old stereotypes of Jewish arrogance, insularity and disdain for "goys," as lowering one's gaze is a social cue of submission and fear. The comment reinforces the dichotomy between the in-group, to which the commenter addresses the mock warning, and the Jewish out-group which appears walled up by its alleged exorbitant → PRIVILEGE (Chapter 26).

Implicit

(3) "'I am Charlie' apparently does not apply to all, because they criticized the poor Jews…such double standards…this is appalling."

The slogan "Je suis Charlie" ("I am Charlie") is used to signify support for those who were killed during the terrorist attack at the offices of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in 2015, and by extension, for values such as freedom of speech, of conscience and of the press. The comment builds on the topos of PRIVILEGE, alleging that support for free speech in society has a variable geometry and falters when critical remarks are targeting Jews. The epithet "poor" is used ironically, insinuating that the victim posture adopted by Jewish people is contrived and unfounded. The commenter then articulates a strong emotional response to such supposed hypocrisy on behalf of society and public opinion.

(4) "So free speech but not if the Israeli government doesn't like it? Or you, [username], don't like. Go cancel somewhere else."

The right to free speech, the commenter contends, would be limited by the whims and wishes of the Israeli government. It implies that Israel has the means to suppress freedom of expression in most Western countries, which leans heavily—albeit implicitly—into conspiracy narratives

about the Jewish state's global domination. The accusation that the Israeli political elites are arbitrarily drawing up the rules of what is "sayable" also strongly echoes the motif of Jewish POWER. Based on the usage of the rhetorical questions, the commenter implies that certain elements want to enforce the TABOO OF CRITICISM; it is not clear to whom the first rhetorical question is addressed, as it could target the Jewish out-group, the political or media elite out-group in general, or a specific media outlet. The second part explicitly targets another user. The closing reference to "cancel culture" attempts to embed this discourse into the broader anti-political correctness rhetoric.

> (5) "Why is it impossible to say anything that's not affirmative for any that is a Jewish person or anything that is tied to Jews on the whole? We all know their history and their tragedy but they are human."

While (5) acknowledges past antisemitism, they resort to a hyperbolic rhetorical question which implies an absolute ban on any critical opinions about Jews or Jewishness. The object of the alleged taboo—"anything that is tied to Jews"—is constructed as vague and undefined. The hyperbolic dimension is also highlighted through the use of the adjective "impossible," which suggests a very strong, quasi-insurmountable level of constraint. Furthermore, the deliberate vagueness of the phrase "anything that's not affirmative" leaves no room for nuance: the commenter claims that no criticism whatsoever is tolerated. The use of the passive voice allows the user to never name the enforcers of this taboo, while also functioning as a distancing device: the statement is presented as a general truth, something that is well known and has already been demonstrated. In addition, the reminder of everyone's fallibility ("they are human") subtly cues to the antisemitic topos of JEWISH PRIVILEGE (Chapter 26), according to which Jews have been conceded a special status.

> (6) "Voltaire: 'To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize'. You've got your answer here"

The use of quotes to justify or legitimise one's position is a common rhetorical device. Voltaire and Orwell are two of the most frequently

invoked figures, as they stand as universally revered symbols of resistance to tyranny. The reference to a champion of freedom of speech and freedom of conscience such as Voltaire is an attempt to root the commenter's worldview into the ideals of the Enlightenment and of liberalism. However, this quote is apocryphal and actually belongs to neo-Nazi author Kevin Strom (Reuters 2022), who was directing it specifically at the Jewish minority. Whether the commenter is aware of the real origin of the quote is irrelevant: its use in the context of the social media ban of a public figure for antisemitic comments immediately activates the imaginary construct of global Jewish domination.

> (7) "Anti-semite: epithet invented by a liberal Jewish zionist, Moritz Steinscheinder. Nazi: derogatory epithet coined by a Jewish journalist, Konrad Heiden. Racist: epithet invented by the Jewish communist, Leon Trotsky. Sexist: epithet invented by radical Jewish feminist, Margaret Feldman."

The statement in (7) explicitly situates the antisemitic concept of TABOO OF CRITICISM within the broader constellation of anti-political correctness discourses. The enumeration suggests regularity, with each individual part weaved into a seemingly coherent historical scenario: namely that Jews have methodically and deliberately created, over time, the entire ideological grammar and lexicon of "cancel culture" in order to control public debate. Such statement ascribes one of the perceived ills of contemporary liberal democracies to the Jewish people: thus, Jews are seen not only as guilty of suppressing anti-Jewish speech, but of creating an entire arsenal for silencing conservative opinions. On a deeper level, this view is rooted in the Cultural Marxism conspiracy theory, a narrative which gained traction in the 1990s and is now truly transnational. It posits that a group of Jewish intellectuals who fled Germany in the 1930s devised an unorthodox form of Marxism that targeted Western culture and values, rather than the economic system. A central element of the alleged ploy was spreading guilt by "criminalising," via language, certain traditional worldviews regarding the family, the nation or ethnicity. The idea that Jewish people are behind a vast operation of "intellectual terrorism" targeting conservative values through speech control and

political correctness is a fundamental tenet of contemporary right-wing antisemitism.

 (8) "The Kommandantur in action"

This comment appears in the context of the social media ban of controversial French comedian Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala resulting from his long-standing and radical antisemitic stances. The German term "Kommandantur" (military headquarters) is laden with historical significance: during World War II it designated, by metonymy, the Nazi decision-making and executive structures, especially in the context of concentration camps. The → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1) activated via this allusion suggests therefore that actions taken to tackle antisemitism are equivalent to the Nazi imprisonment and annihilation of political prisoners and minorities. Such assertions represent blatant forms of Holocaust distortion and trivialisation (→ DISTORTION AND DENIAL OF THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 18).

 (9) "THOUGHT POLICE!!"
 (10) "The Ministry of Truth strikes again. They are not even hiding it anymore. Welcome to France, which is dreaming about enslaving the people like in China!"

References to the imaginary of totalitarianism and dictatorship via onomastic allusions are not limited to Nazi Germany (Becker 2021: 249 ff). These comments, which appear in the context of the social media ban of Dieudonné M'Bala M'Bala, often construct analogies with contemporary authoritarian regimes such as China, North Korea, Iran or Russia. These regimes are well known for their crackdown on freedom of speech and silencing dissent. Fictional dystopias also offer an easily accessible—and immediately recognisable, since they are so deeply embedded in pop culture—lexicon from which to draw in order to paint Western democracies as on an irremediable slide towards tyranny. Both the terms "Thought Police" and "Ministry of Truth" are borrowed from George Orwell's classic novel "1984" and evoke a nightmarish vision of unrelenting social control and large-scale psychological manipulation. The implication that the fight against antisemitic hate speech is akin to a

totalitarian enterprise is a generalising, unnuanced statement that feeds into narratives of → SELF-VICTIMISATION (Chapter 15) and/or JEWISH POWER.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(11) *I understand the need to fight antisemitism and I'm all for it. But seeing populists like Netanyahu act as if no one (Jewish or not) is allowed to criticise his political choices because of it… it is just wrong!*

This comment points out the politicisation of the antisemitism label, which is an ongoing and legitimate debate amongst academics, human rights campaigners and in the civil society. It does not suggest a systematic instrumentalisation of antisemitism or that the suppression of dissent is underpinned by shadowy networks of Jewish influence. It highlights the actions of one specific political figure, current prime minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, rather than of Israel or the Jewish community as a whole (for more detail on this distinction, see INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM/THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20).

Related Categories

POWER (Chapter 12), CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), SELF-VICTIMISATION (Chapter 15), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), PRIVILEGE/'FREE PASS' (Chapter 26).

References

Anglin, Andrew. 2021. Support the Daily Stormer: How to Buy and Send Monero. In *The Daily Stormer*, 21 February 2021. https://stormer-daily.rw/support-the-daily-stormer-how-to-buy-and-send-monero (last accessed on 16 October 2022).

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Daudet, Léon. 1939. La liberté de la presse et la question juive. In *L'Action Française*, 27 March 1939.

Finn, John. 2019. *Fracturing the Founding*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Gaxotte, Pierre. 1939. La meilleure façon de troubler l'unité française. In *Je suis Partout*, 28 April 1939.

Irving, David. 1999. Opening Statement in the London Libel Trial. *The Journal of Historical Review* 18 (5–6): 16–35.

Postone, Moshe. 2010. Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Left. In *Krisis*, 27 June 2010. https://www.krisis.org/2010/zionism-anti-semitism-and-the-left/ (last accessed on 18 October 2022).

Reuters. 2022. Fact Check: 'To Learn Who Rules Over You' Quote Wrongly Attributed to Voltaire, February 3, 2022. https://www.reuters.com/article/factcheck-voltaire-quote-idUSL1N2UE2LM (last accessed on 07 March 2023).

Saphir, Michael. 2007. *Nürnberg II? Mitul denazificării şi utilizarea acestuia în martirologia competitivă Holocaust-Gulag*. Bucuresti: Fundatia Culturala Echinox.

Weber, Mark. 2013. Holocaust Remembrance: What's Behind the Campaign? In *Institute for Historical Review*. http://www.ihr.org/leaflets/holocaust_rem embrance.shtml (last accessed on 16 October 2022).

Wodak, Ruth. 2015. *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage Publications.

24

Jews Have Not Learned From the Past

Karolina Placzynta

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The idea that JEWS HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST contends that, due to the history of Jewish suffering, Jews today should be held to higher moral standards than groups who have not experienced such a past. This suffering is presented as a "learning experience" from which Jews ought to have derived a particular set of idealised ethical and political positions. Their supposed failure to learn such lessons is then turned into an accusation of moral deficiency and used as a means of attacking Jews, Jewish institutions, and the State of Israel or its citizens.

It is relatively common for ethnic, national or religious groups to be called to account for the reprehensible actions of people who share their identity; in antisemitic discourses, a version of this is developed in the concept of → HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S

K. Placzynta (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

ACTIONS (Chapter 26). Similarly, members of communities or nations will often be blamed for a historical misconduct, misdeed or crime so distant that they could not have possibly participated in it themselves. These two assumptions of accountability—extended from an individual to the collective, and from earlier generations to later ones—can then be weaponised against the group in question.

However, a distinguishing feature of the stereotype discussed here is that the point of reference is not past wrongdoing, but past suffering as a result of antisemitic persecution and oppression—often, the Holocaust (Marrus 2016). In other words, it is victimhood that forms the basis of this prejudice (Seymour 2010). Secondly, a conclusion is made that this suffering has imbued Jews with a unique collective understanding of what constitutes good ethical conduct, and that this knowledge obliges them to follow it in practice. Finally, if they do not adhere to these high standards, they are accused of moral failure, since they have NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST (Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017). Such "burden of obligation" (Jacobson 2015) can supposedly be attached to Jews because "the Nazi crime compounds their moral responsibility and exposes them to greater answerability" (Saghiyeh and Bashir 1998; Said and Barsamian 2010). This type of discourse seems to suggest that, several decades on, Jews are not supposed to move on from the painful, traumatising experiences of their ancestors (Friedman 2015), but that they should constantly carry them in their memories as an instrument of self-discipline.

The notion that JEWS HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST, and that they have failed to learn the appropriate lessons about the systematic oppression of the Jewish people, can easily cross the line into the accusation of a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL, that is the claim that Jews are indeed as guilty today as their own persecutors were in the past. This serves as a strategy to conceptualise Jews and/or Israel not only as the modern-day ill-intentioned aggressor, but also one that—in comparison with other nations or states involved in contemporary conflicts—is supposedly more aware of the brutality of such endeavours and their consequences due to the historical victimhood of Jews. The latter can be either understood as history of antisemitism in general or, more frequently, specified as the historical period between 1933 and

1945, leading into the territory of the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1) if comparisons are drawn between the actions of Nazi Germany on the one hand and Jews, Israelis or Israel on the other. However, unlike the concept discussed in this chapter, the VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL does not, at its core, allege that Jews have forgotten about their past oppression, but that they are guilty today to the same extent as the individuals, groups or regimes that historically persecuted them.

The FAILURE TO LEARN FROM THE PAST could also, in some cases, be read as a more specific iteration of the broader topos of → BLAMING JEWS FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10), if it suggests that the alleged failure has led to a wrongdoing that has triggered not just criticism of Jews, but also antisemitic attitudes or actions. This again places the burden of the proper conduct with Jews, lest they attract hatred or discrimination. Like other antisemitic stereotypes and narratives, this concept positions Jews as an out-group—in this case, one with higher moral standards to follow. To an extent, this mirrors the way in which the State of Israel is frequently singled out by accusations which would not be levelled at other countries (Sharansky 2004), becoming a target of → DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33).

The concept is often evoked in discussions surrounding Israel's policies and history. One example of this was the statement "They have learnt nothing from what happened to them in Europe," reportedly directed against right-wing Israelis by the Pakistani-British activist and writer Tariq Ali at a 2021 demonstration in London (The Times of Israel 2021). Similar issues were raised in a debate that followed the publication and staging of Caryl Churchill's play "Seven Jewish Children," which alludes to both the events of the Holocaust and Israel's military activities in Gaza (Churchill 2010). According to some critics, the play "demonises" Israelis, presenting them as aware and accepting of crimes such as → CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4) despite the experiences of their ancestors (Jewish Chronicle 2009).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- The building blocks of the concept are:

  – Direct or implied mention of Jewish suffering in the past (the Holocaust, Nazi persecution, other historical cases of oppression or discrimination);
  – Suggestion that these experiences should be a lesson for the oppressed (i.e. Jews);
  – Suggestion that the lesson has not been learned.

- Possible elements also include mentions of:

  – Short memory, loss of memory, forgetfulness, wilful failure to remember the past;
  – Lack of respect for ancestors or for their experiences.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "You would think that after the Holocaust, the Jewish community would know more than anyone else what true injustice feels like, unfortunately that doesn't seem to be case."
(2) "And with their History you would think Compassion would have woven into their fabric, The Jews were a stigmatised by the nazi and almost wiped out, you'd think the Israelis would have some Compassion."

The most obvious examples of the concept closely follow its three-part structure: they name the historical events such as the Holocaust, Nazi stigmatisation and destruction of Jews, in order to then conclude that "the Jewish community" or "the Israelis" should be able to recognise "what true injustice feels like" or have compassion "woven into their fabric." The third element of the concept is the conclusion that they have failed to acquire these qualities, regardless of their past suffering.

The disappointed, regretful tone intensifies the idea of failed expectations and strengthens the accusation.

(3) "They completely forgot what happened to them—a loss of memory that now leads to a new Holocaust."

The concept can also be activated while superficially signalling one or two of the three conceptual elements of the structure. Here, the past suffering of Jews is referred to only as something that "happened to them," which they now "forgot" or failed to learn from; however, the second part of the sentence implies that this point of reference is the "original" Holocaust, which is supposedly now happening again. A direct connection is made between the alleged "loss of memory" and the potential responsibility of modern-day Jews, Israelis or Israel for "a new Holocaust"—a suggestion which also serves to construct the NAZI ANALOGY.

Implicit

(4) "U zionist disgust me u would think ul learn from ur past and ancestors."

Here, the comment refers to generalised "past and ancestors," using open-ended allusions and relying on the readers' world knowledge or the familiarity of the concept to fill in the blanks (Lennon 2004). The obligation to carry the lesson into the present day is implicitly hinted at through the phrase "[you] would think [you'll] learn," and the failure to do so is conveyed through the sentiment of "disgust," but not stated directly. This strong emotional reaction, framed as a response to a moral failure, targets Israel as a state—as the "Zionist" addressee indicates—but also potentially any Jewish person who supports Israel.

(5) "The Jews quickly forgot the Nazis and the Holocaust."

Conversely, some examples of the topos explicitly refer to past events, but do not expand on the potential consequences which the "quick" loss of memory is supposed to bring, again relying either on the commonplace

nature of this concept or on the context to clarify their meaning. Leaving the utterance open seems to give the comment an ominous or accusatory tone. In another setting, it could potentially be interpreted by some as a positive or neutral statement on liberation from the trauma; however, describing such process as a swift one makes this reading unlikely.

(6) "These Israeli thieves will never learn."
(7) "there just scum of the earth. Short memories"
(8) "You are the shame of your ancestors who suffered to allow you to deny the evidence."
(9) "There are those who have a short memory when it suits them."

It is also not uncommon to see a general reference to the alleged inability or unwillingness to learn, or simply to the "short memories" of Jews or Israelis, here paired with contemptuous epithets of "thieves" and "scum of the earth." Another way in which Jewish "short memories" can be negatively emphasised is by suggesting that they shame or disrespect the suffering of the past generations. According to the last comment, "a short memory" is a convenient tool or pretence used to shrug off responsibility for present actions, perhaps implying that Jews are using the past selectively whenever it serves their interests (→ DECEIT, Chapter 7, INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM, Chapter 20).

(10) "And so we'll see that blind eyes lead to history repeating itself."
(11) "History, like before, will remember those who stood by and watched Shame on you."

Finally, the topos can be expressed without a reference to specific past events, or even to Jews. Elsewhere, the notion that "blind eyes lead to history repeating itself" may be a regretful statement of inevitable fact, not aimed at anyone in particular; however, when interpreted in the context of Israeli or Jewish actors, the statement takes on an accusatory aspect. "Blind eyes"—a metaphor for either a lack of awareness or wilful ignorance—suggest responsibility for the recurrence of past tragedy: either allowing it to happen, or perhaps even re-enacting it in an instance of VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL. The second example warns of inaction in the face of suffering and of the "shame" that befalls anyone who has failed to learn this lesson.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) "People never learn from the past."

When generalised to all people, recognising failure to learn no longer serves to single out Jews and their present mistakes or wrongdoings, or to set higher expectations based on their past. Instead, it becomes a neutral observation on human nature, even if it appears within discourse related to Jews and Israel.

(13) *Netanyahu should be ashamed of stoking the flames of nationalism and bigotry and ally himself with the far right. He should know how this turned out in the past.*

Here, the accusation of failing to heed the warnings of the past and engaging in reckless or immoral behaviour targets one individual rather than Israel, Israelis or Jews as a whole. If moral failure is not projected in a generalising and essentialising way, it does not meet the threshold for antisemitism.

Related Categories

BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 25), HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS (Chapter 26), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33).

References

Churchill, Caryl. 2010. Seven Jewish Children—A Play for Gaza. *Radical Teacher* 89 (1): 66–71.

Friedman, M. Tirzah Firestone. 2015. *Transforming Jewish Historical Trauma: Tales of Choice and Redemption.* Santa Barbara: Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Jacobson, Howard. 2015. *When Will Jews Be Forgiven the Holocaust?* Leicester: W. F. Howes.

Jewish Chronicle. 2009. Outrage Over "Demonising" Play for Gaza. https://www.thejc.com/news/news/outrage-over-demonising-play-for-gaza-1.7643 (last accessed on 30 March 2023).

Lennon, Paul. 2004. *Allusions in the Press: An Applied Linguistic Study*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Marrus, Michael R. 2016. *Lessons of the Holocaust*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Saghiyeh, Hazem, and Saleh Bashir. 1998. Universalising the Holocaust. https://pij.org/articles/382 (last accessed on 27 March 2023).

Said, Edward, and David Barsamian. 2010. *The Pen and the Sword*. Conversations with Edward Said. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Seymour, David M. 2010. From Auschwitz to Jerusalem to Gaza: Ethics for the Want of Law. *Journal of Global Ethics* 6 (2): 205–215.

Sharansky, Natan. 2004. 3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16 (3–4): 3.

The Times of Israel. 2021. Pro-Palestinian Protesters in London Burn Israeli Flag, Liken Israel to Nazis. https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-flag-dragged-through-london-street-as-thousands-rally-in-european-cities (last accessed on 30 March 2023).

Part IV

Further Post-Holocaust Categories

25

Holding Jews Collectively Responsible for Israel's Actions

Karolina Placzynta

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Applying generalisations to an individual or a group based on their background—be it national, ethnic, religious or any other—is a common cognitive and discursive mechanism at the base of any stereotyping; it is also not unusual to blame the whole group for the faults or misdeeds of one of its members. While such sweeping assumptions are undeniably problematic, they are hardly unique to antisemitic discourse. However, this chapter deals specifically with the conceptualisation of all Jews and Israelis as a homogenous group liable for the actions of Israel on the basis of either their perceived religious affiliation or their ethnic origin, or both.

The concept of HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS contains two dovetailing fallacies—of identity and

K. Placzynta (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

of accountability. The first is the generalising misconception that the descriptors "Israeli" and "Jew" can be used interchangeably. Such intentional or unintentional blending of the two identities on the one hand overlooks non-Jewish Israelis—who currently comprise more than a fifth of Israel's population (Statista 2022)—and, on the other, attributes Israeli identity to all of the estimated 14.8 million people identifying as Jews worldwide, more than half of whom live outside of Israel, are usually born and raised in a different society and culture, and hold a citizenship of another country. While it is, of course, possible to have dual citizenship and feel attachment to more than one culture or land, this is not necessarily the case for the majority of non-Israeli Jews and should not be automatically assumed. The confusion may be compounded by the fact that being Jewish can indicate a person's family background as well as their faith—aspects of one's identity which are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually dependent, and which will include many individual interpretations (e.g. non-religious people who identify as culturally Jewish, converts and more) (Joskowicz 2020).

The expectation that all non-Israeli Jews not only belong to Israel due to their culture, religion or family origins, but that they also have paramount loyalty to Israel, have a hand in its decisions, or are responsible for its actions is a recognised characteristic of antisemitic discourse, and is expressed in the IHRA working definition of antisemitism (2016). The idea that Jews allegedly place loyalty towards Israel or other Jews before attachment or duty to the country they are citizens of finds expression in the concept of → DISLOYALTY/JEWISH LOYALTY (Chapter 9), while antisemitic → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13) convey the idea of global networks that mysteriously connect all Jews (Fox and Topor 2021).

The accountability expectation forms the second and key element of HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS. It is more recent than the other two concepts, as it is related to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948; however, it bears some similarity to older antisemitic topoi such as the DEICIDE myth (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1), where blame is placed on Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus—not only those present at the event or alive at the time, but also generations later.

Similar generalisations could, in theory, be made about other religions or ethnicities. For example, British Muslims may be, and sometimes are, unfairly blamed for the actions of governments in Muslim-majority countries; modern-day Catholics may face criticism for the mediaeval Crusades. Likewise, national stereotypes abound, many of them unpleasant and hurtful. It is nevertheless hard to draw exact comparisons between these types of prejudice and the concept of HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS. Like any nation-state, Israel is first and foremost a political project; like many, it has no official religion. However, it has been uniquely founded specifically as a homeland for Jewish people and defines itself as a Jewish state in the Israeli Declaration of Independence. To some, it symbolically embodies both Jewish ethnicity and religion. But, as with any nation-state, there is a formal distinction between Israeli state and civil society, and contradictory currents running within and between them. Then, there is a further distinction between Israeli state and society on the one hand, and Jewish religious, cultural and ethnic communities worldwide on the other. HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS seeks to collapse all of these distinctions into a single homogenous bloc, in a way that is rarely, if ever, applied elsewhere.

Nevertheless, owing to the complexity of the relationship between the political project of Israel and global Jewish communities, it is relatively easy for the generalisation to appear in mainstream discourse without causing a controversy, as lines already seem blurred. Indeed, the idea of a Jewish state had been vilified in antisemitic discourse as a central organisation intent on nefarious, deceitful *international* activities (Wistrich 2004) even before Israel was created. Another popular strategy used here to avoid the accusations of antisemitism is using the label "Zionist" instead of "Jewish" or "Israeli" (EVIL, Oboler 2017; Hirsh 2021; Becker and Bolton 2024).

In the last two decades, the COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY discourse appears most prominently in discussions surrounding the events of the Arab–Israeli conflict, with the commentary pointing to Israel as the sole guilty party (→ ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT, Chapter 36), or at least heavily criticising its activities. HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE for the latter is not just a misconception, but it

also invites and justifies retribution, stemming from the assumption that with collective responsibility comes collective punishment. As a result, it exacerbates negative attitudes towards Jews in other contexts, fostering general mistrust, dislike, or open hostility and violence. It is worth reiterating that instances of Israel-related antisemitism, represented in this concept, are not the same as valid critique of Israel which disputes specific policies, refers to verifiable facts, and is open to counter arguments (Rensmann 2021).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Treatment of Jews and Israelis as a single homogenous bloc:
    - Explicitly, by using the descriptions of "Jewish" and "Israeli," as well as references to Israel, Judaism, and Zionism, interchangeably and thus incorrectly;
    - Implicitly, e.g. with phrases such as "your state" or "Zion" directed at a non-Israeli Jewish addressee.
- Mention of responsibility for the actions of Israel:
    - Explicitly, as blame, guilt, accountability, liability, etc.;
    - Implicitly, through rhetorical questions, advice or ironic inversions, etc.
- Also possible: mention of punishment, reckoning, retribution, comeuppance.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "You, as German Jews, must get used to the fact that you, too, will be held accountable for the actions of the Israelis. After all, this is your state."

Although this statement addresses "German Jews," seemingly recognising their separateness from Israelis, who are also mentioned later in the comment, it explicitly calls Israel "your state" in the same breath; it also establishes Jews as not belonging to "us," positioning them as members of an out-group and highlighting their → OTHERNESS/FOREIGNNESS (Chapter 2). The element of responsibility is also expressed in the literal "you, too, will be held accountable," emphasised by the instruction that the addressee "must get used to it." Interestingly, the first sentence could, on its own, be interpreted as an almost compassionate acknowledgement that such a stereotype exists, and that it is unfortunate or unjustified (see comment (6)). However, the second sentence dispels any doubts raised by the first and fulfils the criterion for classifying the utterance as antisemitic.

(2) "All you Jews want to see Palestinians dead anyway"

Although probably directed to another commenter in the online comment thread, (2) is in effect addressing the entire Jewish out-group. In fact, a blanket generalisation is applied to both Jews and Palestinians, immediately pitching the two against each other and accusing the former of "want[ing] to see Palestinians dead"—a morally reprehensible desire of the highest order (EVIL). While no further contextualisation is attempted within the comment, the mention of Palestinians is likely to elicit the reader's association with the conflict in which they are a side against Israel; this external knowledge will then merge "Jews" with the Jewish state.

The generalisation is also achieved on the linguistic level through the use of the present tense, which gives the statement an almost matter of fact tone, emphasised by the addition of the casual "anyway," and which conveys a habitual, universal and factual character of the accusation.

Implicit

(3) "Dear Central Council of Jews, what are you doing in the Mideast?"

The Central Council of Jews is an institution based in Germany; here, it is called out to respond to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The way the question

is formulated does not leave a great deal of room for interpreting the commenter's view: it most likely suggests that the Council should be using its position of influence to address the issue, perhaps to mediate in the conflict, or to help bring it to a close. An alternative interpretation would be that the Council is already involved in the conflict in a way that raises suspicions, and that the commenter wants to investigate the nature of this involvement or express their disapproval. In either case, it suggests that "the Mideast" is the Council's business, making a swift connection between a German Jewish institution and the State of Israel.

(4) "Interesting.. why isn't the same proposal offered for the Palestinians whose homes and land are being destroyed by the people who share your faith and ethnic?.. Selective humanism"

The context of this comment is the initiative by a British rabbi to coordinate the relocation of Ukrainian war refugees to the UK, as reported by the media in early 2022. Although the news report makes no mention of Ukrainian Jews as sole or main beneficiaries and does not reference Israel or Palestine, the comment makes an immediate connection between this plan and this emergency on the one hand, and the lack of a similar "proposal offered for Palestinians" affected by the Arab–Israeli conflict on the other. It suggests, first of all, that a Jewish person or community in the UK is linked to the "people who share your faith and ethnic[ity]" in the State of Israel. Secondly, it names Israel's actions as the reason that "homes and land are being destroyed."

Together, the hint at the shared identity and the mention of Israel's destructive activities establish the idea that British Jews cannot have a neutral position in relation to the conflict: their choice is between either the failure to meet the moral standard of compassion and be charged with "selective humanism," or take responsibility for the actions of Israel. Additionally, the comment uses the strategy of "whataboutism," i.e. shifting attention from the issue at hand (here, the Russian invasion of Ukraine) to the issue arbitrarily chosen by the commenter.

(5) "You'd think that a Jew simply living their life in Paris is not responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. But I would not take any comfort in it…"

This example, which has all the markings of familiarity with the anti-semitic nature of HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE, creates the atmosphere of cynicism by bookending the self-aware "a Jew simply living in Paris is not responsible for the actions of the Israeli government" with two expressions of doubt. The opening phrase of "you'd think" immediately frames the absolution of Jews living in France from responsibility for, or connection to, the government of Israel as a spurious hypothesis. The pessimistic, open-ended second part confirms that this should not be taken for granted or believed.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(6) *You, as German Jews, must get used to the fact that you, too, might be held accountable for the actions of the Israelis.*

Example (6) carries multiple interpretations. On the one hand, as mentioned above, the statement could be conveying the anticipation that German Jews will face consequences for Israeli actions—that the commenter both expects and desires such an outcome. In this interpretation, this would be classed as antisemitic. However, the comment can also be interpreted as an admission that external actors will unfairly hold Jews collectively responsible for Israel's actions, pessimistically accepting that nothing can be done about it. Without further qualification, the comment may therefore also be an expression of sympathy. Given the two coherent readings, a conservative approach entails that the statement should not be categorised as antisemitic.

(7) *It's definitely true that many Jews support Israel, but a lot of them hate Netanyahu.*

The commenter highlights the nuances in the reception of Israeli politics by Jewish public opinion. Stating that a significant number of Jews are supportive of Israel as a state is grounded in reality and does not amount to a conflation of the Jewish diaspora with Israel itself. The comment

reinforces this point by adding that many Jews (which may include both Israelis and non-Israelis) are strongly critical of the current government and its policies, even if they potentially embrace Israel's right to self-determination, thus retaining the formal distinction between the Israeli state, Israeli civil society and the wider Jewish diaspora. It is therefore a balanced and neutral assessment which does not constitute antisemitism.

Related Categories

THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2), EVIL (Chapter 3.1), DISLOYALTY/ JEWISH LOYALTY (Chapter 9), CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT (Chapter 36).

References

Becker, Matthias J., and Matthew Bolton. 2024. Images of Zionism in the Age of the Internet. In *Routledge Handbook on Zionism*, ed. Colin Shindler. London: Routledge.

Fox, Jonathan, and Lev Topor. 2021. *Why Do People Discriminate Against Jews?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hirsh, David. 2021. How the Word "Zionist" Functions in Antisemitic Vocabulary. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 4 (2): 1–18.

Joskowicz, Ari. 2020. Jews and Other Others. In *Jews, Liberalism, Antisemitism: A Global History. Palgrave Critical Studies of Antisemitism and Racism*, ed. Abigail Green and Simon Levis Sullam, 69–93. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Oboler, Andre. 2017. Zionism Through the Internet's Looking Glass. In *From Antisemitism to Anti-Zionism: The Past & Present of a Lethal Ideology*, ed. Eunice G. Pollack, 334–360. Boston: Academic Studies Press.

Rensmann, Lars. 2021. Israelbezogener Antisemitismus. Formen, Geschichte, empirische Befunde. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung. https://www.bpb.de/themen/antisemitismus/dossier-antisemitismus/326790/israelbezogener-antisemitismus/ (last accessed on 19 June 2023).

Statista. 2022. https://www.statista.com/topics/9064/demographics-of-israel/#dossierKeyfigures (last accessed on 20 February 2023).

Wistrich, Robert. 2004. Anti-zionism and Anti-semitism. *Jewish Political Studies Review*, 27–31.

26

Jewish Privilege and the "Free Pass"

Karolina Placzynta

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The two contradictory elements of antisemitic narratives portray Jews as inferior and lesser on the one hand, and influential or powerful on the other (Biale 2010). The stereotype of JEWISH PRIVILEGE highlights the latter aspect: it fosters the idea that Jews, Israelis or the State of Israel enjoy a certain amount of advantage over others and that they benefit from a more favourable or more lenient treatment. What is more, they are supposedly convinced of their own superiority, and as a result expect to be granted a special status or protection, or are indignant if this is not the case.

Depending on the context, the PRIVILEGE topos can take on the form of more specific accusations. One common iteration emphasises the "whiteness" of Jews and claims that they cannot possibly be a

K. Placzynta (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

target of systemic oppression in the same way as, for example, Black people are a target of racism (Brodkin 1998; Berkovits 2018). Such a claim—although it touches on the pertinent issues of passing and colourism—not only erases Jewish people of colour, but can also easily lead to the conclusion that antisemitism is either not as serious an issue as other forms of prejudice, or that Jews, in fact, do not suffer discrimination at all; such attitudes trivialise or deny the existence of antisemitism and stand in opposition to academic findings on both current and historical antisemitism (Julius 2012). In the United States in particular, this is exacerbated by both philosemitic and pejorative cultural depictions of Jews as overrepresented in prestigious professions, enjoying a high financial status and harbouring a sense of entitlement—as seen, for example, in the "Jewish American Princess" (Dundes 1985; Reznik 2015). Due to the popularity of American pop culture abroad, such stereotypes have a potential to seep into discourses elsewhere.

The stereotype does not always come from the idea that Jews receive unfair privileges as a means of compensation for being victims of antisemitism, or of other forms of exclusion. However, when this is the case, the JEWISH PRIVILEGE stereotype can be expressed as a suggestion that antisemitism receives more attention and sympathy than other types of prejudice, and that more counter action is taken whenever antisemitism is reported.

When applied to Israel, the topos is often conveyed through claims that its government or citizens feel untouchable and above the law, especially in comparison with other governments, countries or nations. It is common for such accusations to imply the existence of double standards and juxtapose Jews with other groups, for example Black people (as mentioned earlier) or Muslims, and Israel with other states, typically Palestine (Anidjar 2003) or—in the context of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022—with Russia.

Such claims can then develop into the idea of a FREE PASS given to Jews, Israelis or Israel. Building on the idea of JEWISH PRIVILEGE and shifting attention to its outcomes, the FREE PASS concept is the suggestion that the supposed privileged status is exploited to commit reprehensible acts without any accountability. Jews are to be allowed more freedom or flexibility, or even given carte blanche, and would not

face rightful consequences of their actions, even if it involves breaking rules or laws. In the debates around the Arab–Israeli conflict, such laws are often named as international humanitarian conventions and human rights agreements, violated by alleged brazen war crimes or crimes against humanity (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1).

On occasion, when an explanation is offered for the supposed existence of the JEWISH PRIVILEGE or a FREE PASS, they may appear alongside → INSTRUMENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST and OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20): it is implied that Jews have positioned themselves as victims of antisemitic discrimination as a ploy to gain the special treatment or protection; the target of such manipulation is often named as "the West" or the international community, who try to compensate or atone for the events of the Shoah, or for the rise of Nazism in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century. Another conventional explanation for either of the two topoi is the alleged Jewish belief that their special status is God-given, and that it has been recorded in the sacred texts of Judaism (Beller 2015).

Another concept adjacent to the FREE PASS is the → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23). The two share a link to the stereotype of → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12), and the cornerstone for both is the assumption that Jews are an untouchable elite. What sets them apart are the external parameters of their construction. In the concept of a FREE PASS, the compliance of the other actors stems from their readiness to turn a blind eye whenever there is an alleged wrongdoing, often due to guilt, or for their own advantage (for example, in exchange for favours or financial gain offered by the "Jewish lobby"). However, in the case of the TABOO OF CRITICISM, there is an undercurrent of wariness, or even fear. Crucially, while the willing attitude of other parties enables the JEWISH PRIVILEGE, and its effects in the form of a FREE PASS, the agency within both these concepts is still attached to Jews. It is important to differentiate this from instances of goodwill and favouritism, imagined or real, where the accusation is not directed against Jews. A commentary which

focuses on unfair or unconditional positivity towards Jews and Jewish-ness, a pro-Israel bias, or oversensitivity around the topic of antisemitism displayed by non-Jews is not treated as antisemitic—on the condition that it does not imply an influence or pressure coming from Jews or the Jewish state.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Jews or Israel presented as an untouchable people/state:
    - Mentions of privilege, special status, exceptionalism, superiority, divine or God-given right, protection, overprotection;
    - Impunity, immunity to consequences, going unchecked, getting away with it;
    - "The chosen people," "the chosen ones," "the master race," etc.
- Jews or Israel presented as enjoying, demanding or enforcing the privilege;
- Reason for the privilege given (possible but not vital):
    - The Hebrew Bible/Torah/Old Testament referring to Jews as the chosen people;
    - Western countries being manipulated to atone/compensate for the Shoah;
    - Western countries being pressured by Jews/Israel to favour them.
- People, states or institutions upholding the privilege are named (possible but not vital);
- Accusation of double standards: comparisons of Israel with Palestine or Russia, of Jews with Muslims or Black people, etc;
- Specific accusations (free pass, free ticket), often focus on breaking international laws, violating human rights, war crimes, crimes against humanity, committing evil acts.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "I sincerely find it difficult to justify why anti-Semitism is more important than the others."

The call to deal with different types of prejudice equally is not, of course, problematic in itself. However, here it is pre-conditioned by the assumption that antisemitism is "more important" than other hate ideologies—in other words, that antisemitism is given more visibility or priority, and that Jews are afforded protections which other groups do not have. Through this presupposition, the demand for equal treatment loses its neutrality.

(2) "Yes, if only they'd surrender and accept that Jews are superior human beings entitled to take whatever they wish."

Alongside straightforward statements like the previous ones, there are many that employ sarcasm, humour and, as in this case, irony. The exaggerated portrayal of Jews as "superior human beings" who have the right to "take whatever they wish" signals that the true intention of the comment is to challenge this perceived privilege.

(3) "when israel does it, it must be for a good reason.. lets remain silent. if any other country does it, unleash the hell. Israel is always right.. right to kill."

Likewise, Israel is described here as an untouchable state, exempt from criticism or other repercussions that "any other country" would face. The comment starts by mocking, in a seemingly light-hearted way, the naïve assumption that it has "a good reason" for its actions, and ends with an ominous mention of its alleged "right to kill," cynically hinting that Israel is willing to exercise such a right, or that perhaps it already does so.

(4) "You can't even use the word here, but they're allowed to kill all children and everyone looks the other way."

The idea of a free pass is articulated in (4) through the claim that "everyone looks the other way" instead of calling for just punishment. However, this time the accusation of killing is put forward directly, referencing the well-known antisemitic topos of → CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4); evoking this stereotype strongly implies who the unnamed "they" are.

Such coded antisemitic language is chosen here with the conscious intention of conveying an antisemitic message in an overtly acceptable manner. The commenter is not only aware that antisemitic language can be detected, but also uses this to support their view, suggesting that Jews cannot be criticised or even talked about ("you can't even use the word here") implicitly communicating yet another antisemitic concept, that of → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23).

(5) "it is understanding that you are a Jewish and you are looking everthing from your 'Master Race' window."

Comments recycling the JEWISH PRIVILEGE stereotype often sarcastically refer to Jews as a "chosen people." Here, a similar idea is expressed via the much darker label of a "'Master Race'"—a phrase which alludes to the worldview of racial superiority, notoriously espoused by Nazi ideology. It is reformulated as an accusation, and placed in quotation marks to signal that it is indeed borrowed from a context in which it was applied to another group—activating a → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1). The analogy between Jews and Nazis is compounded by the overt criticism of "looking [at] ever[y]thing" from a privileged point of view, chastising the comment's (real of hypothetical) Jewish target for being unable to see things fairly and objectively due to their alleged entitlement.

Implicit

(6) "How about, protecting Muslims or Satanists or other religions? Why Jews?"

The comment expresses a presupposition that Jews are protected in ways that other religious groups are not. As a result, the call for equal treatment is built on the assumption that JEWISH PRIVILEGE exists. Unlike (1), this is communicated indirectly through a sequence of two rhetorical questions, rather than through a statement.

> (7) "Zemmour has the right to say almost everything, he has the membership card…"

Instead of referring to the JEWISH PRIVILEGE or a FREE PASS directly, (7) chooses more circumspect wording. The "membership card" metaphor indirectly conveys the idea of belonging to an exclusive club or society, or a privileged lobby. The intended antisemitic meaning is made clear by combining the metaphor with a reference to a Jewish person—the Jewish-born French journalist and political figure Éric Zemmour—and his alleged "right to say almost anything."

> (8) "This is not a request for fair treatment but a special pleading for the exceptionalism of 'don't do as I wish to, do as I say.'"

While there is no mention here of a specific person or group—their identity would have to be deduced from the context of the comment thread—the description of the privilege in the latter part of the sentence matches closely the characteristics of the JEWISH PRIVILEGE topos, referred to as "exceptionalism" which is actively demanded by "special pleading."

> (9) "Their book says they are privileged? It's irrelevant to everybody else."

This comment similarly does not explain who "they" are; at first glance, it could refer to any group of people where a "book" is a symbolic vehicle for a set of beliefs they uphold. However, if the context allows us to determine the signifier "they" as Jews, the "book" becomes the Torah or the Old Testament, and the privilege—the topos of "the chosen people."

> (10) "you can urinate on Muslims and talk about the veil in the middle of a pandemic in order to hide the truth, but you don't touch

> certain categories, no, we clearly have the impression that they are overprotected"

Although the comment begins with a blunt and upsetting hyperbole, it then turns more ambiguous and does not actually contain any explicit accusations. Privilege is articulated as "overprotect[ion];" any explicit reference to Jews is absent and would have to be inferred from context. However, it is worth noting that deliberately vague phrases such as "certain categories" are prevalent in antisemitic discourse. While they are innocuous in isolation, their accumulation and popularity can with time lead to their use as established code.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(11) "Do you think they can kill innocent people with impunity?"

While "kill[ing] innocent people" could be a reiteration of the topos of → JEWISH EVIL, the question format of this comment opens it to interpretation. It is not clear whether its author is posing a genuine question, making an accusation or, on the contrary, ridiculing the assumption that murder would indeed go unpunished due to the existence of a mythical free ticket.

(12) "no nation impose sanctions on Israel, why is this like that?"

There is less doubt about interpretation here: the commenter starts by presenting their view that Israel is not the target of any sanctions as a fact (in reality, this is not accurate at the time of writing) and asks for the reasons. It is likely that this is a rhetorical question, and that the comment implies some special treatment. However, it is also possible that this treatment is not something that Israel itself demands or imposes, but that it is a symptom of favouritism on the part of the international community.

(13) "All prejudice should be treated equally"

A call for equal treatment does not necessarily presuppose that unequal treatment has already occurred, or that victims of antisemitic prejudice receive more sympathy. While it may have been the intention of the commenter, such reading is just one possibility—even when placed in the context of a specific debate about Israel or Jews.

> (14) "The Ukrainians have a right to defend their land, their rights to exist, and the whole world praises their endeavours, Palestinians do the same thing and are labelled 'terrorists.' This is the perfect time to explain the double standards!"

The key to understanding who benefits from the "double standards" is world knowledge, or possibly the context. A reader would need this external input in order to appreciate the analogy between the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Arab–Israeli conflict. The comment positions Ukrainians and Palestinians as fighters for the same cause, then implies that the latter are unfairly misrepresented, thus suggesting the existence of "double standards." However, it is unclear whether the unfairness extends to a positive treatment of Israel as well, and if yes, whether this is perhaps a sign of a pro-Israel bias in the media or the international community, rather than pressure from Israel itself.

Related Categories

POWER (Chapter 12), DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 19), INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20), TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23).

References

Anidjar, Gil. 2003. *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Beller, Steven. 2015. *Antisemitism: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/actrade/9780198724834.003.0003.

Berkovits, Balázs. 2018. Critical Whiteness Studies and the 'Jewish Problem.' *Zeitschrift für kritische Sozialtheorie und Philosophie* 5 (1): 86–102.

Biale, David. 2010. *Power & Powerlessness in Jewish History.* United Kingdom: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Brodkin, Karen. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Dundes, Alan. 1985. The JAP and the JAM in American Jokelore. *The Journal of American Folklore* 98: 390, 456–475.

Julius, Anthony. 2012. *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-semitism in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reznik, David L. 2015. *New Jews: Race and American Jewish Identity in 21st-Century Film.* New York: Routledge.

27

Affirmation of Nazis, Hitler and the Holocaust

Alexis Chapelan and Matthew Bolton

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Despite spanning only around 12 years, the Nazi regime bequeathed the modern world a vast and horrific legacy, with which its successor regimes, but also culture and politics writ large, need to contend to this very day. The national-socialist ideology and institutions are intimately tied to antisemitism and to the Holocaust, as the extermination of the European Jewry was one of the regime's main political projects. Therefore, attributing positive characteristics or praise to Nazism and to Adolf Hitler amounts to legitimising genocidal antisemitism; as such, it represents a clear and radical form of contemporary anti-Jewish hate speech.

A. Chapelan (✉) · M. Bolton
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chapelan.alexis@fspub.unibuc.ro

M. Bolton
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

There are many modalities of the AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLOCAUST. This can take the form of a wholesale espousal of the tenets of National Socialism as an ideology: organised neo-Nazi groups survived in Europe and the United States even after the fall of the Third Reich, although they remain politically marginal (Gay 1997; Virchow 2010; Southern Poverty Law Center 2018; Jackson 2020). Neo-Nazism can be defined as a syncretic ideology that seeks to restore a Nazi-inspired society based on ultranationalism, racism, antisemitism and traditionalist gender roles. They perceive the current opprobrium on Nazism as the consequence of a vast Jewish → CONSPIRACY (Chapter 13) to discredit Hitler's regime. Regarding the Holocaust, they sometimes engage in → HOLOCAUST DISTORTION and DENIAL (Chapter 18) and proclaim the innocence of the Nazi regime. A different attitude is the enthusiastic approval of the mass murder of Jews, as incapsulated by slogans such as 6MWE—*6 Million Weren't Enough*—GTK—*Gas the Kikes*—or Zyklon B tattoos and insignia (Anti-Defamation League 2023). In these groups, the AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLOCAUST is also expressed through a heavy use of Nazi imagery: swastikas, Nazi flags and the Hitler hand salute. Nevertheless, some references to Nazism can be coded and are hard to understand for an outsider. German phrases such as "Blut und Ehre" or "Meine Ehre heißt Treue" but also lesser-known divisional SS insignia require historical knowledge to be decoded, especially outside Germany (Anti-Defamation League 2023). Nazi symbolism can be tweaked and function as dog-whistles: the largest neo-Nazi website, the *Daily Stormer*, bears a name that closely resembles Julius Streicher's *Der Stürmer*. Similarly, in France, the "quenelle" is an antisemitic gesture that recreates an inverted Hitler salute in a manner that allows for plausible deniability (Amadori 2016). Numerical codes, such as 88 for "Heil Hitler" (H being the eighth letter of the alphabet) can also convey support for Nazism (Anti-Defamation League 2023).

Neo-Nazism is a transnational phenomenon. Historically, it emerged in the aftermath of WWII in countries where underground networks of former Nazi activists and sympathisers survived, such as Germany, Austria or France (Tauber 1967; Camus 2000). But the most active neo-Nazi networks today are to be found in the United States, where

neo-Nazism is embedded into pre-existing forms of racism and white supremacy (Jackson 2020). While most European nations have laws criminalising overt AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLO-CAUST, such as Nazi symbols (Young 2015), in the United States such statements are protected by the First Amendment (see National Socialist Party v. Skokie 1977). Neo-Nazism was particularly prevalent amongst marginalised countercultures, such as the prison population, where groups such as the Aryan Brotherhood functioned as a crime syndicate rather than a political movement *strictu senso* (Pelz et al. 1991). However, it increasingly gained political salience in the last decade, notably as a result of the surge of the Alt-Right (Hawley 2017), but also of European far-right parties like Golden Dawn in Greece (Ellinas 2015). The Alt-Right in particular represents the most successful rebranding of Nazi ideology, by embedding their open AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLOCAUST within a broader online culture of irreverence, trolling and "shitposting" (Nagle 2017; May and Feldman 2019). The use of pop culture symbols is a common strategy to articulate praise for Nazism: common examples in neo-Nazi online discourse include memes of Pepe the Frog (Anti-Defamation League 2016a) or Trollface (Anti-Defamation League 2016b) as Adolf Hitler or as Nazis. The argument that praise for Nazism is a tongue-in-cheek but harmless joke is one of the chief lines of defence of the contemporary far-right, such as when the alt-right ideologue Richard Spencer justified Nazi salutes at one of their rallies as "done in a spirit of irony and exuberance" (Barajas 2016).

In addition to these radical political stances, more ambiguous and diffuse forms of support for Nazism can be identified. They usually involve the relativisation of Nazi crimes and an emphasis on the alleged "successes" of Nazi economic or social policy. In the popular imaginary, the association of Nazism with certain positive values such as efficiency, order or family remains hard to break (Wippermann 2008). In Germany and Austria, such claims that not everything was bad "damals" ("at that time", which in this context strongly implies the Nazi era) often map onto forms of secondary antisemitism (Heni 2008). In 2007, the German public broadcaster ARD fired one of its lead talk-show hosts, the author Eva Herman, for extolling what she perceived as the robust family values and sense of community of the Nazi era (Deutsche Welle 2007).

Another common topos is that the Nazis deserve credit for building the modern German highway system (Wippermann 2008). While not all these opinions constitute a structured, coherent political project of rehabilitation of Nazism, they do have a perverse effect. Under the guise of portraying the past in nuanced way, these attitudes have a clear revisionist dimension, legitimising the idea that the national-socialist regime was just a dictatorship amongst many others, with good and bad.

A third type of AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLO-CAUST appears in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, in countries which were under the control of pro-Nazi governments or militias. These include nations like Hungary, the Baltic states, Croatia, Romania and parts of Ukraine. While in these countries, direct affirmation of Hitler and Nazi party elites is relatively marginal (as they are still associated with a foreign power), national political figures which were allied to Nazi Germany still enjoy a certain level of popularity. After the fall of communism, whose official historiography castigated right-wing nationalist leaders and even tried to discredit moderate figures through the association with fascists, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction. New state-building narratives drew on the repertoire of radical interwar nationalism; as a result, ultranationalist movements surged and launched campaigns to rehabilitate pro-Nazi figures. In the 1990s in Croatia, where the independence war exacerbated antagonism with Serbia, Ante Pavelic and his collaborators were often recast as patriots (Pavlakovic 2015). Romania witnessed similar developments as the pro-Nazi dictator Ion Antonescu was portrayed as a national hero and a martyr of the fight against Soviet communism (Cazan 2018). In Ukraine, the fraught international context and the 2014 war with Russian-backed separatists created the conditions for the rise of far-right militias which use Nazi-era symbolism such as the Wolfsangel or the Black Sun (Parfitt 2014). These revisionist discourses are often embedded into a broader dynamic which historian Michael Shafir dubbed "martyrological competition" (Shafir 2011): Nazism and its allies are legitimised and recast as virtuous victims of the communist regime.

But the expression of opinions sympathetic to the Nazis is not limited to the European or American political context. Anti-Israeli and anti-colonial sentiments helped the Nazi regime earn a capital of sympathy

in the Global South, a feeling which unfortunately is still active nowadays, particularly in the Muslim world (Large 2016). Unlike in Europe, such attitudes are not tied to specific radical movements and ideologies, as the unique political traditions of Islamic countries are not conducive to the emergence of neo-Nazi groups. As a result, they percolate in a more diffuse manner political culture, latching onto other antisemitic narratives such as HOLOCAUST DENIAL or CONSPIRACY THEORIES. In 2016, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan gave Nazi Germany as an example of a functional strong presidential system (The Guardian 2016). In Egypt, the actress Soheir al-Babli declared, in a bid to support the presidential campaign of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, that the country needs "a man as strong as Hitler" to restore order and combat criminality (Mada Masr 2014). Other non-European nations, who never had any historical connection to Nazism, can still harbour a positive image of the German dictator as a ruthlessly efficient leader. In the Philippines, strongman Rodrigo Duterte likened himself to Hitler, noting he would be happy to slaughter three million drug addicts in his country to save the next generations: "At least if Germany had Hitler, the Philippines would have [me]" (Holmes 2016). These occurrences illustrate the fact that the AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM and HITLER is not necessarily always rooted in explicit and direct hate against Jewish people, but in a craving for strong authority and a rejection of liberal democracy. Nonetheless, such statements always are a form of antisemitism, because they legitimise the Holocaust as an acceptable price to pay for law and order.

The AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLOCAUST can also appear in conjunction with the idea of a → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23) or of → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12) over the media: Jews are allegedly using their influence to silence positive opinions of Nazi Germany and enforce the narrative of Hitler and the Nazis' absolute wickedness. In one of the most high-profile examples of AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM and HITLER, the rapper Kanye West declared that "The Jewish media has made us feel like the Nazis and Hitler have never offered anything of value to the world. […] I see good things about Hitler, also" (Goggin 2022).

Despite a growing effort towards Holocaust education, the AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM, HITLER and THE HOLOCAUST remains therefore audible in the public discursive space and functions in synergy with other notions from the conceptual galaxy of secondary antisemitism (→ Part III).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Expressing a positive opinion about Adolf Hitler, senior Nazi figures, Nazi institutions/organisations or National Socialism (or elements of it) as a system of beliefs;
- Attempts to endorse, legitimise or celebrate the Holocaust; appeals for a continuation of the crimes of the Holocaust or suggestions that there are too many survivors left;
- Upholding the historical legacy of persons or organisations tied to the Nazi regime and its allies, or that participated in some form or another in the Holocaust; affirming that they can represent an inspiration for present-day society;
- Jokes and humorous statements trivialising the suffering of Jews during the Holocaust, relativising the criminal acts of the perpetrators or presenting the perpetrators in a positive and sympathetic light;
- Expressing a desire for Nazi (or Nazi-allied) leaders, practices or ideologies to be reinstated in present-day society.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Hitler's Germany was based. I am sure it will be back one day."

Glorification of Nazism is often expressed through admiration for the military and political strength of Germany under the national-socialist regime. A dichotomy is constructed between Nazi Germany and

modern-day Germany, which is seen as a degraded, inferior version of the former. The epithet "based" is a slang word indicating respect and appreciation that was originally popularised in the online vernacular of conservative and alt-right milieu. In those discourse spaces, based was often associated with traditional masculine virtues, and used as the opposite of "woke." The support for the Nazi regime is therefore tinged with an aesthetic admiration for its alleged purity, courage and virility. The commenter also expresses confidence in a future restoration of Germany's greatness through a revival of National Socialism.

   (2) "Wow…it's almost like Hitler was….right."
   (3) "The world will give #ITHLER reason one day."
   (4) "When I look at the Israeli brutes I can say that Hitler did nothing wrong."

Another form of AFFIRMATION OF NAZISM builds on the denial that Hitler's actions were deeply immoral and inhumane. Hitler is portrayed as a martyr which has been unjustly demonised (possibly as a result of Jewish influence) and whose merit will be recognised by society in the future. These comments often appear in reaction to a perceived wrongdoings by Jewish people or by Israel, which is then used to endorse and legitimise the Nazi genocidal extermination. The commenters are aware that, in today's society, Hitler is seen as the ultimate symbol of political evil. This explains, for example, the use of a botched spelling of the name in (3), presumably to evade moderation on social media. However, it remains very easily recognisable. Similarly, the ironic use of the exclamation of surprise "Wow" and of suspension points in (2) indicates that the statement should constitute a self-evident truth.

   (5) "Hitler will be a Hero, he fought the communists and Capitalists at the same time."

This comment takes a political approach and glorify Nazism as a force opposing both the capitalist West and the communist USSR, therefore, representing a third way between these two perceived evils. Such radical anti-establishment sentiment maps onto the propaganda of the Nazi

regime itself, which sought to present both capitalism and communist as Jewish inventions and positioned itself as the only obstacle both to the Anglo-American and the Soviet "conquest" of Europe.

(6) "Adolphe please come back and clean up."

The use of "Adolphe" instead of Adolf [Hitler] might again indicate an attempt at coded communication, but given the notoriety of that first name and its inevitable association with Hitler, the meaning is self-evident. The idea of Hitler "coming back" and "cleaning up" activates the topos of the providential saviour, both endorsing Hitler's historical actions and calling for their repetition and extension. It is not explicitly mentioned who the target of the desired purging would be. But whether the comment targets Jewish/Israeli people (in which case it would constitute an indirect → DEATH WISH, Chapter 41) or other supposed "undesirables," it nonetheless portrays Hitler as a competent leader whose actions are deemed appropriate and even necessary in contemporary society.

(7) "Heinrich Himmler all day MF 👆"

Of course, the glorification of Nazism does not focus exclusively on the figure of Adolf Hitler. Other dignitaries—such as Reichsführer of the SS and main architect of the Final Solution, Heinrich Himmler—are often praised for their role in the regime. As in (1), this comment is characterised by the use of informal slang showing appreciation and respect. This is a common strategy in alt-right online milieu, where a culture of aggressive trolling is coupled with a desire to attract a younger audience by presenting National Socialism as a "cool" and rebellious anti-establishment posture.

(8) "Auschwitz could have saved us a lot of work today if the process was expedited a bit more."
(9) "The Nazis should have finished the job."

The Holocaust was the culmination of Nazi ideology, which was entirely premised on the extermination of supposedly inferior races. Therefore, the affirmation of Nazism and the affirmation of the Holocaust can be considered as interchangeable. Here, Auschwitz is a metonym for Nazism and the genocide of the Jewish population. In both (9) and (10), the commenters express regret the Holocaust was not efficient and fast enough, leaving too many survivors. This entails that Jews continue to constitute a problem nowadays, and that more efforts are needed to address it. The comments therefore are an example of DEATH WISHES Chapter 41 and of incitement to racial violence.

Implicit

(10) "We need a new German man with a half moustache 😉"

Hitler's infamous toothbrush moustache became a political symbol and a cultural artefact, often used to visually metonymically represent the Nazi leader in a way that is instantly recognisable. Images of Pepe the Frog or Trollface with this type of facial hair are easy to decode as representation of Hitler. Similarly, in this comment, Hitler is identified through two attributes: his Germanic origin and his moustache. The combination of the two dispel any ambiguity as to the object of the reference. The pronoun "we" constructs the ingroup as in need of a salvatory intervention by the Nazi leader, in a way that mirrors—but through coded, indirect communication—the statement in (6). The winking emoji at the end of the comment is addressed to the other users who understand the reference. The use of a lighter, more humorous tone is not uncommon, as it can "soften up" deeply shocking affirmations and offer a plausible line of defence in case of a strong backlash.

(11) "6MWE"

This comment utilises an acronym ("6 Million Weren't Enough") to implicitly refer to and affirm the Holocaust. The phrase is widely used within radical right circles both on and offline, particularly in the United States. The media visibility of the sign greatly increased after it was

worn on T-shirts by members of the Proud Boys, a right-wing group, in the context of the pro-Trump Capitol riots (CBS 2021). The phrase laments the fact that the Holocaust did not murder enough of the Jewish population. This line of argumentation endorses and prolongs the Nazi antisemitic belief there is a "Jewish question" (*Judenfrage*) which needs to be solved through physical extermination. The comment is constructed in a cryptic way, as an alphanumeric code that requires a good understanding of the far-right vernacular to be grasped. Such coded communication builds ingroup solidarity through socio-discursive mechanisms of "reciprocal recognition": members of a counterculture often derive a sense of belonging from being able to extract meaning from what is seemingly innocuous or non-sensical to outsiders (Lacan 1966). Another advantage of such codes is that such DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41) are strongly tabooed and the cryptic form can shield the commenter from moderation or backlash.

(12) "The Germans did try to get the world out of tyranny, but unfortunately for them, they took the fall…! 😢😭🍍"

The collective noun "the Germans" in combination with "free the world" represents an allusion to the Nazi state, while sad and crying emojis add another layer of meaning—disappointment at the failure of the Nazi extermination project. The genocide of the Jews is being reconceptualised as a positive and liberating endeavour. The implication that there is a Jewish tyranny also maps onto the topos of Jewish POWER. Nazi Germany is credited with trying to end this supposed servitude, but failed and incurred a heavy punishment. The pineapple icon, popularized by the French comedian and antisemitic polemist Dieudonné, is used to mock the Holocaust: indeed, the word *Shoahananas*, a combination of Shoah and ananas, the French word "ananas" (pineapple), is actively trivializing the Holocaust.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(13) *Let's not forget Hitler was democratically elected.*

In 1932, the NSDAP (Nazi Party) became the largest party in the Reichstag, gaining 37 % in the July elections and 33 % in the November elections. Adolf Hitler was named Chancellor following the established constitutional mechanism of the Weimar Republic, in coalition with other right-wing parties. It is therefore true that Hitler's party—despite never holding an absolute majority—got a relative majority of votes in a free and fair election. The comment states a historical fact. There is no evidence the statement attempts to legitimise or affirm the Nazi regime. Instead, this comment can potentially be read as a reminder that even democratic institutions like election can produce dangerous leaders such as Adolf Hitler.

(14) *Most Nazis were not bloodthirsty sadists. They were ordinary men.*

This comment echoes Hannah Arendt's influential thesis of the "banality of evil" (Arendt 1963). The Jewish philosopher highlighted the gap between the horrors of the crimes committed and the ordinariness of the perpetrators, which lacked most of the obvious pathological signs associated with such extreme acts of violence. While this idea was undoubtedly controversial and carries disturbing moral implications for society, it does not amount to an affirmation or a justification of Nazism, quite the contrary. Many historians and social scientists agree that the mechanisms which led so many citizens of a highly educated nation to endorse mass murder are complex and require a fine-grained psychological and sociological investigation that goes beyond a pathologisation of the Nazi psyche. The phrase "ordinary men" in this context does not carry necessarily a positive connotation, rather pointing out to the diversity of backgrounds, trajectories and motivations of Nazi party members.

Related Categories

POWER (Chapter 12), CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), HOLO-
CAUST DISTORTION and DENIAL (Chapter 18), DEATH WISHES
(Chapter 41).

References

Amadori, Sandra. 2016. La « quenelle ». Valeurs symboliques et rhétoriques
d'une insulte gestuelle. *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 1 (110).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2016a. *Hate Symbol: Pepe the Frog*. https://
www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/pepe-frog (last accessed on 23 August
2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2016b. *Hate Symbol: Trollface*. https://www.
adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/trollface-racist-versions (last accessed on 23
August 2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023. Glossary of Extremism. https://extrem
ismterms.adl.org/ (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Arendt, Hannah. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*.
New York: Viking Press.

Barajas, Joshua. 2016. Nazi salutes 'done in a spirit of irony and exuberance,'
alt-right leader says. *PBS News Hour*, November 22, 2016. https://www.pbs.
org/newshour/politics/white-nationalist (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Camus, Jean-Yves. 2000. Nostalgia and Political Impotence: Neo-Nazi and
Extreme Right Movements in France, 1944–64. In *The Developing of the
Radical Rights in France*, ed. Edward J. Arnold, 195–216. London: Palgrave
Macmillan.

Cazan, Marius. 2018. Ion Antonescu's Image in Post-Communist Historiog-
raphy. In *Holocaust Public Memory in Postcommunist Romania*, ed. Alexandru
Florian. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

CBS News. 2021. *Capitol Chaos: Anti-Semitic Apparel Worn During Riot Traced
to Website Based in New York City*, January 11, 2021. https://www.cbsnews.
com/newyork/news/anti-semitic-sweatshirts-camp-auschwitz-6mwe-shirt-
hate-speech-apparel-us-capitol-protests/ (last accessed on 26 August 2023).

Deutsche Welle. 2007. *Family Values*, October 9, 2007. https://www.dw.com/en/german-tv-sacks-talk-show-host-for-praising-nazi-family-politics/a-2776881 (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Ellinas, Antonis. 2015. Neo-Nazism in an Established Democracy: The Persistence of Golden Dawn in Greece. *South European Society and Politics* 20 (1).

Gay, Kathlyn. 1997. *Neo-Nazis: A Growing Threat*. Berkeley Hights, NJ: Enslow Publishing.

Goggin, Ben. 2022. Ye Praises Hitler in Interview with Alex Jones. *NBC News*, December 1, 2022. https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ye-kanye-west-infowars-alex-jones-video-interview-elon-musk-rcna59693 (last accessed on 26 August 2023).

Hawley, George. 2017. *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Heni, Clemens. 2008. Secondary Anti-Semitism: From Hard-Core To Soft-Core Denial of The Shoah. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 20 (3–4): 73–92.

Holmes, Oliver. 2016. Rodrigo Duterte Vows to Kill 3 Million Drug Addicts and Likens Himself to Hitler. *The Guardian*, October 1, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/30/rodrigo-duterte-vows-to-kill-3-million-drug-addicts-and-likens-himself-to-hitler (last accessed on 26 August 2023).

Jackson, Paul. 2020. *Transnational Neo-Nazism in the USA, United Kingdom and Australia*. Washington, DC: George Washington University. Program on Extremism.

Lacan, Jacques. 1966. *Écrits*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Large, David Clay. 2016. The Developing World Thinks Hitler Is Underrated. *Foreign Policy*, October 5, 2016. https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/10/05/the-developing-world-thinks-hitler-is-underrated-duterte-world-war-ii-nazi-politics/#cookie_message_anchor (last accessed on 24 August 2023).

Mada Mars. 2014. *Actress Says Egypt Needs a Hitler Figure*, February 4, 2014. https://www.madamasr.com/en/2014/02/04/news/u/actress-says-egypt-needs-a-hitler-figure/ (last accessed on 24 August 2023).

May, Rob, and Matthew Feldman. 2019. Understanding the Alt-Right. Ideologues, 'Lulz' and Hiding in Plain Sight. In *Post-Digital Cultures of the Far Right*, ed. Maik Fielitz and Nick Thurston, 25–36. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Nagle, Angela. 2017. *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right*. New York: Zero Books.

National Socialist Party v. Skokie. 1977. 432 U.S. 43. https://caselaw.fin dlaw.com/court/us-supreme-court/432/43.html (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Parfitt, Tom. 2014. Ukraine Crisis: The Neo-Nazi Brigade Fighting Pro-Russian Separatists. *The Telegraph*, August 11, 2014. https://www.telegr aph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/11025137/Ukraine-crisis-the-neo-Nazi-brigade-fighting-pro-Russian-separatists.html (last accessed on 24 August 2023).

Pavlakovic, Verjan. 2015. Remembering War the European Way: Croatia's Commemorative Culture on the Eve of EU Membership. In *Croatia and the European Union*, ed. Pero Maldini and Davor Paukovi. London: Routledge.

Pelz, Mary, James Marquart, and Terry Pelz. 1991. Right-Wing Extremism in the Texas Prisons: The Rise and Fall of the Aryan Brotherhood of Texas. *Prison Journal*, 71 (2).

Shafir, Michael. 2011. Le mythe de la dénazification et son utilisation dans la martyrologie compétitive Shoah-Goulag. *Revue d'Histoire de la Shoah* 194 (1): 557–581.

Southern Poverty Law Center. 2018. Neo-Nazi. Extremist Files. https://www. splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/neo-nazi (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Tauber, Kurt. 1967. *Beyond Eagle and Swastika: German Nationalism Since 1945*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

The Guardian. 2016. *Erdoğan Cites Hitler's Germany as Example of Effective Government*, January 1, 2016. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/ jan/01/turkish-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-hitlers-germany-example-eff ective-government (last accessed on 24 August 2023).

Virchow, Fabian. 2010. The Groupuscularization of Neo-Nazism in Germany: The Case of the Aktionsbüro Norddeutschland. *Patterns of Prejudice* 38 (1): 56–70.

Wippermann, Wolfgang. 2008. *Autobahn zum Mutterkreuz. Historikerstreit der schweigenden Mehrheit*. Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag.

Young, Randy. 2015. *Banned flags of Nazi inspiration*, January 11, 2015. https://www.fotw.info/flags/qt-z_ban.html#de (last accessed on 23 August 2023).

Part V

Israel-Related Antisemitism

28

Nazi Analogy/Fascism Analogies

Matthias J. Becker

28.1 Nazi Analogy

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The NAZI ANALOGY draws comparisons between the Jewish state (as the present-day PERPETRATOR CONCEPT) and Germany during the Nazi period (as the historical PERPETRATOR CONCEPT).[1] By making such comparisons, Israel is demonised and singled out, being associated with a regime that committed unprecedented atrocities. According to this accusation, Israel is portrayed as engaging in an expansionist war of extermination, aiming to annihilate entire peoples, maintaining ghettos and

M. J. Becker (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: mjb@decoding-antisemitism.eu

[1] For linguistic research on the NAZI ANALOGY, see also Pérennec (2008); Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz (2017); Becker ([2018] 2021); Giesel (2019). With regard to the analogy's communicative functions (and those references to other historical scenarios), see Becker (2021: 199 ff).

concentration camps, and planning a "final solution to the Palestinian question." Nazi crimes represented extreme forms of state-organised violence, perpetrated with the support of a significant portion of German society; the Holocaust was a systematic and bureaucratic project of destruction (Longerich 1998, 2001, 2006, 2021: 266 ff.; Gerhard 2002; Aly 2005; Welzer 2005). In view of all these aspects, comparisons with Nazi Germany highly distort the conditions in the Middle East and portray Israel as an abysmal → EVIL (Chapter 3.1). This comparison constitutes the most extreme form of delegitimising historical analogies and, contrary to more moderate and nuanced critique, amounts to a → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). The analogy represents a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL, according to which the victims of the past Nazi crimes are the perpetrators today.

Furthermore, it is relevant to emphasise that beyond the extensive distortions outlined, the comparison fundamentally fails on both factual and logical grounds. Nazism was inherently defined by its virulent anti-semitism, making the notion of a Jewish state espousing such hatred fundamentally paradoxical and logically untenable.

Moreover, the NAZI ANALOGY not only demonises but also DISTORTS THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 18.1) (or Nazi crimes in general). The Arab–Israeli conflict, while marked by brutality and significant casualties, does not entail the systematic mass extermination of civilians characteristic of the Holocaust. Even if web users express criticism of Nazi crimes while comparing Israel and Israel to Hitler's Germany, the NAZI ANALOGY indirectly challenges the uniqueness the Holocaust and diminishes the gravity of the genocide.

Beyond demonisation and relativisation, a third effect of the analogy emerges when examining the specific context in Germany (and Austria). This effect is intricately linked to the downplaying of Nazi atrocities, particularly of the Holocaust, which represents the greatest obstacle to positive collective or national self-images. Consequently, if not entirely dissolved, the Holocaust is at least reclassified and loses its singular status. In a subsequent step, this exonerative effect facilitates identification with the national in-group, as negative evaluations are relegated to the background (Schapira and Hafner 2007; Höttemann 2020; Salzborn 2020;

Becker 2021: 201). To no longer perceive the Holocaust in its singularity or unprecedented nature, but rather to project it onto another country—especially onto the country of the former victims, who would thereby continue to bear the collective guilt once directed against them—is what imbues the discursive application of the NAZI ANALOGY with such potency.

The phenomenon of projective distortion of perception plays a central role in the construction of antisemitic concepts (cf. Horkheimer and Adorno 2006: 196 ff.), and is inherently linked to the perpetuation of stereotypes. By the 1960s, the public acceptability of classical stereotypes had declined. In the realm of antisemitism studies, this process and its consequences are encapsulated by the term *communication latency* (Bergmann and Erb 1986; see also Höttemann 2020). The emergence of the NAZI ANALOGY provided a new avenue for these projective distortions to manifest. It is important to note that the NAZI ANALOGY was already circulating in Germany around the time of Israel's founding in 1948. For instance, the left-liberal newspaper *Die Zeit* published an article with the allusion "Ethnic-Nationalist State of Israel" ("Völkischer Ordensstaat[2] Israel" (Dönhoff 1948). In this context, the analogy can be viewed as a secondary form of antisemitism due to its projective attributions of historical guilt and its communicative functions.

But even apart from the exculpatory projection of historical deeds of Germany and Austria, it is crucial to highlight the phenomenon of VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL. This involves the reproduction of a modernised version of the EVIL stereotype, with Nazi Germany depicted as the pinnacle of systems of injustice. Simultaneously, the distortion of the Holocaust amplifies this effect, making the NAZI ANALOGY a central component of internationally pervasive antisemitism related to Israel.

References to neo-Nazis in Israel today should also be classified as antisemitic. While they may be used to polemically highlight racist

---

[2] "Order state" is a historical term referring to a state governed by an order of lords or a military brotherhood. These structures were common in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Here, the term thus hints at a state controlled by a hierarchical order or similar organisation.

tendencies in certain segments of Israeli society, employing the neo-Nazi label draws a comparison to Nazism that strays from legitimate critique of current trends in Israel.

In addition, the use of the NAZI ANALOGY or corresponding allusions in relation to a Jewish individual carries fundamentally explosive implications. These references can extend to Jewish individuals living outside of Israel, as exemplified by the 2005 scandal involving former London Mayor and Labour politician, Ken Livingstone. Livingstone accused the Jewish journalist Oliver Finegold of behaving like a "German war criminal" and, upon learning that Finegold was Jewish, proceeded to liken him to a "concentration camp guard" (see Whine 2011: 313). However, in online discussions, the NAZI ANALOGY is more commonly directed towards the depiction of the Israeli state. It serves as a primary means of demonising and delegitimising the Jewish state, often masquerading as an expression of historical consciousness, thus lending it significant traction in Israel-related discourse.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- All statements comparing Jews, Israel, Israelis, and/or Zionism, as well as Jewish or Israeli institutions and well-known individuals, with the corresponding entities (regime, ideology, institutions, actors, etc.) in Nazi Germany;
- Comparing political processes or actions of Jews, Israel, Israelis, and/or Zionism with corresponding actions perpetrated by Nazi Germany;
- Comparisons between Jews, Israel, Israelis, and/or Zionism and present-day movements or ideologies supporting Nazism, such as neo-Nazism.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

Analogies can be expressed linguistically in various ways. Commenters may evoke the NAZI ANALOGY through classical, more or less explicit comparisons (*X is* (*like*) *Y*) that pertain to the nature or actions of the PERPETRATOR and/or VICTIM CONCEPTS, or to the *tertium comparationis*[3]:

(1) "Israel is to the Middle East what Nazi Germany was to Europe."
(2) "Jews are doing what Hitler did to them."
(3) "This is how yesterday's victims become today's perpetrators!"

In the first example, the user mentions both PERPETRATOR CONCEPTS: Nazi Germany in the past and Israel in the present. The equation between the two states (related to their nature) is realised by a parallel structure, following the pattern *X is to A what Y was to B*. In contrast, (2) mentions "Jews," referring to Israel(is). From the direct context, but also from world knowledge (namely that there is only one scenario worldwide referring to possible forms of state violence—apart from antisemitic → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13)—that suggest a "white genocide" in which Jews are supposedly involved), the reader can infer Israel as the object of discussion, and consequently as the current PERPETRATOR CONCEPT. The mention of Hitler activates the historical PERPETRATOR CONCEPT. Based on the structure *X does what Y did*, the actions of both countries are equated, which indirectly characterises their nature. In (3), the focus is also on the action level—however, the open allusions to the historical VICTIM CONCEPT as well as the current PERPETRATOR CONCEPT have to be decoded from the thread's context. Apart from

---

[3] "The comparison is the classic linguistic expression of the analogy (that is found on the mental level). Formally, a comparison exhibits the following structure: *A is like B*. The particle *like*—also called a (comparative) connective—flags up the ratio of similarity. At the conceptual level, a corresponding statement is understood as follows: A IS LIKE B IN RELATION TO THE CHARACTERISTICS Z. These characteristics are called tertium comparationis. The ratio of similarity is borne by this 'conceptual reference point,' whereby the characteristics are usually not made explicit" (Becker 2021: 171, 198).

this, the REVERSAL is expressed directly, supported by the temporal deixis ("yesterday" versus "today").

(4) "Israel = Nazi country."
(5) "Israeli Zionist is modern day Nazis."
(6) "Israel is the new Nazis."
(7) "Is Netanyahu any better than hitler?"
(8) "Bennett Netyanahu, disciples of Hitler's Nazism"

In these examples, the commenters consistently mention the PERPE-TRATOR CONCEPTS, but the connective particle is replaced by substitutes: functional signs as in (4), metaphorical phrases in (5) and (6), and combinations of indirect comparisons and rhetorical questions in (7). Furthermore, the choice of words such as "disciples" in (8) underlines the presupposed teacher-student relationship, with Israel's politicians following Hitler's example.

(9) "Israeli occupation is slaughtering the innocent people in Gaza. It is reminding us [of] the Holocaust"
(10) "Holocaust Part 2"

The activation of the NAZI ANALOGY does not need to rely exclusively on naming the PERPETRATOR and VICTIM CONCEPTS but can also refer to the *tertium comparationis*—the Holocaust—in combination with connective substitutes ("reminding us," "Part 2").

Implicit

Implicit Nazi comparisons are often drawn through puns where the surface of words is changed so that they form compound words, such as "Zionazis," "iSSrael," "Nazionists" or "AshkeNazis." Moreover, these implicit comparisons rely on allusions, where words or phrases with a strong referential (and inferential) potential can activate Nazi scenarios within discourses on the Middle East:

(11) "They have stolen its water, natural gas, land, resources and its future now they blame the prisoners of their concentration camp

for not sitting back quietly while they shoot their kids with military sniper teams."

(12) "Instead of finally calling the Gaza Strip a ghetto and condemning the settlement policy."

(13) "Gaza is a huge concentration camp and the Israeli security forces are behaving like the SS!"

(14) "It refers to the Lebensraum in the east."

(15) "I sometimes wonder if the general public is not given the right to think for itself. Who is really the oppressor, who is the occupier and whose land is being successively invaded? One could even speak of creeping genocide. Is the world looking the other way? Will there be Stolpersteine [stumbling stones] in Israel later?"

Instead of changing the surface of the words as in puns, commenters use allusions to create an "alienating reference to a supposedly known text" (Bussmann 2008: 45). When phrases like "concentration camp," "ghetto,"[4] "lebensraum" and "SS" appear in online debates about the Arab–Israeli conflict, the latter is framed by the implied scenario: the historical genocide (and other crimes) of Nazi Germany. (15) represents an exception since *Stolpersteine* [*stumbling stones*][5] do not refer directly to Nazi crimes but are an allusion to the memorial politics of post-war Germany—a connection that must again be made through world knowledge.

(16) "The holocaust was a shame!!! The occupation too is a shame!!!"

(17) "you stand against anti semitism and the holocaust but not against killings of innocent Palestinians. You are woman of double standards and a disgrace!"

(18) "I know many families here whose parents had to flee in 1948 with nothing. The narrative of denial is getting older and older and you had better acknowledge what happened in the same way that you demanded that the Holocaust be a crime"

---

[4] On the ambiguity of the reference potential of the "ghetto" allusion against the background of the entire history of antisemitism, see Becker (2021: 250).

[5] https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-A-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance (last accessed on 20 June 2023).

(19) "Later, it may be said again: Everyone looked away, the whole world and the population. Have we really learned from the Nazi era?"

Conceptually, these examples are very similar to (15). When successfully decoded, these statements likewise activate the frame of the historical scenario (Nazi atrocities), which then triggers a particular conceptualisation of the present one (Arab–Israeli conflict). The examples refer to dealing with (or remembering) the Nazi crimes, which is indirectly equated with dealing with the conflict. In contrast to (15), the focus is not on the institutions of memory, but on emotions and attitudes. Both scenarios involve handling the consequences of the respective events, making the two comparable. In this respect, dealing with the consequences represents the *tertium comparationis* of the NAZI ANALOGY. With the sole reference to the way society deals with the Holocaust, the dimension of implicitness increases even more, for example by using the word "shame" in (16). Based on the use of rhetorical questions, repeated words, negative evaluations, or parallel and repetitive structures, commenters are anxious to highlight what they see as hypocritical differences in treatment and "double standards" between Nazi Germany and Israel as in (17) and (18), or to point out supposed patterns, such as indifference to the crimes in (19). In all instances, there is once again an implicit equation being established.

(20) "the United nations and security council have considered this an occupation since 1967, so basically the whole world except Israel. But again Hitler said France and Austria always part of greater Germany too when he invoked them and it was also pointless to try to convince him its not……"

(21) "The behaviour of the Jews is perverse. they destroy a state (Palestine) and 'benevolently' give the rest of the Palestinians who have not yet been driven out a limited amount of vaccine.one would think that the Palestinians are incited to mutual discord by this small amount. They are indirectly reduced because they are not given enough money and serum. It is a bit reminiscent of Warsaw and the food rations, between the Polish/Jewish whistleblowers and the rest of the population who did not get enough food. 😮‍💨"

Here, it becomes apparent that commenters also resort to complex argumentative patterns, in which aspects from the Nazi era are mentioned and then applied to specific scenarios in present-day Israel (or to Israeli politicians). This is known as paralogism, in which a particular event or feature is quoted and then generalised to lead to the erroneous conclusion that the two state entities—Germany and Israel—are equivalent per se. The last example is interesting in that it not only draws an implicit comparison between Warsaw and the Palestinian territories ("Warsaw" here serves as an allusion to the Nazi ghettos), but also formulates the idea of Jewish complicity. Thus, it is not only Israel that maintains an apparatus of oppression allegedly comparable to that of Nazi Germany, but the author emphasises the antisemitic stereotypes of → DECEIT (Chapter 7), → IMMORALITY (Chapter 6) and → GREED (Chapter 11).

(22) "The violation of human rights by the state of Israel takes on features that leave comparisons to what we in Europe, respectively in Germany, also had to experience painfully!"
(23) "Especially *we* [as Germans] should condemn wars of conquest to expand territory."
(24) "*it* is happening again in palestine."

So-called open allusions, in which ready-made, sometimes standardised formulas are used in reference to the Nazi period, without making the reference to this historical phase explicit by means of relevant lexemes or turns of phrase, present a much greater challenge. Often, one simply speaks of Germans and their past in a general way. Because of the prominent status of this period within history as well as its presence in the culture of remembrance, the reader can infer that the statement is to be understood as an allusion to Nazi Germany or to the Nazi period.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(25) "Studying the Holocaust should be a warning against all forms of oppression and injustice, whether in the Middle East or in other conflicts."

This example—even if it conceptually brings the Arab–Israeli conflict and the Nazi mass murder closer together—opens up a wider framework and expresses that the preoccupation with Nazi crimes plays an important role in looking at international forms of injustice. Even though this argumentation moves quite close to the previous examples of paralogism, there is neither enough information nor a sufficient focus on Israel to classify the statement as antisemitic.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), DECEIT (Chapter 7), FASCISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 28.2), APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1), COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32).

28.2 Fascism Analogies

Conceptual and Historical Overview

In the context of Middle East discourse, FASCISM ANALOGIES stand out among the historical analogies used to demonise Israel. Such comparisons conceptualise and evaluate the existence of the State of Israel as a resurgence of fascism. Similar communicative functions apply to FASCISM ANALOGIES as to the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), even if references to fascism are not as serious and aggravated as the NAZI ANALOGY: *demonisation* (referring to Israel/Israelis, possibly Jews), *relativisation* (referring to crimes in the context of the international manifestations of fascism), and—in the context of, for example, Italian discourses—also the function of *exoneration.*

Fascism is a term often used carelessly in various discussions to demonise the addressee or the subject. While the NAZI ANALOGY should in all cases be categorised as antisemitic, determining the antisemitic content of FASCISM ANALOGIES requires a much more nuanced and context-dependent approach. However, as outlined below in the main

features of this concept, it is the essentialising and generalising aspects that render a statement antisemitic. Rather than asserting that specific political currents within Israel are or were comparable to fascism, the state and society of Israel as a whole are depicted as inherently fascist.

In Germany and Eastern Europe at least, there has been a clear tendency to refer to Nazism generally as fascism; this goes back to a Marxist-Leninist definition of fascism that was propagated there for decades. This means that, for some communicators, the NAZI ANALOGY can even be invoked.

With regard to the potentially exonerative functions of FASCISM ANALOGIES in a non-German context, it should be emphasised that a VICTIM-PERPETRATOR REVERSAL is not as evident, given that the Holocaust was first and foremost a German crime. Fascist regimes, while nationalistic and authoritarian, have not always incorporated anti-semitism as a core belief. For example, fascist Italy—a possible historical reference point for FASCISM ANALOGIES—was actively involved in the persecution of Jews but neither initiated nor carried out the genocide of European Jewry. Other fascist regimes, especially in the post-war era, such as Franco's Spain or Latin American dictatorships, did not display systemic state antisemitism. Moreover, fascism has experienced several international manifestations (see e.g. South America, Japan, North Africa), while National Socialism (apart from some political splinter groups in other countries) is closely linked to German (and Austrian) history. As a result, terms like "fascist" are not exclusively associated with Italian history, impacting their communicative functions, including the exoneration of guilt.

Another notable aspect that contributes to the ambiguity surrounding the term "fascism" is its association with Nazi vocabulary or explicit references to the Nazi era. This is one of the reasons why we decided to present FASCISM ANALOGIES alongside the NAZI ANALOGY—it is not only the proximity of the two ideologies, but also the observation that hints of a fascist ideology of Israel often coincide with Nazi accusations.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Equating Israel or Zionism with fascist ideologies or regimes; the accusations should have a systemic nature, targeting the Israeli state and society as a whole or Zionism as a political movement;
- Articulation may not always include the explicit term "fascism," instead referencing regimes, ideologies, leaders, and movements widely considered fascist in political discourse (e.g., Mussolini's Italy, Pétain's France, or Franco's Spain);
- Prominent use of terms such as ethno- or Jewish supremacism/fascism to denote alleged similarities.

We do not consider the use of FASCISM ANALOGIES directed against specific parties and individuals as inherently antisemitic, as they do not constitute systemic accusations, and the demonising connotations of this terminology or related phrases are not extended to encompass the entire out-group.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Zionists are fascists"
(2) "Israel is a fascist state, carrying out an ethnic genocide."
(3) "zionism and facism two peas in a pod!"
(4) "Israel-Palestine isn't a war, it's a conquest by settler-colonial ethno-fascists."

While the first three examples are straightforward to categorise, as they direct the FASCISM ANALOGY at Israel and its inhabitants (partly in connection with an assumed → GENOCIDE, Chapter 32), the fourth statement presents a more nuanced perspective. In this instance, the term "fascists" is closely associated with concepts related to → COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30). The commenter refrains from classifying the Arab-Israeli conflict as a "war," instead framing it as a colonial conquest.

By initially referencing the two sides of the conflict, the commenter indirectly suggests that the categories of COLONIALISM and FASCISM are applicable to the entire Israeli side, not just the settlers in the West Bank. The example highlights the dense and escalating use of various demonising terms in the Middle East discourse.

(5) "I think Israel and Hamas have more in common than they realise. They are both fascist religious extremists only interested in their own power."

This is an example where the accusation of fascism is once again interwoven with another distorted image (→ TERRORIST STATE, Chapter 31). The commenter directs these insinuations against both the Israeli and Hamas sides, claiming that a fascist and pro-terrorist attitude comparable to that of Hamas can be observed in Israeli politics, as well as among the country's population, given its democratic structure and the election of its government. This highlights the enabling function of FASCISM ANALOGIES in perpetuating antisemitic stereotypes, as evidenced in the following examples:

(6) "It's not Hamas it's Palestinians who are fed up of fascist rule !israel putting cover over the worlds eyes to justify their total disregard for international law and theft of land for settlers!"

(7) "for the occupation to end, Israeli fascists shouldn't have the Hamas card in their hands to silence peaceful movements."

(8) "therefore, it's in the interest of the Israeli fascists to keep Hamas in power, and this is their strategy to deny the Palestinians their rights."

All three examples feature the accusation of fascism in the first part of the statement, followed by the antisemitic stereotypes of → LIE and DECEIT (Chapter 7). In the first two examples, metaphorical formulations reproduce these ideas ("putting cover over the worlds eyes;" "Hamas card") that the ("fascist") Israeli side mendaciously conceals imputed crimes and deceitfully instrumentalises the conflict and Hamas terror in order to achieve hidden goals. The latter idea becomes tangible in the third example, where the user addresses this in blunter terms.

(9) "i'll blame the fascistic regime that bombs civilians to establish a living space. Germans used to call it lebensraum."

(10) "You, me, and everyone else can support the right of a peoples to self preservation or we can support a fascistic regime that has Nazi projects to expand its territories until a sufficient living space is acquired at the expense of other peoples. 'Hamas shot rockets,' 'there are terrorists in Gaza,' 'Israel is defending its self' are as valid as Hitler's claims that the attack on Poland was a reaction to Poles attacking the German radio station."

(11) "The fascistic regime is that who has forced two million people to live inside fences. Just like Hitler did with his Ghettos in Poland."

(12) "Israel is worse than hitler and mussolini"[6]

In these examples, the proximity to the NAZI ANALOGY stands in the foreground. In (9), readers can identify this comparison by means of the allusion "[L]ebensraum" allusion to Nazi ideology (moreover, rendered in German). In (10) and (11), an initial link to the NAZI ANALOGY established through insinuations of fascism, assuming parallels between Israel and Hitler's Germany not only in terms of argumentation, but also in political decisions and the concrete shaping of societal structures (for paralogism, see Chapter 28.1). In (12), the commenter portrays Israel as a state that surpasses both Nazism and fascism, employing two onomastic allusions to strengthen the depiction.

(13) "Hates Israel? Or hates Aparthied, land theft, illegal occupations and war crimes committed by an ethno-supremacist far right Government? 🤔"

The lexical variants for fascism mentioned above are employed both in direct insinuations and in rhetorical questions. Given the surrounding co-text, the association with Israel and corresponding demonisation can be immediately established (here, in conjunction with the → APARTHEID ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1).

---

[6] Most of the analogies described in this volume are based on the structure X = Y, i.e. their equation is in the foreground. In linguistics, such comparisons are called "comparisons of equality" or "equatives." If, however, in certain cases, it is claimed that Israel is *worse* than Hitler's Third Reich or Mussolini's fascist Italy (as in (12)), one speaks of "comparative comparisons" (see Becker 2021: 172; see also Thurmair 2001: 3).

Implicit

FASCISM ANALOGIES are rarely expressed in implicit ways. Examples might include references to Netanyahu as *Il Duce*, or likening Hamas celebrations to Hamas celebrations to an *Oxi* movement (referring to the Greek resistance against fascist Italy)—both instances of allusion. However, similar to the APARTHEID ANALOGY, the contextual background FASCISM ANALOGIES would be indirectly conveyed does not seem to be as widely understood as in the Nazi scenario. Consequently, explicit mentions of fascism and ethno-racism typically prevail.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(14) Ben Gvir and Smotrich are total fascists, seriously. They've said so themselves.

The use of FASCISM ANALOGIES in relation to individual extremist politicians should not be automatically classified as antisemitism without further context or information. In many cases, such statements may be distortions that falsify history, but they should be distinguished from comparisons to fascism in relation to Israel's political system and society as a whole, which constitute antisemitic hate speech.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1), COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32).

References

Aly, Götz. 2005. *Hitlers Volksstaat. Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan [German Original: 2018. Analogien der "Vergangenheitsbewältigung." Antiisraelische Projektionen in Leserkommentaren der Zeit und des Guardian. Baden-Baden: Nomos].

Bergmann, Werner, and Rainer Erb. 1986. Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung. Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 38 (2): 223–246.

Bussmann, Hadumod, ed. 2008. *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Kröner.

Dönhoff, Marion. *Die Zeit*, 23 September 1948. Völkischer Ordensstaat Israel.

Gerhard, Paul, ed. 2002. *Die Täter der Shoah. Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* Göttingen: Wallstein.

Giesel, Linda. 2019. *NS-Vergleiche und NS-Metaphern. Korpuslinguistische Perspektiven auf konzeptuelle und funktionale Charakteristika (Linguistik— Impulse & Tendenzen 84)*. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter.

Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. 2006. *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Gesammelte Schriften*, 16th ed. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Höttemann, Michael. 2020. *Sekundärer Antisemitismus. Antisemitismus nach Auschwitz*. https://www.bpb.de/themen/antisemitismus/dossier-antise mitismus/321575/sekundaerer-antisemitismus (last accessed on 26 October 2022).

Longerich, Peter. 1998. *Politik der Vernichtung: Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung*. Munich: Piper.

Longerich, Peter. 2001. *Der ungeschriebene Befehl. Hitler und der Weg zur "Endlösung."* Munich: Piper.

Longerich, Peter. 2006. *"Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!" Die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945*. Munich: Siedler.

Longerich, Peter. 2021. *Antisemitismus: Eine deutsche Geschichte. Von der Aufklärung bis heute*. München: Siedler.

Pérennec, Marie-Hélène. 2008. Nazi-Vergleiche im heutigen politischen Diskurs. Von den Gefahren falscher Analogien. *LYLIA* 16.

Salzborn, Samuel. 2020. *Kollektive Unschuld. Die Abwehr der Shoah im deutschen Erinnern*. Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich.

Schapira, Esther, and Georg M. Hafner. 2007. Entlastungsantisemitismus in Deutschland. In *Neu-alter Judenhass. Antisemitismus, arabisch-israelischer Konflikt und europäische Politik*, ed. Klaus Faber, Julius H. Schoeps and Sacha Stawski, 73–83. Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Reinharz, Jehuda. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-Hatred in Contemporary Germany. The Tauber Institute Series for the Study of European Jewry*. Brandeis: Brandeis University Press.

Thurmair, Maria. 2001. *Vergleiche und Vergleichen. Eine Studie zu Form und Funktion der Vergleichsstrukturen im Deutschen*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer.

Welzer, Harald. 2005. *Täter. Wie aus ganz normalen Menschen Massenmörder werden*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Whine, Michael. 2011. The Liberal Tradition and Unholy Alliances of the Present. Antisemitism in the United Kingdom. In *Politics and Resentment: Antisemitism and Counter-Cosmopolitanism in the European Union*, ed. Lars Rensmann and Julius H. Schoeps, 307–328. Leiden, Boston: Brill.

29

Apartheid Analogy/Racist State

Matthew Bolton

29.1 Apartheid Analogy

Conceptual and Historical Overview

In contemporary political discourse, to accuse a state or a political movement of apartheid is—in terms of moral weight and deserved opprobrium—second only to that of Nazism. "Apartheid" today represents the most aggravated form of colonial oppression, political domination and state-sponsored racism, a universal and unqualified moral wrong that should never be repeated. Accusations of apartheid thus constitute the strongest mode of moral condemnation a modern nation-state can face. To accuse Israel of apartheid is to activate the historical memory of the South African apartheid state, in which "whites" and "blacks" were segregated in virtually every area of political, economic and social life by a

M. Bolton (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

strict white-supremacist racial hierarchy, enforced by state violence. In so doing, the state of Israel is depicted as a colonial, endemically racist state defined by absolute segregation between "races." The result of such a depiction is the moral delegitimisation and demonisation of Israel as a state, opening up a pathway to → the DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

In February 2022, the human rights organisation Amnesty International produced a report accusing the State of Israel inflicting a system of "apartheid against Palestinians," describing it as "a cruel system of domination and a crime against humanity" (Amnesty 2022). Amnesty's accusation of the alleged crime of apartheid against Israel followed similar claims by Human Rights Watch (2021) and the Israeli campaign group B'Tselem (2021). The use of the concept of "apartheid" or "apartheid state" to describe Israel has become one of the most common forms of denouncing the Jewish state in contemporary (online) discourse, both in reference to contemporary Israel policies and the historical foundations of the state itself. It is also one of the most controversial: one key distinction between the IHRA "working definition" of antisemitism and the 2021 Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism is that the latter explicitly argues that "in and of itself" comparisons between Israel and apartheid South Africa should not be regarded as antisemitic (IHRA 2016; JDA 2021). This controversy is intensified by disputes over how "apartheid" itself should be defined: should it be reserved for direct references to the system of racialised "separation" in historical apartheid South Africa? Should it be generalised in legal terms, such as in the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the results of which have been described as "ambiguous and inoperable" (Bultz 2013)? Or is "apartheid" now merely a slogan used to express strong moral condemnation of any form of suspected racial, ethnic or cultural discrimination (Pogrund 2014: xix)?

The APARTHEID ANALOGY stands out from most of the concepts examined in this book in two ways: firstly, due to its widespread acceptance amongst milieus where the historical repertoire and openly hateful expressions of antisemitism are generally rejected—an acceptance indicated by its use by some respected civil society and non-governmental

organisations; and secondly, due to the tendency of web users to legitimise the ᴀᴘᴀʀᴛʜᴇɪᴅ ᴀɴᴀʟᴏɢʏ through arguments from authority referring back to such prominent institutional actors or public figures. There is, in this way, a reciprocal dynamic between the use of the analogy by said institutions and a general discursive climate in which the ᴀᴘᴀʀᴛʜᴇɪᴅ ᴀɴᴀʟᴏɢʏ is used as a presuppositional, self-evident statement, brooking no disagreement, within political milieus—both on- and offline—who otherwise regard themselves as progressive and thus opposed to antisemitism. Moreover, the acceptability of the ᴀᴘᴀʀᴛʜᴇɪᴅ ᴀɴᴀʟᴏɢʏ within substantial parts of the population, including the liberal left, means that it can often act as an "enabling concept" for the unopposed articulation of more explicit and extreme antisemitic concepts and stereotypes (Bolton et al. 2024).

The ᴀᴘᴀʀᴛʜᴇɪᴅ ᴀɴᴀʟᴏɢʏ is closely connected to demands that international bodies, states and civil society organisations should boycott, disinvest and impose sanctions on Israel. The BDS movement (→ ᴄᴀʟʟs ꜰᴏʀ ʙᴏʏᴄᴏᴛᴛ ᴀɴᴅ ꜱᴜᴘᴘᴏʀᴛ ꜰᴏʀ BDS, Chapter 35) emerged in the early 2000s and took explicit inspiration from the success of the Anti-Apartheid Movement's campaigns for a political, consumer, sporting and cultural boycott against apartheid South Africa (Rich 2018).

The claim that the accusation of Israeli apartheid is a form of antisemitism rests on three main bases. Firstly, the Israel-Palestine conflict is one between two national movements and peoples and their competing territorial claims—and not one, as in apartheid South Africa, founded on the racial domination of one part of a nation over another (Morris 2022). While there is racism against Israeli Arabs (as well as Mizrahi and Black Jews) within Israel, it does not resemble the organised, institutionalised "separation" that characterised apartheid South Africa (Pogrund 2014). Rather, it is akin to forms of racism found in many other states, including structural racism. To describe the situation of Israeli Arabs as one of apartheid, and yet not to describe the situation of Blacks, Arabs or Muslims in, say, the contemporary USA, UK, France or India in such terms is thus to single Israel out for demonisation, a → ᴅᴏᴜʙʟᴇ ꜱᴛᴀɴᴅᴀʀᴅ (Chapter 33) which can be understood as antisemitic.

Secondly, the Israeli military and civilian presence in the West Bank is, at least in part, the result of an occupation of land following the

1967 Six-Day War and subsequent security concerns. The use of two legal systems in the West Bank is not a sign of apartheid, but rather the result of the complex interplay between Israeli military rule and that of the Palestinian Authority in the areas for which they have legal responsibility following the Oslo Accords. In relation to the legal status of the West Bank, two contradictory scenarios are simultaneously activated: on the one hand, the accusation of apartheid implies that Israel has a moral obligation to grant full citizenship rights to Palestinians living there; however, if that was to happen, it would amount to a legal annexation of the West Bank, an outcome intensely opposed by pro-Palestinian groups. Therefore, the APARTHEID ANALOGY is a simplification of a complex geopolitical problem and erases the actual history of the conflict in such a way as to depict Israel as the bearers of → SOLE GUILT for the conflict (Chapter 36), if not → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) (Raday 2022). If a situation arose in which Israel did explicitly annex the West Bank, bringing it into the territory of Israel "proper" while retaining a twin legal system, the charge of apartheid might then—even with the above qualifications—have to be re-examined. But this remains a hypothetical projected future, despite such ideas recently gaining ground within some elements of the Israeli extreme right, rather than a concrete reality.

The third base refers to the historical development of the charge of apartheid made against Israel and Zionism. Rather than the analogy between Israel and apartheid being a result of a disinterested scientific comparison, or a response to particular Israel policies, it emerged from a long process of political development. This can be traced back to antisemitic conspiracy theories, during and after the 1899–1902 Boer War, which sought to make South African Jews responsible for the postwar formation of the racist Union of South Africa (Strawson 2006). Such ideas were given widespread credence across the European Left and Arab nationalist movements by a sustained Soviet Union-led propaganda campaign from the late 1940s onwards. This sought to depict Israel, and Zionism, as an integral part of the "imperialist" capitalist West, akin to fascism, and analogous to—if not worse than—the white nationalist colonial states of Rhodesia and South Africa (Tabarovsky 2019).

Those who do regard the analogy as antisemitic therefore point out that the apartheid charge was first levelled at Israel long before the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank and aimed not at Israeli actions but the legitimacy of the state, and of the Zionist idea, as such. Historically, it was routinely intertwined with accusations of essential racism, colonialism, the delegitimisation of Jewish self-determination and European racial supremacy. Just as the only morally acceptable outcome for the Anti-Apartheid movement was the complete dismantling of the apartheid South African state, so too the apartheid analogy opens up a pathway for the legitimisation of DENIALS OF THE RIGHT OF JEWISH SELF-DETERMINATION. These historical connections may not always be known or understood by those who make the apartheid claim today, particularly online. This lack of historical awareness, combined with the transformation of the concept of APARTHEID into a catch-all "buzzword" which often dilutes direct references to the concrete situation of South Africa, is one reason why some argue that its use in relation to Israel should not be considered antisemitic. But once questions of intent are removed from analysis—and it is the premise of this book that they must be when dealing with online speech—its use nevertheless activates and legitimates a whole series of antisemitic concepts and stereotypes. This lends credence to the claims that the analogy should be considered a form of antisemitism.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Any generalised analogy between the State of Israel and apartheid South Africa, or apartheid in general.

Temporally and spatially bounded accusations of particular Israeli policies which may share some similarities to policies within apartheid South Africa, or references to APARTHEID which only refer to the West Bank, should be treated with greater care on a case-by-case basis, taking context into account, and thus do not automatically merit categorisation as antisemitic.

The above is also true of predictions made about the future trajectory of Israeli politics. A comment which predicts that Israel is heading in a direction where it seeks to annex the entirety of the West Bank without giving Palestinians within that territory full political and civil rights and compares this prospect—but not the current state—to apartheid, should not be automatically classed as antisemitic.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "The only right this scam, welfare, fascist, terrorist, apartheid, has is to go f….. itself."

Here, the accusation of apartheid comes at the climax of a rising series of antisemitic demonisations of Israel and its right to exist as a nation-state. The fraudulent or "scam" nature of Jewish nation- and statehood is asserted at the start, activating concepts of → DECEIT (Chapter 7); the parasitical depiction of Israel is expressed through the negative ascription of "welfare;" associations with → FASCISM (Chapter 28.2) and the depiction of Israel as a → TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31) posing a threat to the world are followed by a simple declaration of "apartheid." The comment closes with an insult, cementing the total delegitimisation of Israeli statehood, and with it the concept of Jewish peoplehood as such.

(2) "guess you also believe in aparthied and ethnic cleansing. Dont worry the tide is turning. People now realise what atrocities Israel is comit-ting. Aparthied, ethnic cleansing and illegal occupation will come to an end"

This comment is aimed at another web user seeking to defend Israel in a thread, who is portrayed by extension as a supporter of apartheid and of ethnic cleansing. These ascriptions are not time-limited but are generalised, essentialised and thus presented as constituting the fabric of the state itself. The use of the term "atrocities" evokes memories of historical war crimes and crimes against humanity. The accusation of

Israeli apartheid is used as the basis for a veiled threat: that "[p]eople" are now beginning to see the truth about Israeli EVIL—a truth that was presumably hitherto hidden—and thus this will soon end. The essentialised form of these negative depictions of Israel implies that the state itself will shortly come to an end too, presumably by force.

(3) "Tell me the old, old story, Hasbara. Manda Mandela accused Israel of practicing the 'worst apartheid we have ever seen' […] You want to arg3with Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Manda Mandela? You think these people didn't know apartheid when they see it? You want to arg3with Amnesty International? With Btselem, an organization comprising former IDF soldiers, ashamed of what they were forced to do? Wake up and smell the coffee, lady. It won't wash any more […] The zionist state is a vicious immoral entity, founded on violent land expropriation, ethnic cleansing a d physical and cultural genocide. A colonial enterprise. We're it not for the unstinting support of the American tax payer it would collapse tomorrow. It's time is approaching. Date stamped, and no amount of lyi g propaganda from Hasbara trolls like yourself will prevent it."

This web user does not draw on the APARTHEID ANALOGY explicitly, but rather uses numerous appeals to the authority of individuals and organisations said to have made the claim via a series of rhetorical questions. They directly refer to well-known individuals associated with South African apartheid, including Nelson Mandela himself—who, while a fierce critic of Israel, never made the analogy and gave his explicit support for a two-state solution (Simons 2013)—and NGOs, including Amnesty and B'Tselem. Opposing positions are portrayed as mere "Hasbara"—"lyi[n]g propaganda" organised by the Israeli state.

The apartheid accusation acts as an "enabler" for the articulation of more extreme antisemitic stereotypes and denunciations: Israel is labelled a "vicious immoral entity," depriving it of its legitimate status as a nation-state and activating the → IMMORALITY stereotype (Chapter 6); a → COLONIALISM ANALOGY (Chapter 30) is activated through its depiction as a "colonial enterprise;" and Israel is accused of inflicting "physical and cultural genocide" upon the Palestinians, thus invoking the concept of

→ GENOCIDE (Chapter 32). The commenter interweaves these multifarious accusations with a further → THREAT (Chapter 39). Those continuing to support Israel should "wake up," see the truth, and prepare for the end of the state: Israel's "time is approaching" with the date of inevitable destruction "stamped."

(4) "the Zionist military apartheid criminal military regime is the biggest terrorist entity in the world"

Here again, the accusation of apartheid sets the discursive frame for a series of antisemitic concepts: that Israel is not only a "criminal military regime"—and thus not a legitimate member of the community of nations—but the "biggest terrorist entity" in the world, in other words, a threat to world peace. The rapid-fire staccato of concepts creates a chain of presuppositions, leaving no space for fact-based critique or counterspeech.

(5) "The clever trick zios hard at work to sniff for that AS scent S.E.D. Brown of South Africa, a noted journalist writes, 'The holocaust instills a guilt complex in those said to be guilty and spreads the demoralization, degeneration, and eventually the destruction of the natural racial elite among a people. This transfers effective political control to the lowest elements who will kowtow to the Jews.' Apartheidisraeli-zionist spokesmen often boast of: 'The shattering effect of the holocaust on the Christian conscience resulting in a feeling of collective indebtedness to the Jews.' Don't be caught out by 'the trick' 🐿"

The APARTHEID ANALOGY here comes wrapped in layers of extreme antisemitic concepts, many of them directly drawing on white-supremacist and neo-Nazi ideology. The derogatory label "zio" is intensified by both the descriptor "clever trick"—invoking ideas of Jewish DECEIT—and "hard at work […] for that AS scent"—in short, that Jews continually seek to → INSTRUMENTALISE ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 20) for financial and political benefit. The web user cites the "noted journalist" S. E. D. Brown, quoting his claim that Jews seek to INSTRUMENTALISE THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20) so as to impose guilt upon a nation's "racial

elite" and lead to the nation's → DISINTEGRATION (Chapter 14) and the furthering of → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12). This Nazi-style depiction of Jewish conspiracies is then conflated with the APARTHEID ANALOGY through the compound label "Apartheidisraeli-zionist." What is striking about this comment is that S. E. D. Brown was the editor of the South African Observer newspaper during the Apartheid era and was one of the leading cheerleaders for the apartheid and white supremacy throughout. While Brown's combination of white supremacy and antisemitism is a potent demonstration of the connections between (although not the identity of) anti-Black and anti-Jewish hatred, to reference him here—in a comment in which the APARTHEID ANALOGY is presumably wielded to demonise, rather than praise, Israel—is somewhat quixotic.

Implicit

(6) "I didnt need to goto south Africa and i dont need to goto Palestine to figure it out."

Here the word "apartheid" is not explicitly expressed, but the analogy between the two scenarios is activated by means of a parallelism and spatial deixis—"go[ing] to [S]outh Africa"—which is then juxtaposed to another—"go[ing] to Palestine." By placing the two terms together in this way, the analogy between Israel and apartheid South Africa is made by a simple reference to South Africa, without the for any further explication, or reference to apartheid itself.

(7) "'I am Israel […] I have the power to control American policy […] All the forces of the world are powerless against me […] you will be imprisoned in your little Bantustans…surrounded by checkpoints in every direction […] How dare your children confront my oppression with stones, don't you know my soldiers won't hesitate to blow their heads off? […] Don't you get the message? You will never have peace or freedom, because I am Israel.' Professor Norman Finkelstein"

This is an extract from a several hundred-word long comment that is frequently and repeatedly posted on social media comment threads responding to UK news stories about Israel. As is the case here, it is

routinely attributed to Norman Finkelstein, the author of the polemical "The Holocaust Industry," a book-length accusation of Israeli INSTRU-MENTALISATION OF THE HOLOCAUST. In actual fact, the text reproduced in (7) was written by William Nassar, a Lebanese-Canadian singer. Written in the first person, and thus ventriloquising the voice of the State of Israel as a whole, its form makes each of its claims generalised and essentialising by default. The text incorporates a range of antisemitic concepts, from the assertion of overwhelming ISRAELI/JEWISH GLOBAL POWER, particularly over the political sphere, to → CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4), the claim that Israeli forces "blow [the] heads off" children throwing stones. Israel is positioned as the enemy of world peace—world peace and freedom are deemed to be impossible "*because* I am Israel" [emphasis added]; in short, the existence of Israel and peace are mutually incompatible. The APARTHEID ANALOGY is made implicitly in the middle of the long comment, through an indirect comparison with Palestinian territories (even after full Palestinian statehood) and the "Bantustans" (or "black homelands") of the apartheid era in South Africa.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(8) "Netanyahu has increasingly been introducing some apartheid-style policies in areas of the West Bank"

While this claim remains inaccurate, its temporal and spatial limitations—indicated by the use of "increasingly," "some" and "in areas of"—move the comment away from the identification of Israel and apartheid South Africa that constitutes the *apartheid analogy*. Moreover, the qualifier "-style" retreats from a direct analogy and indicates recognition of differences as well as continuities.

Related Categories

COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34), EVIL (Chapter 3.1), TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31), POWER (Chapter 12), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), FASCISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 28.2).

29.2 Racist State

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The depiction of Israel as a RACIST STATE is closely connected to the → APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1) but lacks the direct connection to a real-world historical scenario. Rather, it simply asserts that the State of Israel is racist in an implacable and totalising sense: that, from its founding, the state, its rationale, its institutions, its leaders and its population—regardless of their individual qualities—have been driven by racist motivations and desires. This portrayal of Israel is frequently intwined with descriptions of Zionism, the national ideology supporting and justifying the national self-determination of a Jewish people, as inherently racist (Hertzberg 1986). The argument that "Zionism is Racism" is one that emerged through the same historical and political process that led to the apartheid analogy, outlined in the previous section. The highpoint of this process was the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 3379 by the United Nations in 1975, which declared that "Zionism is a form of racism and racial discrimination." The passing of the resolution was primarily the work of the Soviet bloc and Arab nationalist governments, who sought—as with the APARTHEID ANALOGY—to conflate the State of Israel with white-supremacist colonial states, and it was not revoked until 1991 (Beker 1988). In contemporary discourse, Israel is occasionally accused of spreading state racism across the globe, with police violence against Black Americans or extremist Hindu nationalism in India being spuriously explained via supposed connections to Israel or Zionism (Pomerantz 2020).

It is crucial that claims that Israel is a RACIST STATE, or that Zionism is akin to racism, are distinguished from accusations of racism aimed at particular Israeli state policies, politicians, political parties or military or social actors. As with every other nation-state, racism exists within Israeli politics and society (Ben-eliezer 2004), both against Israeli Arabs and Mizrahi and Black Jews. Asserting that a particular Israeli policy or individual is racist should not be classed as antisemitic. Accusations of structural racism within Israeli state or society should also not be automatically classed as antisemitic, as long as those accusations are similar in kind to those frequently aimed at other nation-states and societies. Distinguishing when an accusation of structural racism aimed at Israel crosses over from that aimed at other states to become a means of singling out Israel and/or Zionism as uniquely or exceptionally racist requires careful analysis of the context and the text in question. It is only when Israel is depicted as endemically and innately racist from its founding, where accusations of racism are generalised and essentialised to incorporate the entirety of Israeli state and society, or when the concept of a Jewish state, Jewish nationalism or Zionism is presented as uniquely or exceptionally racist, unlike other modes of nationalism (such as Palestinian), that a comment should be classed as antisemitic.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Generalised or essentialised accusation of state racism, aimed at the whole of Israeli state and society;
- Any conflation of Zionism as such, or Jewish national self-determination, with racism—unless this is part of a general critique of nationalism as such (i.e. not where Palestinian national aspirations are legitimated while Jewish nationalism is disparaged);
- References to "Jewish supremacism," which invoke (contradictory yet conflated) notions of white supremacy and Jewish power, may also fall into the category of RACIST STATE unless they refer to specific extremist ideological currents;

- Parallels between Israel/Zionism and historical institutionalised regimes of racial discrimination, such as slavery, Jim Crow or segregation in the United States.

A specific accusation of racism connected to a particular time, place, actor, institutional relation should not be categorised as antisemitic without further information.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Not anti Jewish, just appalled by a right-wing militarised ethno-Nationalist apartheid state… has nothing to do with anyone's religion or ethnicity… it is entirely to do with the guiding ideology of the Israeli state…"

This web user begins their comment by asserting that they are not "anti Jewish," and later clarify that their judgements "have nothing to do with [Jewish] religion or ethnicity." From the outset, they therefore seek to fend off any potential accusations of antisemitism. The description of Israel as "right-wing" and "militarised" may be contentious but is not antisemitic. However, the use of the terms "ethno-Nationalist" and "apartheid state" implies that racism was inscribed into state of Israel—as a state, not particular policies—from its founding. This is reconfirmed by the claim that "ethno-Nationalis[m]" and "apartheid" derive directly from the "guiding ideology of the Israeli state," an implicit reference to Zionism. Thus, the main implicature of the comment is the conflation of Zionism with racism, and thus a generalised accusation of racism aimed at any claim or concept of Jewish national self-determination.

(2) "Hypocrisy is the WORD hasnt it always been the same,, the most racist country in the world is Israhell,, FREE PALESTINE"

This comment starts with an accusation of Israeli hypocrisy and claims, in the form of a presupposition, that this has "always been the same"—i.e. it is a generalised, essentialised accusation of hypocrisy (connected to the idea of → LYING (Chapter 7) which contains no time or spatial limit or particularisation. The lack of time limit means it is at least possible that the attribution of hypocrisy extends beyond the State of Israel to Jews as such, although this is not explicit in the comment. This generalisation then sets up and feeds into the following claim that Israel is "the most racist country in the world"—thus, singling out Israel as exceptionally racist from the moment of its founding. The message is then reaffirmed and intensified using the common wordplay of conflating the name of Israel with "hell," implicitly evoking connections between Israel and Jews with → DEMONIC (Chapter 3.2) forces.

(3) "ISRAEL IS A CRIMINAL RACIST TERRORIST PARIAH STATE paid out by american Taxpayers Stop stealing Palestinan Land and homes"

With the opening accusation written in capital letters for emphasis, this web user links together a succession of demonising and generalising attributions of the State of Israel, with no distinction made between the Israeli state and society, nor the diverse elements within that society. Not only Israel is "RACIST," but it is also "CRIMINAL," "TERRORIST" and a "PARIAH STATE"—it is thereby not fit for membership of the community of nations and should be excluded. Together this amounts to a forceful → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). The rest of the first sentence, written in lowercase insinuates that Israel's existence is dependent on US aid, adding to the depiction of a fraudulent, if not parasitic, pseudo-state. The final clause "Stop stealing Palestinian Land and homes," a call to action directed at Israel itself, should not be classed as antisemitic on its own, as it is ambiguous which "Land and homes" it is referring to—such comments aimed at Israeli policies in the West Bank are legitimate criticism.

(4) "Well a Jewish state is in itself racist."

This comment is not aimed at the actually existing Israeli state, nor any particular policy, political movement or politician. Rather it targets "a Jewish state […] in itself." For this web user, the very concept of a Jewish state is necessarily, and inherently, racist, regardless of how it actually acts. This comment is not making an argument that every and any nation-state, of any type (including a Jewish state) is necessarily racist, otherwise, it would not have been necessary to add the descriptor "Jewish." Rather it is singling out the notion of a "Jewish state" as a uniquely racist form of national identity—depicting it as a "racist endeavour," to use the terminology of the IHRA definition (2016)—and is therefore DENYING JEWS THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION.

Implicit

   (5) "So, the state of the chosen people oppressing the goyim, yet again"
   (6) "They just think they're a superior race to everyone else, and you see it in everything Israel does"

The majority of accusations that Israel is an endemically racist state are made directly. In these examples, the commenters make reference to "the chosen people" trope (5)—far more often used in attacks on Jewish people and institutions than by Jewish people themselves—to imply that Jewish self-perceptions as a "superior race" mean that a Jewish state is, and must be, racist. In (5) this point is reemphasised in the use of the term 'goyim,' effectively ventriloquising the supposed derogatory stance taken by Jewish people towards non-Jews. There is a close connection here with the concept of → JEWISH LOYALTY (Chapter 9), presented in more explicitly racial terms.

Non-antisemitic Examples

   (7) "Netanyahu is a true racist, he is willing to go into coalition with the most racist, far-right people in Israel"

This comment clearly demarcates the person of "Netanyahu" and the "most racist, far-right people in Israel" from the state and society of Israel

as such. Its temporally and spatially limited claim means that it does not make a generalised or essentialised claim about Israel or Zionism as such, nor the concept of a Jewish state. As a form of criticism that could be aimed at any other political leader or the internal politics of any other state, it should not be classed as antisemitic.

References

Amnesty International. 2022. *Israel's Apartheid against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity*. Amnesty International.

B'Tselem. 2021. *A Regime of Jewish Supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid*. https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid (last accessed on 29 September 2022).

Beker, Avi. 1988. *The United Nations and Israel: From Recognition to Reprehension*. Lexington: Lexington Books.

Ben-eliezer, Uri. 2004. Becoming a Black Jew: Cultural Racism and Anti-Racism in Contemporary Israel. *Social Identities* 10 (2): 245–266.

Bolton, Matthew, Matthias J. Becker, Laura Ascone, and Karolina Placzynta. 2024. Enabling Concepts in Hate Speech: The Case of the Apartheid Analogy. In *Hate Speech in Social Media*, ed. Isabel Ermida. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38248-2.

Bultz, Ariel. 2013. Redefining Apartheid in International Criminal Law. *Criminal Law Forum* 24 (2): 205–233.

Herzberg, Arthur. 1986. Zionism as Racism: A Semantic Analysis. In *Antisemitism in the Contemporary World*, ed. Michael Curtis, 164–171. London: Routledge.

Human Rights Watch. 2021. *A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution*. https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution (last accessed on 28 August 2023).

IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). 2016. *Working Definition of Antisemitism*. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

JDA (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism). 2021. *Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism*. https://jerusalemdeclaration.org (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Morris, Benny. 2022. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Isn't About Race—A new Amnesty International Report Charging Israel with Apartheid in the West Bank Applies the Wrong Lens to a Struggle Between Nations. *Wall Street Journal*, February 10. https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-israeli-palest inian-conflict-isnt-about-race-11644505041 (last accessed on 29 September 2022).

Pogrund, Benjamin. 2014. *Drawing Fire: Investigating the Accusations of Apartheid in Israel*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Pomerantz, Steven L. 2020. I Am the Architect of the U.S.-Israel Police Exchange. Don't Believe the Lies. Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. 19 June 2020, https://jinsa.org/i-am-the-architect-of-the-u-s-israel-police-exchange-dont-believe-the-lies (last accessed on 11 August 2023).

Raday, Frances. 2022. Amnesty's Distorted Framing of an Evolving Tragedy. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture* 27: 1–2.

Rich, Dave. 2018. *The Left's Jewish Problem*. London: Biteback.

Simons, Jake Wallis. 2013. The Big Lie: That Mandela Viewed Israel as an Apartheid State. *Jewish Chronicle*, December 12, https://www.thejc.com/comment/analysis/the-big-lie-that-mandela-viewed-israel-as-an-apartheid-state-1.51477 (last accessed on 29 September 2022).

Strawson, John. 2006. Zionism and Apartheid: The Analogy in the Politics of International Law. *Engage Journal* 2. http://www.engageonline.org.uk/journal/index.php?journal_id=10&article_id=34 (last accessed on 29 September 2022).

Tabarovsky, Izabella. 2019. Soviet Anti-Zionism and Contemporary Left Antisemitism. *Fathom*, May 2019, https://fathomjournal.org/soviet-anti-zio nism-and-contemporary-left-antisemitism/ (last accessed on 29 September 2022).

30

Colonialism Analogies

Laura Ascone

Conceptual and Historical Overview

A comparison of the State of Israel to white European colonial projects is regularly invoked in online discourse. There is an ongoing scholarly debate about the nature of colonialism, its consequences for the colonised territories, and whether it constituted a crime against humanity. Even properly defining the phenomenon of colonialism is problematic (Horvath 1972). Broadly construed, colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people or territory to another. However, that would mean that colonialism is—like war or violence—an anthropological constant. A narrower understanding focuses on modern forms of domination, particularly the European colonial project. Modern colonialism is therefore embedded in the history

L. Ascone (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

of the divide between the global north and south and has at its core racism as its ideological justification. There are two main types of colonialism: settler colonialism (as seen in the USA, Canada or Australia) and exploitation colonialism (Africa, South-Eastern Asia). It is undeniable that colonialism has had a long-term structural impact on developing nations, which today is seen, due in great part to the work of postcolonial scholarship, as overwhelmingly negative. Currently, colonialism is not a historical scenario that can serve as basis for a positive national self-identification. Among other historical scenarios of injustice, colonialism is today a form of rule from which members of European in-groups clearly distance themselves and interpret it—if allegedly identified in present-day contexts—as a remnant of outdated, malevolent states.

Given this background, when Israel as a state or the policies of its government are compared to past colonial projects, the academic and historical dimension of such debates are overshadowed by the political uses and meanings ascribed to the concept. The historical relationship between Israel and colonialism is complex and multifaceted. Some early Zionist leaders referred to 'colonisation' in a positive sense, yet the State of Israel was formed in anti-imperialist struggle against the British. There is no Jewish 'metropole' from which a 'peripheral' colony could derive, yet settlement activity in the West Bank could be conceived as colonisation. None of this complexity appears in the simplistic, condemnatory manner in which the term is used by political activists today. They erase the specific political and historical specificities of Zionism and Israel in order to conflate them in their entirety with the broader European colonial project (Klug 2003). It was in the 1950s that the critique of Israel was first embedded into a broader anti-imperialist framework, as the alignment of the Jewish state with the USA and the so-called Western world became obvious. Communist intellectuals were at the forefront of this shift in the perception of Israel. The identification of Israelis with "whiteness" reinforced the analogy, not only in far-left discourse but also in Arab and Black nationalist movements (Pappe 2008).

In the course of corresponding analogies, the fundamentally negative character resulting from historical knowledge of colonialism is transferred to Israel which, depicted as an oppressor and exploiter, is consequently demonised and delegitimised. From this perspective, Israel

supposedly makes the same mistakes that can be found in Europe's past, but from which European states clearly distance themselves. Despite the knowledge and new moral standards, Israelis thus show themselves as unwavering and maintain a policy of injustice, segregation and exploitation.

It is not only for this reason that, when referring to Israel, COLONIALISM ANALOGIES are considered antisemitic, but also because they implicitly disregard "the nature and genesis of the Middle East conflict" (Becker 2021: 12) as well as Israeli policies in general (Edthofer 2015; Sternberg 2016). Furthermore, COLONIALISM ANALOGIES which refer to the position of Israel in the Middle East are evidence of the adaptability of antisemitism: defamatory attributions are created for each possible scenario in history up to the present day.

According to the context in which COLONIALISM ANALOGIES are mobilised, it can refer to either a specific scenario or to colonialism in general. In the context of the UK, a country whose relatively recent past includes a colonial era, speakers are likely to compare Israel to the British Empire—whether the comparison is expressed explicitly or implicitly. However, the reference to a specific scenario is not crucial for the analogy to be considered antisemitic. In other words, when using terms such as 'colonial,' 'colonialist,' 'settlers,' to describe Israel, the speaker automatically triggers associations with the *modus operandi* of any colonial state. However, it is important to highlight that the West Bank and the Golan Heights constitute a specific case, as they are internationally recognised as illegal Israeli settlements even though Israel does not consider them as such. Therefore, when these same words refer to the Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Golan Heights, they cannot be considered antisemitic.

When the narrative supports the colonised, the image of the colonisers changes dramatically. Colonisers are then attributed illegitimacy, oppression, exploitation and appropriation. More precisely, in the case of Israel, its power is presented as → IMMORAL (Chapter 6) as its goal is to expand its territories by exploiting and colonising the Palestinians, who, in addition, are allegedly considered by the Israelis, or Israeli settlers to

be (racially) inferior ($\rightarrow$ APARTHEID STATE, RACIST STATE, Chapter 29). When COLONIALISM ANALOGIES are operated in relation to Israel as a whole, its legitimacy as a political project is fundamentally questioned. As a consequence, the analogy also implies the $\rightarrow$ DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Comparisons between contemporary Israel and past colonial states or colonialist policies;
  - A relevant operationalisation of terms used by speakers is necessary (e.g. colonial conditions, colonialist agenda) in order to differentiate legitimate criticism and antisemitic colonialism analogies.
- Allegations of actions, structures, etc., without any reference to a clear historical scenario. The inference potential can always lead readers to the respective historical scenarios (as the era in which a term was coined or it is referring to), even without directly mentioning them by name;
  - It is important to stress that an utterance only needs one of these characteristics to be classed as a COLONIALISM ANALOGY. Moreover, such analogies have to refer to the whole State of Israel and not only to the West Bank. Any reference to settlement policies in the West Bank or the Golan Heights as colonialism, without inculpating the State of Israel as a whole, is not considered antisemitic.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Israel is an apartheid colony made up of people who had nationalities, citizenship and ethnicities of other countries (mostly Europe and North Africa) who used the cover of the British Empire and the Holocaust and the power of Western finance to steal Palestine from

> its indigenous people. You'll have to excuse the people of that region if (at the latest count 95%) never accept this ethnic cleansing colony made up of people who believe in the fascist ideology of Zionism in their midst. A colony which helped to destroy what was once a beautiful, peaceful and historic region where many ethnicities and religions lived side by side for centuries including those of the Jewish faith."

In this example, the speaker describes Israel as a colony three times. In each case, the speaker accompanies this attribution with other anti-semitic concepts, as if to justify the frequent reference to colonialism. In the first sentence, where Israel is presented as "an apartheid colony," the speaker underlines the fact that Israelis have different "nationalities, citizenship and ethnicities." Furthermore, Israelis are presented as → INSTRUMENTALISING THE HOLOCAUST (Chapter 20) in order to "steal Palestine," which implicitly → DENIES JEWS THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION (Chapter 34). In the second sentence, Israel is accused of "ethnic cleansing" (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1), and Zionism of being "fascist" (→ NAZI ANALOGY/FASCISM ANALOGIES, Chapter 28.1), while in the last sentence it is presented as a colonial power that has caused degradation and conflict in a formerly peaceful region (→ ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT, Chapter 36). The combination of the COLONIALISM ANALOGY with other antisemitic concepts aims at reinforcing the demonisation of Israel.

(2) "Down there it's Palestine colonised by the Zionists, which doesn't make you want to go there. Before, Muslims and Jews lived in peace, the Zionists landed and here is the result."

As in the previous example, the COLONIALISM ANALOGY is combined with the idea that Israel is the only responsible party in the Arab–Israeli conflict (ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT). Even though the analogy is expressed with neutral terms—which was not the case in the previous example—the fact that the alleged Zionist colonisation "doesn't make you want to go there" implies the speaker's rejection and revulsion at Israel's presence in the Middle East. The example shows that COLONIALISM ANALOGIES can be expressed without explicitly comparing Israel to a colonial state or saying that 'Israel is acting as the British/French

Empire.' Rather, simply using the lexical field of 'colony' can suffice to trigger the whole colonial scenario. In other terms, the categorisation of Israel as a colonial state, Israelis as colonisers or settlers, Israeli policies as colonialist or, as in (2), Palestinians as colonised people, constitutes a potential for references to and inferences about colonial scenarios.

> (3) "yes funnily enough all these places were full of all kind of people until Western colonialists arrived in the early twentieth century of which Zionists were the plantation, who have worked tirelessly to destabilise and destroy what they have not already stolen."

Here, the speaker presents the goals of an alleged Israeli colonisation: the stealing and → DISINTEGRATING (Chapter 2.4) of Palestinian land and goods, destabilising the region's balance, which suggests the idea of ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT IN THE CONFLICT, and causing gratuitous destruction. Furthermore, by stating that "Western colonialists arrived in the early twentieth century" the speaker implies that Israel itself is a colony and not, for instance, the West Bank.

> (4) "It's always like this in the colonial logic of Israel. They are in a quantitative ratio of murdering. For 1 IDF soldier killed, 30 Palestinian children are shot or killed by a sniper."

In this example, a "colonial logic" is presupposed. In passing it off as real the comment reinforces it with the assertion that it is "always like this," thus strengthening the stereotypical analogy with a durative aspect. The idea that the colonisers are more powerful suggests that Israelis do not only dominate Palestinians in the daily life, but also in the conflict. The speaker portrays them as disproportionally → VENGEFUL (Chapter 8) in terms of both numbers (one Israeli vs thirty Palestinians) and status (IDF soldier vs children). The idea that Israelis deliberately kill children constitutes an additional antisemitic element as it evokes the classic stereotype of → CHILD MURDER (Chapter 4). As such, the COLONIALISM ANALOGY opens the way to further demonisation of Israel.

Implicit

(5) "The oppressed Palestinians are detained in Gaza like the Boers in the old times. After the wars the Brits controlled all of South Africa – for decades…. you see, violence always pays off!"

By using the preposition "like," the author explicitly compares the situation of Palestinians in the current Arab–Israeli conflict to the systematic detention and mistreatment suffered by tens of thousands of Boers at the hands of British authorities in concentration camps in early twentieth century. Despite this explicit comparison, the analogy between Israel and the British Empire can only be inferred through the reader's world knowledge, namely by associating "the old times" to the Second Boer War, by deducing the connection between the British and Boers and by relating this historical context to the Arab–Israeli conflict. Furthermore, even though the term "violence" is attributed to the British colonial period, it is indirectly used by the author to depict Israel as violent and as a coloniser too. The analogy falsely claims that the context of the objects compared is the same: however, firstly, only part of the Palestinians live in Gaza (while a very large part are e.g. Israeli citizens) and secondly, they are not imprisoned there, but Gaza is sealed off for Israel's protection due to the permanent threat and repeated attacks.

(6) "Israelis must be reminded that they are in an occupied land, and that colonisation is barbarian and that barbarism is fought, as some countries of European freedom do against Putin's colonisation."

The comment, posted in response to a media report on a series of terrorist stabbing attacks in Israel, only implicitly expresses the COLO-NIALISM ANALOGY. By focusing on the perception of colonisation, presented here as a form of barbarity that needs to be fought, the speaker implies that the Palestinian terrorist violence against Israeli civilians is legitimised. This legitimisation is then pushed forward through the comparison of the Arab–Israeli conflict and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

(7) "Not taking sides here but technically it's not necessary to first be a sovereign state for imperialist crimes to mean something. The native Americans didn't have a flag either. 🏴"

Here, the COLONIALISM ANALOGY is conveyed in a much more implicit way. The comment suggests the existence of an Israeli colonial policy without directly mentioning it. Rather, in the first sentence it speaks in general terms, while in the second part it refers to a historical colonial scenario. By stating that "it's not necessary to first be a sovereign state," the speaker implies that even if Palestine is not a sovereign state, Israel's actions constitute "imperialist crimes." The analogy between the two scenarios, one Israeli and the other US, is based here on the non-sovereignty of Palestine and the Native Americans, through the statement that the latter "didn't have a flag either." In other terms, it is necessary to share a certain world knowledge for this example to be deciphered.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(8) "The Israeli government has announced several times that it plans to continue the annexation of the West Bank."
(9) "It's systematic forced displacement and colonisation the West Bank."

Neither of the comments can be considered antisemitic as the COLONIALISM ANALOGY refers here to the West Bank only. Given that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal under international law, while the COLONIALISM ANALOGY may obscure rather than illuminate the specific history and context of the settlement movement, the spatially-limited use of the COLONIALISM ANALOGY here should be held apart from more generalised claims.

Related Categories

THE OTHER/FOREIGN (Chapter 2), APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1), RACIST STATE (Chapter 29.2).

References

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edthofer, Julia. 2015. Israel as Neo-Colonial Signifier? Challenging De-Colonial Anti-Zionism. *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 7 (2): 31–49.

Horvath, Ronald J. 1972. A Definition of Colonialism. *Current Anthropology* 13 (1): 45–57.

Klug, Brian. 2003. The Collective Jew: Israel and the New Antisemitism. *Patterns of Prejudice* 37 (2): 117–138.

Gopal, Priyamavada. 2020. *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonialism and the Making of British Dissent*. New York: Verso.

Pappe, Ilan. 2008. The Jewish Diaspora. In *A Historical Companion to Post-colonial Literatures—Continental Europe and its Empires*, ed. Prem Poddar, Rajeev S. Patke, and Lars Jensen, 406–411. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Sternberg, Yitzhak. 2016. The Colonialism/Colonization Perspective on Zionism/Israel. In *Handbook of Israel. Major Debates*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Julius Schoeps, Yitzhak Sternberg, Olaf Glöckner, 823–847. Berlin: De Gruyter.

31

Terrorist State

Matthew Bolton

Conceptual and Historical Overview

A depiction of Israel as a TERRORIST STATE is a generalised, essentialising description in which the state in its entirety is classed as a terrorist entity, and thus by definition excluded from the global community of legitimate nation-states. According to the US State Department, terrorism can be defined as "politically motivated violence," devoid of moral or legal constraints, "perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" through the creation of fear across the targeted group (Ruby 2002: 10). To accuse Israel of being a TERRORIST STATE is therefore portray to it as → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) and a potential target for retribution, while attacking Israel's legitimacy in a way that → DENIES ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). Labelling Israel as a TERRORIST STATE in this way

M. Bolton (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

should be held distinct from accusations of Israeli 'state terror,' 'state-sponsored terrorism,' or the description of any particular Israeli military action or leader as 'terroristic.' While such descriptions may be wrong, hyperbolic or exaggerated, they are nonetheless fairly frequent within discourses criticising various states' foreign or military policies and do not necessarily ascribe a particular EVIL to the state of Israel or call its legitimacy into question.

Those seeking to demonise and delegitimise Israel in this way may refer to historical incidents of Zionist terroristic actions prior to or during the formation of Israel as a legally recognised nation-state, particularly those committed by the para-military groups such as the Irgun and Lehi against the British during the struggle for Israeli independence (Hoffman 2015). Given that such actions did indeed take place, and could be classed as terroristic, such statements do not fall into the antisemitic category of TERRORIST STATE, unless the argument is extended such that these incidents become the founding principle of the state as a whole, shaping its nature and character throughout its history.

Accusations of Israel being a TERRORIST STATE emerged as a notable rhetoric device in the 1980s during the Israeli-Lebanon war (Rose 1986), often conjoined with the → NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), which depicts Israel as an outgrowth of or successor to Nazism. Labelling Israel as a TERRORIST STATE grew in popularity during the early 2000s in the context of the September 11 terror attacks in the US, George W. Bush's 'War on Terror,' and the Second Intifada (a militant Palestinian campaign against Israel). Anti-war and anti-American activists sought to negate the usage of discourses of 'terror' and 'terrorism' by the US and its allies through inversion, turning the term against its leading proponents (Poynting and Whyte 2012). The work of US political writer Noam Chomsky was pivotal in promoting such perspectives in relation to Israel (Bogdanor 2004). One result is the attempt to create a moral equivalence between the State of Israel and Hamas and other Palestinian groups responsible for suicide bombings, random stabbings and other indiscriminate forms of violence aimed directly at civilians. In more recent years, the idea of Israel as a TERRORIST STATE has been a frequent and explicit theme in statements by Palestinian leaders (AFP News Agency 2010) as well as speeches by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

(Bellut and Köylü 2021). The accusation has been made by numerous other world leaders and national representatives, from Bolivia (*Times of Israel* 2014)—where then-President Evo Morales justified a new law requiring Israeli citizens to apply for a visa to enter Bolivia by reference to Israel being a terror state—to Syria and Iran (*New York Times* 2005). The concept of Israel as a TERRORIST STATE is well-rooted in left-wing discourses too. Even speech ostensibly aimed at countering antisemitism can build on implicit references to the idea of Israel as a TERRORIST STATE, such as when former British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn suggested that holding all Jews responsible for Israel's actions was equivalent to holding all Muslims accountable for the actions of ISIS (Savage and Fisher 2016).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Claims that Israel, Zionism, Israelis or Jews are terroristic entities, groups or ideologies in their entirety;
- Drawing equivalences between Israel as a state and proscribed terrorist organisations;
- Claims that specific terrorist incidents during the period of the founding of the state of Israel define or represent the essence of Zionism or of Israel as a state.

Portrayal of specific, time-limited events/actions (e.g. acts of settlers, one bombing of the Gaza Strip) as terrorism should not be automatically categorised as antisemitic, even if the claim is exaggerated. Neither should the description of individual actors (such as a party leader) as terroristic.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Israel is a terrorist state."

(2) *Zionism = terrorism*
(3) "prior to the illegal occupation of the Israeli terrorist state, Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in harmony with equal rights"
(4) "Israel = Terrorist. Stateless. Palestenian = Innocents. Original natives of the land."

Totalising and generalising depictions of Israel, Israelis and/or Zionism are frequently made directly, with little attempt to code or disguise the accusation. In these examples, the label of "terrorist state," "terrorism" or "terrorist" is made straightforwardly, with the use of an equals sign in (2) to demonstrate unambiguously the total conflation of Zionism as a whole with terrorism. Both (3) and (4) use the notion of Israel as a "terrorist state" to draw the logical conclusion that Israel has no right to exist, thus DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. Both counterpose the supposed terroristic existence of Israel with either the utopian world of interfaith companionship that preceded it (thus emphasising sole Israeli → GUILT (Chapter 36) for the conflict), or the 'innocence' of the 'original natives.'

(5) "The Zionist apartheid criminal military regime is the biggest terrorist entity in the world"
(6) "You and your people (the zionist) are the largest organized terrorist in the world"

The accusation that Israel, Zionism or 'Zionists' constitute the 'biggest' terrorist organisation 'in the world' is one that is routinely found in comment threads responding to reports of terroristic attacks within Israel. In (5), this depiction is preceded by the → APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29) and the accusation of Israel as a 'criminal military regime,' together depriving Israel of the status of a legitimate state and in this way DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. In (6), despite the qualifier of 'the zionist,' the user implies that the Israeli people, if not the Jewish people as a whole, are an organised gang of terrorists.

(7) "Israel doesn't have a land! They are the terrorists! They're lost on the earth! And will continue to be lost!"

Here, via a series of declaratory statements emphasised by exclamation marks, Israel is denied any legitimate claim to its territory and thus

statehood, DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. The claim that 'they are the terrorists' expands the accusation from any particular military act to the entirety of Israeli state and society. This depiction is then implicitly extended further to incorporate the Jewish people as a whole by the claim that 'they' are 'lost on the earth' and 'will continue to be lost,' a non-time-limited ascription of 'homelessness' which evokes older notions of the 'wandering Jew' and thus the concept of → being THE OTHER/ FOREIGN to all societies (2).

> (8) "Originally, the Zion.ists' presence in Palestine is a mistake if Ha.mas is a terr.orist organization, Isr.ael is a terro.rist state organization that occu.pied lands on a fa.lse history You have the right to support Isr.ael, because you are a vic.tim of the media that cont.rols it"

This statement seeks to equate Israel as a whole with terrorist organisations such as Hamas. It begins by describing 'the Zion.ists' presence in Palestine'—and thus the very existence of Israel—as a historic 'mistake,' thereby DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. It follows this by making a direct equivalence between Hamas and Israel, before evoking notions of → DECEIT (Chapter 7) by contending that Israel's territorial claims as such—and thus not merely claims over the West Bank—are based on a 'false history.' The final clause of the statement suggests that any public support for Israel is the result of media manipulation, suggesting that Israel is 'cont.ro[lled]' by the media. This statement inverts the antisemitic claim that Jews control the media, and while indicative of a conspiratorial mindset would not, on its own, be categorised as antisemitic. The use of full stops in the middle of words—'Zion.ists,' 'Ha.mas,' 'Isr.ael'—may be a typing error, or an attempt to avoid being flagged up by automated moderating systems.

> (9) "You are nothing but terrorists. Calling yourself human is an insult, this is nothing but inhumanity"

Here Israel and its supporters are as a totality deprived of all qualities beyond that of being 'terrorists.' This → IMMORAL (Chapter 6) status is then contrasted with the state of being 'human,' presenting Israel

and its supporters as being opposed to humanity as such and thus →
DEHUMANISED (Chapter 5).

(10) "Isnotreal is a well funded t3rrorist organization"

Here what would otherwise be a direct and assertive ascription of terrorist
status is coded using wordplay around the word Israel: the name of the
state is changed to 'Isnotreal,' thereby presenting Israel as a fictional state
and implicitly DENYING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. 'Terrorist' is spelt
with a 3 in place of the 'e,' possibly in an attempt to avoid content
moderation. The notion of Israel as being 'well funded'—presumably by
the US and European states—suggests a form of → JEWISH PRIVILEGE
(Chapter 27.1), but on its own this is not clearly stated enough to be
categorised as antisemitic.

(11) "zionazi terrorism"
(12) "Terrorist NAZIS"

These statements combine the essentialising ascription of terrorism with
the NAZI ANALOGY—(11) uses a common form of antisemitic wordplay
to describe Israel and Israelis as 'zionazis,' portraying Israel as an exten-
sion or successor to the Nazi state. Comment (12) pushes this analogy
further in bypassing any reference to Zionism or Israel at all (which can
thus only be inferred from the context) and labelling Israel and Israelis
as 'Terrorist NAZIS,' with the NAZI ANALOGY emphasised by the use of
capitals.

Implicit

(13) "Why should there be a need for suicide bombs to come to state
terror inflicting state Israel when the whole state is a bomb making
and bomb using factory?"

(13) makes an implicit equation between Israel as a whole and 'suicide
bombs,' arguing that suicide bombing campaigns and other forms of
terroristic activity cannot be the cause of terror in Israel, when the state
is in its essence 'a bomb making and bomb using factory.' In this way
'bomb making' becomes the ascribed purpose of the state's existence.

(14) "Israel is the isis of the jews"

Here the statement makes an implicit accusation of Israel being a TERRORIST STATE through an analogy between Israel and Daesh/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the radical fundamentalist Islamic terrorists who occupied territories within Iraq and Syria from 2014 to 2019. By declaring Israel to be the 'isis of the jews,' the statement positions Israel as a, if not the, primary threat to the peace and security of the world, a merciless killer, and DENIES ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

(15) *Gazans are being treated like the Yazidis.*

In contrast to (14), where the analogy between Israel and ISIS is made directly, here an analogy is drawn by implicit comparison between the Israeli treatment of Palestinians in Gaza and ISIS's attempted genocide of the Yazidi population of Sinjar, Iraq.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(16) "I am referring to when Israel was established in 1948….through war, through terroristic acts against the British…they were TERRORISTS."

This statement explicitly specifies a time-limited reference point for the use of the term 'terrorist'—the years leading up to and including the 1947–1949 Israeli War of Independence, in which Jewish militias fought against both Arab forces and the British colonial power. Two groups, the Irgun and Lehi, committed terroristic attacks against the British in what was then Mandatory Palestine, including the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, in which 91 people died. A statement which limits its accusation of terrorism to historical incidents of outright terroristic acts should not be categorised as antisemitic. If, however, this particular claim is then extended to incorporate all Jewish or Israeli actions in the War of Independence, the whole history of Israel's military endeavours, or is depicted as characterising the nature of Israeli state and society in its entirety, it should be classed as antisemitic.

(17) *Ben Gvir is a known terrorist, the fact he's not in jail but in power is mind-boggling*

Attributions of involvement in terrorist activities or support for terrorism is not automatically antisemitic when directed against a single individual or entities, without generalising it to Israel as a whole. Certain radical Jewish organisations (such as Kach) are classed as terrorist entities under Israeli law, and pointing that certain political figures are known to have expressed support for their actions does not meet the threshold of a delegitimisation or demonisation of Israel as a whole.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34), IMMORALITY (Chapter 6), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32).

References

AFP News Agency. 2010. Abbas Calls Israel a "Terrorist State." 2 June. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XERGvSYTOY (last accessed on 20 March 2023).

Bellut, Daniel Derya, and Hilal Köylü. 2021. Erdogan Calls Israel 'Terrorist State'. DW, 19 May. https://www.dw.com/en/turkeys-erdogan-hits-out-at-israel-as-mideast-conflict-grows/a-57573760 (last accessed on 26 January 2023).

Bogdanor, Paul. 2004. Chomsky's War Against Israel. In *Anti Chomsky Reader*, ed. Peter Collier and David Horowitz, 87–116. San Francisco: Encounter Books.

Hoffman, Bruce. 2015. *Anonymous Soldiers: The Struggle for Israel, 1917–1947*. New York: Knopf.

New York Times. 2005. Iranian Leader Voices Doubts on Holocaust. 8 December. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/08/world/africa/iranian-leader-voices-doubts-on-holocaust.html (last accessed on 20 March 2023).

Poynting, Scott, and David Whyte, eds. 2012. *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence: The 'War on Terror' as Terror*. London: Routledge.

Rose, John. 1986. *Israel: The Hijack State—America's Watchdog in the Middle East*. London: Bookmarks.

Ruby, Charles L. 2002. The Definition of Terrorism. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 2: 9–14.

Savage, Michael, and Lucy Fisher. 2016. Corbyn Is Accused of Linking Israel and Isis. *The Times*, 1 July. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/corbyn-is-acc used-of-linking-israel-and-isis-flnxmgnj7 (last accessed on 26 January 2023).

Times of Israel. 2014. Bolivia Declares Israel a 'Terrorist State'. 31 July. https://www.timesofisrael.com/bolivia-declares-israel-a-terrorist-state (last accessed on 20 March 2023).

32

Genocide

Matthew Bolton

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The claim that Israel has, is or intends to commit GENOCIDE upon the Palestinian population across the Middle East is one of the most incendiary charges that can be made of the Jewish state. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by the UN in 1948, defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such" (UN 1948). Genocide should be distinguished from both 'crimes against humanity' and 'ethnic cleansing'—the former focuses on violence against individuals as individuals rather than group identity; the latter generally refers to forced expulsion from an area, invariably accompanied by violence, but without the aim of destroying the group as such (Mettraux 2016: Chapter 26). The Convention was

M. Bolton (✉)
Center for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

formulated in the wake of the Holocaust, drawing heavily on the work of the Polish legal scholar Raphael Lemkin, who had argued for years that existing legal and political concepts were unable to grasp the specificities of the Nazi persecution and extermination of European Jewry (Lemkin 2012). But the founding of the State of Israel that same year was not the immediate or direct consequence of the Holocaust, nor of the legal recognition of genocide. Achieving Jewish statehood required a UN Resolution and two wars, one against the British imperial power and the other against the combined forces of various Arab states, as well as intense diplomatic wrangling (Herf 2022). Nevertheless, the experience of the Holocaust gave new impetus to the Zionist project for a Jewish nation-state: the Zionist movement argued that the attempted extermination of the Jews, the failure of other states to allow Jews to escape their fate via immigration, and the need to provide a home for thousands of refugees, made the moral case for a Jewish state unsurmountable. Thus, the existence of Israel and the Jewish experience of the Nazi genocide are historically inextricably entwined. This gives accusations of GENO-CIDE aimed at Israel—whereby the victims (or descendants) of the most extreme genocide in history are portrayed as perpetrators—an aggravating factor which goes beyond the routine hyperbole that characterises much political discourse, particularly online.

On a purely factual basis, the claim that Israel is perpetrating a genocide upon the Palestinians does not stand up to analytical scrutiny: it is "without foundation in relation to what the Genocide Convention specifies; there is no evidence of an intent on the part of the Israeli state to annihilate the Palestinians as a group" (Spencer 2010: 146). According to the World Bank, the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza has grown from 2 million in 1990 to some 4.9 million in 2019 (World Bank 2019). Palestinian children are not removed from their parents and raised as Israeli, as was the case in colonial genocides such as that of the Aborigines in Australia. There is no programme of physical extermination in the Palestinian territories. There is no systematic destruction of Palestinian or Arab cultural or religious artefacts, as would be needed to instantiate the weaker claim of 'cultural genocide' or ethnocide. Much like the → APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29) then, accusations that Israel is committing genocide cannot derive from

a process of disinterested rational comparison but are intensely politically motivated.

One origin of the GENOCIDE claim can be traced back to discourse in the Arab world from the mid-1940s onwards (and even prior to the establishment of Israel) (Litvak and Webman 2012). This argument was often accompanied by a specific Arab form of → HOLOCAUST DENIAL and DISTORTION (Chapter 18), in which it was argued that the Jews had concocted or exaggerated the events of the Holocaust in order to justify and win a Jewish state in the middle of the Arab world through the forced removal and eradication of the Arab population. Over time, equations of the Israelis and the Nazis (→ NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1) became more common, with some arguing that the Jews in Palestine had gone beyond anything attempted by Hitler. This equation of Israel and the Nazis was given more concrete form in the development of the narrative around the Nakba, or 'the catastrophe'—the expulsion and flight of Arabs from what would become Israel during the Jewish–Arab war of 1947–1948—which sought to build a "politics of memory" clearly "modelled very much after Israeli Shoah commemorations" (Bartov 2014: 19). While it is perfectly legitimate to memorialise and mourn a particular history, the politics of equivalence—in which the Nakba (and/or the current situation of Palestinians in Gaza in particular) is not just used as a unifying national narrative, but directly identified with the Holocaust—invariably leads to a form of HOLOCAUST DISTORTION. The formation of the State of Israel and the Holocaust are placed on the same analytical and moral level, simultaneously minimising the latter while demonising and delegitimising the former. By ascribing genocidal violence to the formation of Israel, the state as such is targeted. Unlike accusations of genocide made of other states, such as Australia or China, where apologies for historical or ongoing genocides may be sought, but the legitimacy of the state is not called into question, the accusation of GENOCIDE against Israel is routinely accompanied by demands for the destruction of the state—a clear case of discriminatory → DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33) targeting Israel alone.

Since the late 1960s, this narrative has been picked up by parts of the Western left, often via its mediation by the anti-Zionist campaigns of the Soviet Union, with some in its wilder fringes seeking to undermine

Israel's legitimacy by directly rejecting or casting doubt upon the scale of the Holocaust and the existence or purpose of the gas chambers (Yakira 2010). Others are content to draw direct equivalences between Nazi crimes and the policies of the Israeli state. Particularly in the wake of the Second Intifada, claims that Gaza represented a continuation or return of Auschwitz, or was akin to the Warsaw Ghetto were a common occurrence within Palestinian solidarity movements and marches—again radically distorting the historical reality of the gas chambers and of the Ghetto. Campaigns to abolish or re-name Holocaust Memorial Day, driven in great part by the desire to make an equivalence between the Holocaust and the Israel-Palestine conflict, found support within the highest echelons of politics, including from Jeremy Corbyn (Bolton 2020), former leader of the British Labour Party, who in 2010 hosted an event entitled 'Never Again for Anyone: Auschwitz to Gaza' in Parliament (Zeffman 2018). The accusation of Israeli genocide here often comes tinged with disapproval or disappointment that → JEWS HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST (Chapter 24), are stubbornly refusing to be 'good victims' and are replicating their own suffering onto others.

Support for this move has also come from the academic discipline of Genocide Studies itself. In their eagerness to conflate or equate the formation and policies of the State of Israel with the Holocaust, some scholars have sought to extend the concept of genocide so that it incorporates everything from the post-World War II forced transfer of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and the bombing of Dresden to any number of partition and population polices, including the population transfers of the 1948–1949 Jewish–Arab war (Shaw 2010). In so doing, the concept of genocide is deprived of its specific meaning, and it becomes impossible to distinguish between different modes of violence 'in a manner that would help us understand similarity and difference' (Bartov 2010: 252). Moreover, the particularities of the Holocaust—and specifically the exterminatory antisemitism that drove the Nazi regime's obsessive efforts to seek out and destroy all vestige of Jewish life, wherever it was to be found—are erased, in favour of an abstract, universal concept of 'evil' which blocks historical understanding of the Shoah. In recent years, however, some leading Genocide Studies scholars have argued (Moses 2021) that the concept was, from the outset, constructed

and used as means to further Jewish national interests and guarantee the establishment of a State of Israel ($\rightarrow$ INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM and THE HOLOCAUST, Chapter 20).

In the wake of the 7 October Hamas attacks and the Israeli retaliations in bombing and invasion of Gaza that followed, accusations that Israel was committing or seeking to commit a genocide upon the Gazan population were pervasive. The charge of Israeli genocide was one of the defining concepts in interpreting the war in both anti-Israel street protests and online discourse. But it also found support within certain academic circles and at a geopolitical level, when in December 2023 South Africa sought to prosecute Israel for genocide at the International Court of Justice. South Africa called for the court to enforce a series of "provisional measures" against Israel, principally the cessation of military activity in Gaza. The ICJ made an initial ruling in January 2024, ordering Israel to securing access to aid and basic services in Gaza, and preventing statements from Israeli politicians and public figures which could be viewed as incitement to genocide. However, the court did not rule that Israel should cease its military activity in Gaza.

It cannot be antisemitic to carry out genuine investigations into potentially genocidal activity. But the speed and eagerness with which the genocide concept was settled upon as the most appropriate for describing Israel's actions in the war, rather than lesser charges of 'war crimes'––with the evidence often resting on mistranslated or incomplete statements by Israeli politicians, rather than the actual military campaign itself–– coupled with the fact that, as noted above, the genocide concept had been used by anti-Israel movements long before the 2023-24 war, indicates that the choice of this concept was not one driven by dispassionate analysis (Mor 2024; Rosenberg 2024). That the potentially genocidal intent of the Hamas attacks themselves was all-but ignored in the debate about Israeli genocide merely underlines the point (Bruttman and Bou, 2024).

Accusing Israel of genocide is not merely a factual error, then, but is entangled in a web of concepts which, in effect if not necessarily by intent, DISTORT and at times DENY THE HOLOCAUST; demonise and delegitimise the State of Israel and $\rightarrow$ DENY ITS RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34); and seek to make a NAZI ANALOGY between Israel (both

its founding and its subsequent policies) and Hitler's Germany. It betrays a radical misunderstanding of what genocide is, distorting the historical record and obstructing attempts to identify and combat ongoing genocidal violence today. The close proximity of the genocide concept to the NAZI ANALOGY at least raises the possibility that the eagerness to use this particular term in relation to Israel arises from an opportunity to deploy the memory of the Holocaust as a rhetorical weapon against Israel. The increasing centrality of the genocide concept in anti-Israel discourse, and its legitimation by authority figures and institutions, suggests that the concept is undergoing the same process of gradual social acceptance as the APARTHEID ANALOGY. If this is indeed the case, then there is a real risk that the NAZI ANALOGY itself might be the next to establish itself within the political mainstream.

Outside of the context of the Middle Eastern conflict, the concept of GENOCIDE can be mobilised in relation to a supposed Jewish project to eradicate other cultural and ethnic groups: for example, the → CONSPIRACY THEORY (Chapter 11) of "white genocide" implies that Jews are slowly and methodically working on the extinction of the white population in the West, through tactics such as mass migration and destroying fertility rates. The Tree of Life synagogue shooter, Robert Bowers, is known to be a promoter of this idea in his manifesto (ADL 2023).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Any generalised accusation that the State of Israel has or is committing genocide on the Palestinian people;
- References and analogies to past genocidal episodes, such as colonial genocides, the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust (see also NAZI ANALOGY), the Holodomor, Srebrenica, etc which seek to draw equivalences with Israel;
- Allegations that Jews/Israeli/Israel/Zionism have, are or are planning to commit a large scale destruction of a non-Jewish group; for example, see the → CONSPIRACY THEORY (Chapter 11) of "white genocide."

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Opposing genocide is NOT ANTI Semitic. OTHERWISR YOU ARE supporting Adolf in WWII. Can't have it both ways"

This web user asserts the GENOCIDE accusation implicitly through a pre-emptive reference to Israel's supposed INSTRUMENTALISATION OF ANTISEMITISM when defending its interests or rejecting criticism. Declaring that "opposing genocide" is not antisemitic implies first that Israel is committing genocide, and that this fact is being hidden by those who claim that the accusation of Israeli genocide is a manifestation of antisemitism. The web user then makes an implicit analogy between Israel and Nazi Germany, arguing that those who refuse to condemn Israeli genocide by extension must support Hitler's genocidal programme against Jews in World War II. The logical identity between the two scenarios is reinforced by the assertion that those who recognise the Holocaust but reject the Israeli genocide claim "can't have it both ways."

(2) "You mean the news that you desperately lobby and bribe around the western world to hush your Genocide and abhorrent barbaric behaviour?? Sure."

Here the claim of GENOCIDE is presented as a presupposition and intensified by reference to "abhorrent barbaric behaviour," which seeks to deprive Israel of the moral standing needed to participate in the 'civilised' community of nations. This "behaviour" is attributed to a generalised "you," thus extending the accusation of genocide from the State of Israel to its supporters, and potentially, given the importance that the State of Israel holds for the majority of Jewish people today, Jews in general. The first sentence activates the → INFLUENCE (Chapter 12) stereotype, asserting that "you"—again, making a generalised claim about Jews as such—"desperately lobby and bribe" the "Western world" in order to hide the truth of the genocide and barbarism from public knowledge. The accusations are presented in the form of a rhetorical question, with

the final "sure" adding a note of sarcasm and contempt aimed at all those who refuse to see the truth and/or work against its revelation.

> (3) "'Clashes' more like genocide on the innocent Palestinians. Once again the media portrays lies."

In this comment, a media report's use of the term 'clashes' to describe incidents involving violent confrontation between Israeli military or security forces and Hamas militants is rejected, with the concept of GENOCIDE offered in its place. This rhetorical move implicitly activates the → ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT (Chapter 36) concept, in which the history of the conflict is reduced to solely Israeli responsibility, and all agency and moral responsibility is stripped from the essentialised and romanticised "innocent" Palestinians. The idea of media favouritism is articulated in the final clause, although here it does not imply any untoward Jewish INFLUENCE, and on its own does not constitute an antisemitic conspiracy.

> (4) "when UK created Israel it was nothing to do with religion. It's the imperialist committing genocide"

The formation of the State of Israel, and the GENOCIDE of the Palestinians that supposedly was its aim and consequence, is here depicted in presuppositional form as a direct creation of British imperialism, activating the → COLONIALISM ANALOGY (Chapter 30). The actual history of Israel's formation—which required an anti-colonial war against the British—is here erased in favour of a narrative in which the founding purpose of Jewish national self-determination was the furthering of "imperialist" genocidal violence.

> (5) "Hitler horribly murdered from 1941 to 1945 European's that practiced the Jewish faith most of which their great grandparents converted, so with the blessing of the USA, UK and other foreign countries, from 1948 to 2021 they have been committing genocide"

This web user suggests that the historical connection between the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, and perhaps the lingering guilt of "the USA, UK and other foreign countries," has led, in direct

fashion, to a genocide that has been perpetrated by Israel throughout the entirety of its history. Genocide is thus made an essential constitutive characteristic of Israel as a state. While an analogy between Nazi Germany and Israel is not directly expressed, the use of "so" as a link between the two clauses of the sentence creates a commonality between the two historical scenarios that opens up a pathway towards the conflation of the Israeli state and the Nazis.

> (6) "Genocide started after the birth of Israel and this is the Jewish peoples thanks to all those people who sacrificed their lives to liberate them in the second world war."

This comment again asserts that "the birth of Israel" was essentially genocidal. But to this claim is added the idea that Jews—targeted explicitly here as a generalised group—are ungrateful (and hence potentially → IMMORAL, Chapter 6) to "those who sacrificed their lives to liberate them" from the Nazis. Jews are therefore accused of committing genocide after being themselves 'liberated' from genocide—with the web user implying that it is this Jewish IMMORALITY, or FAILURE TO LEARN FROM THE PAST, which lies behind the 'genocide' of the Palestinians. This is not merely factually incorrect—no party in World War II entered it to "liberate" the Jews—but again makes an implicit analogy between the Holocaust and the Israel-Palestine conflict by creating a connection between the suffering of Jews under the Nazis and the existence and actions of Israel.

> (7) "this cowardly massacre by a US funded military colossus slaughtering the indigenous Semites who have no army navy or airforce is the product of a genocidal ideology akin to Nazism!"

Here the analogy between Israel and Nazi Germany is made directly—Zionism, the belief in a Jewish nation-state, is presented as inherently "genocidal" and thus "akin to Nazism." By making Zionist ideology the target of the GENOCIDE label, the State of Israel as such—and indeed, any Jewish state that could be imagined—is presented as innately and therefore essentially genocidal and Nazi-like. The presentation of Palestinians as "indigenous" acts as means of delegitimising and DENYING

ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. The use of "Semites" to describe Palestinians is a means by which the specificities of antisemitism are denied—by widening the category of "Semite" (a category which has no objective existence beyond its use in racialised antisemitic rhetoric) to include Arabs as well as Jews, antisemitism as a particular prejudicial targeting of Jews and Judaism is erased, leading to an implicit → DENIAL OF ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 19).

Implicit

> (8) "So if some one come and take ur home and ask u to leave.will u. Just leave ?. Or fight back ?. And I already know your answer isn't how white America built […]. So I'm not surprised you back isreal crimes."

Here the web user starts by posing a rhetorical question to a previous commenter, asking how they would react if someone took their home. They suggest that responding with "fighting back" would be an appropriate course of action. The concept of "fighting back" is presented broadly without any distinctions made between non-violent civil disobedience and indiscriminately violent acts like suicide bombings against civilians. The comment then indirectly accuses Israel of genocide by drawing an analogy to the destruction of the Native American population during European colonisation of North America, which is presented as equivalent to "isreal crimes."

> (9) "Is it a state of permanent apartheid over the Palestinians or something even more sinister you desire?"

Comment (9) moves beyond the APARTHEID ANALOGY by contending that "you"—either the previous commenter or Israeli supporters in general—secretly wish for "something even more sinister." In popular political discourse, the only form of oppression that exceeds apartheid is genocide. However, it is also possible that the "sinister" outcome that is supposedly "desired" is a Nazi-style state (which incorporates the concept of GENOCIDE but is not limited to it). The implicitness of the claim

therefore leaves the precise meaning open, but the concept of GENOCIDE remains central in either interpretation.

(10) "I think we're well past the point of solely defending human rights there. The very existence of an entire people is at stake so every little bit helps"

In (10), the accusation of Israeli GENOCIDE—either ongoing or imminent—is made implicitly through the urgency conveyed by the reference to "the very existence of an entire people" being "at stake." It suggests that efforts to protect human rights in the West Bank and Gaza are inadequate, thereby implying → AFFIRMATION (Chapter 42) of violent resistance. The phrase "every little bit helps" indicates that there is no differentiation made between such resistance against the Israeli military and that directly targeting civilians, implying support for any form of indiscriminately violent "resistance" against Israel.

(11) *Native Americans, Armenians, Holocaust, Rwanda…we need to add another to the list.*

Here, an allusion to an Israeli GENOCIDE of the Palestinians is created through the listing of previous well-known genocides, with an ellipsis leaving the reader to fill in the gap of who should be added to "the list." In the context of a discussion about the Arab–Israeli conflict, this can only be an implicit reference to a supposed Israeli genocide of the Palestinians. The reference to the Holocaust also classes this comment as a NAZI ANALOGY.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) *There are some far-right parties in Israel right now who do want to destroy the Palestinians.*

While this remains a highly contestable claim, its specification—the attribution to "some far-right parties"—and temporal limit—"right now"—moves this comment away from the generalised accusation of genocide

aimed at the State of Israel as a whole. Without further context, then, it should not be classed as antisemitic.

Related Categories

NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34), HOLOCAUST DENIAL and DISTORTION (Chapter 18), EVIL (Chapter 3.1), JEWS HAVE NOT LEARNED FROM THE PAST (Chapter 24), COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023. HATE SYMBOLS: "Diversity = White Genocide." https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/diversity-white-genocide (last accessed on 05 July 2023).

Bartov, Omer. 2010. On Definitions. In The Question of Genocide in Palestine, 1948: An Exchange Between Martin Shaw and Omer Bartov, ed. Martin Shaw and Omer Bartov. *Journal of Genocide Research* 12 (3–4): 243–259.

Bartov, Omer. 2014. Genocide and the Holocaust: Arguments over History and Politics. In *Lessons and Legacies XI: Expanding Perspectives on the Holocaust in a Changing World*, ed. Hilary Earl and Karl A. Schleunes, 5–28. Baltimore: Northwestern University Press.

Bolton, Matthew. 2020. Conceptual Vandalism, Historical Distortion: The Labour Antisemitism Crisis and the Limits of Class Instrumentalism. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 3 (2): 11–30.

Bruttman, Tal, and Bou Stéphane. 2024. Interview with Tal Bruttmann. *Holocaust Historian facing October 7. K-larevue*, 3 February. https://k-larevue.com/en/interview-with-tal-bruttmann-holocaust-historian-facing-october-7/ (last accessed on 14 February 2024).

Herf, Jeffrey. 2022. *Israel's Moment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lemkin, Raphael. 2012. *Lemkin on Genocide*, ed. Steven Leonard Jacobs. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Litvak, Meir, and Esther Webman. 2012. *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust*. London: Hurst Publishing.

Mettraux, Guénaël. 2016. *International Crimes and the Ad Hoc Tribunals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mor, Shany. 2024. Israel's Obligations Under the Genocide Convention. *State of Tel Aviv*, 30 January. https://www.stateoftelaviv.com/p/israels-obligations-under-the-genocide (last accessed on 19 February 2024).

Moses, A. Dirk. 2021. *The Problems of Genocide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosenberg, Yair. 2024. What Did Top Israeli War Officials Really Say About Gaza? *The Atlantic*, 21 January. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2024/01/israel-south-africa-genocide-case-fake-quotes/677198/ (last accessed on 19 February 2024).

Shaw, Martin. 2010. Palestine in an International Historical Perspective on Genocide. *Holy Land Studies* 9 (1): 1–25.

Spencer, Philip. 2010. The Left, Radical Antisemitism, and the Problem of Genocide. *Journal for the Study of Antisemitism* 2 (1): 133–152.

UN. 1948. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml (last accessed on 11 October 2022).

World Bank. 2019. Population, Total—West Bank and Gaza. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=PS (last accessed on 11 October 2022).

Yakira, Elhanan. 2010. *Post-Zionism, Post-Holocaust: Three Essays on Denial, Forgetting, and the Delegitimation of Israel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zeffman, Henry. 2018. Jeremy Corbyn Hosted Event Likening Israel to Nazis. *The Times*, 1 August. https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/jeremy-corbyn-hosted-event-likening-israel-to-nazis-6sb5rqd5x (last accessed on 11 October 2022).

33

Double Standards

Chloé Vincent and Matthew Bolton

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Treating Jews, Jewish practices or institutions with a DOUBLE STANDARD, purely on the basis of their Jewishness, is to discriminate against them. The application of these DOUBLE STANDARDS to Jews can be overt—denying Jews alone certain political, economic or civil rights—or more subtle. DOUBLE STANDARDS might take the form of stricter regulation on ritual slaughter or Jewish schooling than on other, non-Jewish religious practices or education; refusing to allow Jewish workers time off for religious holidays, but allowing workers of other religious backgrounds to do so; or banning Jewish police officers from wearing a yarmulke

C. Vincent · M. Bolton (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chloe.vincent@ugent.be

M. Bolton
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

while allowing other religious headgear (Cheng et al. 2022). At an individual level, DOUBLE STANDARDS might become apparent in certain cultural, academic or political spheres in which Jews are only accepted as full members so long as they pass a 'litmus test' regarding the 'correct' attitudes to Israel and Zionism (Hersh and Royden 2023).

Following the work of Natan Sharansky (2004a), the concept of DOUBLE STANDARDS has gained a central position within debates around Israel-related antisemitism, used as a test for "distinguish[ing] legitimate criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism." Sharansky proposes a "3-D" test: demonisation (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1, → CHILD MURDER/BLOOD LIBEL, Chapter 4, → NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1, → TERRORIST STATE, Chapter 29), delegitimisation (→ DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, Chapter 34) and DOUBLE STANDARDS, in order to analyse whether discourse against Israel falls under the definition of antisemitism or not.

Applying DOUBLE STANDARDS consists of singling out Israel for alleged or real accusations while ignoring similar accusations towards other countries. Sharansky connects this discriminatory attitude to the State of Israel with historical antisemitism, writing that

> For thousands of years, a clear sign of anti-Semitism was treating Jews differently than other peoples, from the discriminatory laws that many nations enacted against them to the tendency to judge their behavior by a different yardstick. Similarly, today we must ask whether criticism of Israel is being applied selectively. It is anti-Semitism, for instance, when Israel is singled out by the United Nations for human rights abuses while the behavior of tried and true abusers, like China, Iran, Cuba, and Syria are ignored. Likewise, it is anti-Semitism when Israel's Magen David Adom, alone among the world's ambulance services, is denied admission to the International Red Cross. (2004b: 3)

Other concepts are partly based on double standards. The most notable is → ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT FOR THE CONFLICT (Chapter 36): while one can acknowledge that Israel must take its share of responsibility for the conflict, it is antisemitic to refuse to consider critically the role of other actors such as terrorist organisations, Palestinian authorities or other states in the development and sustaining of the conflict, including violence against civilians. Similarly, the APARTHEID ANALOGY

(Chapter 29) could be (and occasionally is) used to target a number of countries, yet only in the case of Israel has it been consistently utilised over the entirety of the state's history (and indeed even before it existed as a state). Finally, concepts such as EVIL, besides having been historically assigned to Jews, express a form of DOUBLE STANDARDS when applied to Israel, since painting the country as the world's worst human rights abuser clearly indicates other regimes are not held to the same standard. The concept is therefore a central part of antisemitic discourse today, either directly or in connection to other antisemitic concepts—it can either open a pathway to, or be the result of their use.

Despite this, or perhaps precisely because of it, it is also one of the more contested concepts within antisemitism studies. The authors of the Jerusalem Declaration, for example, explicitly argue that "[c]riticism that some may see as excessive or contentious, or as reflecting a 'double standard,' is not, in and of itself, antisemitic" (JDA 2021). The JDA's dismissal of double standards has been subject to sustained criticism. It is true that not all forms of 'singling Israel out' can be classed as anti-semitic—various advocacy groups, whether pro-Israel or pro-Palestine, often focus on Israel because of emotional, geographical or cultural ties to the region and/or the conflict. Nevertheless, some are the expression of an obsessive negative fixation or preoccupation, often justified by gross exaggerations and distortions of the historical reality of the conflict, or the character of Israel as a state. More broadly, as David Schraub (2021) notes, "[d]isparate treatment – treating likes unalike – is perhaps the closest thing there is to the paradigm case of discrimination and it'd be simply *weird* for antisemitism to stand alone in not including this very intuitive case."

What this dispute does indicate, then, is that—like virtually every category in this book—context and language need to be taken into account when judging whether a statement or action should be classed as applying a double standard to Israel. This need for context presents a serious problem for the analysis of web comments. In contrast to investi-gating a bias of a political party, a media or even an entire country, where diverse online and offline sources submit from the same 'author,' it is not easy—if possible at all—to detect the application of DOUBLE STAN-DARDS in the context of comment sections. A standalone comment, even

when placed in the context of the preceding article, video, tweet, etc., or the context of the thread itself, does not often provide enough elements to justify that the standards to which Israel are held are not similarly held in other contexts. To ascertain this would require examination and comparison of other comments made by the web user elsewhere, which would be inefficient, often unproductive or even impossible.[1]

However, given the importance of the concept for contemporary anti-semitism, and the frequency with which the use of other, more easily identifiable concepts point towards the application of double standards, it should still be regarded as least a potential mode of antisemitism found online and is therefore presented, albeit briefly, in this volume.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1), ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT FOR THE CONFLICT (Chapter 36), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

---

[1] Moreover, such an examination risks missing the point of linguistic and discourse analytical corpus studies, which are designed to explore the linguistic patterns and discursive dynamics within a dataset, such as a thread. Such analyses are about tapping the reference and inference potential of a web comment, i.e. decoding what is said and meant, while staying close to the understanding and evaluation process of other web users. In everyday life, one web user rarely bothers to reconstruct the wider identity and communication behaviour of another; rather, they consciously or unconsciously pick up on certain claims and evaluations made within other users' comments when skimming a comment section. It is the language and communication that determines the world view of others—and this is precisely the approach of this book. The cross-thread behaviour of one or more commenters requires the use of technical tools that are currently not sophisticated enough in the recognition of antisemitic hate speech (e.g. in the individual profiles of a web user).

References

Cheng, Albert, Jay P. Greene, and Ian Kingsbury. 2022. Are More Highly Educated Individuals More Antisemitic? Findings Based on a New Approach to Measuring Antisemitism Using Double Standards. *Antisemitism Studies* 6 (1): 70–98.

Hersh, Eitan, and Laura Royden. 2023. Antisemitic Attitudes Across the Ideological Spectrum. *Political Research Quarterly* 76 (2): 697–711.

JDA (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism). 2021. Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. https://jerusalemdeclaration.org (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Sharansky, Natan. 2004a. Antisemitism in 3-D. Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16: 3–4.

Sharansky, Natan. 2004b. Testimony to Helsinki Commission. https://www.csce.gov/sites/helsinkicommission.house.gov/files/NAtan%20Sharansky.pdf (last accessed on 13 March 2023).

Schraub, David. 2021. A New Challenger Approaches! Evaluating the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. *The Debate Link*, 26 March. https://dsadevil.blogspot.com/2021/03/a-new-challenger-approaches-evaluating.html (last accessed on 13 March 2023).

34

Denial of Israel's Right to Exist

Chloé Vincent, Matthew Bolton, and Hagen Troschke

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The denial of Israel's right to exist—either as a nation-state at all, a self-identified Jewish state or Jewish-majority state—is one of the most common antisemitic concepts today, and at the same time one of the most controversial. The DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST or the DENIAL OF THE JEWISH RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINE should be distinguished from criticism of the Israeli government, any specific policy of the Israeli state or the general trajectory of the Israeli state and society

C. Vincent · M. Bolton (✉) · H. Troschke
Centre for Research on Antisemitism,
Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chloe.vincent@ugent.be

M. Bolton
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

H. Troschke
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

more broadly. Central to this concept is the idea that Jews, unlike virtually every other group of people in the world, have no right to make collective national territorial or political claims—either in general or in the Middle East in particular. Expressions of this idea commonly centre on attempts to delegitimise the existence of the State of Israel as whole, often by describing it as an 'entity' rather than a state, or through negative and at times incendiary historical ANALOGIES with → NAZI GERMANY (Chapter 28), → APARTHEID South Africa (Chapter 29.1) or European → COLONIALISM (Chapter 30). The 'indigenous' status of the Palestinians is often evoked as a contrast to what are presented as the fraudulent claims of the Jews, thus denying the historical connection between Jews and the land which now comprises the State of Israel.

The idea that Jews required, and were morally entitled to, a specifically Jewish nation-state was first systematically formulated by Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian Jewish lawyer, whose shift from an assimilationist, German nationalist identity to political Zionism was motivated in great part by his experiences of antisemitism in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna (Kornberg 1993). The notion of a secular Jewish state centred on Jerusalem—then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, later Mandatory Palestine under the British—caused contestation from the outset, both within and without the Jewish community.

In the decades before the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel, Jewish opposition came from different directions: from those favouring assimilation, from a more theologically-grounded position that rejected either the secular character of early Zionism or the concept of Jewish political power outright, and from socialistically-minded Bundist groups who supported non-statist forms of Jewish collectivity (Wistrich 1996). Early non-Jewish forms of anti-Zionism included Arab opposition to both the Jewish purchase of land and establishment of a Jewish state in what was perceived as the Arab world, and the various imperial powers who saw Zionism's anti-imperialist character as a threat (Mandel 1977). By 1917, however, in the midst of World War I, Herzl and the broader Zionist movement's diplomatic effort had resulted in the Balfour Declaration, which saw the British government pledging support for a "national home for the Jewish people" (Stein 1961).

Jewish opposition to Zionism decreased over the course of the 1930s as Hitler's rise to power and subsequent oppression of Jews within Germany and then across Europe made clear the lethal threat of modern antisemitism. The failure of other states to offer 'stateless' Jewish refugees sanctuary underscored the need for a 'safe haven' for Jews facing persecution in the form of a Jewish nation-state (Edelheit 2000). For the Nazis, despite early negotiations regarding the transfer of some Jewish property from Germany to Palestine (which have led to antisemitic claims of → NAZI-JEWISH COLLABORATION, Chapter 21), the very idea of a Jewish nation-state was a contradiction in terms, as they saw Jews as essentially cosmopolitan and rootless (→ THE OTHER/FOREIGN, Chapter 2). For Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, the concept of a Jewish state was nothing more than a pitiful parody of the true state form and was merely cover for the furthering of a Jewish global conspiracy (Herf 2006).

In the wake of the Holocaust and the eventual establishment of the State of Israel via the UN Partition Plan for Palestine and a war of independence against both the British and the Arab forces, Jewish anti-Zionism became a minority pursuit. The main opposition to Israel's right to exist now centred on Arab nationalist movements and the Soviet Union, who portrayed Israel as an imperialist or colonial project intended to cement American capitalist hegemony in the Middle East (Tabarovsky 2022). Denying both Jewish claims to territory in the region and the idea of Jews as a national 'people,' these ideas percolated through the parts of the European left that looked to Moscow for political leadership. Contemporary essentialising notions of Israel as an innately → RACIST STATE (Chapter 29.2), an idea closely connected to the APARTHEID ANALOGY and the NAZI ANALOGY, draw heavily on this legacy. Other common modes of DENIAL include statements which refute the current existence of the State of Israel at all.

That this concept remains controversial can be seen in the differing approaches taken by different definitions of antisemitism. The IHRA definition explicitly includes "[d]enying the Jewish people their right to self-determination" as an example of antisemitism and makes direct reference to strategies of delegitimation such as "claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor" (IHRA 2016). It is crucial to note that the definition refers to the existence of *a* State of Israel, rather

than *the* State of Israel—the emphasis here is on the *conceptual* rejection of *any* State of Israel or Jewish state as such, rather than the actually existing state. Thus, it would not be antisemitic to allege that Israel contains elements of systemic racism in both state and society or contest its current (*de facto* or *de jure*) borders. But it would be antisemitic to claim that the idea of a Jewish state is endemically racist—unlike, say, a French, German, British or indeed a Palestinian state. This is a form of → DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33), in which criteria are imposed upon Jews that are not imposed on other groups.

For its part, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism argues that it is antisemitic to deny "the right of Jews in the State of Israel to exist and flourish, collectively and individually, as Jews, in accordance with the principle of equality" (JDA 2021). But it also contends that it is not, "on the face of it," antisemitic to criticise Zionism as a form of nationalism or argue "for a variety of constitutional arrangements for Jews and Palestinians in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean […] whether in two states, a binational state, unitary democratic state, federal state, or in whatever form." Thus, an even-handed critique of the current form of the Israeli state, based on a suggestion that Jews in the Middle East might "flourish" to a greater extent in a bi-lateral or federal state than a Jewish state would not, from this perspective, be classed as antisemitic. While this position may appear as unworldly and utopian and seems to significantly underestimate the potential for antisemitic outcomes for a Jewish minority within what would be an Arab-dominated state, such 'post-Zionist' arguments are nevertheless distinct from those which demonise the idea of a Jewish state while legitimising a Palestinian state, therefore enacting a form of DOUBLE STANDARDS. This latter argument is a familiar topos within online discourse around the Arab–Israeli conflict.

In recent years, and in particular in the wake of the 7 October Hamas attacks and subsequent Israeli invasion of Gaza, debate has raged over whether the slogan 'From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free'— often heard at pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel protests—constitutes a form of denying Israel's right to exist. The phrase originates with, and was first popularised by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), as a means to call for a 'greater' Palestine in which Israel as a separate

state no longer exists. In contrast to the more indeterminate slogan 'Free Palestine,' 'from the river to the sea' can be interpreted as a demand for a Palestinian state that is at the expense of Jewish self-determination. The precise geographical specification indeed attributes the existing territory of the State of Israel to a Palestinian state. The people of Israel would therefore fall under the sovereignty of a state of Palestine. While some advocates of the phrase suggest that it is merely a call for a multiethnic, multi-faith state based on the equality of Jews and Arabs, within the Palestinian discourse from which the slogan first emerged, however, Palestine is generally depicted as place exclusively for Arab Palestinians. Given this, and taking into account the high level of antagonism that now exists between Jews/Israelis and Arabs/Palestinians after a century of conflict, the most likely outcome of a single Palestine between 'river and sea' for Jewish Israelis would be a wholly subservient position at best, and expulsion or even physical destruction at worst. The attribute "free"—read together with the geographical specification and the way in which the slogan is used politically—can be understood as freedom from both Jewish sovereignty in the region and freedom from Jewish Israelis as such. Even if this meaning is not always fully understood by those who express it at pro-Palestinian and anti-Israel protests in Western countries, given this history, the meaning of the slogan is not dependent on the context in which it is uttered—that is, it cannot be simply detached from the meanings historically ascribed to it.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Denying the statehood of Israel in the past, present or future, in its internationally recognised borders;
- Denying the right of Jewish people to live in a Jewish state;
- Denying the/any concept of the Jewish state, including refusal to acknowledge the label of 'state' for Israel in favour of other labels (such as 'entity,' 'organisation,' 'project,' etc.);

- Denying the political, cultural, historic or symbolic connection between Israeli citizens and the territory of Israel;
- Singling out Zionism as an illegitimate form of nationalism.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "There is no Israel, just illegally occupied Palestine"
(2) "cuz so called 'israel' occupied a country and called it there own"
(3) "shush you guys are a bunch of theives and criminals on a fake country"
(4) "EFFF ISREAEL…FAKE COUNTRY"
(5) "Israel" is stolen land."
(6) "wich map di you refer at? Becauz i only see Palastines and olive tree when i look!!! Where is your Israel????"
(7) "ISRAEL IS NOT A COUNTRY is theft Land by a gang of murdereres"
(8) "Israel isn't a country it's a cult!!!"

One of the most common ways to DENY THE JEWISH RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINE is to deny outright the very existence of a State of Israel. Here, Israel is described as a "fake country," wiped from the world map or reduced to "stolen land" and an "illegal occup[ation]," with the latter claims not limited to settlements on the West Bank but applied to the entirety of the state itself. Closely connected to descriptions of Israel as an 'entity,' such comments often place the word Israel within scare quotes, or as in (2) the use of "so called," to draw attention to the supposed fictional character of Israeli statehood. (7) evokes the → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) concept by describing Israelis as a "gang of murder-eres [sic]," while in (8), the description of Israel as a "cult" draws on notions of Jewish 'clannishness' (→ DISLOYALTY, Chapter 9) and potential brainwashing as a result of → JEWISH POWER (Chapter 12).

(9) "I'm sure you know as well as most people know that the only resolution is to dissolve and exterminate Israel and get it back to how it was before the land was stolen from Palestine in 1947, and the top evils of the world became the Israeli government."

Here, (9) explicitly calls for Israel's destruction. The use of the verb "dissolve" reinforces the negation of Israel as a country since it is usually applied in reference to a company or organisation, not a state. The comment then goes beyond denying Israel's right to exist to call for the "exterminat[ion]" of the country, using the vocabulary of pest control (→ DEHUMANISATION, Chapter 5) that has long been central to racial antisemitism, with the potential implication that the Holocaust should be extended to the State of Israel. Although the final sentence refers to the "Israeli government" rather than the state itself, its description as one of "the top evils of the world" is a clear activation of the EVIL concept.

(10) "the only jewish state should have been made in Germany not in Palestine, on the expense of native population"
(11) "I mean Plaestinians had nothing to do with hitler killing jews. Definitely berlin should have been given to jews as a reparation"
(12) "If they were not welcomed, y couldn't they have left. USA or Great Britain Could have them."
(13) "The best solution is to tell the 'Israelis' to go back to where they came from."

These comments deny Israel's right to exist by offering supposed alternative 'solutions' to the problem of where a Jewish state should have been created. Common suggestions include Germany due to the role of the country in the Holocaust, or the USA due to a relatively large Jewish population and political support for Israel. In each case, the historic connection between Jews and the Middle East (and the existence of a native Jewish community preceding Israel) is denied, with Palestinians presented in (10) as the "native population" in contrast to what logically must be the Jewish colonisers. (13) makes the latter point explicit by demanding that "'Israelis'"—again, delegitimised through the use of quotation marks—return to their supposed countries of origin.

(14) "Israeli zeonist fake mobs regime… Israel is a fake state apartheid zeonist genocidal terrorists stolen the Palestinian lands from its rightful owners."

The notion of Israel as being a "fake state" implicitly sets a (non-existent) standard for nation-building processes that Israel has failed to meet, thereby attempting to delegitimize the state. The allegation of a criminal "mobs [sic] regime" is combined with a series of other antisemitic ascriptions, in which Israel is described as a → TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31) imposing APARTHEID and inflicting → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32) on the "rightful owners" of the land. The abundance of slander serves to create the strongest possible moral contrast between Israel and the Palestinians.

Implicit

(15) "thats not even a flag SMH"
(16) "It's like Russia make independent day in Ukraine"
(17) "Why don't you stop stealing their homes and behave like good guests?"

Each of these comments delegitimises the State of Israel and thus denies its right to exist using a different mode of implicit expression, demonstrating the range of this concept. Comment (15) replicates the comments denying Israel's current existence at all highlighted above in (1)–(8). Here, the web user responds to another who has posted an emoji of the Israeli flag by denying its existence as a flag, and thereby through metonymy denying the existence of the state whose flag it is. (16) was posted in response to a news story reporting on the Israel independence day celebrations. It makes an analogy between Israel's independence as a state and the-then recent Russian invasion of Ukraine, thereby claiming that Israel's existence is as illegitimate as the universally condemned Russian aggression.

The first part of the rhetorical question in (17) would not, in isolation, be categorised as antisemitic as it is not clear whether it concerns Israel as a whole or merely the West Bank settlements. The latter part, however, positions Jewish presence in the Middle East as being entirely contingent on the generosity of the true 'owners' and, implicitly, the "good"

behaviour of Jews/Israelis. According to the commenter, the Israeli side should refrain from stealing and take on the role of "good guests." Even if they were to speak only of the West Bank, the status of the Israelis as a group not belonging to the Middle East would remain. The standard of what constitutes "good" or legitimate behaviour is removed from Jews/Israelis themselves. Together these attributions call into question the *right* of Israel to exist and turn the state into a gift which could (or perhaps should) be taken away at any moment.

(18) "You misspelled Palestine."

In response to a comment or an article mentioning Israel, this false ingenuity offers a seemingly well-meaning correction on orthography. However, given that writing 'Israel' instead of the suggested 'Palestine' is clearly not a spelling mistake, one can draw the inference that the message that the web user is trying to convey is that Israel does not or should not exist, and that the land currently occupied by Israel is, in truth, "Palestine." The phrase "you misspelled …" is a common rhetorical device used on the internet to ironically convey the idea that one thing is really something else.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(19) *The West Bank is not Israel. Israel's borders are defined by the 1948 UN resolution!*

This comment denies Israel's sovereignty over the West Bank and some other territories it currently controls, but it does not deny Israel's very existence or legitimacy as a state. The Partition Declaration was the first document to officially recognise Israel, drawing its international borders: reference to this document is implicitly a recognition of Israel's right to exist, even if its borders are being contested.

(20) *Israelis and Palestinians need to learn to live together in a state that will ensure equal rights and prosperity for all.*

While the two-state solution is still the preferred diplomatic solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict, the reality on the ground means a one-state solution is increasingly being debated. The latter would entail equal rights for Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants of such a state, which would become a multi-ethnic state. Israel is already *de facto* such a state, as over 25% of Israeli citizens do not have a Jewish background. Without any further context, it is therefore not antisemitic to suggest the creation of a unitary, federal or confederate Israeli-Palestinian state. While this political arrangement is controversial, has little support within either Israeli or Palestinian populations, would require extensive overhaul of the current Israeli constitutional order and ignores the potential risk of antisemitism in any future state, it does not necessarily negate the Jewish right to political self-determination. It differs from the single Palestinian state envisaged by the 'from the river to the sea' slogan discussed above by explicitly recognising the rights of Israelis to remain as equal citizens within a genuinely bi-national (and thus not a 'Palestinian') state.

Related Categories

NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), GENOCIDE (Chapter 32), TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31), EVIL (Chapter 3.1), CHILD MURDER/BLOOD LIBEL (Chapter 4).

References

Edelheit, Abraham J. 2000. The Holocaust and the Rise of Israel: A Reassessment Reassessed. *Jewish Political Studies Review* 12 (1/2): 97–112.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2006. Convergence: The Classic Case Nazi Germany, Antisemitism and Anti-Zionism During World War II. *Journal of Israeli History* 25 (1): 63–83.

IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). 2016. Working Definition of Antisemitism. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism (last accessed on 30 August 2023).

JDA (Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism). 2021. The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism. https://jerusalemdeclaration.org (last accessed on 30 August 2023).

Kornberg, Jacques. 1993. *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to Zionism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Mandel, Neville J. 1977. *The Arabs and Zionism Before World War I*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Stein, Leonard. 1961. *The Balfour Declaration.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Tabarovsky, Izabella. 2022. Demonization Blueprints: Soviet Conspiracist Antizionism in Contemporary Left-Wing Discourse. *Journal of Contemporary Antisemitism* 5 (1): 1–20.

Wistrich, Robert. 1996. Zionism and Its Religious Critics in fin-de-siècle Vienna. *Jewish History* 10 (11): 93–111.

35

Calls for Boycott of Israel and Support for BDS

Hagen Troschke

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Boycott efforts against Israel as part of the political conflict between Arabs and Jews in the region have a long history. They date back to the time before the establishment of Israel and were then still conceived as boycotts against Jews. Boycotts were organised at the Fifth Palestine Arab Congress in 1922, during the Arab Revolt in Palestine in 1936–1939, at the World Islamic Congress in 1931, the Bloudan Conference in 1937 and by the Arab League from 1946 onwards (Feuerherdt and Markl 2020: 16–19).

The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement was founded in 2005 with the stated goals of achieving an end to the occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands and a right of return for the Palestinian

H. Troschke (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: hagen.troschke@decodingantisemitism.eu

refugees of 1948 and their descendants, as well as mobilising international support for this (Feuerherdt and Markl 2020: 63–75). While these demands ostensibly relate to human rights, they pursue a further agenda. At first, this agenda is based on a strategic ambiguity that leaves open what is meant by all Arab lands. Those who can rally behind this demand include both supporters who advocate an end to the occupation and settlements in the West Bank, and those in the BDS movement who propagate the dissolution of Israel as a state—including the militant groups who share the BDS founding call and seek a violent end to Israel in favour of a Palestinian state on that territory. This ambiguity is meant to broaden the appeal of the call and strengthen support, but is also the reason for controversies surrounding the central concept. It is compounded by the divisiveness of the closely related → APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1) applied to Israel, which frequently occurs in the official and informal BDS discourse—not least due to the fact that the movement has been inspired by campaigns targeting apartheid policies in South Africa.

The logical conclusion of a demand for the right of return for Palestinian refugees—not limited to those actually displaced in 1948, but extended to their descendants, now numbering almost six million—is that Jews would become a minority in an Arab-dominated Israel (or a one-state solution).[1] This would de facto end the capacity for Jewish self-determination. The consequences of both BDS demands, if successful, would be so fundamental that they would amount to nothing less than a → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34). Ultimately, the most militant elements of the Palestinian camp make it clear that they see any Jewish presence in the Middle East as illegitimate.

The attack by Hamas (and other Palestinian groups) on Israel on 7 October 2023, during which the attackers deliberately murdered a total of 1,200 people in a sometimes bestial manner, mutilated them, raped women and took 240 people hostage (TOI 2023; McKernan 2024; Sonnenfeld 2024), was played down in the BDS movement, reinterpreted as an act of liberation or resistance, implicitly welcomed,

---

[1] Just imagine, by way of analogy, that the descendants of all the refugees in Europe after World War II were (despite their new place of residence) to lay claim to the places of their ancestors—and what the consequences would be.

explicitly supported or cheered (ADL 2023b). A few examples out of countless others illustrate this: Students for Justice in Palestine glorified the massacres as "a revolutionary moment" and often proclaimed with reference to them that they "support all forms of resistance" in "the broader occupied Palestinian lands" (by which Israel is meant) for a "free Palestine, from the river to the sea" (ADL 2023b; ADL 2023c; Rodriguez Poleo 2023; cf. Chapter 34). Their advocacy of massacres as a strategy to expel Jews from Israel ($\rightarrow$ AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE, Chapter 42) goes hand in hand with a DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIT. By legitimising the massacres, they also embrace them as a political goal. Activists from the Samidoun network distributed sweets on the streets of Berlin to celebrate the atrocities (Fröhlich et al. 2023). In doing so, they endorse the goals of Hamas and likewise reveal the latently violent nature of the BDS movement. The group Palestine Solidarity Campaign Manchester published a statement in which they describe the atrocities as a preview "of a liberated Palestine" and call for "unconditional support to the resistance until Palestine is free" (Palestine Solidarity Campaign Manchester 2023). This also shows that, in certain contexts, the slogan "Free Palestine" cannot be separated from the character of a battle cry and that it can express both freedom for Palestinians and the annihilation of Jews and Israel (cf. Chapter 34; Chapter 42).

Depriving Jews of their right to self-determination and creating the conditions for the expulsion of Jews from a particular place are antisemitic acts. Jews are also targeted by BDS in two ways. Non-Israeli Jews are coerced into distancing themselves from Israel or severing existing ties. Boycott demands disproportionately affect Jewish communities, both from a material and cultural (science, arts, education) standpoint. As many Jewish people have personal or professional ties to Israel, they would be the first to be impacted in case relations with it were ceased. But Jews also come into focus as they are often assumed to be 'complicit' with Israel ($\rightarrow$ HOLDING JEWS COLLECTIVELY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAEL'S ACTIONS, Chapter 25). The BDS movement only accepts the participation of Jews in society (e.g. in cultural events or in some student bodies on university campuses, where BDS is particularly active) if they publicly denounce Israel and act as a moral caution for anti-Israeli positions (Herzog 2015; Pessin and Ben-Atar 2018; Atkins and Elman 2021: 238–241; ADL 2023a).

Antisemitism can be found in the justifications for the boycott demands, too. Key actors claim that Israel is carrying out ethnic cleansing or is a danger to world peace (→ EVIL, Chapter 3.1), that it is committing → GENOCIDE (Chapter 32) against the Palestinians, that it is acting like the Nazis did (→ NAZI ANALOGY, Chapter 28.1), that it is protected in its actions by a → FREE PASS (Chapter 26) and a → TABOO OF CRITICISM (Chapter 23), that it practises APARTHEID or → COLONIALISM (Chapter 30) or that a powerful Israel lobby (→ POWER, Chapter 12) manipulates international politics in Israel's favour by means of a → CONSPIRACY (Chapter 13); these and comparable accusations are firmly anchored in the boycott discourse and are regularly repeated (Müller 2022: 214–230). They are meant to underline the urgency of the commitment to Palestinian rights. In doing so, however, they overshadow—and prevent—the perception of the complex dynamics of the Arab–Israeli conflict. The untenability of these claims and their reliance on canonical antisemitic repertoires ultimately deprives the BDS movement of its argumentative basis and is an obstacle to a fair political solution to the conflict.

The background of the actors also plays a role in the evaluation of BDS. While some of the *initiators* of the BDS movement can claim that they focus on Israel because they are directly affected by developments in the region and it is therefore their obvious field of action, the situation is different for *external* supporters. There is no other state against which there has been even a remotely comparable boycott movement for the entire duration of the state's existence (with such a wide array of actors)—regardless of the number, severity and duration of human rights violations worldwide. The scope of the boycott movement against Israel has come about solely because the relevant activists have singled out Israel from all the potential objects of their action and focus on it, while human rights violations elsewhere and rare, related boycott efforts receive considerably less attention from activists. According to objective criteria such as the characteristics of the relevant human rights violations, such an imbalance would not be expected. At the very least, *external* support for BDS therefore corresponds to a → DOUBLE STANDARD (Chapter 33) in dealing with Israel, which is characterised by a disproportionately increased agitation against Israel in terms of quantity and severity. The

presented characteristics show that the goals of BDS, the justifications and the decision to support it all contain antisemitic aspects.

Boycott demands do not necessarily have an antisemitic character. If they are not placed in the context of BDS, do not have the character of a general collective punishment of Israelis (or Jews) and are not justified or accompanied by antisemitic attributions, they are not antisemitic per se. A boycott of products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank, for example, has a specific and limited goal, is not directed against Israel as a whole and does not aim to deprive Jews (in general) living in—or outside—Israel of resources. Here, too, a DOUBLE STANDARD could come into play, but this is difficult to demonstrate in a particular case. However, embedding such a boycott in the BDS movement would change its character, as it would then fit into its antisemitic context.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Endorsing the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement as such, as well as its goals or strategies;
- Endorsing a boycott of Israel in general terms (goods, culture, sports, universities, etc.).

Boycott demands that are limited to Israeli settlements in the West Bank or that—unlike BDS demands—do not question the livelihood of Israeli citizens or Israel's statehood or aim at generalised application are not necessarily antisemitic.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Anyone who cares about human rights should be pro BDS."

This general call for support for BDS equates human rights advocacy with BDS. Thereby, the comment expresses a totalising view of the reality

by presenting a dichotomy between human rights defenders on the one hand and Israel (and non-supporters of BDS) on the other. The statement also ignores the current and potentially fatal future impact of BDS on the rights of Israeli and non-Israeli Jews. At best, one could speak here of a one-sided perception, otherwise of an indifference towards the rights of Jews.

(2) "Why would anyone support BDS? Because it worked for apartheid in South Africa and it'll work for apartheid in Israel-Palestine."

The question about the reasons for supporting BDS is answered with the APARTHEID ANALOGY in the form of a direct comparison with South Africa, according to which the aim of BDS is to abolish "apartheid" imposed by Israel. This analogy, which projects the conditions in South Africa at the time of apartheid onto Israel and thus does not provide an analysis of the situation but instead presents Israel as a whole as a moral wrong, is popular as a demonisation strategy in the corresponding discourse.

(3) "zioNaZis is what you say - not 'Jews.' Boycott #goyimhaters & #IsraelRacism!"

This general call for a boycott is accompanied by and justified with antisemitic attributions: with the NAZI ANALOGY in the portmanteau "zioNaZis," which equates all Jews (as underlined in the explanation following) with Nazis, with the insinuation that all Jews hate non-Jews, and with the claim, inherent in the last hashtag, that Israel is fundamentally racist ($\rightarrow$ RACIST STATE, Chapter 29.2). This comment thus shows how close support for boycotts against Israel and antisemitism are in discourse and imagination.

(4) "#bds for the win."
(5) "The solution is #BDS."

(4) and (5) are pure advocacies of the BDS movement. It is seen as a condition for the "win" and touted as the "solution" par excellence, although it remains open what these consist of in each case.

(6) "Yes, divest from the apartheid state."

The call to withdraw investments from Israel (as is evident from the context of the comment) relies on the APARTHEID ANALOGY for justification and accordingly derives the call to action from this demonising attribution and targets the whole of Israel.

(7) "Rightly so. Boycott the Jews!"

The decision by the ice cream brand Ben and Jerry's to stop selling its ice cream in Israeli-occupied territories in 2021 triggered much support from boycott advocates. This comment extends the boycott demand to all Jews, thereby holding Jews worldwide accountable for Israeli policies. The open support for discrimination against uninvolved individuals on the basis of their background and a resentment towards the group they belong to leads directly to the core of antisemitism.

(8) "Boycott the whole of the illegal Israeli colony."

The comment directs the call for a boycott against Israel as a "whole" and attempts to legitimise it with the COLONIALISM ANALOGY. The analogy and the alleged illegality of Israel DENY ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

(9) "They ought to be sanctioned by every country in the world."

This desire for sanctions is not only indiscriminately directed against all of Israel, but wants to see a worldwide collective effort that would put Israel in a hopeless situation. In doing so, it accepts the DOUBLE STANDARD that, in such a scenario, Israel would be the only country sanctioned in this way.

Implicit

(10) "Supporting BDS, the non-violent protest group, is anti-Semitic now?"

Support for BDS is presented in this rhetorical question (recognisable from the ironic use of "now") at the beginning as a neutral proposition. However, through the attributes "non-violent" and "protest group,"

commonly associated with legitimate action and progressive purposes, it becomes clear that BDS is viewed positively and as worthy of support. At the same time, the comment's rhetorical framing rejects the antisemitic characteristics of BDS.

(11) "There is absolute apartheid, racism and occupation in Israel. #BDS #Defund_Apartheid"

In this case, APARTHEID and RACISM are said to have achieved their maximum expression in Israel. The hashtag "BDS" is to be understood in the context of these attributions, and the hashtag "Defund_Apartheid" acts as a slogan-like endorsement of its positioning.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) "The decision to stop selling in the occupied territories signals that there are other ways than BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) to show solidarity with the Palestinians. This is not about boycotting Israel, but only the settlements, which are illegal under international law…"

This assessment refers to the above-mentioned decision by the company Ben and Jerry's to no longer distribute its products in the West Bank. The endorsement is for a limited boycott that continues to give Israel and its people ample room for manoeuvre. While this process allows for other assessments than the present one, it is not antisemitic—just like its affirmation.

Related Categories

APARTHEID ANALOGY (Chapter 29.1), COLONIALISM ANALOGIES (Chapter 30), RACIST STATE (Chapter 29.2), NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1), AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023a. Anti-Israel Activism on U.S. Campuses, 2021–2022. https://www.adl.org/resources/report/anti-israel-act ivism-us-campuses-2021-2022 (last accessed on 10 September 2023).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023b. Anti-Israel Activists Celebrate Hamas Attacks that Have Killed Hundreds of Israelis. https://www.adl.org/resour ces/blog/anti-israel-activists-celebrate-hamas-attacks-have-killed-hundreds-israelis (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2023c. Students for Justice in Palestine Endorses Terrorism and 'Dismantling Zionism;' Plans Day of Resistance. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/students-justice-palestine-endorses-ter rorism-and-dismantling-zionism-plans-day (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

Atkins, Michael B., and Miriam F. Elman. 2021. BDS as a Threat to Academic Freedom and Campus Free Speech in the United States. *Michigan State International Law Review* 29 (2): 213–259.

Feuerherdt, Alex, and Florian Markl. 2020. *Die Israel-Boykottbewegung. Alter Hass in neuem Gewand*. Leipzig: Hentrich & Hentrich.

Fröhlich, Alexander, Lea Becker, and Pascal Bartosz. 2023. Berliner Terror-Unterstützer feiern Angriff auf Israel. *Tagesspiegel*, 8 October 2023. https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berliner-terror-unterstutzer-feiern-angriff-auf-israel-polizei-lost-in-neukolln-aufmarsch-auf--pflastersteine-auf-polizeiauto-geworfen-10588360.html (last accessed on 21 January 2024).

Herzog, Benno. 2015. Hegemonieverschiebung des Antisemitismus in Spanien. 3 September. https://www.bicsa.org/allgemein/hegemonieverschiebung-des-antisemitismus-in-spanien (last accessed on 31 August 2023).

McKernan, Bethan. 2024. Evidence points to systematic use of rape and sexual violence by Hamas in 7 October attacks. *The Guardian*, 18 January 2024. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/18/evi dence-points-to-systematic-use-of-rape-by-hamas-in-7-october-attacks (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

Müller, Natascha. 2022. *Menschenrechte und Antisemitismus. Die transnationale BDS-Kampagne gegen Israel*. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign Manchester. 2023. Manchester Supports the Palestinian Resistance. *Youtube*, 8 October 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TijEAMDjguU (last accessed on 21 January 2024).

Pessin, Andrew, and Doron S. Ben-Atar, eds. 2018. *Anti-Zionism on Campus. The University, Free Speech, and BDS*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Rodriguez Poleo, Germania. 2023. UC-Berkeley's 'Bears for Palestine' offers 'unwavering support' for Hamas terrorists who slaughtered 1,200 Israelis. *Daily Mail*, 12 October 2023. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12624405/UC-Berkeley-Palestine-hamas-gaza-Israel-conflict.html (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

Sonnenfeld, Jeffrey. 2024. The Worst 45 Minute Film You Will Ever See. *Time*, 23 January 2024. https://time.com/6565186/october-7-hamas-attack-footage-film/ (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

TOI. 2023. 14 kids under 10, 25 people over 80: Up-to-date breakdown of Oct 7 victims we know about. *The Times of Israel*, 4 December 2023. https://www.timesofisrael.com/14-kids-under-10-25-people-over-80-up-to-date-breakdown-of-oct-7-victims-we-know-about/ (last accessed on 31 January 2024).

36

Israel's Sole Guilt in the Conflict

Chloé Vincent and Matthew Bolton

Conceptual and Historical Overview

The idea that the existence and actions of the State of Israel are the sole cause of conflict and violence in the Middle East is one of the most common concepts in contemporary antisemitic discourse. The roots of this concept lie in the classical stereotype that Jews are to be → BLAMED FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10) of which they are a victim, that is, that Jewish actions are the only or principal factor motivating antisemitic acts, thereby diverting responsibility for attacks on Jews (and latterly Israelis) away from the perpetrators themselves and onto the Jewish victims. In its updated form, all blame for warfare, violence and wider suffering in Israel and the Palestinian territories—as well, at times, in the Middle East

C. Vincent · M. Bolton (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: chloe.vincent@ugent.be

M. Bolton
e-mail: matthew.bolton@decoding-antisemitism.eu

469

as a whole—is attributed to Israel, including blame for violent attacks on Israel and Israelis. In so doing, and in much the same way as the older concept, the notion of sole Israeli GUILT enables and even justifies further antisemitic words and actions.

The concept of ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT is closely linked to the assumption that the conflict in itself, and the role of Israel in it, is a central cause of antisemitism worldwide. In the case of reports of antisemitic events, a common response is indeed to make the connection between the source of the hate and Israeli actions and its alleged sole responsibility of the conflict, in this sense rationalising and even justifying antisemitism. This concept can therefore be found in many diverse contexts—not only the ones referring to the conflict itself.

The concept can be attached to contemporary events, so that any violent or lethal incident that takes place is *a priori* the total responsibility of Israel, regardless of the actual details of the incident itself. But it can also be generalised to cover the entirety of the history of Israel, so that the formation of the state is isolated as the root cause of all subsequent conflict. Such statements often juxtapose a supposedly idyllic Middle East prior to Israel's formation, where all ethnic and religious groups had lived in harmony, without the violent conflicts that followed Israel's establishment. In this way, all responsibility is removed from any other actor in the Middle East, and the history of both Israel and the conflict distorted or erased in order to reduce it to a simplistic morality tale of right and wrong, or good and →EVIL (Chapter 3.1).

The concept is often formulated through the decontextualisation and dehistoricisation of the circumstances around Israel's founding and the trajectory of the conflict. Such statements ignore events such as the Arab rejection of the UN's 1947 Partition plan (Herf 2022), the aggressive attacks on Jews in the Middle East prior to Israel's formation, the expulsion of Jews from Arab countries (Julius 2012) the wars waged by Arab states against Israel in 1967 and 1973 (Morris 2001), the Palestinian political leader Yasser Arafat's refusal to agree a settlement at the Camp David summit in 2000 (Ross 2004) and the subsequent campaign of suicide bombings and attacks on civilians that characterised the Second Intifada (Jones and Pedahzur 2005). Similarly, the Israeli occupation of parts of the West Bank and, at different points in time, of Gaza and the

Golan Heights are presented purely as the result of belligerent 'land grab-bing,' rather than, at least in part, initially an outcome of the 1967 war, with all subsequent Israeli security concerns belittled or ignored (Jense-haugen et al., 2012; Alpher 1994). One frequent mode of articulation of this concept is the idea that there is no real conflict between Israel and Palestine but merely a singular oppression of the Palestinians by the Israelis. Relations between the two are here depicted in terms of David and Goliath, isolating the conflict from the wider context of the Middle East, with Israel portrayed as overwhelmingly powerful, if not omnipo-tent, and the Palestinians in child-like fashion as 'innocents' or idealised victims. Denying the implication of either Palestinian organisations or Arab neighbouring countries in the conflict, and only focusing on the culpability of Israel, is a form of → DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33), where Israel is treated differently to other states and unfairly singled out. Additionally, accusations of ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT can often question the country's legitimacy, thus crossing over into the → DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

It is crucial that antisemitic claims of ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT are held distinct from comments and statements that highlight and criticise real and factual Israeli actions and responsibilities, and which take into proper account the context and the driving force of a specific incident during the conflict. Forcefully criticising the presence of settlers, settlements or military forces in the West Bank is not the same as attributing a gener-alised blame but focuses on specific targets and actions. Likewise, arguing that Israeli actions contribute to a 'cycle of escalation' does not, on its own, constitute an antisemitic attribution. There is also a clear distinc-tion between denying that Israel has any responsibility in the conflict and recognising the fact that several actors have political (and military) agency and play a part in perpetuating the 'cycle of violence.' Justifi-cations for responses to Israeli actions tip over into the SOLE GUILT concept when all actions undertaken by Palestinian or other agents, regardless of how indiscriminately violent, are ultimately explained and justified as being derived from Israeli actions or presence, thus eradi-cating responsibility from those agents themselves for their own actions and decisions.

Close contextual judgement is required for statements that attribute SOLE GUILT to Israeli actions with regard to particular events or escalation phases of the conflict. It is not necessarily antisemitic to highlight and insist on Israel's responsibility, in a manner that is circumscribed in time and space (or target, such as a particular political actor, party or group within society). However, when such statements stand in stark contrast with known and well-established developments on the ground—such as militant groups targeting Israeli civilian areas with potentially deadly weapons, which would be perceived as an act of war by any other nation-state—it is plausible that such asymmetrical ascription of blame results less from inaccurate information than from a general tendency to perceive Israel as ontologically guilty in the conflict.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Claim that Israel is the only responsible party in the Arab–Israeli conflict and other conflicts in the region;
- 'Black-and-white,' binary portrayals of the conflict as a struggle between a pure and blameless (non-Israeli) side and an EVIL or innately malign Israeli side;
- Denial of any non-Israeli or non-Jewish causes for the conflict or its perpetuation;
- Refusal to attribute any moral responsibility for actions taken by non-Israeli actors.

Care and close contextual judgement must be taken with regard to statements that ascribe SOLE GUILT to a single event restricted in time and space. Genuinely mistaken depictions of a single event do not necessarily indicate the GUILT concept, but gross misrepresentations of the driving forces behind a particular event can do so.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "For well-educated people Israel has been the villain of the piece since its establishment"

(2) "The entire blame is on Israel. Once they top their continued 7 decade aggression there will be no need for a resistance."

Attributions of Israel's sole responsibility for the conflict are often, as here, made directly and without recourse to disguised or coded forms of expression. In (1), the web user makes an appeal to the authority of "well-educated people"—including, presumably, themselves—to insist that an unambiguously negative role is to be ascribed to Israel, elaborately expressed by means of an analogy to the theatre stage. In (2), the web user first directly pins the "entire blame" for the conflict on Israel and then contends that the "resistance" of the Palestinians is entirely reactive, a response to the "continued 7 decade aggression" from the Israeli side. The reference to "7 decade[s]"—i.e. the period since the establishment of Israel until now—implies that Israel's existence is the source of and justifies this resistance (rather than the Israeli presence in the West Bank or particular military or political actions).

(3) "the Zionists who started the aggression 1948. Shame"

(4) "the Zionist have started this since you were born."

(3) traces the roots of the conflict to the founding of Israel in 1948, asserting that Israeli aggression began from the moment of the state's establishment, and that this—or the failure to acknowledge Israeli responsibility—is a source of "[s]hame" and guilt. (4) makes a similar claim by referring to the date of birth of another web user. By doing so, the commenter asserts via detour communication that Israel has been the cause of the ongoing conflict throughout the lifetime of the latter. This mode of generalisation leaves no space for any qualification or reference to concrete historical facts or specific events.

(5) "until Zionist Israel was created in Palestine, Jews And Palestinian Christians and Palestinian Muslims lived in peace in PALESTINE.. in FACT, the entire Western world had no enemies in the Middle East before the Zionist Jewish state was created on the ethnically cleansed Pajestinian territories"

(6) "Christians, Jews and Muslims used to live in peace before the creation of Israel."

(7) "there was only one country,which is Palestine! And yes muslims and christians and jews lived there peacefully until the zionist movement started! And with this movement came the creation of the illegitimate country 'Israel'"

(8) "The region would become a more peaceful one instead of this mess! The creation of this country back in 1948 started all of it to be honest. It was peaceful there for centuries until the cancerous Zionism entered the fray."

(9) "FYI Muslims and Jews lived together for many years and that's what beautiful Islam stipulates. The Israelies don't want to live in peace with Muslims."

Each of these comments compares the contested state of the Middle East today with the supposedly tranquil, multi-ethnic and multi-faith idyll that, according to the commenters, existed before the establishment of Israel. (5) extends this opposition to a geopolitical level by claiming that prior to Israel's founding, there were no tensions between "the entire Western world" and countries in the Middle East, thus making Israel responsible not just for the Arab–Israeli conflict but all conflicts in the region and further afield in the past seventy years. This comment as well as (6) and (7) assert that there was a harmonious relationship between "Christians, Jews and Muslims" before the formation of Israel – a common trope that again idealises and generalises a complex and ambivalent past for the sake of demonising Israel. Such evaluations are articulated here in direct terms, as in (8), where Zionism is described as a "cancerous" destroyer of an organic peace ($\rightarrow$ DEHUMANISATION, Chapter 5). (9) further argues that Islam "stipulates" a peaceful relationship between Muslim and Jews, which is then contrasted with the supposed inherent unwillingness of Israelis to peacefully co-exist with members of other religious communities. In this way, blame for the

current tensions is placed solely on the side of Israel—an assertion that, under certain circumstances, can be extended to Judaism per se.

(10) "it is NOT a conflict! It's a resistance of occupied people against their illegal, illegitimate, criminal and brutal occupier"

(11) "there are only civilians on the Palestinians side, this is a savage occupier murdering the occupied."

The accusation of 'bullying' and unleashed violence is intensified in these comments by the use of terms such as "illegitimate," "criminal," "brutal," and "savage." In (10), the idea that there is a "conflict"—implying the active participation of two sides—is denied, in favour of the concept of "resistance" which expresses a mode of reaction. The basis of the conflict is, thus, explained by the existence and actions of the "illegitimate" Israeli state, a term which implies the DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST. (11) creates a dichotomy between the "savage occupier" on the one side and the "civilians" on the other, erasing entirely the military resources and violent actions of Hamas.

Implicit

(12) "why dont you start your research from 1948, start from the root of the problem"

Here the charge that the establishment of Israel lies at "the root of the problem"—namely, instability in the region—is asserted in implicit form, by reference to the year of Israel's formation as a state. The reader of the statement has to draw on world knowledge in order to be able to decode the generalising accusation.

(13) "If the big kid in the playground beats up the small kid, we call it bullying. We don't turn round and blame the small kid!"

(14) "It's bullying, not a war."

(15) "as perverse as Mike Tyson punching a toddler"

(16) "Monster VS children"

(17) "you mean those homemade rockets […]?You know how vicious fingernails can be? Have you SEEN the harm done to rapists by

> their victims nails raked over their faces, even when the rapists smash in the victims head with a hammer? Ohh.. those vicious and nasty nails"

The idea that Israel constantly bullies other children like a "big kid"—and thus deliberately seeking out weaker "small kid" targets upon whom to inflict gratuitous violence—is grounded in the assumption that such behaviour underpins the conflict as a whole. The geopolitical and geographical position of Israel in the Middle East—surrounded by states the majority of which are both larger and, at least historically, hostile to its existence—is ignored, in order to create a simple binary relation of 'bully' and 'victim' between Israel and the Palestinian territories. (12) reiterates this claim by rejecting the concept of 'war'—which assumes two combatants—in favour of the irrational violence of "bullying."

Analogies to everyday scenarios are very popular in such anti-Israel statements because—despite adding a layer of communicative complexity—they have an enormously high emotional potential due to their high recognition value. However, such accusations in web discourse are not limited to injustice experienced in early childhood, but range to extreme situations of brutality and even sexualised violence (Becker et al. 2021):

Non-antisemitic Examples

> (18) "It wasn't a 1 sided war im 1948, 1967, or 1973"

This comment could be read as asserting that the current state of the conflict is, in fact, a "1 sided war," with Israel primarily responsible for its continuation. But by asserting that the wars in 1948, 1967 and 1973 were not unilateral, the web user recognises that there were multiple actors and thus multiple responsible parties aside from Israel in previous rounds of violence. These historical references imply that Israel is not to be given sole responsibility for the conflict.

> (19) *The current Israeli government is responsible for the worsening of the conflict.*

This comment expresses a legitimate criticism of the politics of the Israeli government, in a specific time period and a specific part of the conflict. It does not imply that the conflict in general is caused by Israel, nor does it imply that the existence of the State of Israel in itself is solely responsible.

Related Categories

EVIL (Chapter 3.1), BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10), DOUBLE STANDARDS (Chapter 33), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

References

Alpher, Joseph. 1994. Israel's Security Concerns in the Peace Process. *International Affairs* 70 (2): 229–241.

Becker, Matthias J., Daniel Allington, Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Jan Krasni, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, Hagen Troschke, and Chloe Vincent, 2021. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-Driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 2*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-15310.

Herf, Jeffrey. 2022. *Israel's Moment: International Support for and Opposition to Establishing the Jewish State, 1945–1949*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jensehaugen, Jørgen, Marte Heian-Engdal, and Hilde Henriksen Waage. 2012. Securing the State: From Zionist Ideology to Israeli Statehood. *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23 (2): 280–303.

Jones, Clive, and Ami Pedahzur, eds. 2005. *Between Terrorism and Civil War: The al-Aqsa Intifada*. London: Routledge.

Julius, Lyn. 2012. *Uprooted: How 3000 Years of Jewish Civilization in the Arab World Vanished Overnight*. London: Vallentine Mitchell.

Morris, Benny. 2001. *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict*. New York: Vintage.

Ross, Dennis. 2004. *The Missing Peace: The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Part VI

Aggressive Speech Acts

37

Introduction to Aggressive Speech Acts

Laura Ascone, Karolina Placzynta, and Marcus Scheiber

In the following five chapters, we present five linguistic categories described as speech acts. A speech act is an utterance which both expresses and performs an action (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). Everyday examples of this include a promise, an invitation or a request: uttering one achieves the action of promising, inviting or requesting. However, in the context of contemporary antisemitic discourse the speech acts which

L. Ascone (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

K. Placzynta
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

M. Scheiber
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

are both most pertinent and most common include INSULTS, THREATS, CURSES, DEATH WISHES, and AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE.[1]

Each of these speech acts involves the speaker (who produces it), the addressee (who receives it) and the target (who is intended to be hurt by the speech act). In the context of antisemitic hate speech, the target is always Jewish, Israeli or pro-Jewish/Israeli; it can also include Zionism, since an attack on the ideology and its supporters is ultimately directed against the advocacy of Israel's existence. When the attack is against an individual, it will be considered antisemitic if the target's Jewish identity is well established or when they could be identified as Jewish.

Often, the addressee and the target are synonymous, but in many cases the speaker addresses their own in-group instead. The five speech acts are usually elicited by specific events or situations that stimulate the negative emotion felt and expressed by the speaker; if the addressee belongs to their in-group and shares their emotion or point of view, they will perceive even an explicitly antisemitic speech act in a positive way, as it will reinforce their opinion and confirm their bias.

Within antisemitic discourse, many instances of these speech acts are used to express antisemitism explicitly and forcefully. However, at other times the meaning is achieved neither through direct hostility nor verbal violence, but through various linguistic strategies—for instance allusions, metaphors, idioms, abbreviations, dog whistles, world knowledge references, humour and many more.

---

[1] While these linguistic categories are not antisemitic in themselves, for the sake of clarity and consistency with the rest of this volume they will also be presented in small caps, in the same way as antisemitic concepts in previous chapters.
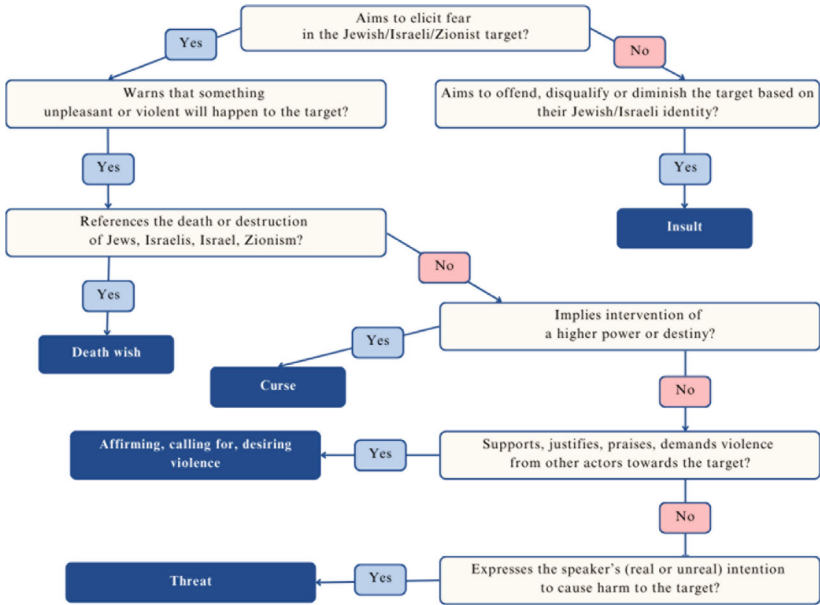
References

Austin, John L., 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Searle, John, 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. London: Cambridge University Press.

38

Insults

Laura Ascone

Conceptual and Historical Overview

An antisemitic INSULT generally aims at offending, disqualifying and diminishing Jews or Israelis on the basis of, or related to, their Jewish or Israeli identity, against whom the speaker expresses their negative emotions. INSULTS can be considered a threatening speech act (Plantin 1997; Doury 2000; Vincent/Bernard Barbeau 2012) like → THREATS (Chapter 39), → CURSES (Chapter 40) and → DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41). Yet, the goal of INSULTS is not to elicit fear or physically harm but to show the speaker's hostility and place themselves in a superior position.

INSULTS are elicited by specific events or situations that constitute the stimulus of the negative emotion felt and expressed by the insulter. However, certain INSULTS may nevertheless draw on the speaker's beliefs.

L. Ascone (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

In these cases, the specific situation constitutes a trigger awakening the speaker's perception of Jews and/or Israelis, and making antisemitic stereotypes re-emerge. For example, calling a Jew a 'pig' could be read not only as an INSULT against an individual in a certain situation but also as a dehumanising generalisation rooted in a long history of portraying Jews as impure and (morally and physically) dirty. Likewise, in the antisemitic discourse, the target can be considered a → LIAR and manipulator (Chapter 7), a → CHILD MURDERER (Chapter 4), etc. Even though the reference to antisemitic stereotypes is not systematic, for an INSULT to be considered antisemitic it needs to both target a person or group whose identity is Jewish, Israeli or Zionist, and refer to this in a negative way. In other terms, if there is no reference to the target's Jewish identity, the INSULT cannot automatically be considered antisemitic unless the target's Jewish background is well known as it is the case, for instance, of George Soros, Mark Zuckerberg, Benyamin Netanyahu—and even here there needs to be some indication of a connection to an antisemitic concept or animus, or a massive generalisation. Furthermore, under the same framework, an INSULT will be considered antisemitic if it is against a pro-Israeli individual, group or organisation, independently from their Jewish or non-Jewish identity.

When insulting, the insulter both shows the target a hostile attitude (expressive function, see Jakobson 1987) and places themselves in a higher and more powerful position than the insulted person (Goffman 1959). Thanks to this assumed position of superiority, antisemitic INSULTS may be perceived as persuasive by any individual sharing the insulter's point of view.

An antisemitic INSULT is not always addressed directly to the target; this is all the more true in online communication, which is by nature mediated and public. In these cases, the non-target addressee represents a witness to the target's diminishment (Lagorgette and Larrivée 2004) and can form a coalition either with the insulter, if they share the same point of view, or with the target, if they contest the INSULT. In other terms, INSULTS may reinforce both the bonds among the in-group members and the hostility against the insulted person. The either persuasive or insulting interpretation of the same utterance depends on

the non-target addressee's points of reference, which include both their universe of beliefs and cultural background.

In the context of antisemitism, two different types of slurs can be identified: general pejoratives (e.g. 'idiot') and slurs that are antisemitic per se (e.g. 'kike'). As mentioned above, for general pejoratives to be considered antisemitic, they need to both refer—whether implicitly or explicitly—to the target's Jewish/Israeli identity and relate to any antisemitic topos. On the contrary, the simple use of slurs such as 'kike' and 'yid' constitutes a form of antisemitism as they unequivocally target a specific group independently from the context in which they are used.

This distinction holds true for other forms of hate ideologies such as racism (Reisigl and Wodak 2005). However, empirical analysis of both present-day and historical antisemitic discourse shows that antisemitic ideas are often conveyed without the use of disparaging ethnic slurs. Slurs are less central in the "discourse economy" of antisemitism than in the case of racism or anti-LGBT hate speech: for example, in US hate speech trials between 1988 and 1998, plaintiffs cited use of the term 'kike' as evidence of anti-Jewish animus in only five opinions issued by federal court, while the usage of 'n*gger' as evidence of anti-black prejudice in several hundred opinions (Kennedy 2000). This might be explained by the fact that antisemitism often functions under the cover of an 'anti-hegemonic' discourse, based on a critique of perceived → POWER (Chapter 12).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Aims to offend, disqualify and/or diminish;
- Directed against a person or group based on their Jewish/Israeli identity, which the speaker explicitly or implicitly refers to; a person or group whose Jewish/Israeli identity is well-known, even if the speaker does not refer to it; Israel, Zionism, and pro-Israel individuals or institutions;
- Can be expressed through specifically antisemitic INSULTS/slurs;
- Can be linked to antisemitic topoi.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "F***ing Jewish liar"

This example can be intended as an attack either against all Jews or against a Jewish individual only. In both cases, this INSULT is considered antisemitic because of the named Jewish identity of the target. Not only is this INSULT based on the target's Jewish identity; it also refers to a classic antisemitic stereotype, that is the alleged representation of Jews as → LIARS (Chapter 7).

(2) "Kike," "Yid," "du Jude"

Contrary to the previous examples, "kike" is in itself a highly offensive term. Its origins might date back to the beginning of the twentieth century and it was used in the USA to refer to Jews who had immigrated from Europe, as their surnames often ended in "-ki." Even though its origin remains unclear, this term—used to INSULT and denigrate Jews based on their faith or ethnicity—constitutes a form of antisemitic hate speech. Its insulting dimension depends on neither the syntactic structure nor on the context in which it occurs. On the contrary, "yid" depends on both the pronunciation and the speakers. When this term is pronounced with a short "i" (/ˈjɪd/), it is perceived as an INSULT, while when it is pronounced with a long "i" [/ˈjiːd/], it is usually not considered an offensive term.[1] This expression has controversially been reclaimed by some Jews, who use it in a non-offensive way.[2] As to the German "du Jude," (in English: "you Jew") this expression became an antisemitic INSULT directed against Jewish and non-Jewish students: if

---

[1] https://educalingo.com/en/dic-en/yid.

[2] In response to the insulting use of "yid" against the football club Tottenham Hotspur, its fans started using the expression "yid army" as a chant (Poulton 2016). Different positions on whether slurs and stereotypes can be used in a non-pejorative way are taken by researchers like Embrick and Henricks (2013) and Croom (2015).

Jews are conceptualised as evil, greedy, deceitful or dirty, the Jewish identity itself becomes laden with negative ascriptions and functions as an INSULT (Kiesel and Eppenstein 2021).

(3) "George Soros the biggest scum on earth!"

The target of this INSULT is the billionaire and financier George Soros, whose Jewish identity is well-known. The insulting comment activates the antisemitic stereotype of → EVIL (Chapter 3.1), through the hyperbolic use of the superlative. It conveys the classic antisemitic imagery (previously often associated with the Rothschilds) of the powerful maleficent Jew which represents a threat to all of humanity.

(4) "UMM ISNT THIS GUY A SICK OLD CABAL ELITEST.??
NWO DIK SUKER"

The target, based on the context of the comment, is the same as in (3). Similarly, this comment builds upon a variety of → CONSPIRACY THEORIES (Chapter 13), such as the NWO narrative. In conjunction with Soros' Jewishness, this conspiracy takes on an antisemitic meaning. The comment contains different layers of INSULTS. The first epithets ("sick old") map onto canonical topoi of Jewish ugliness and → REPULSIVENESS (Chapter 5), as portrayed in many antisemitic drawings and caricatures from the Middle Ages onward. The second sexualised INSULT (with homophobic undertones) explicitly links Soros to the theme of the NWO, while also expressing in more general terms disgust and anger towards the financier and philanthropist.

(5) "A dog has more respect for himself then a Zionist."

The speaker INSULTS the target by comparing Zionists to dogs. Its goal is then to diminish and dehumanise the target, namely by presenting it as inferior.

(6) "Zionist snake"

This INSULT can be considered antisemitic as the dehumanising reference to the snake generally indicates that Jews are cunning and untrustworthy. This INSULT can then be interpreted as detour communication:

by attributing to Zionists what is usually associated to Jews in antisemitic discourse, the speaker seems to hide their antisemitic statement behind an attack to Zionism.

Implicit

(7) "Evil Sore-Ass"

In order for this INSULT to be considered antisemitic, the reader's world knowledge is crucial as it allows them to associate the INSULT to Soros, a well-known Jewish individual. In addition to the insulting pun, the reference to the classic stereotype of the EVIL allows us to state that the attack is an antisemitic one.

(8) *Israel =* 💩💩💩🤮🤮

In this comment, Israel is essentialised and targeted as a whole by the INSULT. This comment uses iconographic elements instead of traditional insulting epithets. Through the first one, Israel is compared to excrements while the second one articulates the attitude of the speaker towards the target, namely disgust. While icons (non-face graphical signs that express a general action or attribute) and emojis (face-like signs) can accompany and reinforce traditional linguistic communication, in this comment they replace it and convey meaning on their own.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(9) "Fuck Israel!!! Long live Jews!!!"

Despite the positive valence of the second part of this statement, this sentence can be considered an antisemitic INSULT. Not only is the first expression "fuck Israel" explicitly insulting; its combination with "long live Jews" could also be read as a strategy to reject any accusation of antisemitism. The speaker seems to make a distinction between Jews and Israel, without considering that antisemitism also includes forms of Israel-related antisemitism. However, this statement can be read as

a non-antisemitic anti-Zionist attack. Therefore, because of this double interpretation, this sentence cannot be classified as antisemitic.

(10) "Why should we trust that Soros bastard?"

Unlike the previous two comments targeting Soros, (10) does not build on any pre-existing antisemitic stereotype or narrative but is simply an expression of the commenter's negative opinion on Soros. The hostility might be rooted in reasons other than antisemitism, for example, a general dislike of his left-leaning political views or a belief that extremely wealthy people are harming society and acting in immoral ways.

Related Categories

THREATS (Chapter 39), CURSES (Chapter 40), DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41), AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42).

References

Austin, John L. 1975. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bernard Barbeau, Geneviève. 2012. Le bashing: forme intensifiée de dénigrement d'un groupe. *Signes, Discours et Sociétés*, 8. http://revue-signes.gsu.edu.tr/article/-LXz7csbNocGwoCcIp2Z (last accessed on 26 September 2022).

Croom, Adam M. 2015. Slurs, Stereotypes, and in-Equality: A Critical Review of "How Epithets and Stereotypes Are Racially Unequal." *Language Sciences* 52: 139–154.

Doury, Marianne. 2000. La réfutation par accusation d'émotion. Exploitation argumentative de l'émotion dans une controverse à thèmescientifique. In *Les émotions dans les interactions*, ed. Plantin Christian, Marianne Doury, and Véronique Traverso, 265–277. Lyon: PUL/ARCI.

Embrick, David G., and Kasey Henricks. 2013. Discursive Colorlines at Work: How Epithets and Stereotypes Are Racially Unequal. *Symbolic Interaction* 36 (2): 197–215.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Doubleday.

Jakobson, Roman. 1987. *Language in Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Kennedy, Randall L. 2000. Who Can Say "Nigger"? And Other Considerations. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 26: 86–96.

Kiesel, Doron, and Thomas Eppenstein. 2021. *„Du Jude" Antisemitismus-Studien und ihre pädagogischen Konsequenzen*. Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (BpB).

Lagorgette, Dominique, and Pierre Larrivée. 2004. Interprétation des insultes et relations de solidarité. *Langue Française* 4: 83–103.

Plantin, Christian. 1997. L'argumentation dans l'émotion. *Pratiques: théorie, pratique, pédagogie* 96: 81–100.

Poulton, Emma. 2016. Towards Understanding: Antisemitism and the Contested Uses and Meanings of 'Yid' in English Football. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39 (11): 1981–2001.

Vincent, Diane, and Geneviève Bernard Barbeau. 2012. Insulte, Disqualification, Persuasion et tropes communicationnels: à qui l'insulte profite-t-elle? *Argumentation et analyse du discours* 8. http://journals.openedition.org/aad/1252 (last accessed on 26 September 2022).

39

Threats

Laura Ascone

Conceptual and Historical Overview

A THREAT is a warning that something negative or violent will happen to a person or group, especially if a particular action or order is not followed. Through this action, the speaker aims at eliciting fear in the target in order to lead them to act in a certain way. More precisely, the fear is caused by the fact that THREATS "involve a harm of some kind […] that has not yet happened" and express "a warning that invites the person to take preventive steps in order to do what he or she can do to mitigate impending harm" (Monat and Lazarus 1991: 3 f.).

Together with → INSULTS (Chapter 38), disdain and denigration, THREATS are then part of threatening speech acts (Vincent 2005).[1] In other terms, through their discourse, the speaker places themselves in a

L. Ascone (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

[1] The speech act theory, according to which a speaker can act through their discourse, was introduced by J. L. Austin in 1939 and developed by John Searle in 1969.

position of strength by eliciting fear in the THREAT's target, thus modifying or hoping to modify their behaviour. Yet, the speaker does not intend to fulfil their part of the deal; they only want to prompt the target to act. Antisemitic THREATS against the State of Israel can be articulated by hostile statesmen or political leaders, but also by individual web users who do not wield significant institutional power. In that case, there is rarely a credible prospect that such THREATS, including violent THREATS, will be implemented (although this cannot be categorically ruled out). There is, therefore, a performative element to such online THREATS, which seek to demonise the Jewish/Israeli/Zionist outgroup and create solidarity within the anti-Israel in-group. This fictitious dimension applies to almost all corresponding speech acts, since the outgroup is always threatened with violence that cannot be implemented. As such, it is the positive conceptualisation and justification of violence that is of importance here.

Since THREATS have the potential effect of harming the addressee psychologically and/or physically, they can be considered a form of verbal violence—a force exerted on someone through speech, either voluntarily or unintentionally (Bellachhab and Galatanu 2012). When analysing web discourse, as it is not possible to determine the speaker's intention, we can only base our interpretation on the linguistically constructed meaning of a comment.

In order to be considered antisemitic, THREATS need to be directed against Jews, Israelis, Zionism or any individual or organisation supporting Israel. Because of their intrinsic violence towards these groups, THREATS do not need to explicitly evoke any antisemitic concept or arise as a result of a reproduction of the latter. However, THREATS can, and frequently do, enable antisemitic ideas. For instance, THREATS against Israel are often linked to → DENYING JEWS THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINE (Chapter 34)—the THREAT against Israel's existence intrinsically features this kind of denial. Likewise, THREATS against Israelis tend to be expressed as a consequence of their supposedly → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) actions against Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In these cases, the antisemitic concept is used by the speaker to legitimise their THREAT. Moreover, as stated before, when expressing a THREAT the speaker commits themselves to undertaking a certain violent action.

Yet, when the speaker targets Israel or a whole community (e.g. Jews and Israelis), it goes without saying that their THREAT is unreal, as the speaker is not in the position to realise it. Whether the speaker realises it or not, their goal is still to elicit fear in the Jewish or Israeli target. According to this, unreal THREATS are part of the repertoire of antisemitic speech acts.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Expresses an ominous warning of the harm, punishment or negative consequences that will be faced by the target, especially if a particular action or order is not followed. It can be directed against Jews, Israelis, Israel, Zionism or any individual or organisation supporting Israel and/or Jews;
- THREATS can be expressed via grammatical structures such as future simple, future intention, conditional sentences and with the use of modal verbs (e.g. shall, will, may);
- Explicit reference can, but need not, be made to cause and consequence and to antisemitic concepts;
- THREATS are distinct from explicitly communicated → DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41) and → CURSES (Chapter 40).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

    (1) "Israel is like a lamb among a wolf pack. When they stop fighting among themselves and bring the attention on the food, it will hurt…. Israel, keep enjoying the neighbours' nap. When they wake up, they will hurt you"

Here, the web user does not commit themselves to violent action against Israel but refers to its neighbouring states. The reformulation and repetition of this THREAT emphasises the severity of the consequences ("it will hurt," "they will hurt you"). The metaphor used at the beginning

of the comment, in which Israel is compared to "a lamb among a wolf pack," aims at highlighting the slim chances Israel has to come through this THREAT unscathed.

(2) "Y'all will pay for killing the innocent of the Palestine and Gaza Tribes"

The target of this THREAT is not mentioned in the comment overtly, but can be deduced by means of world knowledge from the reason given by the commenter, that is "killing the innocent of the Palestine and Gaza Tribes." Since the violent action can then be derived from the context as a THREAT against Israel as a whole ("[y]'all"), the statement represents antisemitism. It should be classified as an unreal THREAT, as the commenter cannot put it into practice and make all of Israel "pay." This, however, applies to almost all corresponding speech acts (see above).

(3) "You've been warned"

Even though the comment gives even less information about the threatening action the speaker commits to undertaking, it implies that something negative might, or will, happen to the target. It is the context (or, in the case of web comments, the co-text) that will allow to tell whether the warning is an antisemitic THREAT or not. If the warning is based on the target's Jewish or Israeli origins, this THREAT will be considered antisemitic despite the absence of references to antisemitic concepts.

(4) "Your time will come soon."

In this example, the vague timeline ("will come soon") only highlights the confidence of the THREAT's author and creates an even more anxiety-inducing effect on the target, who will have to face this negative consequence in no time. Yet, like the previous example, it is the context (including the individual and/or group the utterance is directed against) that allows to determine whether the THREAT is antisemitic or not.

Implicit

(5) *If Israel keeps making so many enemies around the world, there will soon be a need for a new final solution.*

In this comment, the THREAT is articulated through a historical allusion to the genocide of the Jews during World War II. The "final solution" reference implies that if Israel persists in its behaviour, its population will face large-scale extermination. World knowledge is necessary to decode this statement, especially since the term "solution" is quite common and, for someone who is not familiar with the vocabulary of Nazi Germany, could refer to any political resolution to a long-standing conflict. It is the combination with the adjective "final" that activates the allusion. The commenter does not name the actors who would carry out the THREAT but offers a moral caution by citing a "need" for such violence. The comments maps onto other antisemitic concepts, notably by placing the → BLAME FOR ANTISEMITISM (Chapter 10) on the victims.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(6) "Israel and its citizens will never live in peace and prosperity unless they try to understand and address the root cause of the conflict."

Violence is not articulated here as a THREAT or as desirable possibility, but rather as the grim outlook of the lack of political negotiations regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict. It falls, therefore, under the category of a prediction, possibly also an appeal. There is also no indication the speaker rejoices at the prospect of more violence, quite the contrary. However, while the "root cause" ascribed responsibility for this situation is not made explicit, from the construction of the commentary it is possible to imply that Israel is regarded as the said cause, and so is the suffering associated with it. In this respect, this example can possibly be understood as a reproduction of the stereotype of → ISRAEL'S SOLE GUILT (Chapter 36). But, because both antisemitic and non-antisemitic interpretations are plausible, this comment cannot be considered an antisemitic THREAT.

(7) "What goes round comes round."

Even though the sentence has a threatening dimension, it relies on context for it to be read as an antisemitic THREAT. Uttered in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the comment might imply that Israel must suffer the same fate it inflicts on the Palestinians, and thus it may be endorsing, relativising or justifying anti-Israel violence. However, it could also be used to justify or support Israeli reprisals against, for example, Hamas rocket fire. Given that the cause of a negative outcome is not specified (it can also be a problematisation of corruption on both sides of the conflict), any determination of the comment's antisemitic or non-antisemitic character requires further information than appears in the comment and means that the comment falls into a 'grey area' between the two.

Related Categories

CURSES (Chapter 40), DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41), AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42).

References

Bellachhab, Abdelhadi, and Olga Galatanu. 2012. La violence verbale: représentation sémantique, typologie et mécanismes discursifs. http://revue-signes.gsu.edu.tr/article/-LXz7UzMvkF2HCFxzaII.

Monat, Alan, and Richard S. Lazarus. 1991. Stress and Coping: Some Current Issues and Controversies. In *Stress and Coping: An Anthology*, ed. Alan Monat and Richard S. Lazarus, 1–15. New York: New York Columbia University Press.

Searle, John. 1979. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vincent, Diane. 2005. Analyse conversationnelle, analyse du discours et interprétation des discours sociaux: le cas de la trash radio. *Marges Linguistiques* 9: 165–175.

Weill, Isabelle. 1993. La menace comme acte de langage: étude diachronique de quelques formules de français. *Linx* 28 (1): 85–105.

40

Curses

Marcus Scheiber

Conceptual and Historical Overview

An antisemitic CURSE is essentially an amplified form of a → THREAT (Chapter 39), since it bases its violent desire on the explicit or implicit intervention of a higher power (also in the form of destiny, fate, predestination, cosmic justice) and is thus operating on a supra-individual level. A CURSE expresses a wish for misfortune to someone, or more specifically a wish for something unpleasant or violent to happen to a person/group, up to a → DEATH WISH (Chapter 41) (Searle 1969; Sharifi 2012). Similar to → INSULTS (Chapter 38) and THREATS (Chapter 39), CURSES contain a negative emotional value and realise a form of verbal violence, as the speech act hints at a harmful event in the future: pending harm is invoked. Jews, Israelis, as well as the State of Israel or Zionism can all be targets of an antisemitic CURSE.

M. Scheiber (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: marcus.scheiber@decoding-antisemitism.eu

CURSES, attributed to the cursed entity in an explicit or implicit way, serve as self-positioning and identification in discourse, presenting the speaker not only as the in-group, but also as the voice of righteousness who can expect a deity or universal justice to be on their side against the wrongdoers. This, in turn, may lead to projecting the antisemitic stereotype of → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) onto the target, although all antisemitic concepts can be resorted to in the process of formulating a CURSE. At the same time, uttering a CURSE has a persuasive function as it informs others about the negatively attributed qualities and convinces them to make a similar evaluation by, mostly implicitly, referring to an unspecified higher power and thus giving the evaluation the character of inevitability.

CURSES usually fall back on forms of communication that are firmly established within a language community (in English, this includes explicit performative verbs such as 'curse,' the prototypical use of modal verbs like 'may,' the usage of religious terms, for example 'god' or the future simple tense, as in 'god will punish you'), which may well develop idiomatic structures. Hence, CURSES can vary from one language community to another. From the perspective of speech act theory, CURSES can be classified as commissive speech acts, because they are related to some future actions (the direction of adjustment is world-on-word). CURSES are structurally the same but semantically opposite to blessings.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Expresses a wish for something negative or violent to happen through an unspecified higher power;
- Can be directed against Jews, Israelis, Israel or Zionism, but also individuals and groups supportive of Jews/Israel/Zionism.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "May God punish Israel hard for their crime!"
(2) "May god curse the sons of Zion."

This reference to a supra-individual entity as in (1) and (2) in relation to "G/god" appears prototypical for (antisemitic) CURSES; it is not the speaker who pronounces the CURSE who ultimately inflicts harm on the target, even if this is explicitly desired, but an entity outside of—and greater than—the human being. Its judgement is presupposed as absolute as well as lawful in the case of "God" and thus implies an inevitable finality. Thus, both "Israel" and "the sons of Zion" will necessarily suffer harm in the future, which is legitimised in example (4) by the attribution "for their crime." Both examples use the modal verb "may" to express the future. Additionally, (2) even performs the speech act via the explicit performative verb "curse."

(3) "Zionist Israel will heaviest pay price since they kill innocent children, women…The dark days and nights are approaching to them…There is no peace for Israel community any more…"

While in many statements no clear justification for the CURSE is given, as in (2), this example opens up a causal chain: as a result of the assumption that Israel would "kill innocent children, women," introduced as an unquestionable presupposition, the repeatedly expressed CURSE "Israel will heaviest pay price" and "The dark days and nights are approaching to them…" is legitimised and implied as a necessary result of the preceding actions. This finality is expressed above all in the word choice ("approaching"), and the present progressive tense, which is oriented towards a continuous development. At the same time, the striking metaphorical lexis of the phrase "dark days and nights" paints a vague but in all cases gloomy and negative picture of the desired consequences for Israel.

(4) "Who protects the Innocent babies, children, defenceless mothers, KARMA is a batch and I hope it comes your way soon."

While the causal relationship in (3) is still accomplished through various lexical means, the if–then relationship in (4) is condensed in the idea of karma and transcends it: by resorting to the latter, the speaker again realises a reference to a punishment brought about by Israel itself, which, although it still lies in the future, is inevitable.

   (5) "May all your projects fail!"

This example, again appearing in a thread discussing Israel and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict, the CURSE has a generalising character and that this is expressed via the quantifier "all." Furthermore, the modal verb "may" again prototypically refers to the future and at the same time to an inevitable scenario. The CURSE aims at the failure of every "project," which is revealed in the context of the comment as a designation for the State of Israel. The speaker thus negates its legitimacy (→ DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, Chapter 34) through the reference to Israel as a "project" and expresses a wish for its decline in the form of the CURSE.

Implicit

   (6) "The Lord knows how to deliver the pious from temptation, but to
         keep the unrighteous for the day of judgment to punish them."

CURSES do not necessarily have to be realised explicitly. The example above shows that although a CURSE is uttered, this interpretation only arises from the co- and context of such a comment, since neither specific actions nor persons are referred to, but a generalising statement is made that can be agreed to in a religious context. Now, however, the reference is not a religious but an antisemitic frame, which must be implied due to the context of the discourse (Israel's military actions). Within this context, the statement is an implicit commissive speech act (and not an assertive one), in that the "unjust" are conceptualised as Jews who will (necessarily) receive a justified—since divine—punishment.

Non-antisemitic Examples

    (7) "The man who broke the bank of England…may this man's financial projects fail."

Although this comment appears extremely similar to (1), since it also hopes for the failure of a person widely identified as Jewish (in this case, the businessman George Soros), the specificity of the reference as well as the lack of a generalising quantifier does not allow the interpretation of the comment as antisemitic. Firstly, the CURSE refers to specific projects and not to the existence of George Soros, and secondly, it remains completely unclear whether such a CURSE refers to him as a Jewish entity or to his work as an investor. The latter would still constitute a CURSE, but without an antisemitic dimension.

Related Categories

DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41), AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42).

References

Searle, John. 1969. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sharifi, Shahla. 2012. Assessing Speech Acts of Curses and Prayers in Persian. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 2 (9): 1911–1916.

41

Death Wishes

Karolina Placzynta

Conceptual and Historical Overview

An antisemitic DEATH WISH is an ultimate form of a → THREAT (Chapter 39) or → CURSE (Chapter 40), by virtue of an explicit, implicit, violent or non-violent reference to the death or destruction of Jews or Israelis, with the possible target also being the State of Israel or Zionism. THREATS and CURSES express the suggestion or wish that something detrimental will, or should, happen to Jews. While they can encompass a broad range of unfavourable circumstances or incidents, DEATH WISHES refer specifically to the extreme end of the spectrum.

All three of these categories can express their meaning violently, meeting the criteria of → AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42). However, non-violent DEATH WISHES, constructed through linguistic strategies such as allusions or humour,

K. Placzynta (✉)
Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany
e-mail: karolina.placzynta@decoding-antisemitism.eu

tend to be more socially tolerable or acceptable and not recognised as hate speech (Levinson 2017; Paasch-Colberg et al. 2021) and therefore more likely to evade detection in mainstream discourses—by both moderators and other web users (Becker 2021). An antisemitic DEATH WISH can also strive to seem more palatable, or even righteous, by positioning itself as dissent or protest against oppression and violence; examples of this are often found in current web user commentary on the Arab-Israeli conflict in British comment boxes. Contextualising DEATH WISHES can help to justify and legitimise them, but it also allows for their structure to be readjusted, bypassing a semantic reference to a Jewish or Israeli target, or to the means of the desired death or destruction.

While a DEATH WISH does not perform the destruction or loss of life it desires, it could be argued that it has some potential to contribute to such an outcome. Occasionally, a DEATH WISH might fall on fertile ground, in particular when uttered by a speaker in the position of authority, or—in the case of online discourse—a speaker with a broad following, and with potential to motivate a certain group or person to put the DEATH WISH into practice. This potential impact is difficult to measure precisely and in isolation from other speech acts; however, at the very least, there seems to be a correlation between the increase of hate speech on the one hand and of hate crime incidents on the other (Wilson and Land 2020).

Another, more likely effect is that the spread of DEATH WISHES in mainstream discourse can normalise cruel, contemptuous attitudes towards Jews or Israelis, making it increasingly permissible to talk about their destruction or erasure as a desired event (Schwarz-Friesel 2019), in increasingly violent terms. In time, the accumulation, repetition and familiarity of antisemitic DEATH WISHES push further the boundary between what seems to be just strong criticism—for instance towards the State of Israel or individual Jewish or Israeli figures—and what is, in fact, antisemitic discourse.

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Expresses a suggestion that something negative or violent will happen to a Jewish/Israeli/Zionist target, possibly through an unspecified higher power, especially if they do not follow a particular action or order;
- Contains references to the death or destruction of Jews, Israelis, Israel, Zionists, Zionism.

Explicit references:

- Violent and affirming, desiring, or calling for violence: e.g. kill, shoot, bomb, drown;
- Non-violent: e.g. erase, remove, dissolve, clean up, vanish.

Coded references:

- Activated by either the context or world knowledge, e.g. references to "doomsday" (religious) or "shower" (historical).

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "We will stop at nothing to kill the Zionists"

When a DEATH WISH appears as an extreme form of a THREAT, it follows that same pattern of intimidation towards its target, but it becomes considerably more menacing through the mention of death or killing, either explicitly or implicitly. In its strongest and most overt form, a DEATH WISH directly affirms, desires or calls for deadly violence towards Jews or the Jewish state. It may be addressing an out-group (you or they), an in-group ("we will stop at nothing"), or be expressed more generally—sometimes in a sloganised form, as in the case of the brief and blunt call for "death to Israel."

(2) "Death to Israel"
(3) "Im wating for the day when the tables turn lmao and filthy zion-
    ists scream for their lives, quranic and biblical prophecy mate. The
    muslims and christians will rise up together to killl every single one
    of you zionist"
(4) "the Most High Ra hears you and will not let your death be in vain
    your blood will be revenged"

Similarly, a curse crosses the line into a DEATH WISH when it incorporates
mentions of death into its basic paradigm, whose distinguishing feature is
referencing interventions from a higher power. In this pair of examples,
the first one communicates an explicit desire to "kill every single […]
[Z]ionist" who will "scream for their lives," framed as a future certainty
due to a "quranic and biblical prophecy." The second comment assures
that "blood will be revenged," presumably by spilling blood in return, as
an act of the "the Most High Ra." The act of inflicting death is presented
as either a cause so righteous that it will allegedly unite two major world
religions, "[M]uslims and [C]hristians," who "will rise up together" or
as a divine intervention. With this rationale, killing loses its connotation
of a crime, and responsibility for the death is either excused or removed
entirely.

(5) "The plague Will come over israel and the water Will disappear

    doomsday for Israel"

In fact, references to divine interventions or religious principles seem to
be used rather frequently to communicate the DEATH WISH in a more
covert way. They rely on the audience's understanding of phrases such as
"the plague" as an Old Testament divine reckoning, and of "doomsday"
as the biblical final judgement meted out at the end of time. Elsewhere,
comments may also reference the Hinduist and Buddhist concept of
karma as an inescapable consequence of one's actions.

(6) "Go prepare your bags for an eternal voyage to the hell"
(7) "i hope all of thoae heartless israelis burn in this life and the hereafter.
    Rot in hell."

Another subset of DEATH WISHES employs a variety of religious or cultural references to the afterlife—expressing a desire for the target of the DEATH WISH to not only die, but also receive eternal punishment after death. Here, comments refer to a "voyage to […] hell," "rot[ting] in hell" and suffering a painful fate in both "this life" and "the hereafter."

(8) "Dear lord, just die already."
(9) "Are there no snipers in the militaries of the world???"
(10) "I wish a rocket had landed on his head during that speech"
(11) "Love to see tel aviv in flames"

Syntactically, DEATH WISHES can take on a range of forms, from instructions ("just die already") to rhetorical questions ("are there no snipers […]???"), as well as actual wish constructions ("I wish," "[I would] love to see"). These can then be used to frame a broad range of references to death or destruction—at times specific, such as shooting or air strikes, at others more generic.

(12) "sooner or later the tables will turn and the people will rise, you will no longer exist on this earth!"
(13) "One day they will clean their land from the Israeli conquerors and the land will return to its ppl…. Palestinians."

However, the ominous, sinister tone of a DEATH WISH can also be successfully constructed through a relatively simple declarative sentence in future tense, which suggests an inevitable destiny for the target of the DEATH WISH (here suggested to be in a position of power in the present). This effect is further intensified through generalised time expressions such as "soon," "sooner or later" or "one day." With the help of such devices, the wish does not require violent language to imply annihilation. Instead, it can use seemingly innocuous phrases: its target will simply "no longer exist on this earth," or "their land" will be "clean[ed]."

(14) "Israel you will be reduced to nothing very soon you will no longer exist you will disappear like dust"
(15) "I hope the weapons are vast enough to wash israel from the world.map and remove zionism from the pages of history"

A significant portion of DEATH WISHES operates within this semantic field of disappearance, vanishing, removal or being "reduced to nothing." This may be coupled with metaphors, as the one portraying the desired destruction of the Jewish state as "wash[ing] [I]srael from the world map" as if a stain or dirt, or "remov[ing] [Z]ionism from the pages of history," suggesting that it should not only be destroyed but also forgotten, thus → DENYING ISREAL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34).

(16) "I think it's good that the ultra-orthodox were vaccinated first because many died from it and this world has become a bit cleaner"

On the content level, DEATH WISHES can use recent events as a frame of reference; since early 2020 one of such events has been the global Covid-19 pandemic. This example alludes to the Covid-19 vaccine, and possibly also the speedy nationwide vaccination campaign in Israel, falsely stating that it caused the death of those who "were vaccinated first." It expresses praise for the supposed premature deaths of "the ultra-[O]rthodox [Jews]," claiming that their removal has supposedly made the world "a bit cleaner."

(17) "Adolph come back to clean up please"

Aside from current events, DEATH WISHES can also use historical scenarios; among them, that of Nazi persecution of Jews is particularly common. Here, the comment communicates the wish for Adolf Hitler to "come back" and "clean up." In the context of Nazi ideology and agenda, there can be little doubt that the "clean[ing] up" refers to exterminating Jews, as well as possibly other groups excluded and targeted by Hitler's regime.

Implicit

(18) "I'm a bit sleepy tonight but when I wake up I'm going death con 3 On JEWISH PEOPLE"[1]

---

[1] https://www.reuters.com/world/kanye-wests-twitter-instagram-accounts-restricted-after-alleged-anti-semitic-2022-10-09 (last accessed on 10 July 2023).

A well-publicised antisemitic DEATH WISH can quickly inspire affirmation and imitation, as seen in the case of this now-deleted statement published by US musician and influencer Kanye West on his official *Twitter* account on 8 October 2022. West's tweet was widely reported by the media and commented on by both his critics and supporters (see also Chapelan et al. 2023). Some of the latter attempted to explain away the phrase "death con" as non-threatening and a misspelling of the annual hacker convention DEF CON (however, it may well have been a reference to DEFCON—Defense Readiness Condition, the US military's ranking system for defence readiness against a potential nuclear attack). Many others expressed their agreement with the DEATH WISH and used West's statement as a jumping-off point for spreading further antisemitic stereotypes and conspiracies.

(19) "why A….didn't finish the job"

Among the many and varied strategies employed to obscure antisemitic message, some are deceptively simple. Abbreviating a word reduces the chances of it attracting unwanted attention and makes it unrecognisable outside the context. It also creates an easy escape route should the author of the statement be accused of antisemitism—even if the choice to use the abbreviation in itself points to awareness that the statement is potentially problematic. Here, similarly to an earlier example, a comment alludes to Adolf Hitler and asks why he had not "finish[ed] the job" of exterminating Jews. Its rhetorical nature renders the statement implicit, but also seems to convey regret that the historical scenario had not played out this way, in other words—a wish that deaths of more, or all, Jewish people (and other targeted minorities) had not occurred.

(20) "They suffered this from Nazism, today Nazism no longer exists, let's hope history repeats itself"

While this comment openly mentions Nazism, the DEATH WISH itself is again expressed implicitly—by means of an idiom. By hoping that "history repeats itself," the comment expresses desire for Nazism (or perhaps a regime with similar ideology) to return, and with it the persecution of Jews.

(21) "Someone needs to give Soros a 'shower'"

Other statements rely on still more subtle linguistic ruses, such as this allusion to gas chambers, coded as giving "a shower" to the Jewish-born George Soros. However, to ensure that the allusion is not missed or misunderstood, the comment places it in inverted commas, signalling that it is indeed not to be read literally.

(22) "Covid has moved much too slowly in his case"

Here, we rely on both world knowledge and context to decode the statement as an antisemitic DEATH WISH. The former is required to understand that Covid-19 is a potentially deadly virus which has recently caused a global pandemic; the virus moving "much too slowly" means failing to cause a person's death. The context is needed to confirm that "his case" indicates a Jewish target of the DEATH WISH. When this external information is put together, the resulting tone is disappointment that the virus did not result in the death of a Jewish person.

(23) "6MWE"

The acronym, which stands for "6 Million Wasn't Enough," has been appearing not only in comments sections and *Twitter* hashtags, but also offline—for example as a T-shirt slogan, as evidenced by a photograph of a masked man allegedly taken on 6 January 2022 during the attack on the United States Capitol.[2] The phrase references the approximate number of Jews killed during the Holocaust, and—by stating that it was insufficient—insinuates that either more such deaths should have happened at the time or should still happen, thus potentially CALLING FOR VIOLENCE against Jews.

---

[2] https://www.timesofisrael.com/right-anti-semite-wrong-trump-protest-tweets-of-racist-T-shirt-may-help-bigots (last accessed on 15 July 2023).

Non-antisemitic Examples

(24) "you would doubtless still be celebrating the death of thousands of Jews"

It is unclear whether the commenter is praising or criticising the hypothetical continued celebration of "the death of thousands of Jews." The pronoun "you" could be playing a generic role (meaning "everyone") or a deictic one (pointing away from the speaker and towards an out-group). The lack of additional information makes both interpretations—an antisemitic DEATH WISH on the one hand, and counter speech on the other—equally possible.

(25) "Death con 3 Jews… how is this not antisemitic??"

While the first part of the comment is taken verbatim from the notoriously antisemitic tweet by Kanye West (see (18)), the second part reacts to the DEATH WISH conveyed in the first. Despite the interrogative format, it is unlikely to be a genuine question—a much more probable reading is that it is counter speech: through a rhetorical question, the commenter seems to express their genuine surprise that the DEATH WISH can be interpreted as anything but an antisemitic statement. This is further emphasised by the choice to ask a negative question "how is this not antisemitic" (rather than a more neutral one 'is this antisemitic?'), and with the use of punctuation.

(26) "Israelis will die because people die on both sides, as with ALL wars"

Similarly, even though the opening of the comment bears structural resemblance to DEATH WISHES and uses direct language ("Israelis will die"), the rest of the sentence corrects this impression. In all likelihood, this is a statement about the universality of death, which can and will occur "on both sides" of a conflict, in "ALL wars." There is no suggestion that the death of Israeli citizens is more deserved, particularly desired, or imminent. Both (25) and (26) show that the mere co-occurrence of the words "death" or "die" with "Jews" or "Israelis" does not suffice to classify a comment as an antisemitic DEATH WISH.

Related Categories

THREATS (Chapter 39), CURSES (Chapter 40), AFFIRMING, CALLING FOR, DESIRING VIOLENCE (Chapter 42).

References

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. Antisemitism and Language. In *Antisemitism in Reader Comments*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chapelan, Alexis, Laura Ascone, Matthias J. Becker, Matthew Bolton, Pia Haupeltshofer, Jan Krasni, Alexa Krugel, Helena Mihaljević, Karolina Placzynta, Milena Pustet, Marcus Scheiber, Elisabeth Steffen, Hagen Troschke, Victor Tschiskale, and Chloé Vincent. 2023. *Decoding Antisemitism: An AI-driven Study on Hate Speech and Imagery Online. Discourse Report 5*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism. https://doi.org/10.14279/depositonce-17105.

Levinson, Stephen C. 2017. Speech Acts. In *Oxford Handbook of Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Paasch-Colberg, Sünje, Christian Strippel, Joachim Trebbe, and Martin Emmer. 2021. From Insult to Hate Speech: Mapping Offensive Language in German User Comments on Immigration. *Media and Communication* 9 (1): 171–180.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika. 2019. 'Antisemitism 2.0'—The Spreading of Jew-hatred on the World Wide Web. In *Comprehending and Confronting Antisemitism: A Multi-faceted Approach*, ed. Armin Lange, Kerstin Mayerhofer, Dina Porat, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, 311–338. Boston: De Gruyter.

Wilson, Richard Ashby, and Molly K. Land. 2020. Hate Speech on Social Media: Content Moderation in Context. *Connecticut Law Review* 52 (3): 1029.

42

Affirming, Desiring, Calling for Violence

Laura Ascone

Conceptual and Historical Overview

Even though freedom of speech, which constitutes a pillar of many countries' constitutions, allows any individual to say and believe in whatever they wish, it is a common consensus that it does not include the right to incite to violence or lawless actions (Mrabure 2016). In the case of antisemitism, according to the IHRA definition, "calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews" is a form of antisemitism (IHRA 2016); it is important to recognise that if such speech acts target Israelis, Israel and Zionism or Zionists, they can also be antisemitic.[1] In

---

[1] According to the IHRA definition, these actions are undertaken "in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion". Yet, we consider it too restrictive as these attitudes can come from individuals that are not motivated by extremist ideologies.

L. Ascone (✉)

Centre for Research on Antisemitism, Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

e-mail: laura.ascone@decoding-antisemitism.eu

other terms, in order to establish whether an AFFIRMATION OF, DESIRE, and CALL FOR VIOLENCE is antisemitic, it is first crucial to determine if such a demand or the perpetrated brutality itself is motivated by antisemitic ideology—that is, if it attacks its target for being Jewish.

AFFIRMATION OF VIOLENCE comprises any form of SUPPORT FOR THE VIOLENCE perpetrated against Jews, Israelis, Israel and Zionism/Zionists that is motivated by antisemitic ideology. It also includes justifications for the use of violence, as well as expressions of praise for the perpetrators who have committed extreme acts against these targets. It is important to highlight that when supporting violence and praising its perpetrators, even though the feeling expressed is a positive one, it will be perceived as negative by any addressee that does not share the speaker's point of view.

A DESIRE FOR VIOLENCE focuses on the speaker's feelings rather than on the actions that should be taken against the target. Meanwhile, in a CALL FOR VIOLENCE the speaker incites the addressee to act against the target (i.e. Jewish/Israeli/Zionist entities). It can be seen as a weak obligation, as the speaker is not actually in the position to oblige the addressee to undertake a certain action. An AFFIRMATION OF, DESIRE, and CALL FOR VIOLENCE does not need to refer to any additional antisemitic stereotype or concept. However, it can enable certain antisemitic concepts. For instance, to justify a certain brutal action against Jews, the speaker can evoke their alleged → EVIL nature (Chapter 3.1). Likewise, they may support a terrorist attack against Israel because they consider it a → TERRORIST STATE (Chapter 31).

Just like other speech acts, this one too can be against a group or an individual; when the attack is against an individual, it will be considered antisemitic if the target's Jewish identity is well established or when they can be identified as Jewish. If support or CALLS FOR VIOLENCE are directed against Israel, its citizens are ultimately also affected. Even if there are not many ways to semantically position oneself in a meaningful way against Zionism as a political movement (that supports Israel), such a reference to Zionists is also antisemitic. This would apply primarily to Israelis or Jews; however, even if non-Jewish Zionists were meant, an attack on them is also antisemitic, as it is directed against the advocacy of Israel's existence.

AFFIRMING, DESIRING or CALLING FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST Jews, Israel or Israelis must be distinguished from support for the Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli conflict. While the conflict might involve violence, merely stating general support for the Palestinian cause when responding to reports of Palestinian violence is too vague to be classed as AFFIRMATION, as the potential support for extreme action can only be inferred indirectly and tentatively. Furthermore, support for the Palestinian cause is not incompatible with the rejection of violence. Expressions of indifference to anti-Jewish/anti-Israeli violence, while unpleasant or upsetting, should not be considered antisemitic in themselves, as the speaker might simply be unempathetic or care more about other issues. Such attitudes might be grounded in a general desensitisation to violence following media reports of atrocities all over the world.

That said, the online response to the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023—the most shocking display of large-scale violence against Jewish people since the Holocaust—was, in fact, characterised by a widespread direct AFFIRMATION and even celebration of the violence, to the surprise and consternation of even seasoned observers of online antisemitism (Becker et al. 2023). Such AFFIRMATION was articulated explicitly, but also conveyed implicitly through expressions of support for Hamas or Palestinian resistance in general posted in direct response to reports of the Hamas atrocities. In such situations, statements such as "Free Palestine" or even the posting of Palestinian flags—neither of which in normal circumstances constitute an antisemitic expression—function as AFFIRMATIONS of the reported violence. However, as soon as the focus of the reporting or discussion shifts (for example, towards the humanitarian situation of the Palestinian population or diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict), such statements may lose that particular their connotation. Therefore, phrases such as 'Free Palestine' are heavily context-dependent, requiring knowledge of the event to which they are a response, as well as the surrounding co-text of the statement, in order for any antisemitic meaning to be determined. Another indirect strategy of AFFIRMATION of violence entails depicting the violence against civilians as "necessary" or as self-defence, or comparing it to historical scenarios of armed resistance. The resistance against Nazi Germany is one of the preferred of

such scenarios, in which the indirect AFFIRMATION of Hamas' violence maps onto the NAZI ANALOGY (Chapter 28.1).

Key Identifying Characteristics

- Positioning towards past, present and future violence against Jews, Israelis, Israel, Zionism, Zionists, including:
  - Support for violence;
  - Justification for the use of violence;
  - Praise for the perpetrators of such violence;
  - Wishes or demands that violence be exercised.

Antisemitic Examples

Explicit

(1) "Totally deserved and appropriate!!!Israel deserves MUCH more than this. Fascist, Genocidal state!!!!"

In this statement, posted in response to media coverage of terrorist attacks against civilians perpetrated in Israel in May 2022, for which the Islamic State group has since claimed responsibility, the speaker not only affirms their support for the attacks but also accuses Israel of being a fascist and genocidal state (→ FASCISM ANALOGIES, Chapter 28, → GENOCIDE, Chapter 32). The speaker cites this characterisation of Israel as justification for the violence, and for their own support of the violence. Furthermore, the sentence "Israel deserves MUCH more than this" suggests that the speaker both condones the violence already perpetrated against Israelis and wishes that many more brutal actions were undertaken. Both the support and the desire for violence are emphasised on the semiotic level as well, namely with the use of distinct typographic properties (capital letters and multiple exclamation marks) that illustrate high emotional charge.

(2) "Great job Hamas freedom fighters"
(3) "Very Weldone Hamas...done great job...We fully support and Stand with Hamas... ❤ ❤ ❤"

Both (2) and (3) were comments posted in the immediate aftermath of the 7 October Hamas attacks, as responses to news reports detailing the scale of the carnage inflicted on Israeli civilians. Here the phrases "Great job Hamas" and and "Weldone Hamas" signify direct support for the violence itself, rather than any more generic support for the Palestinian cause—a commitment underscored in (3) by the web user's declaration that they "fully support" Hamas's actions. In (2) the web user truncates the well-known phrase "one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter" in order to reframe the Hamas attacks as a noble strugge for freedom, which here acts as an implicit statement of support for the violence.

(4) "I hope Palestinians will make those Zionists suffer as they have been suffering since 1948"

In a comment reacting to reports on rockets launched at Israeli towns and cities by Hamas in May 2021, the speaker expresses a desire for violence against Zionists, by which they most probably mean Israelis in general, including civilians. The commenter justifies this extreme desire by claiming that Zionists have been continually causing harm to Palestinians since the creation of Israel in 1948. As a consequence, Israelis as 'Zionists' appear here as EVIL entities, and Israel as the → ONLY GUILTY PARTY IN THE CONFLICT (Chapter 36).

(5) "Congrats Palestinians, don't leave any centimetre of your homeland, what was taken by force will be given back by force"

Here, again in reaction to the May 2022 attacks in Israel, the speaker directly addresses Palestinians and incites them to keep acting violently against Israel with the demand to hold their ground, and with the suggestion that Palestinians will take territories back in a violent way. Therefore, this sentence also represents an indirect THREAT against Israelis. According to the speaker, the claim that these territories were taken by Israelis by force justifies the perpetration of brutal actions against them. Even though Israel is not mentioned, the combination of

"Palestinians" and "homeland" allows the reader to understand that the speaker refers to Israel.

Implicit

(6) "When the people will rise up at last, I won't feel sorry for Soros and the likes of him"

Through the combination of the verb "rise up" and the adverb "at last," the comment constitutes an implicit AFFIRMATION that the violence (the nature of which is not specified) which would befall Jewish billionaire George Soros is well-deserved. The idea of violence itself is expressed via a presupposition and inferred through the evocation of the topos of people's revolution, which in the collective imagination maps onto the idea of a cathartic, cleansing and righteous violence. By feigning indifference, the web user both shows that they would have no sympathy for Soros and endorses the act, clearly positioning themselves on the side of the perpetrators. In this context, the syntagm "I won't feel sorry" functions as a euphemistic, potentially sarcastic and AFFIRMATION of violence.

(7) "Hail the fighters of freedom"

In another context, this statement, and the posting of Palestinian flags, would not be viewed as antisemitic. However, when posted in response to reports of the atrocities of 7 October, as this comment was, then the meaning is changed—"hail[ing] the fighters of freedom" acts as an implicit AFFIRMATION of the "freedom fighters," who in this context can only be the Hamas perpetrators of 7 October. Similarly the Palestinian flag takes on an antisemitic meaning here by becoming the symbolic bearer of such AFFIRMATION of violence against Israeli civilians.

(8) "more to come insha'Allah"

Again, shorn of context, the statement in (8) can have any number of meanings. In the context of the 7 October attacks, however, it represents an implicit statement of support for the perpetrators, and the wish for

more violence to come—violence which the use of "insha'Allah" (or 'God willing') presents as divinely sanctioned and thus worthy of celebration.

> (9) "Support to Palestinians 👏 👏 an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"

If this example, reacting to the terrorist attacks in Israel in May 2022, consisted of the first part of the sentence only, one could hardly conclude the support for violence and the expression of antisemitism. However, through the comment's second part, the web user expresses their support for the attacks, as "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" is a figure of speech representing the idea of revenge. Together with the formulated support for the Palestinian side, this statement is to be understood as an implicit call for violence. The commenter suggests that Israel deserves these attacks because of its own actions towards Palestinians.

> (10) "Brave lions and martyrs! 💪💪💪"
> (11) "They are defenders of their homeland! How comes Ukrainians are heroes but Palestinians are terrorists?"

In these two cases, the context is again crucial to determine whether the statement is antisemitic or not. Like (5), the two comments are taken from a discussion of terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians. If they referred to a conventional confrontation between military groups, they would not meet the threshold for antisemitism. However, since they extoll the perpetrators of acts of violence against civilians, who were targeted on the base of their Israeli identity, they are antisemitic in nature. Comment (6) uses the figure of the lion as a metaphor for heroism and bravery—a trope common in jihadist discourse; the religious symbolism of the martyr evokes a just cause. The triple flexed biceps emoji further reinforces the meaning, being frequently used to express admiration for someone's fortitude, determination and strength. Therefore, it constitutes an implicit apology of terrorist violence. Meanwhile, (7) is more nuanced and attempts to draw an analogy with another brutal military conflict. However, it conflates actions against military targets with attacks on unarmed civilians. The topos of national self-defence has

been heavily used throughout the history of antisemitism to legitimise violence, portraying it as merely a reaction to the alleged aggressive actions of Jewish people.

Non-antisemitic Examples

(12) "*don't agree with the violence at all, but this kind of thing was always going to happen.*"

Here the web user distances themselves from the violence from the outset. Even though the latter half of the comment may in some contexts act as a justification for violent attacks—by making them an inevitable or even rational response to Israeli actions—there is no direct blame attached to either side. As such the comment could be understood as a generic condemnation of the 'cycle of violence' throughout the conflict, and should not therefore be considered as AFFIRMATION of violence, nor antisemitic.

(13) "*Good that Rabin was shot.*"

The speaker expresses their endorsement for the shooting of a former prime minister of Israel. While the language and the emotional charge are neutral, this sentence might be interpreted as antisemitic AFFIRMATION of violence, as the speaker explicitly refers to the Jewish identity of the victim. However, if the speaker is, for example, a right-wing Jew this sentence could also be interpreted as an approval of such violence against a political actor, rather than against any Jewish individual. Because of this double interpretation, this sentence cannot be considered antisemitic.

Related Categories

THREATS (Chapter 39), CURSES (Chapter 40), DEATH WISHES (Chapter 41), DENIAL OF ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST (Chapter 34)

References

Al-Abodi, Iman Khudhair, and Riyadh Tariq Kadhim Al-Ameedi. 2007. The Use of 'Praise' Speech Act in Selected Texts of the Holy Bible. *Journal of Al-Qadisiya University* 10 (3–4) (last accessed on 06 October 2022).

Ascone, Laura. 2018. La radicalisation à travers l'expression des émotions sur internet. PhD thesis. Université de Cergy Pontoise, France.

Becker, Matthias J., Laura Ascone, Matthew Bolton, Alexis Chapelan, Pia Haupeltshofer, Alexa Krugel, Karolina Placzynta, Marcus Scheiber, and Tschiskale Victor. 2023. *Celebrating Terror: Antisemitism online after the Hamas attacks on Israel: Preliminary Results I*. Berlin: Technische Universität Berlin. Centre for Research on Antisemitism.

IHRA (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance). 2016. Working Definition of Antisemitism. https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antisemitism (last accessed on 24 November 2022).

Mrabure, Omote. 2016. Counteracting Hate Speech and the Right to Freedom of Expression in Selected Jurisdictions. *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence* 7: 160–169.

Searle, John. 1979. *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glossary

Concept

Following the definition of cognitive linguistics, the term *concept* refers to the smallest unit in our cognitive system. Concepts are "mental organisational units that have the function of storing knowledge about the world. As building blocks of our cognitive system, they enable the economic storage and processing of subjective units of experience through the grouping of information into classes according to certain characteristics" (Schwarz-Friesel 2008: 108 [translated by the editors], cf. also Becker 2021: 155 ff). For example, when the term *chair* is mentioned, the corresponding concept gets automatically activated in the brain. If one is able to speak a language, one cannot *not* understand (Lakoff 2014[1]). In the context of antisemitism, there are numerous concepts or stereotypes that have persisted over the centuries and adapted to the respective conditions. The basis of all antisemitic concepts is the idea of Jews as THE OTHER/FOREIGNERS (Chapter 2)—an attribution

---

[1] In "Don't think of an elephant" (2014), the cognitive linguist George Lakoff examines the way the brain frames and the (political) strategies through which this framing is successfully carried out.

that can consequently be extended with numerous pejorative and/or exclusionary aspects, as happens in the context of the entire repertoire of antisemitism. In detail, this means that a conflation of two concepts takes place: the one that represents Jews as a group and the one that represents the respective idea of a characteristic—be it that Jews are the other, or GREEDY (Chapter 11.1), POWERFUL (Chapter 12) and MENDACIOUS (Chapter 7). The transmission of these fused concepts as well as the nature of our thinking, in which activation and association processes run automatically and uncontrollably, allow that when the Jewish group or a (known) Jewish person is mentioned, a corresponding framing immediately arises in the mind of a person socialised with antisemitic concepts.

Stereotype

Stereotypes are mental 'images' of social groups. They are used to create and convey knowledge about these groups and thus about the social world. They enable social categorisations and classifications based on quickly available generalities. "Stereotypes represent the traits that we view as characteristic of social groups, or of individual members of those groups, and particularly those that differentiate groups from each other" (Stangor 2016: 4). The stereotypical attributions are also durative, i.e. assigned as group characteristics that are stable throughout history. On the linguistic level, this may be expressed grammatically (supra-temporal present tense) or semantically (e.g. 'once again').

The generalised and therefore false attributions in stereotypes lead not only to a distorted perception of a group. At the level of attitude, "stereotypes are commonly, but not necessarily, accompanied by prejudice, i.e. by a favourable or unfavourable predisposition towards any member of the [stereotyped group]" (Stallybrass 1977: 601). The negative charge of prejudice against other groups clearly predominates (Stangor 2016: 4).

Stereotypes can be formed on the basis of observations, but also solely on the basis of slander. Several antisemitic stereotype triggers have been based on selective observations of actual incidents. For example, since the Middle Ages some Christian majority societies imposed occupational

restrictions on Jews, forcing them to work in e.g. professions based on financial services. From this, a stereotype was formed that assumed their affinity to such professions. This in turn was linked to prejudices about the alleged motivation and behaviour. Another stereotype built on real events is that of the → ADMONISHERS (Chapter 22): for many Jews, remembering the Holocaust is or was significant, some of them point also to antisemitic incidents or developments. This fact is extended to all Jews, exaggerating the frequency and claiming that they make continuous demands.

However, virtually all other stereotypes go back to baseless accusations which, intended from the very start to slander and defame Jews as a group. Through repetition, they became standardised ideas over time and burned themselves into the collective memory. For example, the stereotype of → CHILD MURDER/BLOOD LIBEL (Chapter 4), according to which Jews seek to kill Christian children for religious ceremonies, manifested itself in ever new accusations from the Middle Ages onwards and was handed down as a central defamation.

A stereotype that can accompany positive evaluations is that Jews are all successful in the arts and sciences, leading to philosemitic prejudice (although it can equally be linked to negative attitudes). However, philosemitism is linked to antisemitism through stereotyping ideas about Jews: in the corresponding imagery, these usually go hand in hand with negative stereotypes, which can be equally recalled and spread in other moments. The whole network of interconnected stereotypes is woven together to form a grand narrative about Jews. The antisemitic stereotypes have been passed on through language and images for centuries, forming a "cultural and communicative code" (Volkov 2000: 74 ff).

Analogy

Analogy refers to the mental expression of a comparison or equation of two concepts. Both the analogy and the stereotype are phenomena on the cognitive-conceptual level. However, in contrast to the stereotype, which represents the projection of an *abstract* negative character trait (that is not limited in time) onto Jews, an analogy is an equivalency to a

more or less *concrete* (historical) scenario (or the ideology on which this scenario is based) through which—directly or indirectly—Jews, Israelis, Israel or Zionism are demonised and delegitimised. Usually, the analogy is linguistically expressed or activated by a *comparison* (*X is*/*acts like Y*). However, like stereotypes, analogies can be verbalised in various ways, e.g. by using metaphors, allusions, wordplay, etc. Historical analogies, often but not only in Israel-related discourse, have various functions. Based on the regular use of such analogies Israel gets primarily conceptualised and evaluated as a colonial, apartheid, fascist or even a Nazi state. The function of said analogies refers to the conclusions that can be derived about the two scenarios (based on the information of the two related presentations). The question of whether the speaker has realised the equivalence intentionally or unintentionally is just as irrelevant to the function of the analogy as its understanding on the part of the recipient. What is decisive is whether a certain equivalence is communicated, in which case linguistic evidence can be provided for it (Becker 2021: 199).

Topos

The notion of topos is derived from the Greek word for a place, a region or a space. Its current-day use in discourse studies was introduced by Aristotle, who used the spatial metaphor to describe the common 'places' where a speaker or a writer may 'go' to 'find' an appropriate argument to convince the audience. Therefore, topoi function as reservoirs of stock formulas, puns, proverbs, similes, metaphors, symbols or themes, which can be deployed at will. The concept can also be applied in narratology, rhetoric or in political sciences to characterise some archetypal elements that can be assembled and reworked to form a coherent story (Curtius 1953).

Moreover, as Balkin (1996) points out, a topos is always culturally embedded into a shared understanding of the world: it is working so efficiently precisely because, having been repeated so many times in different discourses, it is immediately recognisable and intelligible for the audience. Most of the time, its meaning does not need to be expounded: topoi are therefore a form of conceptual shortcut towards

a reservoir of readily available meaning. This is highly significant for the study of displays of antisemitism, which builds upon sedimented strata of negative cultural assumptions. The antisemitic canon offers multiple examples of topoi being employed for the purposes of OTHERI-SATION and exclusion. For example, the classically antisemitic topos of the Wandering Jew highlights the fundamental plasticity and adaptability of topoi: initially embedded into the Christian myth of DEICIDE, it then mapped in the nineteenth century onto the narrative of national identity and belonging (through the stereotype of the Jew as an ontological foreigner), before capitalising on the Arab–Israeli conflict by depicting Jews as colonisers without a motherland. A topos is therefore, at its core, a micro-narrative that exists in a society's collective imagination and can be activated in discourse through certain formulas: calling Jews 'foreigners' can activate the culturally entrenched story of their punishment by God to eternal nomadism, thus legitimising even in secular societies their exclusion from the ethnic and political in-group. Topoi are a broad linguistic category, as they cover stereotypes, analogies and strategies.

Strategy

So far, we have presented the two carriers of antisemitic concepts: stereotypes and analogies. In those cases, negative or exclusionary characteristics are transferred to the Jewish out-group. Such transferences are absent, however, from statements that, for example, affirm Hitler, relativise the Holocaust or deny antisemitism—and yet no one would have any doubt that the corresponding statements are antisemitic. In this context, it is not the transference to the out-group that has a constituting effect, but the fixing of certain attitudes towards Jews within the in-group. While a strategy often presupposes a consciousness of the act itself, a firmly anchored consciousness cannot always be assumed in, for example, a relativisation of the Holocaust (see *hate speech*, below). The same is true in the reproduction of stereotypes. Nevertheless, an attitude

towards Jews and their historical fate is performatively expressed in these operations.

Hate Speech

Hate speech as a phenomenon is on everyone's lips. All too often, the question arises whether hateful words really appear in statements identified as hate speech by experts. This is a misunderstanding. Hate speech does not mean *hateful speech*—i.e. speech motivated by hate—but rather discriminatory verbalisations—which can, but do not have to be connected with incitement. Hate speech can equally include expressions of other emotions, such as fear—or even be devoid of all expressions of emotion. We follow the INACH (International Network Against Cyber Hate) definition: "Hate speech is *intentional or unintentional* public discriminatory and/or defamatory statements; intentional incitement to hatred and/or violence and/or segregation based on a person's or a group's real or perceived race, ethnicity, language, nationality, skin colour, religious beliefs or lack thereof, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, political beliefs, social status, birth, age, mental health, disability, disease."[2] In this respect, the word combination 'hate speech' introduces a new level of meaning. In the context of antisemitism, hate speech means the expression of defamatory, demonising and/or exclusionary ideas about Jews (for further elaborations on hate speech, see Guillén-Nieto 2023).

What the definition correctly highlights is that hate speech can also be expressed unconsciously or unintentionally. In the case of antisemitic hate speech, one form—in addition to obvious speech acts such as insults, threats, curses, death wishes, etc.—is the reproduction of stereotypes. The history of some of these stereotypes goes back centuries. Passed down through the generations, many have become ingrained within collective consciousness, and thus a piece of shared normality. At

---

[2] Contrary to the INACH definition, we need to emphasise that expressions of hate speech do not have to be public: the dimension of hate speech does not change whether e.g. someone distorts the Holocaust publicly or privately.

times, allegations about Jewish intelligence, wealth or power are not even understood as expressions of hate speech by those who would tend to distance themselves from it. This can also be true of historical analogies as well as strategies like affirmation, relativisation or denial of the Holocaust, all of which fall under antisemitic hate speech. However, there is also a form of antisemitism that does not constitute hate speech: so-called structural antisemitism. Structurally antisemitic worldviews and patterns of speech replicate the form or structure of antisemitic ideas without necessarily referring to Jews or Judaism at all. These include conspiracy theories which contend that a small, secretive global elite assert omnipotent control over the world's political and economic systems. Such ideas can open pathways to more explicit antisemitic interpretations, but do not necessarily or inevitably lead to antisemitism.

Implicitness

Implicit antisemitism—in contrast to its explicit counterpart—is characterised by the fact that there is no one-to-one relation between the concept/strategy on the one hand, and the word or phrase on the other. In other words, the conceptual meaning is not directly expressed and can only be inferred from the words or phrases used. In order to infer a particular concept to fill the gaps in communicative meaning, the recipient needs to draw upon knowledge about the language, but also information about the immediate context (the words or comments the statement is responding to), or the wider contextual framework (that is broader world knowledge) (Becker and Troschke 2023). Implicit meanings might be communicated through code words whose intended meaning is known to a particular in-group; or 'detour communication' strategies (Bergmann and Erb 1986), in which latent antisemitism is articulated in a more socially acceptable manner. Conceptually, that can be achieved, for example, by replacing the attribute "Jewish" with "Zionist," thus creating the impression it's only the political identity which is targeted. Linguistically, implicit antisemitic hate speech can be realised through puns, allusions, and metaphors, but also through indirect speech acts such as irony or rhetorical questions.

Presupposition

Communicative understanding is only possible if there is relevant, reciprocal knowledge between the producers and recipients of a communicative sequence. The notion of presupposition attempts to grasp the function of extra-linguistic knowledge in the coherence of texts and discourses (Ehrhardt and Heringer 2011). Presuppositions designate given, implicit knowledge prerequisites activated in a linguistic utterance, whose truth is taken for granted in discourse. The decisive criterion of presupposition is negation, insofar as the presupposition remains intact when a corresponding statement is negated (in contrast to implication, which then falls away) (Meibauer 2008): both the sentence 'Jews have managed to take over the world' and the sentence 'Jews have not managed to take over the world' presuppose that the attempt has been made and that Jews have the ability (power) to do so.

Speech Acts

Every linguistic utterance has a specific quality of action: by performing an utterance, the speaker performs an act. The intended action is called illocution, is based on conventionally established rules of communication and can (mostly) be derived from indicators within the utterance (Searle 1969): by saying 'Jews are greedy' the recipients have been *warned* of the negative characteristics of Jews. At the same time, speech acts do not have to be realised exclusively directly, but also indirectly, i.e. with a different illocution than that expressed by indicators: the utterance 'When will Soros die?' does not aim at receiving an answer to this question, but verbalises a death wish towards Soros. Finally, a speech act can be understood differently by the recipient: its perlocution, that is the effect on the recipient, does not always match the illocution that is the intended meaning or result. For example, an ironic counter speech statement can be taken as literal and antisemitic.

Metaphor

The metaphor is a case of non-literal language use. When using metaphorical language, the speaker does not intend to convey the literal meaning of a word or phrase given by the language system (see also Skirl 2009; Kirchhoff 2010; Musolff 2016). Rather they use it to establish a relationship between the object that is lexically identified and the object to which the word or phrase normally refers. The result is a fusion of concepts into a single entity. This coupling can be used to illustrate how the basic conceptualisation of cognition works: uttering stereotypical thinking is first of all the merging of two concepts, e.g. the concept of greed with a cognitive representation of the Jewish out-group (see: concept, above).

The following example illustrates this: 'Israel's declaration of military action is a smoke grenade for finding the truth.' Here, the transfer of features occurs from the concept of a 'smoke grenade' to the concept of 'Israel's declaration.' Despite seemingly incompatible concepts, the process of understanding (see Grice's principle of cooperation) leads to the assumption of a "meaningful meaning," i.e. one that cannot be understood literally (Grice 1989: 28 f). The recipient must take into account both the co-text and the context, as well as emergent features that do not follow from the individual terms (Skirl 2009). Only then can they work out features such as the concealment of truth and transfer them to Israel; however, the process is often swift and subconscious. The Jewish state is thus perceived as a party to the conflict that resists (a) the clarification of the conflict and (b) the desire for conflict resolution. In another example, the metaphorical utterance 'Zionist snake' results, again, from the transfer of features of the latter to the former. By integrating semantic aspects of the respective expressions into each other, a new meaning emerges. By transferring features, the metaphor can make the elusive, complex and abstract facts conceptually comprehensible and close "lexical gaps" (Skirl 2009). As a result, it is able to conceptualise and evaluate an unknown quantity—like a foreign country, a foreign culture and an outside group—for the reader by means of its pictorial quality without being noticed.

Paralogism

A paralogism is a logical fallacy or a mistake in reasoning that leads to an incorrect or invalid conclusion. The term was first popularised by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant in his "Critique of Pure Reason," and since then has been commonly used in the context of philosophy, especially in discussions related to logic and argumentation, to describe errors in reasoning related to the self and consciousness. In other fields, a paralogism can take various forms and can occur in any area of thought or argumentation. Some common types of paralogisms include the *false cause fallacy* (assuming a cause-and-effect relationship between two events when there is no evidence to support it), *hasty generalisations* (drawing a broad conclusion based on insufficient evidence or limited sample size) or *appeal to authority* (accepting an argument as true solely because someone with perceived authority or expertise says it is true, without examining the evidence).

In statements about Israel, commenters often claim that it behaves like (or even represents) a Nazi or European colonial state. They tend to use arguments that refer to a historical scenario, placing its circumstances in an equivalent relationship to the (partly distorted) conditions observed in Israel. By stringing together these arguments, the claim is made—either explicitly or implicitly—that these equated partial aspects should necessarily lead to a fundamental equation of the two states. Thus, a paralogism or generalising fallacy occurs (Van Eemeren 2001; Pérennec 2008; Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 227 ff; Becker 2021: 221 ff).

The same happens when accumulating arguments against a Jewish person, at the end of which an idea that corresponds to a stereotype is activated. The communicative advantage of paralogisms, whether they are intentional or not, obviously lies in the fact that the assertion is based on seemingly secure empiricism, strengthening the speaker's perspective and position in discourse. The speaker does not always verbalise the erroneous conclusion explicitly, but it is practically on the tip of their tongue.

Wordplay

When changes are made to the surface of a word or phrase that add a second meaning to the utterance, the result is called a wordplay or pun. Often, the new units of meaning are so unambiguous or conventionalised that the recipients of the utterance can quickly understand it. Nevertheless, this phenomenon falls into the realm of the implicit, since by means of insinuation certain meanings are not made explicit, i.e. the idea is not reproduced word for word, but the speaker creatively changes the word. For example, 'iSSrael' conveys the idea that the Jewish state represents the return of Nazi Germany. '🐍 oro 🐍,' written with two snake symbols, implicitly renders the stereotype of → EVIL (Chapter 3.1) in the context of the Jewish investment banker George Soros. So-called composites or portmanteaux also fall under puns, where a conceptual unit is created not indirectly, as in metaphor, but directly by linking two words. The NAZI ANALOGY, for example, can be communicated by the compound "Zionazis." 'Schwindler's List' suggests, by means of a word combination (related to the name Schindler and the word 'swindle;' 'List' is a German word for 'cunning'), that the Holocaust was a lie; moreover, there is an allusion to Steven Spielberg's film, whose fame enables the inference of the Nazi scenario (see below). This verbal pattern allows ideas to be expressed in persuasive brevity that, in explicit variants, would be incomparably longer. In this way, wordplay represents the increase in efficiency that characterises web communication.

Allusion

An allusion references knowledge shared by the speaker and the recipient, often in the form of cultural material presupposed as familiar, such as titles, sayings, song lyrics, advertising slogans, creating "communicative proximity" (Bussmann 2008: 45). This phatic relationship between the author and the recipient emerges because a shared knowledge of the world, background, culture, as well as shared judgement of these allusions is required to understand the relevant positions (see Sampson and Smith 1997: 12). It is a "vehicle of indirect communication" (cf. Lennon

2001: 5), since the meaning is not explicit and needs to be inferred by the recipient.

Onomastic allusions (from Greek *onoma*) include names such as 'Hitler,' 'Auschwitz,' 'Zyklon B' and can refer to both the fictional and non-fictional. In one example, present in both German and international contexts, the word 'Auschwitz' is used as a metonymic unit to allude to the Nazi mass murder of European Jews (as well as other minority groups); the German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno comments in his essay "Cultural Criticism and Society:" "Writing poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric […]" (Adorno [1951] 1977: 30). The Nazi mass murder and thus the communicative meaning of this statement can be understood instantly with the appropriate historical background knowledge. Allusions of this kind are "forms of elliptical communication about cultural matters" (Rodi 1975: 123; Lennon 2001: 11). Other historical scenarios can also be decoded depending on the level of familiarity within the language community.

Open allusions, meanwhile, use clichéd, partly standardised formulations, i.e. without verbalising any relevant reference to the historical scenario. For example, through the presence of Nazi atrocities in the German collective memory, readers can immediately understand phrases such as "that reminds us of our dark times" without further indication.

Non-antisemitic Examples

Throughout the book, we will contrast explicit and implicit forms of antisemitic hate speech for each of the presented phenomena. Additionally, it is relevant to explain the transition of antisemitic communication to so-called grey areas, where the dividing line between antisemitic and non-antisemitic statements is blurred. This is particularly pertinent, of course, with regard to the distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel as a state and Israel-related antisemitism. But the Middle East discourse is just one topic where uncertainties exist. Other crossovers concern anti-elitism or anti-capitalism when discussions revolve around public figures such as George Soros, or restrictions in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Grey area means statements where two or more readings are possible, at least one of which is antisemitic. Since we have neither background knowledge of the commenter nor (usually) further statements of this person, false positives can be avoided when categorising the respective statement conservatively. This means that every utterance is classified as non-antisemitic if at least one of its various coherent readings does not constitute antisemitism or do not lead to antisemitic inferences. If the meaning remains too vague—despite the information provided in the web comment itself, its immediate co-text, and the domains of knowledge from language and the world—we have classified it as non-antisemitic.

In order to make this process transparent for the readers, we will use several (mostly authentic) examples to show which utterances still fall under the category of antisemitism, and in which comments either the semantic gaps are too large or the analysed meaning—in itself or in context—does not exhibit an antisemitic basis.

Intentionality

In order to recognise the meaning of an utterance—in this case anti-semitism—knowledge of the author's intention is not necessary, as it is the utterance itself that matters. We do not need to decide whether the statement is an expression of a wider antisemitic worldview. Rather, we are concerned with its reference and inference[3] potential. Does it explic-itly or implicitly communicate an antisemitic idea? Ultimately, it is these patterns that pass on and normalise antisemitism (Schwarz-Friesel and Reinharz 2017: 20). What is more, unintentional statements also have the potential to reinforce stereotypical thinking and the exclusion of Jews (and other groups) in society. In contrast to the mental attitudes

---

[3] Ideas or meanings that are explicitly conveyed are called the *reference potential;* they are specifically verbalised by authors—but may not always be understood by readers. Information conveyed implicitly must be decoded or inferred by readers: "An inference is a cognitive process based on our world knowledge, bridging discontinuities in the text and used by the reader for incomplete information but also for problem cases and apparent nonsense" (Schwarz-Friesel 2013: 33).

or intentions of the person who expresses themself, the utterance itself can be clearly analysed by criteria, such as those we present in this book. Here, it can be determined whether it reflects an antisemitic idea in the respective context.

Discourse

This broad term, used in a variety of ways in linguistics, philosophy, sociology as well as in non-academic contexts, will most often be found in this book in one of two meanings: either synonymous with the *content* of a debate surrounding the given topic, or with its *form*, the language patterns and conventions (Bubenhofer 2009) characteristic of such a debate. The former, more general sense represents the typical concepts, topoi, clichés, stereotypes, arguments and narratives appearing in a discussion surrounding an issue. The latter refers to the set of verbal forms used to express them—the recurring syntactical patterns, lexical units, acronyms and punctuation, the usual metaphors, analogies, jokes, as well as visual or multimodal elements such as emojis, GIFs and memes. Frequently, the two meanings will merge. Therefore, a reference to e.g. 'current antisemitic discourse in the UK' can signify—depending on the context—either the content, or the form, or both, i.e. the verbal, visual and/or multimodal expressions of antisemitic concepts in the contemporary UK. Similarly, *'Twitter* discourse' has its distinct character, recognisable to a habitual *Twitter* user, separate in language terms from e.g. everyday speech, academic texts, media register or professional jargon, but may also be slanted towards specific topics and narratives.

Mainstream

Pinpointing the concept of 'mainstream' is always a delicate effort, as it is by its very nature situational and context-dependent. From a more abstract, ahistorical perspective, there are two main axes for grasping the concept. The first one is axiological and it takes into account the normative 'content' of mainstream cultural productions: mainstream media

refers to the mass media that conforms to society's dominant values, norms and conventions. The second approach is focused on structural aspects of the media system. Mainstream media are thus defined as media of all types (printed, radio, television and web-based) that are structured around broadcast logic attaining a significant part of the audience. These two approaches are of course complementary, because the concept of the 'mainstream' has a double normative and structural connotation. However, it is in constant flux: for example, in Nazi Germany, a radical antisemitic tabloid such as *Der Stürmer* unquestionably belonged to the mainstream, despite being very far from the politically moderate centre. Similarly, in countries such as Iran, mainstream media are frequently displaying antisemitic attitudes (ADL 2012).

In our usage of the term we will, however, limit ourselves to Western democracies, where the liberal political consensus (ranging from the conservative right to the socio-democratic left) is still to some extent delineating the boundaries of mainstream communication spheres. In our data from the UK, France and Germany, another important aspect of the mainstream media is its nationwide coverage (via their websites or social media profiles). In the case of some British and French publications, such as *The Guardian*, *BBC* or *Le Monde*, these outlets aggregate global English- or French-speaking language communities. Maximum reach is an important parameter, as this allows to track the circulation of antisemitic concepts and topoi beyond the fringe extremist circles and grasp the developments in the antisemitic language (such as recourse to dog whistles, implicature, humour and more consensual argumentation strategies).

It is reasonable to say that there is no assumption of perfect political alignment between the users and the media outlet. Studies have shown that the comment sections of media outlets often exhibit strongly negative attitudes towards the outlet 'hosting' the comments, a fact even more evident on social media where users do not need to pay readers to engage with the content (Wallsten and Tarsi 2016). However, communicating on mainstream platforms comes with a number of normative constraints. In fringe communities, such as extremist milieux, 'deviant' behaviour (for example, openly racist and antisemitic speech) is not only

tolerated but actively encouraged, as part of the transgressive sociali-sation that binds the in-group (Proust 2020). In contrast, mainstream discourse is more likely to take into account the fact that antisemitism is strongly condemned in Western liberal societies and resort to 'detour communication' and roundabout ways to express anti-Jewish resentment. Therefore, mainstream repertoires are often veered towards consensus and mass appeal, with references and strategies that globally try to co-opt rather than directly challenge dominant values and norms. For example, the ethics of human rights can be invoked for demonising Israel, or the language of freedom of expression can be marshalled to gain a capital of sympathy for antisemitic public figures.

Datasets and Qualitative Content Analysis

The datasets under investigation consist of authentic user comments collected from the comments sections of the websites, *Twitter* and *Facebook* pages of mainstream media (in particular newspapers) from Germany, the UK and France, in order to help understand how anti-semitism is expressed today in politically moderate milieus.

The data collection was not based on keywords such as 'Jews' and 'Israel.' Rather, we looked at real-world events that could potentially trigger antisemitic reactions on social media. This gave us access to forms of antisemitic speech which are expressed in coded and implicit form, many of which do not use keywords related to Jews or Israel at all.

The data was first examined according to Mayring's qualitative content analysis (2015). A series of categories were developed inductively and deductively (Meibauer 2008) in order to identify both the antisemitic concepts (Schoeps and Schlör 1996; Julius 2010) and the linguistic and visual phenomena employed by the commenters.

Practical Considerations

Across all the chapters, the anonymised examples from the dataset have been presented in quotes. In accordance with the conventions of cognitive and pragmalinguistics, and in order to present the data as faithfully as possible, they retain their original spelling, punctuation and grammar, including any errors, inconsistencies or offensive terms. Whenever French or German comments are used, they have been translated by the authors into standard British English. Fictitious examples, especially in the non-antisemitic section of each chapter, are written in *italics*.

In accordance with the conventions of cognitive linguistics, which use this format to highlight phenomena that exist on the mental level and can be reproduced through language, the frequent mentions of antisemitic concepts (such as stereotypes and analogies) but also forms of self-positioning (like Holocaust denial or affirmation of Nazism) are presented in SMALL CAPS, as are other, less frequent antisemitic concepts which do not have their own chapter. For ease of reference, linguistic phenomena such as insults or death wishes are also presented in SMALL CAPS.

References

ADL (Anti-Defamation League). 2012. *Iranian Government's Press TV Promotes Anti-Semitism To Global Audience*, 10 May 2012. https://www.adl.org/resources/press-release/adl-report-iranian-governments-press-tv-promotes-anti-semitism-global (last accessed on 30 August 2023).

Adorno, Theodor W. [1951] 1977. Prismen. Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft. In *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I. Gesammelte Schriften.*, ed. Theodor W. Adorno, Vol. 10.1, 7–30. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Balkin, Jack M. 1996. A Night in the Topics. In *Law's Stories: Narrative and Rhetoric in the Law*, ed. Peter Brooks and Paul Gewirtz. London: Yale University Press.

Becker, Matthias J. 2021. *Antisemitism in Reader Comments: Analogies for Reckoning with the Past*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Becker, Matthias J., and Hagen Troschke. 2023. Decoding Implicit Hate Speech. The Example of Antisemitism. In *Challenges and Perspectives of*

Hate Speech Research, ed. Christian Strippel, Sünje. Paasch-Colberg, Martin Emmer, and Joachim Trebbe, 335–352. Berlin: Digital Communication Research. https://doi.org/10.48541/dcr.v12.20.

Bergmann, Werner, and Rainer Erb. 1986. Kommunikationslatenz, Moral und öffentliche Meinung. Theoretische Überlegungen zum Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. *Kölner Zeitschrift Für Soziologie Und Sozialpsychologie* 38: 223–246.

Bubenhofer, Noah. 2009. *Sprachgebrauchsmuster*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Bussmann, Hadumod, ed. 2008. *Lexikon der Sprachwissenschaft*. Stuttgart: Kröner.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. 1953. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. New York: Pantheon.

Ehrhardt, Claus, and Hans Jürgen Heringer. 2011. *Pragmatik*. Paderborn: Fink.

Grice, Herbert P. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

INACH (International Networks Against Cyber Hate). What is cyber hate and why do we want to counter it. https://www.inach.net/cyber-hate-definitions (last accessed on 30 April 2023).

Guillén-Nieto, Victoria. 2023. *Hate Speech: Linguistic Perspectives*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Julius, Anthony. 2010. *Trials of the Diaspora. A History of Anti-Semitism in England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kirchhoff, Susanne. 2010. *Krieg mit Metaphern. Mediendiskurse über 9/11 und den "War of Terror."* Bielefeld: Transcript.

Lakoff, George. 2014. *All New Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*. Chelsea: Green Publishing.

Lennon, Paul. 2001. Die Rolle von Anspielungen in britischen Zeitungstexten. *ZfAL* 34: 5–25.

Meibauer, Jörg. 2008. *Pragmatik. Eine Einführung*. Tübingen: Stauffenberg Verlag.

Musolff, Andreas. 2016. *Political Metaphor Analysis. Discourse and Scenarios*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Pérennec, Marie-Hélène. 2008. Nazi-Vergleiche im heutigen politischen Diskurs. Von den Gefahren falscher Analogien. *LYLIA* 16.

Proust, Serge. 2020. Dieudonné: Anti-Semitism, moral panics and deviant community. *Déviance Et Société* 44 (3): 383–419.

Rodi, Frithjof. 1975. Anspielungen. Zur Theorie der kulturellen Kommunikationseinheiten. *Poetica* 7: 115–134.

Sampson, Rodney, and Colin Smith. 1997. *And Now for Something Completely Different. Dictionary of Allusions in British English*. Ismaning: Max Hueber.

Schoeps, Julius. and Joachim Schlör. 1996. *Antisemitismus: Vorurteile und Mythen*. Munich: Piper.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika. 2008. *Einführung in die Kognitive Linguistik*. Tübingen: Francke.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika. 2013. *Sprache und Emotion*. Tübingen: Francke.

Schwarz-Friesel, Monika, and Jehuda Reinharz. 2017. *Inside the Antisemitic Mind: The Language of Jew-hatred in Contemporary Germany*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press.

Searle, John. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Skirl, Helge. 2009. *Emergenz als Phänomen der Semantik am Beispiel des Metaphernverstehens. Emergente konzeptuelle Merkmale an der Schnittstelle von Semantik und Pragmatik*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr (Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik).

Stallybrass, Oliver. 1977. Stereotype. In *The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, ed. Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, 601. London: Fontana/ Collins.

Stangor, Charles. 2016. The Study of Stereotyping, Prejudice, and Discrimination within Social Psychology. A Quick History of Theory and Research. In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, ed. Todd D. Nelson, 3–27. New York/London: Psychology Press.

Van Eemeren, Frans H. 2001. Fallacies. In *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Volkov, Shulamit. 2000. *Antisemitismus als kultureller Code*. Zehn Essays. München: Wallstein.

Wallsten, Kevin, and Melinda Tarsi. 2016. Persuasion from Below? An Experimental Assessment of the Impact of Anonymous Comments Sections. *Journalism Practice* 10 (8): 1019–1040.

Index